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THE

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VOL. IX.

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THE COMPLETE WORKS

THOMAS MANTON, D.D.

VOLUME IX.

CONTAINING

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE CXIX. PSALM;

ALSO

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER

OF ST MATTHEW.

LONDON:

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SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE

CXIX. PSALM.

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SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE

CXIX. PSALM.

SERMON CLIX.

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law

is the truth. — Ver. 142.

In this verse the word of God is set forth by a double notion, of right-

eousness and law ; accordingly two things are predicated of it : as it

is righteousness, it is said to be an everlasting righteousness ; and as

it is law, it is said to be the truth. Both imply our duty : as there

are truths in the word, it is man's duty to believe them ; as there are

commands, it is man's duty to obey them. I shall treat first of the

notions, secondly of the predications.

First, The notions; and there the word is first called righteousness.

' Thy righteousness/ God's righteousness is sometimes put for the

righteousness which is in God himself ; as ver. 137, ' Righteous art

thou, Lord ; ' Ps. cxlv. 17, ' The Lord is righteous in all his ways/

And sometimes for the righteousness which he requireth of us ; as

James i. 20, ' The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of

God ; ' that is, the righteousness which God requireth of us ; and

here in the text. Once more, that righteousness which God requireth

of us in his word is sometimes taken, in a limited sense, for the

duties of the second table, and so usually when it is coupled with

holiness, Luke i. 75 ; Eph. iv. 24, ' The new man is created after

God in righteousness and true holiness.' Holiness giveth God his

due, and righteousness giveth man his due. Sometimes it is taken in

a more general sense, as to imply the whole duty and perfection of

man ; thus righteousness when it is put alone.

In this general sense I take it here, and observe this point —

1. The word of God is righteousness. This is one of the notions by

which it is expressed in this psalm ; so it is called in the text.

The reasons.

[1.] Because it is the copy of that righteousness which is in God.

God's natural perfections are represented in the creatures, his majesty

and omnipresence in the sun, but his moral perfections in the word.

4 SERMONS UPON PSALM CX1X. [SER. CLIX.

The heavens declare his excellent majesty and glory, but his law, his

purity, righteousness, and holiness — Ps. xix., the sun and the law are

compared together, — as the creatures in their kind set forth God, so

doth the word in its kind. Well may it be called righteousness, be-

cause it is the fairest draught and representation of God in his moral

perfections, the chief of which are called righteousness and holiness.

The knowledge we get by the creatures tendeth to exalt God ; the

knowledge we get by the law to humble and abase man, because of

our impurity ; and therefore the prophet, when he saw God, cried out,

Isa. vi. 3, ' Woe is me ! I am undone; I am a man of unclean lips ; '

and David, when he contemplated the holiness of the law, cried out

presently, Ps. xix. 12, ' Lord, cleanse me from my secret sins.'

[2.] It is the rule and pattern of all righteousness and justice in man;

for our righteousness is a conformity to God's law. Indeed, habitual

righteousness is a conformity to God's nature ; actual righteousness, to

his law. His Spirit reneweth our nature according to the image of

God, and telleth us what is pleasing to God : Isa. li. 7, ' Hearken unto

me, ye that know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law.'

They that have the law of God in their hearts do only know righteous-

ness, that is, know what belongs to it ; the new nature is tried, and

all our ways tried by it.

[3.] It is the great instrument to promote righteousness. It maketh

the man that doth observe it just and righteous before God. There is

a twofold righteousness before God — the righteousness of justification

and the righteousness of sanctification. The righteousness of justifi-

cation, that is the great truth revealed in the scriptures. Nature saw

nothing of that; the heathen. saw something of a breach, that there

was need of appeasing God, but nothing of a righteousness before God :

that secret was hid from the wise men of the world, and reserved for

the scriptures ; and therefore the apostle saith, Bom. iii. 21, 22, ' But

now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being

witnessed by the law and the prophets, even the righteousness of God,

which is by Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all that believe.' The

law and the prophets set forth this mystery to teach men, that we are

to be justified before God by faith in Christ. Nature could convince

us of guilt, but not of a righteousness.

2. For the way of sanctification, or how a man that is justified

should approve himself to God and men. The scripture crieth up

another righteousness, that becometh justified persons; that is, the

way to be righteous is to do righteousness : 1 John iii. 7, ' Little

children, let no man deceive you ; he that doth righteousness is right-

eous.' So it is said of Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke i. G, that ' they

were righteous before God, and walked in all the commandments ami

ordinances of the Lord blameless/ So Deut. vi. 25, ' And it shall be

our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments, before

the Lord our God, as he commanded us.' This wisdom we learn from

the word, where nothing but righteousness is recommended ; for it

cometh from the righteous God, who is essentially good and holy, and

cannot be contrary to himself in commanding unjust things : and

therefore his commandments are in all points right. There is no way

right to prove principles but by arguing ab absurdis, and so prove

VER. 142.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 5

the goodness of them. What a miserable case would the world be in

if there were not such a law and rule ! a place of villanies and wicked-

ness. And therefore here is righteousness, and all righteousness ; we

need not seek further for direction. Sure God can tell what will best

please him, and our sense and experience inform us what things are

good and honest in the sight of men.

Use. Let us live as becometh them that have such a righteous rule :

' Wisdom is justified of her children,' Mat. xi. 19. Let us bear wit-

ness by our faith, profession, and godly life to the doctrine of God.

This is to glorify the word, Acts xiii. 40, when we express the excel-

lencies of it in our practice ; do not only approve it in our judg-

ments, and commend it with our mouths, but express it in our

lives. Practice glorirleth more than verbal praise. Let us show that

the word is righteousness , that is to say, the copy of God's righteous-

ness, by being the rule and instrument of ours. Let us look after the

righteousness of jastification. We can never be truly righteous, unless

we lay the foundation of the spiritual life in faith in Jesus Christ, and

repentance from dead works, that maketh way for the spirit and power

of godliness ; for Christ is made of God to us righteousness before he

is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30. There is no acceptance with God

without it : Bom. v. 19, ' By the obedience of one, many were made

righteous.' Thereby our persons are accepted. In ourselves there is

none righteous, no not one ; and it is dangerous to look after any other

righteousness while this is neglected : Bom. x. 3, ' Being ignorant of

God's righteousness, they went about to establish their own righteous-

ness,' &c. Again, let me press you to look after the righteousness of

sanctification, to see that we be renewed by the Spirit, and entered

into a holy course ; and not only so, but we go on still in righteous-

ness : Bev. xxii. 11, ' He that is righteous, let him be righteous still.'

We are renewed but in part : Prov xv. 9, ' The Lord loveth him that

followeth after righteousness ; ' that maketh it his business to grow

more righteous every day, and increase the acts, to perfect the habit ;

this earnest endeavour must never be left off.

Secondly, Now I come from the notion to the predication. This

righteousness, it is an everlasting righteousness : it is so in two respects

— in the constitution among men, and in the effects of it.

1. In the constitution of it. The covenant of grace is an everlast-

ing covenant ; so it is called Heb. xiii. 20 ; and the gospel is called

the ' everlasting gospel,' Bev. xiv. 6 ; and ' I will make an everlasting

covenant with you,' Isa. lv. 3. The privileges of this covenant are

eternal. Christ ' hath obtained an eternal redemption for us,' Heb. ix.

12 ; Dan. ix. 24. There is an unchangeable righteousness which

Christ hath established in the church ; he is the Lord our righteous-

ness. His righteousness is still the same, and the plot was first laid in

his everlasting decrees. The terms of life and salvation held forth in

the new covenant are to continue for ever, no change to be expected.

From the beginning of the world to the end thereof, the covenant of

grace cannot cease ; the obligation still continueth ; men are for ever

bound to love God and their neighbour. There shall no time come

when the law of loving God and our neighbour shall be reversed and

out of date. The covenant is essentially the same, under all the diver-

(I SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SEE. CLIX.

sity of administrations. And as the privileges, so the duties are of an

eternal obligation. Among men, to. SUata tcivovfteva, that is just at

one time that is not just at another. Lawgivers cannot always live

to see their laws executed, and men cannot foresee all occasions and

inconveniences, and therefore often repeal their laws. But God is wise ;

he hath made an unchangeable law, and he forbiddeth things intrin-

sically evil, and comniandeth things intrinsically good.

2. As to the effects of it, in case of obedience or disobedience.

(1.) In case of disobedience, eternal wrath lighteth on them that

reject this covenant, that walk contrary to it, they shall be eternally

miserable : 2 Thes. i. 9, ' Who shall be punished, with everlasting

destruction from the presence of the Lord.' Not a temporal but an

everlasting destruction ; and Mark ix. 44, ' The worm shall never

die, and the fire shall never be quenched.' An eternity of torments,

because they despised everlasting mercy, and rejected the autho-

rity of an everlasting God. Having offended an infinite God, their

punishment abideth on them for ever. If they will stand out their

day, it is fit their recovery should be hopeless. (2.) The benefits

are eternal in case of obedience. There is everlasting grace, ever-

lasting comfort, and everlasting life : 1 John ii. 17, ' The world

passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the word of God

abideth for ever.' The Spirit is given as a comforter that shall

abide for ever, John xiv. 16 ; and 2 Thes. ii. 1G, ' God who hath

loved us, and given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through

grace.' And it is fit it should be so, because it is built upon God's

unchangeable love, and Christ's eternal merit and intercession. God's

love is an everlasting love, Jer. xxxi. 3. The efficacy of Christ's merit

never ceaseth, Heb. xiii. 8. His continual intercession ever lasteth,

Heb. vii. 25 , and Bom. viii. 39, ' Nothing shall separate us from the

love of Christ.' He liveth for ever, by which we continue for ever in

the favour of God, and the covenant standeth firm between him and

us ; the fountain of comfort is never dried up.

Use 1. To inform us of the difference between the laws of God and

the laws of men. There are many differences, some of which I shall

touch by and by ; this expression offereth two — it is righteousness, and

everlasting righteousness.

1. It is righteousness. Men have and do often decree wickedness

by a law, not only in the first table, where man is most blind, but also

in the second ; not only in their barbarous worship, their sacrificing of

men, but also in their human constitutions. The Lacedemonians

held it lawful to steal, if he were not taken hr clvtco (pepeiv, in the very

act. In Cyprus they held it lawful for their virgins, if they were poor,

to prostitute themselves to get a dowry or portion. By the law of the

twelve tables a man might kill his wife if she smelt of wine or coun-

terfeited his keys. And among the Komans, if a slave had killed his

master, all his fellow-slaves were put to death with him, though never

so innocent. By the same laws, a father might thrice sell his child ;

they might tear their debtors in pieces if they were not solvent. Thus

blind were men in their own concerns and what made for human com-

merce ; much more in the way of pleasing God and the interest of the

world to come. Bless God for this righteous law. Again —

VER. 142.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 7

2. It is everlasting righteousness ; not only righteous at the first

giving out, but righteous in all ages and times ; and should we slight

this rule that will hold for ever ? In the world, new lords new laws ;

men vary and change their designs and purposes ; privileges granted

to-day may be repealed to-morrow, but this word will hold true for

ever; our justification by Christ is irrevocable, that part of righteous-

ness is everlasting. Be sure you are justified now, upon terms of the

gospel, and you shall be justified for ever ; your forgiveness is an ever-

lasting forgiveness, and your peace is an everlasting peace: Jer. xxxiii.

34, ' I will remember your sins no more.' So the other righteousness

of sanctification, it is for ever. Approve yourselves to God now, and

you will approve yourselves at the day of judgment.

Use 2. Exhortation.

1. Let this take us off from seeking things that have no continuance

in them. The everlastingness of the word is opposed often to the

transitory vanities of the world : 1 Peter i. 23-24, ' All flesh is grass,

and the glory of man as the flower of grass : the grass withereth,

and the flower falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth for

ever.' Why should we hunt after that glory that soon fadeth ? So

1 John ii. 17, ' The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he

that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.' All these things change,

.and move up and down by divers circumrotations ; we sit fast and

loose in the world, but in the covenant of grace all is sure.

2. Let us choose this word to live by, that we may be partakers of that

everlasting good which cometh by it. Oh, let us regard it ! Eternity

is concerned in it. If the righteousness of God be everlasting, let us

begin betimes to get interested in it, and persevere in it to the end.

Let us begin betimes, for we have but a few days to live here in the

world, and so either to express our thankfulness or lay a foundation

for our eternal hopes ; therefore let us set about the work the sooner.

And let us persevere ; our care to keep this law must be perpetual, not

like temporaries. Many will carry themselves well and godly for a

while, but afterwards fall off ; this doth not become an everlasting law ;

there is the same goodness in God's law that there was at first.

3. Let us comfort ourselves with the everlastingness of the privi-

leges offered to us in God's word. The redeemed of the Lord should

have an everlasting joy: Isa. xxxv. 10, 'And the ransomed of the

Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy

upon their heads.' Let other things end and change as they will,

our right by the new covenant changeth not. Sometimes we are in

request in the world, and sometimes in disgrace ; but God's love is

everlasting and sure. We are not in with him to-day and out to-

morrow ; he hath dealt with us upon sure and unchangeable terms ;

nay, when you die, you may comfort yourselves in this, Ps. ciii. 17,

4 The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, upon them

that fear him, and his righteousness upon children's children.' Yea,

not only in the changes of your outward condition is here an everlast-

ing spring of comfort, but also in the ups and downs of your spiritual

condition, and the clouds which now and then darken your comfort

and hope in God. In a time of desertion we seem to be dead and cast

off ; yet remember God loves to be bound for ever : 2 Sam. xxiii. 5,

8 SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SeR. CLIX.

1 Although my house be not so with. God, yet lie hath made an ever-

lasting covenant.' Though we are not so punctual, exact, and faith-

ful, but are subject to many errors and failings, yet God will mind his

eternal covenant: Ps. Ixxxix. 33-34, ' Nevertheless my loving-kind-

ness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to

fail ; my covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out

of my lips.' Death doth not dissolve it, nor desertions break it off.

Now for the second notion by which the word of God is expressed,

' thy law,' from whence observe —

Doct. That the word of God hath the nature and force of a law.

It is often so called in scripture ; not only the decalogue, which is

the abridgment of all moral duties, but the whole scripture is God's

law : Isa. li. 4, ' A law shall proceed from me ; ' and Ps. i. 2, ' His

delight is in the law of God ; ' and the gospel is called ' the law of

faith,' Rom. iii. 28. Here I shall show you how necessary it was that

God should give man a law, both as .we are considered apart, and with

respect to community ; and then show that the word hath the force of

a law.

1. Consider man apart. Surely the reasonable creature, as it is a

creature, hath a superior to whose providence and ordering it is sub-

ject. So all the creatures have a law, by which the bounds of their

motion are fixed and limited : Ps. clxviii. 6, ' He hath established

them for ever and ever; he hath made a decree which shall not pass ; '

Prov. viii. 29, ' He gave the sea his decree, that the waters should

not pass his commandment.' The sun, moon, and stars are under a

law ; all the creatures are balanced in a due proportion, and guided

and fixed in their tract and course by an unerring hand, which is a

kind of law to them. As a creature, man is subject to the direction

of God's providence, as other creatures are; but as a reasonable

creature, he is capable of moral government ; for so he hath a choice

of his own, a power of refusing evil and choosing good. Other

creatures are ruled by a rod of iron, necessitated to what they do by an

act of God's power and sovereignty ; but man, being a voluntary agent,

is governed by laws which may direct and oblige him to good, and

warn and drive him from evil. This law was at first written upon

man's nature, and that was sufficient while he stood in his integrity to

guide him and enable him to serve and please God in all things pro-

pounded to him. The law written on the heart of man was his rule

and principle. But that being obliterated by the fall, it was needful-

that God should give a new law, to guide man to his own blessedness,

and to keep him from erring. The internal principle of righteousness

being lost, the laws of men could not be sufficient, for they have

another end, which is the good of human society. They aim not at

such a supernatural end as the enjoyment of God ; their laws reach no

further than the ordering of men's outward conversations, and meddle

not with the inward workings and motions of the heart, of which they

can take no cognisance. These may be inordinate, do a great deal of

mischief ; therefore, as the wise God directed men to give laws to order

men's actions, so he would himself give laws to order the heart, which

man cannot reach. Lay all these together, and there is a necessity

that God should give a law to man.

VER. 142.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 9

2. But much more if you consider man in his community, as he is

a part of that spiritual community called a church. All societies of

men from the beginning of the world have found the establishing of

laws the only means to preserve themselves from ruin. There is no

other way against confusion ; and would God leave that society which

is of his own institution, that of which he is the head, and in which his

honour is concerned, without a law ? Deut. xxxii. 9, ' The Lord's

portion is his people/ which was set apart to serve him, and to he to

him for a name and a praise. Surely a people that have God so near

them, and are in special relation to him, have their laws by which they

may be governed and preserved as to their eternal good, unless we

should say God took less care for his own people than for others. This

necessity is the greater because this society is spiritual ; though made

up of visible men, yet combined for spiritual ends, commerce and

communion with God, and that mostly in their spirits, which maketh

this society the hardest to be governed, and this, the most scattered and

dispersed of all societies throughout all parts of the earth, should

therefore be knit together with the strongest bonds. Surely then

there needeth a common law, whereby they may be united in their

conjunction with Christ, the head, and one another, that it may not

be broken in pieces ; and this to be given by God, that he may pre-

serve his own authority and interest among them.

This law is the scripture, those sacred digests in which God hath

discovered not only his wisdom and justice, but his will and imperial

power, what he will have us do. The one showeth the equity, the

other the necessity of our obedience ; surely this is his law or none.

The church to whom the law was given, God hath constituted the

keeper of its own records ; never acknowledge another ; nor can any

other make any tolerable pretence.

Now, having brought the matter home, I shall show you wherein it

hath the nature and force of a law, as we commonly take the word ;

and here I shall —

1. Show you wherein it agrees.

2. Wherein it differs from the ordinary laws of men.

1. Wherein it agreeth.

[1.] A law is an act of power and sovereignty by which a superior

declareth his will to those that are subject to him. There are two

branches of the supreme power — legislation and jurisdiction ; giving

the law, and governing according to the law so given. And so God's

power over the reasonable creature is seen in legislation, and in the

administration of his providence there is his jurisdiction. In the scrip-

ture he hath given the law, and he will take an account of the observ-

ance of it ; in part here, at the petty sessions ; hereafter, more fully

and clearly at the day of general judgment. But for the present, here

is God's power seen over the creature in appointing him such a law.

God hath the greatest right and authority to command : Isa. xxxiii.

22, ' The Lord is our judge and our lawgiver.'

[2.] That there is not only direction given to us, but an obligation

laid upon us. There is this difference between a law and a rule — a

bare rule is for information, a law for obligation. So herein the word

of God agrees with a law ; it is not only the result of God's wisdom,

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but the effect of his legislative will. He would not only help and

instruct the creature in his duty, hut oblige him by his authority.

Decretum necessitatem facit, exliortatio liberam voluntatem excited,

saith the canonist. Exhortation and advice properly serveth to quicken

one that is free, hut a decree and a law imposeth a force, a necessity

upon him. So Hierome, lib. ii. contra Jovin — Ubi consilium datur

operantis arbilrium est, ubi prceceptum necessilas servitutis. A counsel

and a precept differ ; a precept respects subjects, a counsel, friends.

The scriptures are not only God's counsel, hut his precept. There is a

coactive power in his laws. God hath not left the creature at liberty

to comply with his directions if he please, but hath left a strict charge

upon him.

[3.] Every law hath a sanction, otherwise it were but an arbitrary

direction ; the authority might be contemned unless it hath a sanction,

that is, confirmed by rewards and punishments ; so hath God given his

law under the highest penalties : Mark xvi. 16, ' He that believeth shall

be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned ; ' Gal. vi. 8, ' If

ye sow to the flesh, of the flesh ye shall reap corruption;' Bom. viii.

13, ' If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' God telleth them what will

come of it, and commandeth them to abstain as they will answer to

God at their utmost peril. The obligation of a law, first, inferreth a

fault, that is, contempt of authority ; so doth God's, as it is his law,

and so it will infer a fault in us to break it ; and as we reject his counsel,

it inferreth punishment, and the greater punishment the more we know

of God's law : Rom. ii. 9, ' Tribulation, wrath, and anguish upon every

soul that doeth evil, upon the Jew first, and also upon the Gentile.'

Why the Jew first ? They knew God's mind more clearly.

[4.] A sanction supposeth a judge, who will take an account whether

his law be broken or kept, otherwise all the promises and threatenings

were in vain. The law, that is the rule of our obedience, is the rule of

his process ; so the word of God hath this in common with other laws ;

therefore God hath appointed a judge and a j uclgment-day wherein he

will judge the world in righteousness, by the man whom he hath

appointed; and 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He will come in flaming fire, to render

vengeance on all them that know not God, and obey not the gospel.'

According to the law they have been under, Gentiles, Christians, they

must all appear before the Lord, to give an account how they have

observed God's law. Now in patience he beareth with men, yet some-

times interposeth by particular judgments, but then they shall receive

their final doom.

2. Let us see wherein they differ from ordinary laws among men.

[1.] Man in his laws doth not debate matters with his subjects, but

barely enjoineth and interposeth authority ; but God condescendeth

to the infirmities of man, and cometh down from the throne of his

sovereignty, and reasoneth with and persuadeth and prayeth men that

they will not forsake their cwn mercies, but yield obedience to his laws,

which he convinceth them are for their good : Isa. xlvi. 8, ' Remember

this, show yourselves men ; bring it to mind again, ye transgressors ; '

Isa. i. 18, ' Let us reason together, saith the Lord/ God is pleased to

stoop to sorry creatures, to argue with them, and make them judges in

their own cause : Micah vi. 2, 3, he will plead with Israel, ' my

VER. 142.] SERMONS UPOX PSALM CXLX. 11

people, what have I done unto thee ? and wherein have I wearied

thee ? Testify against we.' He will plead with Israel about the equity

of his laws, whether they are not for their good. It is a lessening of

authority for princes to court their subjects — they command them ;

but God will beseech and expostulate and argue with his people ;

2 Cor. v. 20, he draws with the cords of a man, sweetly alluring their

hearts to him.

[2.] The laws of God bind the conscience and the immortal souls of

men ; the laws of men only bind the behaviour of the outward man,

they cannot order the heart. God takes notice of a wanton glance, of

an unclean thought, a carnal motion, Mat. v. 28. Men's words and

actions are liable to the laws of men ; they cannot know the thoughts ;

but the law of God falls upon the counsels of the heart : Rom. vii. 14,

' For 1 know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal ; ' Heb. iv. 12,

' It is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.'

[3.] The law of God immutably and indispensably bindeth all men

without distinction ; no man beggeth exemption here because of their

condition ; there is no immunity and freedom from God's law. Men

may grant immunity from their laws : 1 Sam. xvii. 25, ' He will make

his father's house free in Israel.' Men's laws are compared to spiders'

webs ; the lesser flies are entangled, great ones break through. God

doth not exempt any creature from duty to him, but speaketh impar-

tially to all.

[4.] Men's laws do more propend to punishment than they do to

reward. For robbers and manslayers death is appointed, but the inno-

cent subject hath only this reward, that he doth his duty, and

escapeth these punishments. In very few cases doth the law promise

rewards ; the inflicting of punishments is its proper work, because its

use is to restrain evil ; but God's law propoundeth punishments equal

to the rewards ; eternal life on the one hand, as well as eternal death

on the other : Deut. xxx. 15, ' See I have set before thee this day life

and good, death and evil;' because the use of God's law is to guide

men to their happiness. This should be much observed ; it is legis

candor, the equity and condescension of man's law to speak of a reward ;

it commands many things, forbids many things, but still under a

penalty ; that is the great design of man's power ; in very few cases

doth it invite men to their duty by a reward ; only in such cases where

every good man would not do his duty. It is more exact and vigi-

lant in its proper and natural work of punishing the disobedient,

that wickedness should not go unpunished ; the common peace

requireth that ; but that good should be rewarded, there is no human

necessity. Human laws were not invented to reward good, but pre-

vent evil.

Use. Let us humble ourselves that we bear so little respect to God's

word, that we so boldly break it, and are so little affected with our

breaches of it. Do we indeed consider that this is God's law ? The

greatest part of mankind fear the prince more than God, and the gal-

lows more than hell. If every vain thought or carnal motion in our

hearts were as the cutting of a finger or burning in the hand, men

would seem more afraid of that than they are of hell. Nay, I will tell

you, men can dispense with God's law to comply with man's : Hosea

12 SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SER. CLIX.

v. 11, 'Ephraim is oppressed, and broken in judgment, because he

willingly walked after the commandment.' A little danger will draw

men into the snare, when hell will not keep them from it. Oh, let us

rouse up ourselves ! Is not man God's subject ? Is he not a more

powerful sovereign than all the potentates in the world ? Doth he not

in his word give judgment on the everlasting estate of men, and will

his judgment be in vain ? Hath not God appointed a day when all

matters shall be taken into consideration? If you can deny these

truths, go on in sin and spare not ; but if conscience be sensible of

God's authority, oh ! break off your sins by repentance, and walk more

cautiously for the time to come ! Every sin is avo/xla, 1 John iii. 4,

a breach of God's eternal law ; and will God always wink at your dis-

loyalty to him ?

Nothing remaineth to be spoken to but the last clause, ' Thy law is

truth.'

Doct. God's law is truth.

1. I shall show in what sense it is said to be truth.

2. The reasons why it is truth.

3. The end of this truth.

First, In what sense it is said to be truth.

1. It is the chief truth ; there is some truth in the laws of men and

the writings of men, even of heathens; but they are but sorry frag-

ments and scraps of truth, that have escaped since the fall ; but the

truth of the word is transcendent to that of bare reason. Here are

truths of the greatest concernment, matters propounded that are very

comfortable and profitable to lost sinners, 1 Tim. ii. 16. Here moral

duties are advanced to the highest pitch : Deut. iv. 6, ' Keep therefore

and do them, for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the

sight of the nations.' The end of these is not only to regulate your

commerce with men, but to guide you in your communion with God,

and help you to the everlasting enjoyment of him.

2. It is the only truth, that is, the only revelation of the mind of

God that you can build upon ; it is the rule of truth. A thing may

be true that is not the rule of truth. There is Veritas rcgulata, and

Veritas regulans ; the word is the measure and standard, and they are

true or false as they agree or disagree with it. Every custom and

tradition must be tried upon it ; from the beginning it was not so ;

from the beginning, my Christianity is Jesus Christ. We must not

attend to what others did, but what Christ did, who is before all ;

every dictate of reason must be tried by it, for here is the highest

reason. It is written to make the man of God perfect, or else it can-

not guide you to your happiness, 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16. Every revelation

must be tried by it, Gal. i. 8. If an angel or man bring any doctrine

which differs from or is besides the written word, it is a cursed doctrine :

this is the rule.

3. It is the pure truth ; in it there is nothing but the truth, without

the mixture of falsehood ; every part is true as truth itself. It is true

in the promises, true in the threatenings, true in the doctrines, true in

the histories, true in the precepts, true in the prohibitions. God will

make it good to a tittle. True in moralities, true in the mysteries of

faith ; not only true in duties that concern man and man, but in the

Veil 142.] sermons upon psalm cxix. 13

sublimer truths that concern commerce with God, where nature is

more blind: Ps. xix. 9, 'The testimonies of the Lord are true and

righteous altogether.' It is true where a carnal man would not have

it true, in the curses and threatenings. If God's word be true, woe to

them that remain in a sinful way, they shall find it true shortly, and

feel what they will not believe. It is true where a godly man feareth

it will not be true ; no promises contradicted by sense but will prove

true in their performance. Whatsoever, in the hour of temptation,

carnal reason may judge to the contrary, within a while you will see

your unbelieving fears confuted.

4. It is the whole truth ; it containeth all things necessary for the

salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it:

John xiv. 26, ' He shall teach you all things,' and remember you of all

things;' John xvi. 13, 'Lead you into all truth ; ' in all things that

pertain to religion and our present conduct towards everlasting happi-

ness. Therefore nothing is to be hearkened to contrary to what God

hath revealed in his word ; there is no room left for tradition, nor for

extraordinary revelations ; all that is necessary for the church is re-

vealed there ; it is a full perfect rule.

Secondly, The reasons.

1. From the author ; God is a God of truth, and nothing but truth

can come from him, for God cannot lie, Titus i. 2. The truth of the

law dependeth upon the truth of God ; therefore it must needs be

without error ; yea, it corrects all error ; if God could deceive or be

deceived, you might suspect his word.

2. The matter itself ; it commends itself to our consciences by the

manifestation of the truth : 2 Cor. iv. 2, ' Approving yourselves by the

word of truth,' 2 Cor. vi. 7. If the heart be not strangely perverted,

and become an incompetent judge by obstinate atheism and corrupt

affections, it cannot but own these truths to be of God : ' If our gospel

be hid, it is hid to them that are lost,' 1 Cor. iv. 4.

3. The end of it, which is to regulate man and sanctify man. Now

it were strange if he should be made better by a lie and a cheat: John

xvii. 17, ' Sanctify them by thy truth ; thy word is truth.' Certainly it

is the most convenient instrument to reduce man to his wits, and

?nake him live like a man.

4. It pretends to be the law of God ; it is so, or else it would be the

greatest cheat in the world ; for it speaketh to us from God all along,

and by virtue of his authority. None can be so brutish as to think

that the wisest course of doctrines that ever the world was acquainted

with is a mere imposture.

Use 1. To commend the word of God to us ; we cannot have true

doctrine, nor true piety, nor true consolation without the scriptures.

Not true doctrine : Isa. viii. 20, ' To the law and to the testimony, if

they speak not according to this word, there is no light in them.' It

is to be condemned of falsehood, if not according to the word. You

cannot have true holiness, for holiness is but scripture digested and

put in practice, James i. 18. The foundation of the spiritual life is

laid in the word ; scripture faith and scripture repentance are still fed

by the word. It teacheth us how to believe, and how to repent, and

how to pray, and how to live, especially the heavenly life ; and there

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can be no true comfort and peace without the word : Rom. xv. 4, ' That

ye through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope/

Use 2. 1. We should consider the truth of the word, partly in the

general, for the strengthening and settling of our faith, and to make it

more clear and solid and certain: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted,

after that ye heard the word of truth.' When boisterous temptations

would carry us to some evil, which God hath forbidden and severely

threatened, that the point of the sword of the Spirit be put to the

bosom of it, Deut. xxix. 19, 20.

2. When you are settling your souls as to the main point of accep-

tance with God : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is a faithful saying, and worthy

of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sin-

ners, of whom I am chief.' The word will never deceive them that

seek righteousness there.

3. When difficulties arise that oppose the promise or expectation of

relief according to the promise, you should urge the truth of the word

in the very face of difficulty: ' Thy law is truth.' Take Paul's in-

stance, Acts xxvii. God by promise gave all that sailed with Paul in

the ship their lives, yet how many difficulties came to pass ! At first,

when they Avere in the Adriatic Sea for so many days and nights, and

had neither seen sun nor stars, they knew not where they were, nor

whither they should go ; here was little appearance of God's making

good his word to Paul. Another difficulty fell out, they feared they

were near some country ; they sounded and found they were near some

land, but what land they could not conjecture, and were afraid of

being split in pieces against the rocks ; but the shipmen, that knew the

danger of these seas, they must go out of the ship, they would make

use of their long boat, and so they were ready to miscarry in the sight

of the land, but Paul prevented them. And after it was day, the men

were so spent because of long fasting and conflicting with the waves,

they could not ply the oar. Another difficulty, they were where two

seas met ; they ran the ship aground and resolved to kill Paul and the

rest of the prisoners, lest they should swim to land ; but the captain,

willing to save Paul, prevented that purpose ; and so at length they

came all to shore, though followed with difficulty upon difficulty.

God made good his promise to a tittle, ver. 44. Pray observe how

Paul urged God's promise against the greatest difficulties, as sufficient

ground of encouragement to expect relief : ver. 25, ' For I believe God,

that it shall be even as it w r as told me.'

SERMON CLX.

Trouble and anguish have taken hold of me, yet thy commandments are

my delights. — Ver. 143.

In the words we have —

1. David's temptation, trouble and anguish have taken hold of me.

2. David's exercise under that temptation, thy commandments are

my delight.

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3. The benefit of that exercise, notwithstanding the greatness of the

temptation, yet. It is propounded with a non obstante.

First, The temptation was very great, for he speaketh of trouble

and anguish. The joining of synonymous words, or words of a like

import and signification, increaseth the sense ; and so it showeth his

affection was not ordinary ; yea, both these words have their particular

use and emphasis. Trouble may imply the outward trial, and the

difficulties and straits he was in ; anguish, inward afflictions : the one,

the matter of the trial, and the other the sense of it. The other

expression also is to be observed, ' Have taken hold of me ; ' in the

Hebrew, ' have found me ; ' so the Septuagint renders it, 0\tyei<; ical

avd^tcai evpoaav /ne ; and the vulgar Latin out of them, tribulatio et

angustice invenerunt me, 'have found me,' that is, ' come upon me/ as the

expression intimateth. Troubles are said to find us, because they are

sent to seek us out, and in time will light upon us. We should not

run into them, but if they find us in our duty, we should not be troubled

at them. Sometimes in scripture we are said to find trouble, and

sometimes trouble to find us. We are said to find trouble. David

said, Ps. cxvi. 3, ' I found trouble.' And so now here in the text,

trouble and anguish found him. There is no difference, or if any,

the one noteth a surprise. Trouble findeth us when it cometh un-

looked for ; our finding it noteth our willingness to undergo it. when

the will of God is so, especially for righteousness' sake.

Secondly, David's exercise under this great temptation, ' Thy com-

mandments are my delights.' Where we have —

1. The object, ' thy commandments.' The commandment is put

for the word in general, which includeth promises as well as precepts,

the whole doctrine of life and salvation. However, the property of the

form is not altogether to be overlooked ; even in the commandments or

the conscience of his duty, he took a great deal of comfort.

2. The affection, 'delight.' He had said before that he did not

forget God's statutes when he was small and despised, ver. 141 ; now

he delighted in them. This was his great love to the word, that he

could find sweetness in it when it brought him trouble, such sweetness

as did allay all his sorrows, and overcome the bitterness of them.

3. The degree, ' delights,' in the plural number ; he did greatly

delight in it. Omnis oblectatio mea, saith Junius — thy command-

ments to me are instead of all manner of delights and pleasure in the

world.

Thirdly, The next is the opposition of this exercise to that tempta-

tion, ' yet.' It is not in the original, but necessarily implied, and there-

fore well inserted by our translators, to show that the greatness of his

straits and troubles did not diminish his comfort, but increase it rather.

The points are these : —

1. God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise his people with a

great deal of trouble.

2. This trouble may breed great vexation and anguish of spirit, even

in a gracious heart.

3. Notwithstanding this trouble and anguish, gracious hearts will

manifest their graciousness by delighting in the word.

4. They that delight in the word will find more comfort in their

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afflictions than troubles can take from them, or such sweetness as will

overcome the sense of all their sorrows. This was always David's help

to delight in the word, and this brought him comfort though in deep

troubles.

For the first point, that God seeth it necessary sometimes to exercise

his people with a great deal of trouble. Though they are highly in

favour with God, yet they have their share of troubles as well as others.

This is true if you —

1. Consider the people of God in their collective body and com-

munity, which is called the church. It is the church's name: Isa. liv.

11, 12, 'Oh thou afflicted, and tossed with tempest!' Names are

taken a notionibus ; things are known and distinguished by their

name; it is one of the way-marks to heaven: Acts xiv. 22, ' Through

many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God ; ' as the way to

Canaan lay through a howling wilderness. If we were told before that

we should meet with such and such marks in our journey to such a

place, if we found them not, we should have cause to suspect we were

out of our way. From the beginning of the world, the church hath

always been bred up under troubles, and inured to the discipline of

the cross : Ps. cxxix. 1, ' Many a time have they afflicted me from my

youth, may Israel now say.' The spirit of enmity wrought betimes.

The first family that ever was in the world yielded Abel the proto-

martyr, and Cain the patriarch of unbelievers. While the church

kept in families, the outward estate of God's people was worse than

their neighbours. Abraham was a sojourner, though owned and

blessed by God, when the Canaanites were possessors, and dwelt in

walled towns. Jacob's family grew up by degrees into a nation, but

Esau's presently multiplied into many dukes and princes. And as

they grew up, they grew up in affliction. Egypt was a place of retreat

for them for a while, but before they got out of it, it proved a house

of bondage. Their deliverance brought them into a wilderness, where

want made them murmur, but oftener wantonness. But then God

sent fiery serpents, and broke them, and afflicted them with other

judgments. After forty years' wandering in the wilderness, they are

brought into Canaan, a land of rest ; but it afforded them little rest,

for they forfeited it almost as soon as they conquered it ; it flowed with

milk and honey, but mixed with gall and wormwood. Their story, as

it is delivered in the book of God, acquaints you with several varieties

and intermixtures of providence, till wrath came upon them to the

utmost, till God saw fit to enlarge the pale and lines of communication

by treating with other nations. Now, if the Old Testament church

were thus afflicted, much more the New. God discovered his appro-

bation and improbation then more by temporal mercies and temporal

judgments. The promises run to us in another strain ; and since life

and immortality were brought to light in the gospel, we must not

expect to be so delicately brought up as never to see an evil day. He

hath told us, 2 Tim. iii. 12, ' We must be conformed to our head,'

Eom. viii. 29 ; and expect to pledge Christ in his bitter cup, and our

condition must inform us that our hopes were not in this world, 1 Cor.

xv. 19. In the gospel dispensation God would deal forth temporal

blessings more sparingly, and spiritual with a fuller hand ; the ex-

YER. 143.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 17

perience of all ages verifieth this. When religion began first to fly

abroad into all lands, the pagans first persecuted it, and then the pseudo-

Christians ; the holiest and best people were maligned, and bound, and

butchered, and racked, and stoned, but still they multiplied. It were

easy to tire you with various instances in every age. Those that went

home to God were those that came out of tribulations, and had washed

their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, Rev. vii.

14. There is always something set afoot to try God's servants, and in

the latter times the roaring lion is not grown more gentle and tame,

rather more fierce and severe : Rev. xii. 12, ' For the devil is come

down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath

but a short time.' Dying beasts struggle most. As his kingdom

beginneth to shake, so he will be most fierce and cruel for the support-

ing of it.

2. As to particular persons : ' The whole creation groaneth,' Rom.

viii. 22 ; and God's children bear a part in the concert ; they have

their share in the world's miseries, and domestical crosses are common

to them with other men in the world ; yea, their condition is worse

than others : chaff and corn are threshed in the same floor, but the

corn is grinded in the mill and baked in the oven. Jeremiah was in

the dungeon when the city was besieged. The world hateth them

more than others, and God loveth them more than others. The world

hateth them because they are so good, and God correcteth them

because they are no better. There is more care exercised about a vine

than a bramble. God will not let them perish with the world. Great

receipts call for great expenses first or last. God seeth it fitting,

sometimes at first setting forth, as the old Germans were wont to dip

their children in the Rhine to harden them, so to season them for

their whole course ; they must bear the yoke from their youth or first

acquaintance with God, Heb. x. 32. Sometimes God lets them alone

while they are young and raw, and of little experience, as we are

tender of trees newly planted, as Jacob drove as the little ones were

able to bear: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'He will not suffer you to be tempted

dbove what you are able. ' They are let alone till middle age, till they

are of some standing in religion : Heb. xi. 24, ' Moses when he was

come to years,' fieyas yevofievos. Sometimes let alone till their latter

time, and their season of fighting cometh not till they are ready to go

out of the world, that they may die fighting, and be crowned in the

field. But first or last, the cross cometh, and there is a time to

exercise our faith and patience before we inherit the promises. I will

not enlarge in the common-place of afflictions, and tell you how

necessary the cross is to subdue sin, which God will do in an acommo-

date way to weaken pride, to reclaim us from our wanderings, to

increase grace, to make us mindful of heavenly things ; these are dis-

cussed in other verses : to make us retreat to our great privileges, to

stir us up to prayer, &c. Tribulatio tarn nobis necessaria, quam ipsa

vita, immo magis necessaria, multoque utilior quam totius mundi opes,

et dignitates, saith Luther — we think wealth is necessary for us, dignity

and esteem is necessary for us ; no, affliction is necessary for us : 1

Peter i. 6, ' If need be, you are in heaviness/ &c.

Use 1. Let us look for troubles and provide for them. We shall

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not always have a life of ease and peace ; the times will not always be

friendly to religion : ' Then had the churches rest,' Acts ix. 31 ; hal-

cyon days. The enmity of wicked men will not always lie asleep ; we

would gather rust and grow dead, therefore look for them. If because

you are Christians you promise yourselves a long lease of temporal

happiness, free from troubles and afflictions, it is as if a soldier going

to the wars should promise himself peace and continual truce with the

enemy; or as if a mariner committing himself to the sea for a long

voyage, should promise himself nothing but fair and calm weather,

without waves and storms ; so irrational it is for a Christian to promise

himself rest here upon earth. Well, then, let us learn beforehand how

to be abased and how to abound, Phil. iv. 12. He that is in a journey

to heaven must be provided for all weathers ; though it be sunshine

when he first sets forth, a storm will overtake him before he cometh

to his journey's end. It is good to be fore-armed ; afflictions will come,

and we should prepare accordingly. We enter upon the profession of

godliness upon these terms, to be willing to suffer afflictions if the

Lord see fit ; and therefore we should arm ourselves with a mind to

endure them, whether they come or no. God never intended that

Isaac should be sacrificed, yet he will have Abraham lay the knife to

his throat. Sorrows foreseen leave not so sad an impression upon the

spirit. Tela promissa minus feriunt. The evil is more familiarised

before it come : Job iii. 25, ' The evil that I feared is come upon me.'

When our fears prophesy, we smart less ; it allayeth the offence ; we

meet with nothing but what we thought of before : John xvi. 1,

'These things have I spoken unto you, that you should not be

offended.'

Use 2. If you are under afflictions, pr) ^evl^eade, 1 Peter iv. 12, do not

strange at it, more than at night and day, showers and sunshine ;

as these things fall out in the course of nature, so do troubles and afflic-

tions in the course of God's providence ; it were a wonder if otherwise.

We do not wonder to see a shower of rain fall, or a cloudy day suc-

ceed a fair : 1 Peter v. 9, ' All these things are accomplished in your

brethren that are in the world.' All the rest of God's people are

fellow-soldiers in this conflict.

Use 3. When we are out of affliction, let us bless God that we are

out of the affliction. The greatness of the trouble, danger, misery,

straits whereinto God doth cast his own doth lay a greater obligation

of thankfulness upon those that are free from those evils. If thou

beest not thankful for thy health, go to the lazarhouses, look upon the

afflicted state of God's people, and that may quicken you to thankful-

ness for being freed from them.

Use 4. Advice ; do not draw sufferings upon yourselves by your own

rashness and folly : James i. 2, ' Count it all joy when you fall into

divers temptations.' We must not seek or desire trouble, but bear

it when God layeth it on us. Christ hath taught us to pray, ' Lead

us not into temptation.' It is a folly for us to cast ourselves upon it ;

if we draw hatred upon ourselves, and run headlong into dangers

without necessity, we must make ourselves amends by repentance,

otherwise God will not. If a man set his house on fire, he is liable to

the law ; if it be fired by others, or by an ill accident, he is pitied and

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relieved. We are to take our own cross when made to our hands by

God's providence, not make it for ourselves ; not to fill our own cup,

but drink it off if God put it into our hands. We must come honestly

by our crosses as well as by our comforts, and must have a call for

what we suffer as well as for what we do, if we would have comfort in

our sufferings.

Doct. This trouble may breed much vexation and anguish of spirit

even in a gracious soul. David speaketh of anguish as well as trouble.

1. Partly from nature. God's children have the feelings of nature

as well as others. Christ Jesus, to show the truth of our nature,

would express our affections ; he had his fears and tears, Heb. v. 7,

and so hath legitimated our fears and sorrows. It is an innocent

affection to have a dislike of what is contrary to us, to our natural

interest ; to be without natural affection is among the vices. And —

2. Partly from grace. The children of God are more sensible than

others, because they have a reverence for every providence, and look

upon it as a good piece of religious manners to observe when God

striketh, and to be humble when God is angry, Jer. v. 3 ; slight spirits

are not so much affected. Ordinarily they see not God, nor own God

in every stroke ; but when the windows of heaven are opened, and the

mouth of the great deep below, there must needs be a great sense.

3. Yet there is in it weakness and a mixture of corruption, which

may come from an impatiency of the flesh, which would fain be at

ease : Gen. xlix. 15, ' Rest is good/ Therefore we are filled with

anguish when troubled, either from distrust, or at least from inatten-

tiveness to the promises. As there is a negative faith in the wicked,

not contradicting the truth of the word, so a negative distrust in the

godly, not regarding, not minding the promise, or not regarding the

grounds of comfort which it offereth to us ; as Hagar saw not the well

that was nigh her till God opened her eyes, Gen. xxi. 19 ; so Mark vi. 52,

' They considered not the miracle of the loaves ;' therefore are amazed

in themselves beyond measure. ' Have ye forgotten the five loaves

and two fishes ? ' Heb. xii. 5, ' And ye have forgotten the exhortation

which speaketh to you as unto children.' Yea, sometimes there may

be positive distrust, or actual refusing comfort : Ps. lxxvii. 2, ' My

soul refused to be comforted.' As they may not mind comfort, so in

great troubles refuse comfort in greater distempers.

4. Sorrow and trouble may revive inward trouble. Affliction in

itself is a part of the law's curse, and may revive something of bondage

in the hearts of God's children, which is good and useful so far as it

quickeneth us to renew our reconciliation with God. Spirits enten-

dered by religion are more apprehensive of God's displeasure under

afflictions : Num. xii. 14, ' If her father had spit in her face, should

she not be ashamed ?' If it humble under the mighty hand of God,

it is well ; but when it filleth us with perplexities and amazement, like

wild bulls in a net, or produceth uncomely sorrow, roaring like bears,

or mourning as men without hope, it is naught.

Use. Let us take notice how affliction worketh. There is a double

extreme, slighting the hand of God, or fainting under it, Heb. xii. 5 ;

we must beware of both. There must be a sense, but it must be kept

within bounds ; without a sense there can be no improvement ; to

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despise them is to think them fortuitous. They come from God ; their

end is repentance, their cause is sin. Two things men cannot endure

to have despised, their love and their anger. When David's love was

slighted, he vowed to cut off all that pertained to Nabal ; and Nebu-

chadnezzar, when his anger was despised, commanded the furnace to

be heated seven times hotter. Nor fainting, for that excludeth God's

comforts. God hath the whole guiding and ordering the affliction,

and while the rod is in his hand there is no danger. He is a wise

God, and cannot be overseen ; a God of judgment, by whom all things

are weighed, 1 Sam. ii. 3; every drachm and scruple of the cross;

a just God, and will punish no more than is deserved : Job xxxiv.

23, ' He will not lay upon man more- than is right.' As well no more

than is meet, as no more than is right. He is a good God, does only

what our need and profit requireth : ' For he doth not afflict willingly,

nor grieve the children of men/ Lam. iii. 33.

Doct, That it is the property of a gracious soul to delight in God's

commandments.

It was David's practice, and it is the mark of a blessed man : Ps. i.

2, ' But his delight is in the law of the Lord ; ' and Eom. vii. 22, ' I

delight in the law after the inward man ;' and Ps. cxii. 1, ' Blessed is

the man that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' Delight in

moral things, saith Aquinas, is the rule by which we may judge of

men's goodness or badness — Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono ;

men are good and bad as the objects of their delight are ; they are

good who delight in good things, and they evil who delight in evil

things.

We shall consider the nature of delight —

1. In the causes.

2. In the effects of it.

First, The causes are —

1. Proportion and suitableness. Sensitive creatures delight much

in such food as is agreeable to their nature. Now the commandments

are suitable to the renewed heart : ' The law is in their heart,' Ps. xl.

8 ; and Ps. xxxvii. 31 , ' The law of his God is in his heart.' Divine

qualities are planted there, which suit with the rule of holiness and

righteousness, Eph. iv. 24. And this is the sum of the law or com-

mandments of God.

2. A second cause is possession of it and communion with it.

Oritur, saith Aquinas, ex prwsentia connaturalis boni. Now one may

be said to possess the law or enjoy the law in regard of the knowledge

of it or obedience to it : John xiv. 21 , ' He that hath my command-

ments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' The knowledge of

the law, so it be not superficial and fleshly, but full and thorough

and savoury, is very comfortable, and goeth toward a good note ; but

obedience to the law is the cause of delight therein. God's servants

rejoice when they can bring on their hearts with any life and power

in the way of God's testimonies : Ps. cxix. 14, ' I have rejoiced in the

way of thy testimonies more than in all riches.' Thence cometh their

comfort and obedience.

3. A third cause of delight is a precedent love of the object. Love

is a complacency in and propension towards that which is good.

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absolutely considered both in the presence and absence of it. Desire

noteth the absence of a good, delight the presence and fruition of it.

Therefore a love of the object delighted in is essentially pre-supposed

to delight. So that it is impossible for anything to be delighted in

but it is first loved. We have experience that many things are

delightful in themselves, and known to be such, which yet do not

actually delight if they be hated. A man may taste of the sweetness

of honey, yet if he hath an antipathy against it he may loathe it.

David in this psalm pre-supposeth love as antecedent to delight : Ps.

cxix. 47, ' I will delight myself in thy commandments, Avhich I have

loved.' Carnal men cannot say so ; ' For every one that doeth evil

hateth the light,' John iii. 20. The renewed only love the command-

ments. Yea, it doth not only pre-suppose a love of simple com-

placency, but also a love of desire ; for all things are first desired

before delighted in. None can truly delight in obedience but such as

desire it. Such as can say with David, ver. 40, ' Behold, I have

longed after thy precepts;' and ver. 131, 'I opened my mouth and

panted, for I longed after thy commandments.' Now all such are

blessed, Mat. v. 5.

Secondly, Let us consider the effects.

1. The first is dilatatio cordis, the enlarging of the heart ; it

openeth and wideneth the heart towards the reception of the law, and

maketh it more capacious and comprehensive thereof than otherwise

it would be : Ps. cxix. 32, ' I will run the way of thy commandments,

when thou shalt have enlarged my heart.' The heart is at ease and

in a commodious condition, as a body that is in a large and fit place,

where it is not straitened ; and this is as oil to the wheels.

2. Delectatio causat sui sitim et desiderium. Delight in an object

causeth a thirst of itself, and more of itself. Even the angels and

blessed spirits feel this effect of delight, that it never cloyeth, but they

desire more of their own happiness. Much more doth it work so in

us, who are in such an imperfect state of enjoyment, upon a twofold

account : —

[1.] The objects of spiritual delight are perfect, but the acts whereby

we enjoy and possess those objects are imperfect. God is an infinite

and all-satisfying good, but the acts whereby we enjoy him here in

this life, whereby we have union and communion with him, are

imperfect. We know, believe, love, hope but in part, 1 Cor. xiii. 9.

Hereupon that delight which ariseth from the imperfect fruition of

God here in this life stirreth up to an eager desire after fuller fruition,

and unto a further enlargement and intension of those acts whereby

such fruition is attained, or wherein it consisteth ; still thirsting after

more when tasted, 1 Peter ii. 3, 4.

[2.] Spiritual delights may be said to create a desire, as desire

importeth a denial or exclusion of loathing ; for the objects of spiritual

delight and the acts whereby they are enjoyed can never exceed the

degree and measure required in them, unless by accident, by reason

of some bodily act concurrent therewith, and subservient unto the

spiritual operation. The desire can never be too great ; the expression

of it may be burdensome. We may easily exceed the bounds of

moderation in carnal things, but not in spiritual ; they can never be

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too high and intense. Therefore fresli desires and earnest longings

;ue still kindled and quickened in us ; it never dulls the appetite, but

draweth out the soul further and further, and cannot be too eager and

zealous after holiness.

3. Another effect of delight is perficit operationem, it makes the

operation to its object more perfect than otherwise it would be. As a

motive or means, it exciteth to a greater care and diligence in pro-

moting the end which we pursue. The delight in the law helpeth to

perfect our meditation therein and observation thereof ; by its sweet-

ness it quickeneth, provoketh, and allure th to a greater zeal in both.

Delight maketh all things easy : 1 John v. 3, ' All her ways are ways

of pleasantness,' Prov. iii. 17 ; ' The Sabbath is a delight/ Isa. lviii.

13. It facilitates duties, and removes difficulties in working.

Now this delight must be sincere, otherwise they are but like the

carnal Jews who did delight to know his ways, Isa. lviii. 2. It must

not be on foreign reasons. And then it must be universal, otherwise

it is but like Herod, who ' heard John gladly, and did many things,'

&c, Mark vi. 20. It must be deeply rooted, otherwise it is but like

the seed which fell on the stony ground, ' which received the word

with joy, but dureth but for a while,' Mat. xiii. 20.

Use 1. To show how far they are from the temper of God's children

whose delight is in sin or the pleasures of the flesh. These have

dreggy, muddy souls; their hearts are on sports, plays, merry-meet-

ings. These desires are soon cloyed, leave a bitterness in the soul ; till

we contemn them, we are never fit for a holy life. See Gregory de

Valentia.

Use 2. Have we this delight ? The sincerity may be discerned — •

1. By the extent. It is extended to all parts of the word, delight

in the promises and precepts. To be partial in the law, hypocrites

can well allow, Mai. ii. 9.

2. It will be discerned by the effects of it. You will often consult

with it : Ps. cxix. 24, ' Thy testimonies are my delight and my coun-

sellors.'

3. It will be a perpetual delight : Job xxvii. 10, ' Will he delight

himself in the Almighty ? will he always call upon God ? ' You

will own it in affliction, as in the text. Many will delight in God's

word when prosperity accompanieth it, but not in trouble and anguish.

You will delight in obedience, and in the way of his testimonies ; not

talk of it, but do it. The young man's delight in Dinah made him

circumcise himself, Gen. xxxiv. 19.

Lastly, compare it with your delight in things sensible, temporal,

aud corporeal. If it be sincere and cordial, it will not only equal, but

surmount these : ver. 72, ' The law of thy mouth is better to me than

thousands of gold and silver ; ' and ver. 162, 'I rejoice in thy word as

one that findeth great snoil.' Spiritual good is greater than corporal,

our conjunction with it is more intimate, greater and firmer. The

part gratified is more noble, the soul than the body ; it will make

these die that the other may live.

Use 3. Let us be exhorted to do what we can for the begetting,

increasing, and cherishing this delight in our hearts. If you love God,

you cannot but love his word, which is so perfect a representation of

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him. If you love holiness, you must needs delight in the word ; this

is the rule of it. If you love life and happiness, you must needs de-

light in the word ; this is the way that leadeth us to so hlessed and

glorious an estate. If you love Christ, you will love the word, which

offereth him to you. If you love the new nature, you will delight in

the word, which is the seed of it. If you would speed in prayer : ver.

77, ' Let thy tender mercies come unto me, for thy law is my delight.'

If you would be supported in affliction : ver. 92, ' Unless thy law had

been my delight, I should then have perished in mine affliction.'

Doct. In the days of our trouble and anguish God's word will be a

great delight and comfort to us.

Such a comfort as will overcome the bitterness of our affliction. So

saith David here. When all comforts have spent their virtue, then

God's word will be a comfort to us.

Here I shall show —

1. What comfort the word holds out to us.

2. Why afflictions do not diminish it.

First, What comforts it holds forth.

1. The privileges of the afflicted: Kom. v. 1, 2, ' We glory in tribu-

lations, knowing that tribulation worketh patience.' Such may rejoice

in tribulations ; miseries are unstinged, his rods are not signs of his

anger. They are in the favour of God, and his heart is with them,

however his hand be smart upon them. The habitude and nature of

afflictions is altered in themselves ; they are the punishments of sin,

and so their natural tendency is to despair and bondage. God seemetli

to put the old covenant in suit against unbelieving sinners ; but now

they are trials, preventions, medicines to believers, that proceed from

love, and are designed for their good.

2. The word holdeth forth the blessedness of another world : 2 Cor.

iv. 17, 18, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh

for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' Hope is not

affrighted by affliction, but worketh. Before corn be ripened it needeth

all kinds of weather. The husbandman is glad of showers as well as

sunshine ; rainy weather is troublesome, but the season requireth it.

3. It assureth us of what is acceptable to God : Micali vi. 8, ' He

hath showed thee, man, what is good, and what doth the Lord

require of thee, but to do justly and love mercy and to walk humbly

with thy God?' So it yieldeth comfort through the conscience of our

duty, and cheerful reflections on afflicted innocency. Are not these

God's ways which we desire to walk in, and for which we are troubled ?

4. The word hath notable precepts that ease the heart : Phil. iv. 6,

' Be careful for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and supplication,

with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God : 1 Peter

v. 7, ' Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you ; ' Prov.

xvi. 3, ' Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be

established.' It biddeth us cast all our cares upon God, and commit

ourselves to the guidance of his providence.

5. It giveth us many promises of God's being with us, and strength-

ening and delivering us, and giving us a gracious issue out of all our

troubles : 1 Cor. x. 13, ' God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be

tempted above that you are able, but will with the temptation also

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make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.' Now it is a

great ease to the soul to fly to these promises wliich are made to his

afflicted servants.

6. It breedeth faith, which fixeth the heart: Ps. cxii. 7, 'Ho shall

not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.'

It breedeth fortitude, or cleaving to God under the greatest trials,

2 Sam. vi. 22; and Ps. xliv. 17, 18. Now this becometh a testimony

and proof of our love to God, and so bringeth comfort. It breedeth

obedience, and the doing of good leaveth a pleasure behind it. After

sin a sting remaineth, Horn. ii. 14, 15. It breedeth waiting and

patience when all hope is cut off: Micah vii. 7, ' Therefore I will look

unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation;' when such

trouble is on us as no end appeareth of it. Most men's comfort holdeth

out but whilst there is hope of turning the stream of things. They are

not satisfied in their duty nor comforted with promises, but borne up

with hopes of success.

Secondly, Why afflictions do rather increase than diminish this ?

1. They drive us to these comforts. Man liveth by sense more than

by faith when he hath anything about him, but his sorrows drive him

to God. Indeed, men that wholly forget God in prosperity will not

find his word a delight in adversity : Ps. xxx. 6-8, ' In my prosperity

I said I shall never be moved : Lord, by thy favour thou hast made

my mountain to stand strong : thou didst hide thy face, and I was

troubled: I cried unto thee, Lord,' &c.

2. They prepare us for them ; the sweetness of the word is best per-

ceived under the bitterness of the cross. God and his word are never

so sweet to the saints as in adversity: Ps. xciv. 19, ' In the multitude

of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul;' and 2 Cor.

i. 5, ' As the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also

aboundeth by Christ.'

Use. Let no calamity drive you from the commandments, for there

you will find more delight than trouble can take from you, 1 John

iii. 1, 2. Shall the reproach of men have more power to make us sad

than the honour of being God's children hath power to make us joyful ?

Let us be ashamed that we can delight no more : James i. 2, ' My

brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations ;' Mat.

v. 12, ' Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in.

heaven ;' for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you ;'

and 1 Thes. i. 6, ' Ye became followers of us and of the Lord, having

received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost/

SERMON CLXI.

The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting : give me under-

standing, and I shall live. — Ver. 144.

In these words —

1. The excellency of the word is again acknowledged, the righteous-

ness of thy testimonies is everlasting.

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2. A prayer is thereupon grounded, give me understanding.

3. The fruit and benefit of being heard in that prayer, and I shall live.

Because the righteousness of the word is everlasting, therefore we

should beg understanding, and this sound understanding maketh way

for life.

First, He beginneth with the praise of the word, ' The righteousness

of thy testimonies.' The word of God is contemned by none but such

as know not the excellency of it, both in its own nature and the fruits

of it. The sum of the whole octonary is here repeated.

Doct. That the- righteousness and everlasting righteousness of God's

testimonies should be deeply imprinted on our minds, and often thought

of by us.

This stuck so in David's mind that he could hardly get off from the

meditation. Here I shall show you — ■

1. Wherein the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies con-

sisted.

2. What it is to have them deeply imprinted upon our minds, and

when they are so.

3. Why they should be deeply imprinted upon our minds.

First, Wherein the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies

consisteth.

Ans. In two things — in the tenor of them, and in the effects.

1. In the tenor, and in that those terms which God dealeth with

us are never repealed, but stand in force to all eternity. It is an ever-

lasting truth that he that believeth in Christ shall be saved, and that

without holiness no man shall see God. The moral part of the word

is unchangeable, and shall never be altered ; the same duties and

the same privileges do always continue. Our Lord telleth us, Mat. v.

18, ' Till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle shall in no

wise pass from the law till all be fulfilled/ The truth of the doctrine

of the law and prophets is more firm and stable than the frame of

heaven and earth. Heaven and earth may be dissolved and made

void, but his law shall never be made void ; both in that part wherein

he comforts us by his promises, and that part wherein he sets down

our duty ; we are eternally obliged to obedience, and God hath eter-

nally obliged himself to reward and bless. There is an everlasting

and unchangeable ordinance, by which we are bound to God, and he

hath bound himself to us. We should not change, and God will not,

having passed his word to us. The everlasting obligation on us

dependeth on God's authority; the everlasting obligation on God's

part dependeth on his own truth and veracity. And though we are

poor changeable creatures, God hath interposed his authority : Mai.

iii. 6, ' I am the Lord ; I change not ;' James i. 17, ' In him there is no

change or shadow of turning.' God would change if his truth was

changed, but that is everlasting. It is not in the power of men to an-

nihilate and change the law ; they may break the law, but they can-

not annihilate and change the law. Though it be not fulfilled by them,

yet it shall be fulfilled in them and upon them. And God will not

annihilate the law, for God cannot change or deny himself ; in those

things wherein he hath engaged his truth to the creature, he is im-

mutable and infallible. Another expression is, Jer. xxxiii. 20, 21,

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4 If you can break my covenant of the day, and my covenant of the

night, that there shall not be day and night in their seasons, then

may also my covenant be broken with David my servant.' The one

shall not fail any more than the other. God compareth the firmness of

his covenant with those things that are most unalterable, the standing

of heaven and earth, the constant course of night and day. The cere-

monial law was not abrogated till fulfilled in Christ. This is God's

last will ; the terms of life and salvation are still the same, other con-

ditions are not to be expected.

2. In regard of the effects. These testimonies endure for ever, both

in a way of grace and glory. In a way of grace, the word worketh in

the heart an eternal principle, and carries us beyond temporal things,

2 Cor. iv. 18 ; 1 Peter i. 23, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed,

but incorruptible, the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.'

The word worketh in us an eternal principle, which will abide with

us as the root of everlasting blessedness. They that have served God

faithfully shall not be deprived of eternal glory. Now, in glory the

word abideth for ever, for though the souls of men are immortal, yet

they have not in them a principle of blessed immortality. Sin is the

root of eternal perdition, but grace of incorruption and eternal happi-

ness. The wicked, though the substance of their soul and body shall

not be annihilated, but upheld unto all eternity by the mighty power

of God in the midst of eternal torments, yet all their glory and plea-

sure shall be consumed, and they themselves shall ever languish under

the wrath of a highly provoked and then irreconcilable God : 1 John

ii. 17, ' He that doth the will of God abideth for ever.' The wicked

shall endure by the word of God ; it is a living death in regard of the

execution of eternal wrath upon them that reject it, and the perform-

ance of everlasting blessings which are promised to them that receive

and obey it ; this will abide when other things fade. The word of

God keepeth the godly and wicked alive in some sense.

Secondly, When is the word deeply imprinted upon our minds ?

That is discovered by two things — sound belief and serious considera-

tion ; when it is strongly believed, and often duly considered.

1. When it is strongly believed, or else it worketh not : for all

things work according to the faith we exercise about them : 1 Thes.

ii. 13, ' The word of God, which worketh effectually also in you that

believe.' Did we believe that our eternal condition depended upon

the observance or non-observance of this rule, we would regard it

more: Ps. cxix. 66, ' Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I

have believed thy commandments.' Lord, I believe I must stand or

fall by this rule, and therefore let me know all my duty. So Heb. xi.

13, ' Being persuaded of these things, they embraced them.' We

have not a thorough persuasion about these things ; our persuasions

about eternal things are very weak, when God's expressions about it

are very clear and strong. Most men guess at a world to come, but

are not thoroughly persuaded. They have a loose or general opinion

that the scripture is the word of God, the rule by which they shall be

tried ; but do not soundly assent to it, and receive it as the word by

which they shall be judged at the last day, John xii. 48. Christ pro-

nounceth as the word pronouncelh. There is a non-contradiction, but

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not an active and lively faith ; this and nothing but this bindeth the

will and conscience to obedience.

2. Often considered. David still insists upon this, the everlasting

righteousness of God's testimonies. It is as if he had said, I have

said it already, and I will repeat it again and again. It is constant

thoughts are operative, and musing maketh the fire burn. Green

wood is kindled not by a flash or spark, but by constant blowing.

Deep, frequent, and ponderous thoughts leave some impression upon

the heart ; the greatest matters in the world will not work much upon

him that will not think upon them ; all the efficacy is lost for want of

these ponderous thoughts. Why are all the offers and invitations of

God's grace of so little effect ? Mat. xxii. 5, ol Se dfxeXyaavTe^, they

made light of it, they would not take it into their care and thoughts.

"Why do all the injunctions and precepts of God work no more ?

Men will not consider in their hearts, Deut. iv. 39, 40, all the com-

minations of God ; and therefore he calls upon them, ' Now consider

this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none

to deliver,' Ps. 1. 22. It is for want of this that all the promises

of God, of heaven and happiness work so little upon us : 2 Tim. ii. 7,

' Consider what I say, and the Lord give you understanding in all

things.' The truth lieth by, neglected, unimproved, till consideration

take it up, and lay it in the view of conscience, and then it worketh.

Till we take it into our thoughts, we have no use of any truth ; there-

fore set your hearts seriously to consider of these things.

Thirdly, Why the everlasting righteousness of God's testimonies

should be deeply imprinted in our minds.

1. It establisheth our judgments against vain fancies, and the

humour of other gospelling. The apostle saith, Gal. i. 8, ' Though we,

or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that

we have preached unto you, let him be accursed ; ' 1 Tim. vi. 3, ' If

any man teach otherwise,' &c. There are some that expect speculum

spiritus sancti, a greater measure of light beyond what the Spirit now

affordeth, new nuncios from heaven, to assoil the doubts of the pre-

plexed world. No ; the present rule leadeth a believer all along in his

way to heaven ; other and better institution shall not be, cannot be.

Christ promised to bless this doctrine to the world's end : Mat. xxviii.

20, ' I will be with you to the end of the world ; ' to guide and succour

them. Christ prayed for no others but those that believe through

their word, John xvii. 20 ; this word which the apostles have consigned

to the use of the church. An angel is accursed if he should bring any

other doctrine, Gal. i. 8. There is no other way of salvation given

or to be given, Acts. iv. 12. If an angel should hold out another way,

believe it not. The apostle propounds an impossible case to show the

certainty of this way ; it is good to be sure of our rule ; now this con-

sideration helpeth that.

2. Because it bindeth and helpeth to obedience, partly as it showeth

the absolute necessity of obedience, because the terms of salvation are in-

dispensably fixed, and will everlastingly stand in force ; therefore I must

yield to God or perish. The soul cometh off most kindly to the ways

of God when it is shut up unavoidably, without all hope of escape and

evasion but by yielding to God's terms. The Lord will have the world

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know that there is no hope of a dispensation : Mark xvi. 16, 'He that

believeth shall he saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned/

The terms are peremptorily fixed ; there is no relaxation in the gospel

covenant. Now this doth bind the heart exceedingly to consider, ver.

152 of this psalm, ' Concerning thy testimonies, I have known them

of old ; thou hast founded them for ever.' And partly as it urgcth to

speediness of obedience. You will not get better terms, for the right-

eousness of God's terms is everlasting ; as good yield at first as at last.

The laws of Christianity are always the same, and your heart is not

likely to be better by delay. Your standing out were more justifiable

in the account of reason if you could get better terms. Partly as it

engageth to seriousness whilst it carrieth the mind off from the vanities

of the world into the midst of the world to come. I am not to mind

what will content me for the present, but what will profit me for ever:

holiness will abide when other things fade. My ways are to be

scanned by an eternal rule. Some distinctions will not outlive time,

as rich and poor, high and low ; but the distinction of holy or unholy,

sanctified or unsanctified, these abide : 1 Peter i. 24, ' All flesh is grass,

and the glory of man as the flower of grass ; the grass withereth, and

the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of the Lord endureth

for ever.' Nothing stirreth us up more to provide for a better life than

to consider the uncertainty of the world's glory, and the everlasting-

ness of God's approbation according to the rule of his word. When

all things are dissolved, we are to be tried by a rule that will never

fail. Our pomp, and honour, and credit, and all things that we hunt

after in the world, are soon blasted, but the gospel tells us of things

that are everlasting — everlasting torments and everlasting bliss ; and

therefore our thoughts should be more about them : Isa. lv. 2, ' Why

do you spend your money for that which is not bread ? and your

labour for that which satisfieth not ? ' and John vi. 27, ' Labour

not for the meat that perisheth, but for that meat which endureth to

everlasting life/ And partly as it engageth to constancy in obedience ;

for it must last as long as our rule lasteth. You are eternally bound

to love God, and fear him and obey him. We must not only begin

well, or serve him now and then in a good mood, but so love God as

to love him for ever, so cleave to him as never to depart from him.

For his law is an eternal obligation ; you must never cease your work

till you receive your wages, and that is when you enter into eternity.

Yea, much of our work is wages, loving, praising God ; all duties that

do not imply weakness are a part of our happiness. Thus it hath a

greater influence upon our obedience than we were at first aware of.

3. Because it conduceth much to our comfort. The apostle telleth

us that the comfort of believers is built upon two immutable grounds,

therefore it is so strong, Heb. vi. 18. Now this everlasting righteous-

ness of God's testimonies is a comfort to us —

[1.] In all the changes of men's affections towards us. Sometimes

they smile and sometimes they frown, but the promises ever remain

the same. There is Yea and Nay with men, but not with the promises ;

they are all Yea and Amen in Christ, 2 Cor. i. 20. Times alter and

change, but the tenor of the covenant is always the same.

[2.J It comforts us in the changes of God's dispensations to us.

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God may change his dispensations, yet his purposes of grace stand

firm, and are carried on unalterably, by various and contrary means.

We must interpret providence by the covenant, not the covenant by

providence. We know the meaning of his works best by going into

his sanctuary. The world misconstrueth his work and dealing to his

children many times. If it be rightly interpreted, you will find God's

righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. Sometimes God's pro-

vidence is dark, but always just : Ps. xcvii. 2, ' Clouds and darkness

are round about him ; righteousness and judgment are the habitation

of his throne ; ' Hab. i. 12, ' Art not thou from everlasting, Lord

my God ? ' That was the prophet's support in those sad times, when

a treacherous people were exalted, when he was embrangled and lost

about God's dispensations ; this was his comfort and support, God's

eternal immutability in the covenant. He is always the same, loveth

his people as much as ever, as faithful and mindful of his covenant

as ever ; only a veil of sense covereth our eyes that we cannot see it.

[3.] It comforts us against the difficulties of obedience, when it

groweth irksome to us. The difficulty and trouble is but for a while,

but we shall everlastingly have the comfort of it : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For

our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far

more exceeding and eternal weight of glory/ Then it will be no grief

of heart to us to have watched, prayed, striven against sin, suffered,

continued with him notwithstanding all temptations : Kom. ii. 7, ' To

them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour,

and immortality, eternal life.'

[4.] It is a comfort in death. We change and are changed, but

God is always the same, the righteousness of Christ will bear weight

for ever : Dan. ix. 24, ' To bring in an everlasting righteousness.'

The fruits of obedience last for ever : Ps. cxii. 7, ' His righteousness

endureth for ever.' How comfortable is this to remember, that we

may appear before God with this confidence, which he hath wrought

in us, that the covenant of grace is an everlasting charter, that shall

never be out of date nor wax old.

Use. Let it be thus with us ; let it be so deeply imprinted upon

our minds that it may leave an everlastingness there upon the frame

of our spirits ; for then we are transformed by the word, and cast into

the mould of it. Now, who are they that have an everlasting righteous

frame of heart ?

1. Such as act out of an everlasting principle, or the new nature

■which worketh above the world. The word ingrafted is called an

incorruptible seed, or the seed of God, 1 Peter i. 23, ' that abideth in

us,' 1 John iii. 9 ; when there is a divine principle in us, such a principle

as is the seed and beginning of eternal life ; when the word hath

rooted itself in our hearts.

2. Such as by their constant progress towards an everlasting estate

are going from strength to strength, serving God, and cleaving to him

in a uniform constant course of holiness, not by fits and starts, but

unchangeably : Acts xxiv. 16, 'To have always a conscience void of

offence.' Again, when you are in such an estate wherein you can

bear the trial of those everlasting rules : Gal. vi. 8, ' He that soweth

to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption ; but he that soweth to

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the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting ; ' Rom. viii. 13,

1 If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die ; but if ye through the Spirit

do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.' In short, if you have

everlasting ends: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things

that are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things

which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are

eternal' Not making things temporal our scope and aim ; that

will not satisfy us : when we are deeply possessed with the thoughts

of the other world : 1 Cor. ii. 12, ' We have not received the spirit

of the world,' and look upon all other things by the by, and use\*

the world as if we used it not, 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30.

Secondly, I come now to the prayer, ' Give me understanding, and

I shall live.'

1. Here is the benefit asked, understanding.

2. The person asking, David, give me.

3. The person from whom it is asked, from God.

First, The benefit asked, ' Give me understanding ;' that is, the sav-

ing knowledge of God's testimonies.

Doct. One great request that we have to put up to God should be

for the saving knowledge of his testimonies.

The reasons why this should be our great request to God.

1. The necessity of understanding ; that will appear —

[1.] Because of our ignorance and folly, which is the cause of all

our sin : Titus iii. 3, ' We ourselves were sometimes foolish and dis-

obedient ; ' therefore disobedient because foolish. Every natural man

is a fool, blind in spiritual things ; whatever understanding or quick-

ness of judgment he hath in other things, in all things that relate to

God and heaven, blind and foolish, and cannot see afar off: 2 Peter

i. 9, ' He that lacketh these things is blind.' And you shall find that

sinners are called fools : Prov. i. 22, ' How long, ye simple ones, will

ye love simplicity ? and scorners delight in scorning and fools hate

knowledge ? ' Ps. lxxv. 4, ' I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly ;

and to the wicked, Lift not up the horn.' They follow their own wit

and will, to the ruin of bodies and souls, and all that they have. Their

mirth is the mirth of fools, Eccles. vii. 4, 5 ; their service the sacrifice

of fools, Eccles. v. 1 ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 10, ' I have done very foolishly;'

therefore give me understanding.

[2.] Knowledge is our cure. The state of grace is called a state of

light : Eph. v. 8, ' Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light

in the Lord/ So that the new estate is described by light, a directive

and a persuasive light. It is very notable in Eph. v. 14, ' Arise from

the dead, and God shall give thee light ;' and Acts xxvi. 18, ' To turn

them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.'

In our natural estate we are all over darkness, slaves to the prince of

darkness, doing the works of darkness, and posting on apace into

utter darkness ; and therefore it is light must cure us, and guide us

into a better course : Col. i. 13, ' Who hath delivered us from the

power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.'

2. Because of the excellency of understanding ; therefore we should

make it our request to God. Here are four considerations : —

[1.] Knowledge in the general is man's excellency. It is our privi-

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lege above the beasts ; many of them excel us in beauty of colour, in

strength, and nimbleness, and vivacity, and long life, and acuteness of

sense ; but we excel them in knowledge. And so God hath taught us

more than the beasts of the field. Man is a rational creature, his life

standeth in light : John i. 4, ' In him was life, and the life was the

light of men.' Other'creatures have life, but not such a life as is light,

are not endowed with a reasonable soul and a faculty of understand-

in«\ The more of knowledge there is increased in us, the more of man

there is in us.

[2.] Divine knowledge is better than all other knowledge ; to know

God's nature and will, to know how God will be pleased, and how we

may come to enjoy him ; all other knowledge doth but please the

fancy, this doth us good to the heart : Jer. ix. 23, 24, ' Let not the

wise man glory in his wisdom, nor the mighty man glory in his might ;

let not the rich man glory in his riches : but let him that glorieth

glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me ; ' as not in

strength, so not in natural wisdom. Here I may take the argument of

the text. Men do not properly live if they want the light of heavenly

wisdom ; without divine knowledge a man is little better than a beast.

The endowment of reason was not given us merely to shift for our-

selves, or provide for the animal life ; other creatures do that better by

instinct and natural sagacity, and are contented with less. No; man's

life was given him for some other end, to know and serve his Maker.

[3.] Of all the knowledge of God, practical knowledge is better than

speculative ; not so much subtlely to be able to discourse of his nature

as to obey his will : Jer. xxii. 16, ' He judged the cause of the poor

and needy ; was not this to know me ? saith the Lord.' The know-

ledge of God is not measured by sharpness of wit, but by serious ready

practice ; not strength of parts, but a good and honest heart ; so to

understand as to keep them : Ps. cxi. 10, ' The fear of the Lord is the

beginning of wisdom, and a good understanding have all they that do

his commandments.' They understand best, not who can discourse

most subtlely, but who live most holily. When our faith is more

strong, our reverence of God increased, our obedience more ready, then

is our knowledge sound ; when we follow those courses which we

know God delighteth in, Jer. ix. 24, and study to please him in all

things : 1 John ii. 4, ' He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his

commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' He that doth

not make conscience of his duty, he knoweth no such sovereign being

as God is, that hath power to command, to save, and to destroy : Titus

i. 16, ' They profess that they know God, but in works they deny him.'

So 1 John iii. 6, ' Whosoever sinneth hath not seen him nor known

him.' Well, then, in giving his word, God's end was not to make trial

of their wits, who could most sharply conceive ; nor of their memories,

who could most firmly retain ; nor of their eloquence, who could most

neatly discourse ; but of their hearts, who would most obediently submit

to him : that is knowledge indeed which tendeth to use and practice.

Look, as scire malum non est malum — to know evil is not evil, for

God knoweth evil, yet his knowledge is not evil ; so scire bonum, non

est bonum, to know that which is good doth not make a man good.

This is the distinction between understanding and will ; the under-

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standing draweth the object to itself, but the will is drawn by the ob-

ject to it. If I understand anything, I am not in a moral sense that

which I understand ; but if I will anything, or love anything, I am

what I will and love. This is the difference between the two faculties.

[4.] Transforming, regenerating, saving knowledge is the best part

of practical knowledge. I add tins because general knowledge may

produce good life, or some outward conformity in the unregenerate :

2 Peter ii. 20, ' For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the

world, through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.'

Those that are destitute of the saving knowledge of Christ, they may

cleanse their external conversation by that rational conviction, though

not spiritual illumination, though strangers to inward mortification,

and unrenewed in heart ; yea, avoid gross sins, perform external

duties. Oh ! but the lively saving light, such as subdueth the heart

to God, such as maketh a thorough change in us, that is the best :

2 Cor. iii. 18, ' But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the

glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to

glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' When we so know Christ

as to be like him, this is like heaven's knowledge : 1 John iii. 2, ' And

when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he

is.' Common truths have another efficacy, when they understand them

by the lively light of the Spirit ; when men know the torments of hell

so as to flee from them : Mat. iii. 7, ' Flee from wrath to come ; ' as a

man would out of a ship that is sinking or a house falling. So when

we see heaven so as it maketh us seek after it, Heb. iv. 1, so to know

Christ as to be made like him, this will do us good, and this is one of

God's best gifts.

Use. Oh ! then, beg this gift of God. Lord, give me understanding

eyes. Do not beg riches, and honours, and great things in the world,

but beg for understanding ; it is pleasing to God, 2 Chron. i. 12. This

will bring other things with it. Be importunate, take no nay ; Prov.

ii. 3, cry for knowledge, lift up thy voice for understanding. It will

not come at the first call. Follow God as the blind man, Mark x. 5,

\* Lord, that my eyes may be opened, that I may receive my sight.' So

be earnest with God that the eyes of your understanding may be opened,

that you may have such a sight of heaven as that your affections may

be set upon things above ; such a sight of hell as that ye may flee for

refuge as if the avenger of blood were at your heels. Without this

there can be no true piety : Ps. xiv. 3, ' There is none that under-

standeth, there is none that seeketh after God.' Nay, there can be no

salvation without this: Isa. xxvii. 11, 'It is a people of no under-

standing; therefore he that made them will have no mercy upon them,'

&c. Ignorant people have a saying, He that made them will save

them ; but it is said they have no understanding ; therefore he that

made them will not save them ; and therefore beg of God that he

would break in upon your minds with the lively light of his Spirit.

Secondly, Here is the person asking this request, David, one well

acquainted with God and his ways.

Docf. None know so much of God and his ways but they still need

to know more. Petitions for understanding do not only become begin-

ners, but grown Christians.

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Three reasons of this point : —

1. That we may escape the deceits of a subtle devil, who lieth in

wait for us, and assaults us on every hand, and maketh great advantage

of the relics of our ignorance. The devils are called, Eph. vi. 12,

' Eulers of the darkness of this world.' The dark part of the world is

the devil's territory ; and so much of ignorance as is in the children

of God, so much advantage hath Satan against us : 2 Cor. ii. 11, ' Lest

Satan should get an advantage ; for we are not ignorant of his devices.'

The more we know, the less advantage the devil hath of us ; he layeth

snares for us where we least suspect.

2. That we may serve a holy God with that exactness and diligence

as will become his excellency. The fault of the heathen was that

' when they knew God, they glorified him not as God/ Kom. i. 21 ;

because they knew so little, they did not improve the knowledge they

had ; and this is true in some degree of every Christian. God would

be more loved, feared, trusted, served, did we know more of him. The

clearer our sight, the warmer our hearts will be in his service : 1 Chron.

xxviii. 9, ' Know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him with a

perfect heart and willing mind.' If we did know God, we would

devote ourselves to his service.

3. That we may be prepared for our everlasting estate by degrees.

Our everlasting estate is called the inheritance of the saints in light.

Now we grow more meet for it by increasing in holiness : Prov. iv.

18, 19, ' The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more

and more to the perfect clay ; the way of the wicked is darkness, they

know not at what they stumble/ The just man is like the light that

increaseth as the day groweth ; the wicked are like the night that

increaseth to thick darkness, till at last they fall into utter darkness.

Use. Well, then, let not only poor ignorant creatures, or young

beginners, take up David's prayer, but also grown Christians of longer

standing. Go to God, and say, Give me understanding. Partly

because practical knowledge is never at a stand ; knowing of things as

we ought to know them, it is possible for a man to see round about

the compass of revealed truths. Though extensively no more truths

are to be known, yet intensively we may know them better. The best

are defective in their knowledge. And partly, too, because it is a very

satisfactory thing to be sure we are in God's way ; in some nice debates

it is hard to discern God's interest, when all circumstances must be

considered, and temptations hinder the sight of our duty. And partly

that we may justify the ways of God against cavils, Mat. xxiv. 24.

We have to do with men that would even puzzle the very elect, if it

were possible.

Thirdly, To whom is this petition made ? To God.

Doct. If we would have the knowledge of divine things, we must

seek to God.

I will give you some grounds of this. Partly because he is the

fountain of knowledge, the first mind or intellect, called in scripture

' the Father of lights,' James i. 17. He is the sun that must not only

shine on us, to make us see things, but shine through us to make us

be enlightened ourselves. Ours is but a participation. Now, to

show whence we receive all, God will be asked. And partly, too,

because God gave the rule, and therefore he must interpret it, ejus est

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interpretari cujus est condere. He can best show his own meaning ;

and therefore in all doubtful cases repair to him, especially since he

hath undertaken in necessary cases : Jer. xxxi. 34, ' For they shall all

know me from the least to the greatest ; ; and loveth to be employed

by his people for that end and purpose. Once more, without his Spirit

the clearest light we have hath no efficacy, Rom. i. 18. He will have

it sought.

I come to the third and last thing, the fruit and benefit, ' And I

shall live.' I shall explain the words in the prosecution of this point.

Doct. The saving knowledge of God's testimonies is the only way to

live.

There is a threefold life : —

1. Life natural.

2. Life spiritual.

3. Life eternal.

In all these considerations may the point be made good.

First, Life is taken for the life of nature, or the life of the body, or

life temporal, called ' this life ' in scripture, 1 Cor. xv. 19 ; 1 Tim. iv. 8..

Among outward things nothing is more precious than life ; it maketh

us capable of enjoying what the world can afford to us. We give all

that we have to preserve it, Job ii. 9. Indeed, in competition with

worldly things, we do well to value it ; but not in competition with

our duty and love to Christ ; so we must not count our life dear to us:

Acts xx. 24, ' I count not my life dear to me ;' and Luke xiv. 26,

'Whosoever hateth not father and mother,' &c, 'and his own life.'

Out of the conscience of our duty to Christ, we must be willing to

expose it, for he can give us a better life, John xi. 24 ; but otherwise

so far as we can preserve it with our duty, it must be precious to us,

and we must seek the interests of it. Well, then, in this sense it is no

unbecoming thing for a Christian to say, ' Give me understanding,

that I may live.' My life present, which mine enemies seek to take from

me, this life is from God, both originally and in a way of constant pre-

servation. God gave it at first : Gen. ii. 7, ' God formed man of the

dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and

man became a living soul ; ' and still this life is at God's disposing, and

he will sooner continue it to us in a way of obedience than in a way of

sin : Job x. 12, ' Thou hast granted me life and favour, and thy visita-

tion hath preserved my spirit ; ' Acts xvii. 28, ' In him we live and

move, and have our being.' The same power that giveth us being main-

taineth it as long as he pleaseth. All is at the daily dispose of God.

2. Life is better preserved in a way of obedience than by evil-doing ;

that provoketh God to cast us off, and exposes us to dangers. It is

not in the power of the world to make us live or die a day sooner or

longer than God pleaseth. If God will make us happy, they cannot

make us miserable. Therefore ' Give me understanding, and I shall

live ; ' that is, lead a comfortable and happy life for the present. Pre-

vent sin, and you prevent danger. Obedience is the best way to pre-

serve life temporal. As great a paradox as it seems to the world, it is

a scripture truth : Prov. iv. 4, ' Keep my commandments, and live ; '

and ver. 13, ' Take hold of instruction ; let her not go, keep her, for

she is thy life ;' and Prov. iii. 16, ' Length of days is in her right

hand, and in her left riches and honour ;' and ver. 18, ' She is a tree

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of life.' The knowledge and practice of the word is the only means to

live comfortably and happily here, as well as for ever hereafter.

Secondly, Life spiritual; that is twofold — the life of justification

and the life of sanctification.

1. The life of justification : Bom. v. 18, ' The free gift came upon

all men to justification of life.' He is dead not only on whom the

hangman hath done his work, but also he on whom the judge hath

passed sentence, and the law pronounceth him dead. In this sense we

were all dead, and justification is called justification to life ; there is

no living in this sense without knowledge : Isa. liii. 11, ' By his know-

ledge shall my righteous servant justify many/ We live by faith, and

faith cometh by hearing, and hearing doth no good unless the Lord

giveth understanding ; as meats nourish not unless received and

digested.

2. The life of sanctification : Eph. ii. 1, ' And you hath he quickened

who were dead in trespasses and sins/ And men live not properly till

they live the life of grace ; they live a false counterfeit life, not a

blessed, happy, certain, and true life. Now this life is begun and

carried on by saving knowledge : Col. iii. 10, ' The new man is

renewed in knowledge/ Again, men are said to be 'alienated from the

life of God, through the ignorance that is in them,' Eph. iv. 18. They

that are ignorant are dead in sin. Life spiritual cometh by knowledge,

hence beginneth the change of the inward man, and thenceforth we

live. Give me understanding, ut vere in te vivam, that the true life

begun in me may grow and increase daily, but never be quenched

by sin.

Thirdly, Life everlasting, or our blessed estate in heaven. So it is

said of the saints departed, they all live to God, Luke xx. 38 ; and

this is called water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life ; pro-

perly this is life. What is the present life in comparison of everlast-

ing life ? The present life, it is mors vitalis, a living death, or mor-

talis vita, a dying life, a kind of death ; it is always in fiuxu, like a

stream ; it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us : Job xiv. 2, ' He

flieth as a shadow, and continueth not/ We die as fast as we live ;

it differeth but as the point from the line where it terminateth. It is

not one and the same, no permanent thing ; it is like the shadow of a

star in a flowing stream ; its contentments are base and low, Isa. lvii.

10, called ' the life of thy hands ; ' it is patched up, of several crea-

tures, fain to ransack the storehouses of nature to support a ruinous

fabric. And compare it with a life of grace here ; it doth not exempt

us from sin, nor miseries. Our capacities are narrow, we are full of

fears and doubts and dangers ; but in the life of glory we shall not sin

or sorrow more. This is meant here, ' The righteousness of God's

testimonies is everlasting : give me understanding, and I shall live.'

It is chiefly meant of the life of glory ; this is the fruit of saving

knowledge, John xvii. 3, when we so know God and Christ as to come

to God by him.

Use. Let us seek the saving knowledge of God, that we may live,

first spiritually here, and gloriously here. But few mind it ; all desire

sharpness of wit, and to be as knowing as others ; no man would be a

fool, but would own a wickedness in morals rather than a weakness in

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intellectuals ; but who thinketh of being wiser for heaven, of being

seasoned with the fear of God ? Most men choke all the motions and

inclinations they have in that kind with worldly delights and worldly

businesses, being alive to the world and dead to God, thronging their

hearts with carnal vanities, but leaving no room for higher and serious

thoughts.

But at length be persuaded ; what do men desire but life ? If you

know God and Christ with a saving knowledge, you shall have it. (1.)

We were made for this end, to come to the knowledge of the truth and

be saved, 1 Tim. ii. 4. We do not live merely to live, but to make

provision for a better life ; not to satisfy our bodies out of God's store-

house, but to furnish our souls with grace, and exercise ourselves in his

law day and night, that we may know his will concerning us, and pro-

vide for a better life, and live according to the directions of his word.

(2.) No creature is so bad as man when he degenerateth from his end

for which he was created : it is not so much for the sea to break its

bounds, or to have a defect in the course of nature, as the degenera-

tion of man. (3.) You live not properly when destitute of the life of

God and heavenly wisdom : he doth not live the life of a man, nor pre-

serve the rectitude of his nature.

SEEMON CLXII.

/ cried with my ivhole heart; hear me, Lord: I will keep thy

statutes. — Ver. 145.

In these words are —

1. An allegation, I cried with my whole heart.

2. A petition, hear me.

3. A promise of obedience, I will keep thy statutes.

1. In the allegation we have a description of prayer, by the two

adjuncts of it : —

[1.] Intension and fervency, ' I cried.'

[2.] The sincerity and integrity of it, ' With my whole heart.'

2. The petition is for audience ; only, what we translate ' hear me,'

is in the Hebrew ' answer me.' Now this being a general, it is un-

certain what he prayed for : it may be for deliverance out of trouble ;

for in the 146th verse it is ' save me,' but in the 149th verse it is

' quicken me,' which implieth the vigour of the spiritual life, or grace

to keep God's statutes. Whether for the one or the other, David would

be heard.

3. Here is a promise of obedience, ' I will keep thy statutes ;' which

is mentioned either as the end and scope of his prayer, c That I may

kce\) thy statutes ; ' or as a holy vow and promise which the saints are

wont to mingle with their prayers, ' I will,' &c. He would diligently

serve God if the Lord would hear him.

First, I begin with the allegation or description of David's carriage

in prayer. David devoured not his grief, nor nourished his unbelief,

but opened his heart unto God, and that in an affectionate manner :

VER. 145.] SEUMONS UPON PSALM CX1X. 37

he did not call, but cry. Crying noteth vehemency and earnestness,

and is opposite to careless formality and deadness. The note from

thence is —

Doct. That there is a holy vehemency and fervour required in

prayer.

Here I shall show — ■

1 . That we may cry.

2. That we must cry.

3. Wherein it consisteth.

First, We may cry in our afflictions. David doth so for help and

relief, and it is not inconsistent with patience for us to do so ; for our

Lord Jesus had his cries, Heb. v. 7, in the extremity of his sufferings,

without any impeachment of his courage and patience. So did Job,

chap. xxx. 28, ' I went mourning without the sun ; I stood up and I

cried in the congregation.' It argues we have a sense of our condition,

and are under a pinching necessity ; and therefore may complain to

God, though not of God. They are sullen and obstinate and senseless

that have no feeling, and so no complaint to make, when God lasheth

them.

Secondly, We must cry. For —

1. The spirit of grace was given for this end : Rom. viii. 15, 'Ye

have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father ; '

not to say, but cry. He assisteth us by groans : Rom. viii. 26, ' The

Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot

be uttered/ And such a spirit of prayer should we all labour for, to

come to God with affection and humble and sensible groans, if we

cannot come with the pomp of gifts. There is good sense in broken-

ness of heart, though it be accompanied with brokenness of speech ;

for God knoweth what a groan meaneth, and will not refuse the work

of his Spirit.

2. Because the saints have all done so. Their way of praying is

crying : Ps. xviii. 6, ' In my distress I cried unto the Lord ; ' Ps.

xxxiv. 6, ' This poor man cried unto the Lord ; ' Ps. cxxx. 1, ' Out

of the depths have I cried unto thee, Lord ; ' and Ps. lv. 17, ' At

noon will I pray, and cry aloud ; ' and in many other places. Others

can say a prayer, but they cry it out.

3. These cries are heard and answered ; as in all the former places,

so Ps. xxii. 5, ' Our fathers cried unto thee, and were delivered ; ' Ps.

xxxiv. 17, ' The righteous cry, and the Lord heareth ; ' fiorjdeay, the

word ' to help ' is et? fiorjv Qelv to run to the cry. An arrow drawn

with full strength will pierce deep.

4. Other prayers are not comely. It doth not become God to

whom we pray ; dead service doth not become the living God : Mai.

i. 14, ' Cursed be the deceiver which hath in his flock a male, and

voweth and sacrificeth unto the Lord a corrupt thing : for 1 am a

great king, saith the Lord of hosts, and my name is dreadful among

the heathen.' Slight dealing in God's service argueth mean thoughts

of God. It doth not become the Spirit by whom we pray, as in the

first reason ; nor doth it become the blessings for which we pray :

God will not give a mercy till it be valued. If we be indifferent, and

pray for things of course, without any esteem of them, we bespeak our

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own denial. Then we undervalue the grace we seek if we seek it so

as if we cared not whether we obtained our request or no, for form's

sake we must say something. When things are prized we are earnest,

and God will have us earnest, to ask, seek, and knock, Mat. vii. 7. If

you have good things, you must do so, and will do so, before you have

them. Nor doth it become the state of want wherein you pray.

Where there is real indigence and felt necessity, it will sharpen your

affections and put an accent upon your prayers. You will not tell a

tale or a cold story of your own wants, but cry aloud for help : Jonah

ii. 2, ' I cried by reason of mine affliction unto the Lord.' And the

saints cry day and night, Luke xviii. 18. A true sense of want will

sharpen our sluggish desires ; the hunger-bitten beggar will not easily

be put off.

Thirdly, Wherein this crying consisteth.

1. In the earnestness of the affection, not in the loudness of the

voice: Gal. iv. 6, ' He hath sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts,

crying, Abba Father.' It is a cry, not of the mouth, but of the heart;

it lieth not in the lifting up of the external voice, or the agitation of

the bodily spirits, but the serious bent and frame of the spirit, Rom.

viii. 26, arevajfj.ol<; d\a\7]TOL<;, inward groans, and holy meltings and

breathings of soul after God. Moses cried after God, Exod. xiv. 18 ;

but we hear of no words which Moses spake. We hear of Israel's

crying, and have an account of their words, hot and full of impatience,

ver. 10 ; but not a word that Moses said, yet he cried unto the Lord.

Israel was in straits, the Red Sea before, the Egyptians behind.

Clamabat popidus, et non audiebatur : tacebat Moses, et audiebatur,

saith Ambrose. Moses' silence was sooner heard than their cry. Our

groans and tears have a language which God understands. It is

said, 1 Sam. i. 13, that ' Hannah spake in her heart, only her lips

moved, but her voice was not heard/ That is the better crying, in

sighs and groans, rather than words ; as the child that cannot speak

will cry and make moan for the breast. God hath heard the cry of

the heart without that of the tongue, but never the cry of the tongue

without that of the heart. Quibus arteriis opus est, si pro sonitu

audiamur I — what lungs and sides must we have, if the loudness of

the voice did it ! A dumb beggar gets an alms at Christ's gate if he

can but make signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him.

2. This spiritual crying is not the earnestness of carnal affections ;

that is stirred up by the flesh, but this cry is stirred up by the Spirit,

who maketh request, Kara Qeov, Rom. viii. 27. God should have

work enough to do if he did answer all men's prayers. Some would

set him a task to provide meat for this, others for that lust. This

man prayeth heartily for his pleasures, another for honour, another

for preferment, another to satisfy his revenge. A carnal spring may

send forth high tides of affection, James iv. 3 ; but few seek grace to

serve God : they would make God serve with their sins. These are

not the groans and breathings of the Spirit, but the eructations and

belches of the flesh. Therefore the vehemency of the affection is not

only to be regarded, but the regularity, that they be not stirred up by

the flesh, but guided by the Spirit.

3. It is not a mere natural fervency ; that is the cry of nature after

YER. 145.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 39

ease, but not the cry of grace after God, and is but howling in God's

account, Hosea vii. 14. The heart is not affected with that which is

the true misery, sin and the wrath of God ; nor sincerely engaged to

God, from whom they expect help : and then how instant and earnest

soever men be to be rid of their burden, their prayers are but like

the moanings of the beasts under pain, and the howling of dogs, or

the gaping of hungry ravens, Ps. cxlvii. It is lawful to ask ease, but

we must ask in a spiritual manner. It is lawful to pray for temporal

blessings, but not in the first place, or with the neglect of better

things. Prayer properly is the vent of grace, and the desires of a

renewed heart expressed to God, Zech. xii. 10.

Use 1. To reprove most men for their deadness and carelessness in

prayer. Prayer is a part of natural worship. All that will acknow-

ledge God and a providence will acknowledge a necessity of praying

io God, especially in their straits. The pagan mariners cried every

man to his god in a tempest, Jonah i. 6 ; but though all will pray in

one sort or other, yet few pray in good earnest. Some say a prayer,

but they do not pray in prayer, James v. 17. Elijah prayed earnestly.

Their prayers are conceived in a cold and customary track of devotion.

Others flow in words without spirit and life ; their tongue is as the

pen of a ready writer, but the heart is dead and carelessly affected,

for they are indifferent whether they be heard or not. Prayer is in-

deed the work of their invention, but not the expression of their

spiritual desire. The mind conceiveth a rational prayer, but the

heart is not poured out before God ; and so it is discoursing rather

than crying. Words are the outside of prayer, sighs and groans lie

nearer the heart, and do better discover the temper of it, and are more

regarded by God than all the charms of speech : Ps. vi. 8, ' The Lord

hath heard the voice of my weeping.' Tears have a language which our

Father understandeth ; a want of affection is more than a defect of words.

Broken words with a spiritual affection do more than a well-set speech

with unbrokenness of heart. Others have a natural fervency, but not

renewed affections ; pray from their own interest, or pray passionately

for carnal things : Num. xi. 4, ' They fell a-lusting, and wept, saying,

Who will give us flesh ? ' They may be importunate for their own

ease and welfare : ' Give me children or else I die/ saith passionate

Rachel. Natural desires are very passionate, yea, for spiritual things

on their own terms. Would not a man desire pardon and heaven ?

Whose heart doth not engage him to look after them ? Some that

are renewed yet are too cold in prayer, do not cry. It is not enough

to have the qualification of the person, but the prayer must be quali-

fied also, James v. 16, &er]cri<; ivepyov/xivrj ; it must be a well-wrought

prayer, otherwise it availeth not ; yea, our earnestness must increase

according to the weight and moment of what we pray for. When

Peter was in prison the church made instant and earnest prayer,

Ser]cn<; e/cTe^?, Acts xii. 5, as in the margin it is ; and Christ had his

ifcrevecTTepov, Luke xxii. 44. But now the children of God are con-

scious to themselves of much deadness and drowsiness, and are so low

sometimes that they are not heard, scarce breathe in prayer, so far from

crying. But what is the reason of this carelessness ?

1. Want of sense. They have no feeling of their wants, and there-

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fore pray perfunctorily. The poor in spirit, the mourner, and meek,

are put before the desirer, Mat. v. Men must be affected with their

wants before they be earnest after a supply. Jesus Christ was sensible

of his burden, and therefore he ' offered up supplications with strong

crying and tears,' Heb. v. 7. And if man were once sensible of his

sins by which his Saviour suffered, he would be fervent in his prayers,

and most earnestly deprecate the wrath of God, as his Saviour did.

A smart sense of wants quickens prayers. If we were always alike

affected, as we are in a deep distress, or fears of death, or some notable

danger, we should not need many directions to teach us to pray fer-

vently ; but because such a sense is soon worn off, our prayers grow

cold and careless.

2. As they are tongue-tied through sin, and carnal liberty hath

brought an indisposition upon them, 1 John iii. 20, 21. He that

hath wronged another will not easily repair to him, and crave his help

in straits.

3. Want of spiritual desire. Prayer is but the acting of desire ;

as desire is more or less, so is our cry in prayer. He that asketh

remission of his sins, but doth not thirst after it with an earnest and

burning desire, doth but pray for it out of course, and not as it

becometh a creature that hath a sense of God's anger against sin.

He that asketh the mortification of sin, but doth not desire it out of

true desire, flowing from the hatred of sin dwelling in him, doth but

pray for form's sake. He that desireth the deliverance of the church,

but doth not desire it out of a true love to the church, will never pray

heartily and in good earnest for it : Isa. lxii. 1, ' For Zion's sake I will

not hold my peace,' &c. A man whose soul truly loveth the interests

of the church will be solicitous for it ; as Eli trembled for the ark of

God, 1 Sam. iv. 13. So when at ease we ask temporal supplies for

fashion's sake. God must have the name, though we eat our own

bread, and wear our own apparel.

4. Want of reverence to God, and therefore they babble over words

without sense and feeling ; they do not see him that is invisible :

Eccles. v. 1, 2, ' Keep thy foot when thou goest to the house of God,

and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools ; for they

consider not that they do evil. Be not rash with thy mouth, and let

not thy heart be hasty to utter anything before God, for God is in

heaven and thou upon earth : therefore let thy words be few.' Keep

thy heart and affections when thou goest into God's presence ; a little

outward lip-service is but the sacrifice of fools, an affront to the power

and majesty of God : Mai. i. 8, ' Offer it now unto thy governor ; will

he be pleased with thee or accept thy person ? saith the Lord of

hosts.'

5. Want of faith : Mat. xi. 28, ' Come unto me, all ye that labour

and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.' To the woman of Canaan,,

that would take no denial, Christ saith, ' woman, great is thy faith.'

The blind man cried after the Son of David, as we run to a rich man

that is charitably disposed for an alms. If we were persuaded that we

should be the better for coming to God, we should not be so slight and

careless in our approaches to him.

Use 2. To press you to this crying or holy vehemency in prayer.

VER. 145. j SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 41

The apostle biddeth us to ' continue instant in prayer,' irpoa-Kap-

TepovvTes, continue with all your might in prayer : Col. iv. 12,

a<ya)vi$/ji,€vo<?, ' Labouring fervently in prayer for you.' The word

signifieth to be striving in a battle, and in an agony for them : it

hath life in it. But what is it ?

1. When the heart worketh in prayer as before.

2. When you follow the suit, and will not give over praying : Luke

xviii. 1, 'He spake a parable to them to this end, that men ought

always to pray, and not to faint;' Luke xi. 8, 8ia ttjv avaiheiav,

' Because of his importunity he will rise,' &c. The prophet telleth

God plainly what he would do : Isa. lxii. 1, 'For Zion's sake will I

not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,' &c. So

Jacob: Gen. xxxii. 26, ' I will not let thee go unless thou bless me.'

Absque te non recedam.

3. When deaf to disappointments and discouragements from without,

from within, from himself, from God himself: 1 Sam. xii. 23, ' God

forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you/

&c. ; notwithstanding the many objections in his heart, what 'God

would do to a rebellious people. So Elijah when the heavens were as

brass and the clouds as iron ; and blind Bartimeus : Mark x. 48,

' Many charged him that he should hold his peace, but he cried the

more a great deal, Thou Son of David, have mercy on me.' When

God seemeth to cast out prayer, to give no answer, or a contrary one.

So Daniel when forbidden to pray : Dan. vi. 10, ' When Daniel knew

that the writing was signed, he went into his house and prayed three

times a day as afore-time ;' he doth not make one suit the less, or abate

one jot of his zeal. To cleave to God when he seemeth to thrust us

from him, Job xiii. 15, this is a holy obstinacy, very acceptable unto

God. The woman of Canaan standeth fending and proving with

Christ, till he giveth her satisfaction ; then ' be it unto thee as thou

wilt.' When we turn discouragements into arguments and motives of

believing, and draw nearer to Christ the more he seemeth to drive us

from him. However God wrestle with such for a while, it is with a

purpose to give faith the victory, and to yield us himself to do for us

what our souls desire of him. You pray and God keepeth silence :

' He answered her not a word,' Mat. xv. 23. It is not said he heard

not a word, but he answered her not a word ; these two differ. Christ

often heareth when he doth not answer. His not answering is indeed

an answer, and speaks this, Pray on, and continue your crying still ;

the door is kept bolted that you may knock again. Afterwards a

rebuke. First, he answereth not a word, then giveth an answer to the

disciples, not to the woman, ' I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the

house of Israel,' and then ' It is not meet to take the children's bread

and to cast it to dogs.' But she turned the discouragement into an

argument,' and she said, ' Truth, Lord, yet the dogs eat of the crumbs

which fall from their master's table.'

4. Holy fervency and vehemency will be argumentative, and plead

with God ; as Abraham: Gen. xviii. 25, ' Shall not the judge of all

the earth do right ?' So Jacob : Gen. xxxii. 9, Jacob pleadeth God's

promise ; Return unto thy father's house; I will deal well with thee ;

Lord, I undertook not this journey but upon this encouragement. The

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little honour God hath by the church's calamities, Ps. xliv. 12; Isa.

lii. 4, 5. The praise God will have from his people, Ps. cxlii. 6. Do

it, as David in the text, ' I will keep thy statutes.' The chief argu-

ments are — God's covenant : Ps. lxxiv. 22, ' Arise, God, plead thine

own cause ; remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily.

Have respect to thy covenant.' The merits of Christ : Lord, hear for

the Lord's sake. Desire is witty to find out arguments and reasoning

to enforce the things we sue for.

But how shall we get it ?

[1.] Have a sincere desire to the things asked. We will cry for what

we value and earnestly desire : Prov. ii. 3-5, ' If thou criest for know-

ledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding ; if thou seek for her

as for silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures ; then shalt

thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God.'

[2.] Be persuaded of the Lord's willingness to hear and power to

help. A rich and bountiful person, a beggar will not let him go, if

he see only a rich man : Mat. viii. 2, ' Lord, if thou wilt thou canst ;'

it is in the power of your hand to help us. But is not God willing

also ? Suppose it be an uncertainty, yet cry mightily unto God,

' Who can tell that he will not repent ? ' Jonah iii. 8, 9. If there be

but a possibility, yet try what importunity will do : Ps. lvii. 2, ' I will

cry unto God most high, unto God who performeth all things for me/

He hath heard once, and will again.

[3.] Beg the assistance of the Spirit. Our necessities are not sharp

enough to quicken our affections, they need the secret influence of

grace ; it is his work to set us a-groaning and crying to God. How

well are we provided for, with an advocate and notary : Horn. viii. 26 ;

Jude 20.

[4.] Let us rouse up ourselves : Isa. Ixiv. 7, ' There is none that

calleth upon thy name, that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee ;'

Psa. lvii. 8, ' Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp ; I myself

will awake early.' We must avafairvpelv ' stir up the gift of God,

which is in us,' 2 Tim. i. 6.

[5.] Let us take heed we do not quench the Spirit, 1 Thes. v. 19,

bring deadness on our hearts by carnal liberty. So much enlarged as

we are to the flesh, so much straitened in the spirit. Where desires are

after other things, there will be little delight in prayer.

[6.] The way to be fervent is to be frequent and often with God.

A key seldom turned rusts in the lock. The fire of the sanctuary

was never to go out. By great interruptions we lose what we have

wrought : ' The way of the Lord is strength to the upright, but

destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity,' Prov. x. 29.

I come now to the second qualification, ' With my whole heart ;'

xvhich importeth his integrity and sincerity in praying.

Doct. Our prayers to God must be sincere as well as fervent.

The heart must be in them, and the whole heart. This noteth —

1. Seriousness, that we heed what we say, otherwise we do not pour

out our hearts before God. It is so far from being a spiritual act

that it is not a rational act, but like the parrots speaking by rote, or

as children say their prayers ; and we must not be always children.

Surely we do not speak to God as God, as an all-seeing Spirit, if we

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do not mind what we say, John iv. 24 ; and Prov. xxviii. 23, ' Burning

lips and a wicked heart are as a potsherd covered with silver dross.'

2. A hearty desire or affectionateness. Praying from memory and

invention, and praying from affection, are two distinct things ; yea,

praying from conscience, and praying from the heart. Many times

the mind is in prayer when the heart is not in it. The mind or con-

science dictates what is fit to be asked, but the heart doth not con-

sent, or not urge it to make any such suit to God ; and so the prayer

is repeated in the very making : Psa. Ixvi. 18, ' If I regard iniquity

in my heart, God will not hear me.' The understanding judgeth that

a meet prayer, but the heart is biassed the contrary way to some

known sin. Therefore as David calleth all that is within him to bless

God, Ps. ciii. 1, so to pray to him — memory, understanding, conscience,

will, affections, all that is within us must attend upon this work ; that

which God heareth is desire : Ps. x. 17, ' Lord, thou hast heard the

<lesire of the humble : thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause

thine ear to hear/ So Ps. cxlv. 19, 'He will fulfil the desire of them

that fear him : he also will hear their cry, and will save them.'

3. The prevalency of these affections. That God and his interest

be uppermost in the soul, and the heart be effectually bent towards

him ; for prayer is not a work barely of our natural faculties, but of

grace guiding, ordering, and inclining those faculties ; not only a work

of understanding and will, but of faith, love, fear, zeal, hatred of sin,

temperance, patience, and other virtues, which do bend the heart to-

wards God, and draw it off from other things : and without them the

understanding will not be clear, and have any deep sense of the worth

of spiritual things, 2 Peter i. 19. Without these, the will is remiss,

and they never pursue them in good earnest. We may wish for them,

but shall not will them : As Balaam, ' Oh that I might die the death

of the righteous ! But he loved the wages of iniquity,' 2 Peter ii. 15,

and so spake words which his heart allowed not. The affections will

be diverted to other things, and we cannot have those longings and

strong desires after grace, Ps. cxix. 36 ; Col. iii. 2 ; or at best but a

little passionate earnestness for the present.

4. A universal care to please God in all tilings, without harbouring

any known sin in our hearts, Ps. Ixvi. 18 ; Ps. xvii. 3, ( Thou has proved

mine heart ; thou hast visited me in the night ; thou hast tried me,

and shalt find nothing ; ' nothing contrary to the new covenant, no

guile ; nothing in his heart contrary to what was in his mouth. So

no insincerity found : Job xi. 13-14, ' If thou prepare thine heart, and

stretch out thy hand towards him : if iniquity be in thy hand, put it

far away, and let not wickedness • dwell in thy tabernacles.' If you

mean to call upon God with any confidence, all that is displeasing to

him must be cast out of the heart. This is the best preparation ; all

filth must be swept out when you come to the holy God, for he will

not do us good till we are fit to receive good. Therefore if you mean

to stretch out your hand in prayer, thus you must do, then may you lift

up your face without spot, have boldness and confidence in prayer ; but

when the heart is wedded to any vanity, God will not hear: Job xxxv. 13,

' Surely God will not hear vanity, neither will the Almighty regard it/

Use. To persuade us to pray with our whole hearts ; for —

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1. God will not be mocked, Gal. vi. 7 ; that is in vain. You may

venture to mock God, put him off with vain pretences, but it will cost

you dear. He knoweth the thoughts afar oft , Ps. cxxxix. 2 ; and

Heb. iv. 12-13, ' 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; neither is there any creature

that is not manifest in his sight ; but all things are naked and open

unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.' Though man cannot

find you out, yet God can.

2. God hath expressly told you, ' The prayer of the upright is his

delight,' Prov. xv. 8. He will pardon many defects, but he will not

pardon want of sincerity, either in the person or prayer. Though you

cannot bring the pomp of gifts, or exact righteousness, yet, if sincere,

God will delight in you ; he measureth your prayer by that.

3. Where there is a moral integrity you do not dissemble ; God can

find the defect of supernatural integrity : Dent. v. 29, ' I have heard

the voice of the words of this people, which they have spoken unto

thee ; they have well said in all that they have spoken : oh that there

were such an heart in them,' &c. Therefore be sure your lips do not

feign, Ps. xvii. 1, and pretend more grace than you have; so that for

the main your hearts be upright, seriously, readily bent to please him

in all things. To this end —

[1.] The tongue must not only pray, but the heart. How dare you

tell God to his face that you love him, and fear him, and trust in him,

when there is no such matter ? No such forgery as counterfeiting the

voice of God's Spirit. The heart should be first and chief in prayer,

Ps. xli. 1 ; and Lam. hi. 4, ' Lift up your hearts with your hands

to God in the heavens.' There is the chief voice ; the hand without

it is nothing.

[2.] You must make conscience of graces as well as gifts, yea, more

than gifts : 1 Cor. xii. 31, 'But covet earnestly the best gifts ; and yet

show I unto you a more excellent way ; ' with 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2. And

bewail unbrokenness of heart more than brokenness of expression ; if

you chatter like cranes, yet if there be a holy desire in it, God will hear.

[3.] You must pray earnestly in secret as well as in company : Mat.

vi. 5, 6, ' When thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are,

for they love to pray standing in the synagogues, and in the corners

of the streets, that they may be seen of men : but thou, when thou

prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray

to thy Father which is in secret/ &c. We have more enlargement

there, because we represent our own case to God. Mourn apart :

Jer. xiii. 17, ' My soul shall weep in secret places.' We are flat, cold,

loose, careless in private ; strive to speak with the same power, life,

holiness in private as you would in public.

[4.] What you would be in prayer, you must be out of prayer : Prov.

xxvi. 7, ' The legs of the lame are not equal, so is a parable in the

mouth of a fool ;' as the legs of the lame, one doth not answer another.

They are devout, all of a lire in their prayers, but neglectful of God

in their conversations: Eph. vi. 18, 'Praying always with all prayer

and supplication in the spirit, watching thereunto with all perseverance;

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Prov. xxviii. 9, ' He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law,

even his prayer shall be an abomination.' He doth not live his prayers.

We must live in the same frame.

[5.] You must pray as affectionately for heavenly as you would for

earthly things. A carnal man's mind and heart is upon worldly

things, and spiritual tilings lie by ; contrary to Mat. vi. 33, where we

are bid, ' First to seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness

thereof,' &c. ; and Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord,

that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all

the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in

his temple.' They have no savour for other requests, but can find

tender affections for safety, ease, sloth : other petitions do but bear

these company ; there is their business with God. If God will give

these things, we will give a discharge for other things ; so that their

prayers do not come from grace, but nature ; thanks to his natural

necessities for all the affections he hath in prayer.

[6.] We must not only have our flashes and good moods. So Balaam :

Num. xxiii. 10, ' Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my

last end be like his.' So those, John vi. 34, ' Then said they unto him,

Lord, evermore give us this bread/ Strange strivings for the present,

but it is only for privileges. It is vanishing : Job xxvii. 10, ' Will

he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?'

They would have heaven without holiness ; pardon of sin, rather than

power against it, or a new heart. He will pray when he seeth his

time, as men take strong waters in a pang : he hath a praying fit upon

him in adversity, not in prosperity : Hosea v. 15, ' In their affliction

they will seek me early.'

[7.] As you pray to God, so you must entirely trust him : James i.

6, 7, ' Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ; for he that wavereth

is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.' A carnal

man wavereth ; he would fain have help from God, but his heart

runneth upon other things: Hosea vii. 11, ' Ephraim is like a silly

dove without heart ; they call to Egypt, they go to Assyria.' Their

hearts are seeking to other refuges, however they call to God among the

rest. Ahaz would not ask a sign that would engage him to depend

upon God, and keep him from running to other shifts. Sometimes he

thinketh prayer will do it, and by and by desponds, dareth not trust

God upon his prayers; he knoweth not what course to take, whether to

shift for himself, or tarry God's leisure. But one that commits all to

God is fixed : Ps. cxii. 7, ' He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his

heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' He is freed from anxious cares.

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I cried with my whole heart ; hear me, Lord ; I will keep thy

statutes. — Yer. 145.

Secondly, Here is the petition, ' Hear me;' or, as it is in the Hebrew,

\* answer me ; ' not in words, but deeds.

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Doct. God's children when they pray are earnest for an answer.

To give you some instances : Ps. lxxxv. 8, ' I will hear what God

the Lord will speak.' A gracious heart doth not make prayer a vain

babbling or an empty prattle, but a gracious exercise that will in time

get an answer, and obtain a good return or blessing from the Lord.

Therefore they are listening and hearkening after news from heaven,

if they can hear anything from God, how he receiveth their prayers,

and what he will do for them: Micah vii. 7, 'Therefore I will look

unto the Lord, I will wait for the God of my salvation : my God will

hear me.' They are not only waiting, but observing and watching

what cometh in upon prayer; for they are certain it is not breath

poured out in the air, but a petition commended to their God, who

hath promised to hear them. So Hab. ii. 1, 'I will stand upon my

watch, and set me upon the tower, and will watch to see what he will

say to me.' He compareth himself to a watchman that is spying

abroad if he can get any intelligence of any approaching comfort. So

Ps. v. 3, 'I will pray, and look up;' as Elijah, if he could spy a

cloud, any preparation towards mercy.

Reason 1. Because they dare not take God's name in vain, as all do

that pray cursorily and never regard what cometh of it ; like foolish

boys that knock at a door in wantonness, but have no business, and

therefore will not stay till somebody cometh to open the door. It is a

great sin to take God's name in vain in any act of worship, much

more in prayer. Now all do so that go about this duty as a task, not

as a means to do their souls good, or to obtain blessings from God ;

when I hear merely that I may hear, or receive the Lord's supper,

and rest in the act of receiving. Every ordinance must be gone about

in faith and obedience, expecting the ends of the duty, as well as being

employed in the acts of it. If you do it in good earnest, and with

respect to God's institution, you must do so. All the ordinances

come under a fourfold notion — as duties, as privileges, as means, as

talents. As duties enjoined, and a part of our homage and obedience

to God ; this will breed an awe upon our conscience, to keep us to a

due and constant observance of them ; it is not a matter arbitrary, but

our necessary duty. As privileges ; this keepeth us from weariness, that

we may not consider them as a burdensome task. As means of our

growth and improvement, that notion is necessary that we may not

rest in the work wrought, but look after the grace dispensed thereby.

As talents for which we must give an account, which will quicken us

to more earnest diligence in the improvement. Some do not look

upon them as duties, and so neglect them ; others not as privileges,

and so do not prize them, are not joyful in the house of prayer ; others

not as means, and so rest in the bare performance, without looking

after the fruits to be had thereby ; others not as talents, and so are

more indifferent whether they get good by them, yea or no : but when

all these are regarded, we act best in any service or ordinance. Now,

as this is true of ordinances in general, so especially of prayer, which

is a sweet means of communion with God, not to be done as a task ;

herein we make an immediate address to God and come to set him

a-work, and to take proof of his power and goodness, to see what he

will do for his people. We put it, I say, to the trial, as in that ex-

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traordinary case Elijah puts his contest with Baal's priests upon this

issue, ' that God that should answer by fire, he should be God,' 1 Kings

xviii. 24 ; so ordinarily we put in prayer to trial whether God hath

any respect to his people, and that with God's own leave and en-

couragement ; for he hath said that none shall seek his face in vain,

Isa. xlv. 19. We put it to proof whether he will keep touch with his

people, and be able and willing to perform what he hath promised.

Therefore we use this duty in vain, and in a cursory way, if we be not

earnest for an answer ; which the saints dare not do.

Reason 2. Not looking for an answer proceedeth from an ill cause.

1. Heedlessness, not considering what they do, and then their

prayers are the sacrifice of fools, Eccles. v. 1, 2. Surely attention to

holy duties, and that we should consider what we are about, it is the

most serious and important part of our lives. Now men that do not

consider why they pray are heedless and inattentive and rash.

2. Atheism, there is a touch of it in this sin : Heb. xi. 6, ' He that

cometh unto God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of

them that diligently seek him.' God's being and his bounty, that

there is a God, and that he will be good to them that seek him ; these

they do not believe steadfastly, these primitive and supreme truths of

God's being and bounty, essence, and providence, but only comply with

the common custom and fashion ; for were they persuaded that there

is a God, and that he is good to mankind, and will reward those that

worship him sincerely, they would see what cometh of their duties and

prayers to him.

3. Distrust, which is next akin to atheism : Job xxi. 15, ' What

profit have we if we pray unto him ?' Mai. iii. 14, ' Ye have said, It is

in vain to serve God ; what profit is it that we have kept his ordi-

nances ? ' &c. Now when you look for nothing, we do in effect say so ;

for you carry it as if nothing would come of your prayers and fasts.

They that are persuaded that God heareth them, they will wait for the

answer of their prayers : 1 John v. 14, 15, ' And this is the confidence

that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he

heareth us ; and if we know that he hears us, whatsover we ask, we

know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.' But low

and slight thoughts of God and his service beget this carelessness ;

something they do, but never look after what they do.

4. It argues some disesteem of God's favour and acceptance, they

care not whether he hath any respect for them, yea or no ; for they

do not so much as inquire of it. Oh ! how contrary is this to the

temper of God's people ! If God hide his face they are troubled,

Ps. xxx. 7 ; he is the life of their lives : ' Lord, lift thou up the light

of thy countenance upon us/ Ps. iv. 7. The seasoning of their com-

forts is God's accepting their works, Eccles. ix. 7. How passionately

do they beg for a glimpse, for a token for good, Ps. lxxxvi. 17.

Nothing goeth so near their hearts as when the Lord hideth himself

from their prayers : Ps. xxii. 2, 'I cry in the daytime, and thou nearest

not; in the night season, and am not silent;' Job xxx. 20, 'I cry

unto thee, and thou dost not hear me ; I stand up, and thou regardest

me not.' A dumb oracle is a great trouble. They make a business

of prayer, therefore it is very grievous to have no answer, not to see

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their signs, to have no token for good. The church taketh it bitterly

to heart: Lam. iii. 14, ' Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud, that

our prayers should not pass through.' That cloud is his wrath, by

reason of sin. Now, to have no affection this way argucth a stupid,

sottish spirit. These are two reasons of the point.

Reason 3. If we do not look after God's answer, our loss is exceeding

great.

1. We lose our labour in prayer, yea, return worse than we came,

with more hardness of heart and neglect of God. Yea, that is not all,

the loss of a prayer with a degree of spiritual judgment ; but we lose

confirmation of faith, for answers of prayer are notable props to the

soul to support our faith in the truth of God's being : Ps. lxv. 2, ' O

thou that nearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' Every one

shall own thee for God. So many answers of prayer, so many argu-

ments against natural atheism. We have challenged him upon his

word, and find there is a God. So of the truth of the promises, Ps. xviii.

30. Thy word is a tried word ; I will build upon it another time.

You have put them in suit, and ever found them good. Now all these

experiences are lost if we do not look for an answer of our prayers.

2. You lose excitements to love and obedience. Nothing so much

increaseth our love to God, as when we see that he is mindful of us

upon all occasions, especially in our deep necessities, Ps. cxvi. 1, ' I will

love the Lord because he hath heard the voice of my supplication.'

Every experience in this kind is a new fuel laid on to increase the fire.

3. We lose encouragements to pray again : Ps. cxvi. 2, ' Because he

hath inclined his ear to me, I will call upon him so long as I live.'

The throne of grace shall not be neglected and unfrequented by me :

I see there is mercy to be had, help to be had. One adventure suc-

ceeding encourageth another : Ps. xxxii. 6, ' For this shall every one

that is godly pray unto thee ; ' because David found such ready audi-

ence and despatch.

4. You lose the benefit of sensible communion with God. Taking

communion for familiarity, it lieth in donatives and duties, prayers

and blessings ; and there is a commerce between the heavens and the

earth, by vapours and showers: prayers go up, and blessings come

down ; as it was told Cornelius, Acts x. 4, ' Thy prayers and thine

alms are come up for a memorial before God ; ' and down come the

blessings upon us.

5. God loseth honour and praise and thanksgiving if we do not look

for an answer. For the answer, as it is matter of comfort to us, so it

should be matter of praise to God : Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in the

day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me ; ' so

Col. iv. 2, ' Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanks-

giving.' We are to gather up matter of praise to God. We should

not be so barren in gratulation if we did observe more of these experi-

ences. You would not only be glorifying God by way of invocation,

but commemoration : you may commend him to others from your own

experience : Ps. xxxiv. 8, ' taste and see that the Lord is good/

Use 1. To reprove them that throw away their prayers, and never

look after them ; that play with such a duty as this, as children that

shoot away their arrows, and never look where they light. Surely this

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argueth great contempt and low thoughts of God, formality in prayer,

and stupidness of heart. It bespeaks low thoughts of God and of his

providence ; for if they did believe such a particular providence

reacheth to all persons and things, they would study to produce some

of these experiences, to be able to say, I was in such a strait, and God

delivered me: Ps. xxxiv, 6, 'This poor man cried unto the Lord, and

he heard him.' Great formality in prayer ; for if we pray not out of

course, but in good earnest, we cannot but hearken after the speeding

of our requests. Great stupidity of spirit ; hearts that have any sense

of life in them are observing God's dealings, and suit their carriage

accordingly. Lively Christians are putting cases.

Use 2. To press us to hearken after the answer of our prayers.

God's children do so, and get much comfort thereby, and evidence of

his love : Ps. lxvi. 18, 19, 'But verily God hath heard me ; he hath

attended to the voice of my cry.' It is no small favour and respect we

have from God's love to us ; it is a great owning of our persons ; our

mercies are the sweeter. There is a double lustre and beauty put

upon them when they come in the way of prayer, out of the hand of

God ; not by a common providence, but by covenant ; and by virtue

of the covenant put in suit by us, as well as granted by God, which is

a pledge of God's respect to us. To this end —

1. Be persuaded that God will hear you, and answer you when you

pray according to his will : 1 John v. 14, ' And this is the confidence

that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will,

he heareth us.' This is absolutely necessary for all that will pray

aright, and mind what they do; for none can come to God aright

but those that are persuaded they shall be the better for coming to

him : James i. 5, ' Pray in faith, nothing wavering.' There must be

a relying upon God, if indeed we pray to him. He that expects little

in prayer will neither be much in it nor serious about the answer of it.

2. This answer must be needfully observed. Careless spirits will not

easily discern it : Ps. cxxx. 5, 6, L wait for the Lord, my soul doth

wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord, more

than they that watch for the morning ; I say, more than they that

watch for the morning ; ' as those that watched in the temple for the

dawning of the day. This earnest waiting is a happy token ; when we

make much of prayers, they are not lost. Therefore, as they watched

for the word, brethren, so must you wait upon God for some discovery

of his love by a gracious answer and return unto your prayers.

3. Sometimes God giveth an answer presently ; sometimes it may

be after some competent space of time. (1.) Sometimes presently; as

Cornelius, in the time of prayer, and while the duty is a-doing. God

giveth in some tokens of acceptance ; as an angel was sent to Cornelius

at the ninth hour, which was the hour of prayer, to assure him that

his prayers were heard, and duties accepted : Acts x. 3, ' Peter and

John went up to pray at the ninth hour,' Acts iii. 1. So Daniel:

' Whilst I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin ; yea,

whilst I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel was caused to fly

swiftly.' The Lord is ready to answer the prayers of his servants in

the very instant of their praying. So Acts iv. 3, ' While they prayed,

they were filled with the Holy Ghost.' The cases brought are singular

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and extraordinary as to the token and manner of assistance, but as to

the substance of the blessing, it is the common practice of God's free

grace : Isa. lviii. 10, ' When they call, I will answer ; while they are

yet speaking, I will hear ; ' Acts xii. 12, a company was met to-

gether in prayer when Peter in prison heard of the time of his deliver-

ance. (2.) Sometimes a good while after: the prayers are in God's

book, Mai. iii. 16. Now these must be waited for : ' My God will hear

me/ Micah vii. 7. We cannot say, As soon as the prayer is made, for

he saith, 'I will wait for the God of my salvation.' Paul prayed

thrice for the removal of the messenger of Satan, 2 Cor. xii. ; then

God said, ' My grace is sufficient for thee.' We must knock again and

again. God heareth as soon as the prayer is made, but he taketh his

own time to despatch an answer. Abraham prayeth for a child, but

many years pass over till he hath him in his arms.

4. When God giveth an answer, own it as an answer. Sometimes

we will not take notice of what is before our eyes, out of deep distress

of spirit. It is said, Job ix. 16, ' Though I had called and he had

answered, yet would I not believe that he had hearkened to my voice.'

Thus we misinterpret God's dealings in our troubles, that we will not

own God's work as an answer.

5. Consider the several ways how God giveth answer to his people's

prayers.

[1.] Extraordinarily, as in ancient time ; so an angel was sent to

Cornelius to tell him his prayers were heard ; so to Daniel ; so to

Abel, Heb. xi. 4, probably by fire from heaven ; by vision to Abra-

ham ; by voice or visible token to Moses, and the high priest in the

tabernacle of the congregation from above the mercy-seat. But these

returns were proper to those times.

[2.] Ordinary, and this several ways : —

(1.) Either by granting the mercy prayed for; as to Hannah: 1

Sam. i. 27, ' For this child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me the

petition I asked of him.' So to David : Ps. xxi. 2, ' Thou hast given

him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of his lips.'

So often to his people, when they have humbly sought to him. Some-

times instantaneous, at the very praying: 1 Sam. vii. 9, 10, 'And

Samuel cried unto the Lord for Israel ; and the Lord heard him, and

as Samuel was offering up the burnt-offering, the Philistines drew near

to battle against Israel, and the Lord discomfited the Philistines.' Or

by degrees, when God is preparing instruments, before he giveth con-

summate deliverance : Acts vii. 34, ' I have heard their groanings, and

I will send thee into Egypt.' Their escape was some while after.

(2.) By giving in spiritual manifestations to the soul, though he

doth not give the particular mercy prayed for; as when upon the

prayer he reviveth the soul of him that prayeth : Job xxxiii. 26, ' He

shall pray unto God, and he will be favourable to him, and he shall

see his face with joy/ The Lord giveth them the light of his counte-

nance, and special discoveries of his love or support till the mercy

come : Ps. exxxviii. 3, ' In the day when I cried, thou answeredst me,

and strengthenedst me with strength in myx soul.' Support is an

answer ; such an answer had Paul : ' My grace is sufficient for thee.'

Or when the heart is quieted ; though we do not know what God will

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do with our requests, yet satisfied in the discharge of our duty, and

that we have commended the matter to God. So it is said of Hannah,

i When she had prayed, her countenance was no more sad/ 1 Sam.

i. 18 ; and Phil. iv. 6, 7, ' Be careful for nothing ; but in everything by

prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made

known to God ; and the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,

shall keep your hearts and minds, through Jesus Christ.' Sometimes by

a secret impression of confidence, or a strong inclination to hope well of

the thing prayed for : Ps. vi. 8, ' The Lord hath heard the voice of my

weeping.' Or experiences ; as they that travelled to Jerusalem, pass-

ing through the valley Baca, they met with a well by the way, Ps.

lxxxiv. 6 ; a sweet refreshing thought, or some help in the spiritual

life, by serious dealing with God ; some consideration to set you a-work,

or some new engagement of the soul to God, as the recompense of the

duty ; some principles of faith drawn forth in the view of conscience,

not showed before. Some truth or other presented with fresh life and

vigour upon the heart.

(3.) Sometimes by way of commutation and exchange ; and so God

doth answer the prayer, though he doth not give the mercy prayed for,

when he giveth another thing that is as good, or better for the party

that prayeth ; though not in kind the same, yet in worth and value as

good. This commutation may be three ways — (1.) In regard of the

person praying. David fasts, and humbleth and melteth his soul for

his persecutors, Ps. xxxv. 13, ' And it returned into his own bosom,'

was converted to his own benefit. His fasting had no effect upon

them, but his charity did not lose its reward. David prayeth for his

first child by Bathsheba, but that child dieth, and God giveth Solomon

instead thereof , 2 Sam. xii. 15. Noah, Daniel, Job shall save their own

souls, Ezek. xiv. 14. Your peace shall return to you again, Luke x.

5, 6 ; the comfort of discharging their duty. (2.) In regard of the

matter, carnal things are begged, and spiritual things are given : Acts

i. 6, 7, ' The apostles asked him, Wilt thou at this time restore the

kingdom to Israel ? ' They did not receive the kingdom to Israel,

but received the promise of the Spirit. Moses would fain enter into

Caanan with the people : Deut. iii. 23, 24, ' And God said, Let it

suffice thee ; speak no more of this matter ; ' but God gave him a

Pisgah sight, and ease of the trouble of wars. We would have speedy

riddance of trouble, but God thinketh not fit ; as showers that come

by drops soak into the earth better than those that come in a tempest

and hurricane. We ask for ease in troubles, and God will give

courage under troubles : Lam. iii. 55-57, ' I called upon thy name,

Lord, out of the low dungeon : thou hast heard my voice ; hide not

thine ear at my breathing, at my cry : thou drewest near in the day

that I called upon thee ; thou saidst, Fear not.' His gracious and

powerful presence in trouble was enough. Christ ' was heard in that

he feared,' Heb. v. 7 ; not saved from that hour, but supported and

strengthened in it. Job sacrificed, prayed for his children when

they were feasting, Job i. 5 ; and though they were all destroyed, God

gave him patience, ver. 22 ; for in all that befell him ' he sinned not,

nor charged God foolishly.' (3.) In regard of means. We pray such

means may not miscarry ; God will use others. As Abraham would

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fain have Ishmael the child of the promise, but God intended Isaac :

Gen. xvii. 18, ' that Ishmael might live before thee ! ' Thus doth

God often blast instruments we most expect good from, and make

use of others to be instruments for our good which we did least expect

it from. God may give us our will in anger, when the mercy turneth

to our hurt. Therefore the kind of God's answer must be referred to

his own will, in all things for which we are not to pray absolutely ;

and when we have discharged our duty, endeavoured to approve our

hearts to God, take what answer he will give.

Doct, From the manner of praying, with the whole heart, the saints

have the more confidence of being heard in prayer. David allege th

his crying with the whole heart as a hopeful intimation of a gracious

answer.

1. Because a prayer rightly made hath the assurance of a promise.

The promise is, John xvi. 24, ' Ask and ye shall receive, that your joy

may be full.' Now this beareth no exception, but that we ask

according to his will, 1 John v. 14. Si bona peta/nt, boni, bene, ad

bonum. Good men, asking good things, in the name of Christ, for a

good end, thou canst not miss.

2. Where there is sincerity and fervency, we have two witnesses to

establish our comfort and hope — the Spirit of God, that knoweth the

deep things of God ; and the spirit of man, that knoweth the things

of man. God's Spirit, who stirreth up these groans in us : Bom. viii.

26, 27, ' He that searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the Spirit,

because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of

God.' And the testimony of our own spirits, that we have done our

part and discharged our duty, and so have true joy and confidence :

Job xvi. 19, 20, ' My witness is in heaven, and my record is on high :

my friends scorn me, but mine eye poureth out tears to God.'

3. God doth not use to send them away comfortless that call upon

him in spirit and in truth, because by one grace he maketh way for

another ; by the grace of assistance for the grace of acceptance : Ps.

x. 17, ' Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble ; thou hast

prepared their heart ; thou wilt cause thine ear to hear/ Where God

hath given a heart to speak, he will afford an ear to hear ; for God

will not lose his own work : he cannot refuse those requests which are

according to the direction of his word and the motions of his Holy

Spirit, when they are brought to him.

Use. This exhorteth us to look more after the manner of praying.

An earnest and sincere prayer cannot miscarry ; judge by this and you

cannot want success. You cannot judge of your prayers by the wit,

by the length, by the kind of words ; but by the faith, the sincerity,

the obedience, the holy desires expressed in them. Cry with your

whole hearts, and God will hear you. (1.) Look to the fervency of

the prayer ; set yourselves in good earnest to seek God, and good will

come of it: Dan. ix. 3, I set my face to seek the Lord God by-

prayer and supplications.' I seriously minded the work : 2 Sam. vii.

27, ' Thy servant hath found in his heart to make this prayer unto

thee ; ' he found his heart disposed to call upon God. There is many

a prayer we force upon ourselves, we do not find it there. What

encouragements from the word, what motions from the Spirit ?

VER. 146.] SEEB10NS UPON PSALM CXIX. 53

Kesolve to seek after it till you have found it : Ps. xxvii. 2, 'When

thou saidst, Seek ye my face, my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Lord,

will I seek.' Wrestle with God : Hosea xii. 3, ' He had power over

the angel, and prevailed ; he wept and made supplication unto him.'

{Such as wrestle with God, and have their hearts broken and melted

before the Lord, will prevail. (2.) Look to the sincerity of your

prayers ; see that you do not feign and pretend to pray for a thing

you desire not. Is your confidence wholly in the Lord ? When your

heart is divided, and you hanker after carnal lusts, you cannot pray

aright. (3.) Look that you ask more for his glory than for your own

ease : James iv. 3, ' Ye ask, and receive not, because you ask amiss,

to consume it on your lust.' The less by-ends in prayer, the more hope

of success.

Thirdly, The promise of duty, 'I will keep thy statutes.'

Doct. God's children, when they think of mercy, are at the same

time thinking of duty and obedience.

1. Because they are ingenuous and thankful. Now obedience is the

best expression of gratitude : and therefore, when they ask mercy,

they mingle resolutions of duty with expectations of mercy : Born.

xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the mercies of God, that ye present your

bodies a living sacrifice, holy, and acceptable to God, which is your

reasonable service.'

2. They are supernaturally or spiritually sincere, and so propose

this as their scope in all conditions, to live unto God : all their desires

and resolutions are to this purpose. They have a sense of their own

benefit, but still in subordination ; their purpose is to serve him

diligently: Phil. i. 21, 'To me to live is Christ;' Bom. xiv. 7, 8,

' For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth unto himself : for

whether we live, we live unto the Lord ; or whether we die, we die

unto the Lord : whether we live or die, therefore, we are the Lord's.'

3. This is God's end in giving mercy, temporal or spiritual, to bring

them to obedience : Luke i. 74, 75, ' That we being delivered out of

the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness

and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' Save me,

quicken me, and I will keep thy statutes. God's end in giving, and

the end of gracious souls in seeking mercies and blessings, is much

the same — that God may have the glory, as well as they the benefit

and comfort of what he bestows upon them.

Use. Mind your service more ; engage yourselves to God anew, in

every prayer : upon every mercy and answer of prayer : Lord, I desire

this only in order to obedience.

SEBMON CLXIV.

/ cried unto thee ; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies. —

Veil 146.

This verse is the same with the former, only these differences may be

observed : —

54 SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SEr v . CLXIV.

1. There the qualification of the prayer is expressed, ' I cried with

my whole heart.' Here the person to whom he prayed, ' I cried to

thee, Lord.' He had told us before how he cried, now to whom he

cried ; to thee have I sought, and to thee only.

2. The request was general, that God would hear him ; now parti-

cular, that he would deliver him ; there it was ' hear me,' now ' save

me.'

3. The notion which implieth the word of God is diversified ; there

'statutes,' here 'testimonies.'

4. Our translation expresseth another difference ; there it is, ' I will

keep thy statutes,' as making it his vow and purpose ; here, ' I shall

keep thy testimonies/ as making it the effect and fruit of his deliver-

ance ; or, as it is in the marginal reading, ' that I may keep thy testi-

monies,' as making it his scope and aim.

In the words observe —

1. An intimation of prayer, I cried unto thee.

2. The matter of his prayer, save me, or deliver me out of trouble.

3. The end and scope of his prayer, not for the satisfaction of his

natural desire, but that he might have a heart and opportunity to

serve God, and obey his word : that I may, or then I shall, keep thy

testimonies.

Observations from the text.

Boot. 1. We should not lightly give over our suits to God.

Here is a repetition of the same prayer : I cried, yea, again I cried,

and a third time : ver. 147, ' I prevented the dawning of the morning,

and cried.' Si ter jpulsawbi nemo respondet, abito ; we use to knock

at a door thrice, and then depart. Our Lord Jesus, Mat. xxvi. 44,

' prayed the third time the same words, saying, Father, if it be possible,

let this cup depart from me.' So the apostle Paul : 2 Cor. ii. 8, ' For

this I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.' So

1 Kings xvii. 21, ' And he stretched himself upon the child three

times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, Lord my God, I pray thee

let this child's soul come into him again.' This it seemeth was the

time in which they expected an answer in weighty cases, and yet I

will not confine it to that number, for we are to reiterate our petitions

for one and the same thing, so often as occasion requireth, till it be

granted.

Now the reasons are : —

1. Because the force of importunity is very great : the two parables

evidence that, Luke xi. and Luke xviii. ; if to obtain the Spirit, or

right upon our enemies or oppressors. In both these parables there

is a condescension to the suppositions of our unbelief ; if we suppose

God tenacious and hard-hearted, or if we suppose him regardless and

mindless of the affairs of the church ; or, to put it in milder terms, if

we think nothing due to us : Luke xi. 8, ' If he will not rise and give

him because he is his friend ;' or if our condition be so hard that we

think it is past all relief; whatever be our secret and misgiving thoughts,

we ought always to pray, /cat yx?) iicKaicelv, not to be overcome with

evil : Luke xviii. 1, ' He spake a parable unto them to this end, that

men ought always to pray, and not to faint ;' for importunity is of great

prevalence with God and men.

VER. 146.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CX1X. 55

2. A deliverance is never so sweet, nor so thankfully improved, if it

come at the first call.

[1.] It is not so sweet, nolo nimis facilem. We disdain things that

come too easily, but that which costs us much pains and long crying

is more prized. The reason is because delay and difficulty sharpen

our desires, and the sharper our desire in the absence of a blessing, the

greater gust and sweetness we find in it when it cometh at last. A

sack that is stretched out is more capacious, and holdeth the more ;

so is the soul more widened by enlarged desires, to entertain the bless-

ing, for always our delight is according to the proportion of our de-

sires ; as a hungry man, or one long kept from meat, relisheth his food

better than another that hath it always at hand : Isa. xxv. 9, 'And it

shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God, we have waited for him,

and he will save us ; this is the Lord, we have waited for him, we will

be glad, and rejoice in his salvation.' We that know blessings more

by the want than the worth of them, in waiting we are acquainted

with the difficulties and inconveniences that attend the want of things,

and so are more fitted to prize them than ever we should have been if

we had not so long waited.

[2.] It is more thankfully improved ; this follows upon the former,

and may be further made good, because when we know the difficulty

of getting a blessing, we will not easily part with it ; as they that get

an estate are usually more careful how they spend it than they that

are born to one : therefore God holdeth his people long at prayer, to

prepare and season their hearts, that when they have it, they may

know better how to employ it for his glory and his own good. Ques-

tionless Hannah would never have devoted her child to God had she

not continued so long without him, and prayed for him with such bit-

terness of heart; but that wrought on her: 1 Sam. i. 11, 'And she

vowed a vow, and said, Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on

the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget

thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man-child ; then

I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and no razor

shall come upon his head.' Compare this with ver. 27, 28, ' For this

child I prayed, and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked

of him ; therefore also I have lent him to the Lord ; as long as he

liveth he shall be lent unto the Lord.' The same effect you may ob-

serve in any spiritual comfort you obtain for your souls, or any tem-

poral mercy or comfort of the present life, which you get by prayer.

If God had answered you at first, it had been reckoned among the

ordinary effects of his goodness, and so passed by ; but what is won by

prayer is usually worn with thankfulness. You would not have been

so sensible of the hand of providence, the graciousness of the answer,

or your obligation to God, or indeed that it had been an answer of

prayer at all.

3. Things often and earnestly asked of God come with the greater

fulness of blessing when they come ; and so, as one saith, God payeth

them use 1 for forbearance ; the mercy is the more ample, and so every

prayer hath its reward. Christ denied the woman of Canaan long,

but at length yieldeth up himself to her importunity : Mat. xv. 26,

1 That is, interest. — Ed.

5G SERMONS UPON TSALM CXIX. [SeR. CLXIV.

' woman, great is thy faith ; be it unto thee as thou wilt.' She lost

nothing Ly the delay. Hannah was long without a child, hut at length

the child proved the more eminent ; she gets both a child and a pro-

phet too. Let God alone, and do you continue praying, and he will

recompense yoiiv abundantly for all his delay. Peter was in prison,

and the church made prayers without ceasing, Acts xii. 5, and God

doth not only bring him out, but brings him out with a miracle, so

that they were astonished, ver. 16. God delayed for a "while, and

seemed to refuse their prayers; but when Herod was just about to

bring him forth to execution. God brought him forth to deliverance.

Every prayer is upon the file, and contributeth to make the mercy the

more complete ; it remaineth day and night before the Lord : 1 Kings

viii. 59, ' And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication

before the Lord, be nigh unto the Lord our God day and night, as a

memorial ; ' Acts x. 4, ' Thy prayers and thine alms arc come up for

a memorial before God.'

4. It argueth an ill spirit when we will not continue praying, though

we have not presently that which we pray for. To be sure —

[1.] There is disobedience in it, for it is contrary to God's injunc-

tions: Luke xviii. 1, 'Men ought always to pray, and not to faint.'

We ought not to surcease our suits so : Eph. vi. 18, ' Praying always,

and with all perseverance ;' always relateth to the constant exercise of

this duty upon all occasions ; with all perseverance, to particular suits

we put up to God. Now our duty must not be omitted, whatever the

discouragements be ; as Moses was to hold up his hands till the going

down of the sun, so are we to continue our suits, and press hard for

an answer, till God give us the thing we pray for.

[2.] There is weakness of faith to yield to the temptation, and to

go off upon every repulse ; yea, sometimes too too plain unbelief and

atheism, as if there were no mercy to be expected from God, or no

good to be obtained by spiritual means. Faith is to believe what we

see not. The woman of Canaan cometh to Christ ; at first she gets not

a word from him, and afterwards his speech is more discouraging than

his silence ; she is put out of the compass of his commission : ' I am

not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel ; ' but still she is

importunate ; afterwards a rough answer : ' It is not meet to take the

children's bread and cast it unto dogs.' She turneth his rebuke into

an encouragement ; then, ' woman, great is thy faith,' Mat. xv. 26.

Many times we pray for blessings, and the oracle is dumb and silent ;

though God love the supplicant, yet he will not seem to take notice

of his desires : yea, the more they pray, the more they may go away

with a sense of their unworthiness and revived guilt ; yet the work of

faith is to make an answer out of God's silence, a gracious answer out

of his rebukes, and to increase our importunity the more.

[3.] Want of love to God, or coldness of love. It is the property

of love to adhere to God, though we be not feasted with felt comforts

and present benefits ; yea, though he appear an enemy ; for so will

God try the affection and deportment of his children : Isa. xxvi. 8,

' Yea, in the way of thy judgments have we waited for thee ; the

desire of our souls is to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name ; '

Job xiii. 15, ' Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' Not only

VER. 146.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CX1X. 57

when our affections are bribed : a child of God should love God for

his judgments, as well as fear him for his mercies ; as lime, the more

water you sprinkle upon it, the more it burnetii. It was a high

expression of Bernard's affection to those that he took to be the people

of God, Adhcerebo vobis etiamsi velitis etiamsi nolitis ; so should we

adhere to God now. When you can only wait on him in the way of

his mercies, not in the way of his j udgments, your waiting and praying

is discouraged upon every difficulty and disappointment, you have

little love to him.

[4.] Want of patience, or tarrying God's leisure till the promise bring

forth. Some are hot and hasty ; if God will appear presently they

can be content to observe him ; but to be crying and crying till their

throat be hoarse and weary of crying, and no good come on it, they

cannot away with this : 2 Kings vi. 33, ' This evil is of the Lord ;

why should I wait on the Lord any longer ? ' They are discontented

that God maketh them stay so long. Though God wait long upon

them, and had reason enough to take the discouragement and be gone,

yet they cannot tarry a little for God, and think prayer a useless work,

unless it yield them a quick return, and that it is better to shift for

themselves.

Use. Keproof to two sorts : —

1. To those that cease praying or crying to God, if they have not

a present answer, especially if they meet with a contrary rebuke in

the course of his providence. You must cry, and cry again, not

imagine that God will be at your beck ; but foolish men suddenly

conclude, Mai. iii. 14, ' It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is

it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully

before the Lord of hosts ? ' Oh no ! Consider something is due to

the sovereignty of God, that we should wait his leisure ; for he is

supreme, and will govern the world according to his own will, not ours.

And therefore we must stay his time for the mercies we expect :

Ps. cvi. 13, 14, ' They soon forgat his word, they waited not for his

counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God

in the desert.' And something is due to the stated course of \_ his

providence. We cannot expect that God should turn all things

upside-down for our sakes, and invert the beautiful order of his dis-

pensations : Job xviii. 4, ' Shall the earth be forsaken for thee, and

the rock removed out of his place ? ' shall God alter the course of

nature, or change the order of governing the world for us, or to please

our humour ? Something is due to the present estate of mankind,

who are not to live by sense, but by faith : Hab. ii. 3, 4, ' For the

vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and

not lie : though it tarry, wait for it, because it will surely come, it

will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up, is not upright in

him : but the just shall live by his faith.' And that appointed time

is for our trial, to see if we out of duty and principles of faith, can

keep up our respects unto God, though his providence doth not

presently gratify our desires or satisfy our necessities. Besides, it

concerneth us to suspect ourselves rather than to blemish God's

dispensations. Those always complain most of God's not hearing

prayer who least deserve to be heard : Isa. lviii. 3-5, ' Wherefore

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have we fasted, say they, and thou seest not ? Wherefore have we

afflicted our soul, and thou takest no knowledge ? Behold, in the

day of your fast you find pleasure, and exact all your labour : behold,

you fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness,

ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on

high- Is it such a fast that I have chosen ? a day for a man to afflict

his soul ? is it to bow down his head like a bulrush, and to spread

sackcloth and ashes under him ? wilt thou call this a fast, and an

acceptable day to the Lord ? '

2. That though they do not cease praying, yet do they not pray with

any life and hope, because of his delays and seeming denials. There

are certain general blessings which we are always praying for, because

though we have them, yet we ought daily to ask them of God ; the

continuance of them, the sense of them, the increase of them ; here

never cease praying, There are other particular blessings, that either

concern ourselves, or the church of God, which we are to ask with

earnestness, and yet submission : in these we put it to the most sensible

trial whether God will hear us or no. Now for these things we must

seek the face of God with hope and zeal.

[1.] Because it is not enough to keep up the duty, unless we keep

up the affections that must accompany the duty : Rom. xii. 12, ' Con-

tinuing instant in prayer,' irpoaKapTepovvres. In long afflictions men

will pray, but they pray as men out of heart, for fashion's sake, or

with little and weak affection ; rather satisfying their consciences than

setting a-work the power of God.

[2.] A seeming repulse or denial should make us more vehement ; as

blind Bartimeus, ' the more they rebuked him, he cried so much the

more,' Mark x. 48. God suffereth the faith of his servants to be tried

with great discouragements ; but the more it is opposed, the more

should it grow, and the more powerfully and effectually should it

work in our hearts ; as the palm-tree shooteth up the faster the more

weight is hung upon it ; or as fire, the more it is pent up, the more

it striveth to break out ; therefore we should not only have fresh

affections at first, but in every new prayer we should act over our

faith again, and put forth spiritual desires anew.

[3.] God's dearest children are not admitted at the first knock:

Mat. vii. 7, ' Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ;

knock, and it shall be opened unto you.' It may be we have not at

first asking ; we need seek and knock. Mercy cloth not come to us all

in haste ; we have not at first what we lack ; delays are no denials ;

therefore we must not take the first or second answer, but continue

with instance : ' Give the Lord no rest,' Isa. lxii. 7. Be importunate

with him, to hasten the deliverance of his people.

[4.] We must not only continue praying when Christ seemeth to

neglect us, or to give no answer, but when he giveth a contrary answer ;

when he, to appearance, rejecteth our persons and prayers, and seemeth

to forbid us to pray. {Sometimes he seemeth to neglect us, and pass

us by as if he took no notice ; but yet he heareth when he doth not

answer ; yea, his not answering is an answer. Pray, or continue your

prayer. It is said, Mark vi. 48, ' He saw them toiling in rowing, for

the wind was contrary to them ; and about the fourth watch of the

VER. 146.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 59

night he cometh unto them, walking upon the sea, and would have

passed by them.' But he came with an intent to appease the storm

and help them. Christ taketh notice of the distresses of his people,

but they shall not kDOW so much, but delayeth to help till all their

patience be spent, and yet then seemeth to pass by, for their thorough

trial and exercise, and to move them more earnestly to pray. Some-

times he giveth them a seeming contrary answer and rebuke ; instead

of an expression of favour, he seemeth to pursue us in anger. God

is the main party against us, we have to do with an offended God ;

but yet we should not quit him, but follow him when he seemeth

to forsake us, and fly to him when he is pursuing us in hot displeasure.

Such is the admirable power of faith that it dares call on an angry

God, and follow him when he goeth away from us, and lay hold on him

when he smiteth, and cast itself into his arms in the midst of his

rebukes and frowns : Jonah ii. 4, ' Then I said, I am cast out of thy

sight ; yet will I look again towards thy holy temple.' God seemeth

to cast us off, as those he will not favour or care for, which is a great

trouble to a child of God, who liveth by his favour, and valueth that

above all things else : now for such a one to be rejected by God in

his own sense and feeling, it goeth near his heart ; yet in such a case

we should not cast away our confidence, nor give over all addresses

to God, but yet look to him and wait upon him.

[5.] Whether God answereth or no, it is the duty of faith to answer

itself. The answer of his providence is not so sure as the answer of his

word, and that faith hath to do with. See Ps. vi. 4, ' Keturn, Lord;

deliver my soul ; save me, for thy mercies' sake.' Compare ver. 8, 9,

' The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping : the Lord hath heard

the voice of my supplications; the Lord will receive my prayer.'

When trembling for fear of wrath, yet in prayer his heart groweth

confident as if it had received news of an answer from heaven : Ps. lv.

2, ' Attend unto me, and hear me;' compared with ver. 19, ' My God

shall hear, and afflict them.' He is confident of it that the prayer

should not miscarry. So Ps. liii. 1, 2, ' Deliver me from mine enemies,

my God ; defend me from them that rise up against me ; deliver me

from the workers of iniquity, and save me from bloody men ; ' ver. 10,

' The God of my mercy shall prevent me ; God shall let me see my

desire upon mine enemies.' Faith sees its own deliverance in the pro-

mise and all-sufficiency of God. When we have prayed according to

God's will, we should take our prayer for granted, and leave it lying

at God's feet : 1 John v. 14, ' And this is the confidence that we have

in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us.'

God's delay is not always an argument of his hatred, but some more

glorious purpose which is to be helped on by prayer : John xi. 5, 6,

1 When he had heard therefore that he was sick, he abode two days

still in the same place where he was.'

I observe again, that he not only repeateth his prayer, but reneweth

the promise of obedience, to f-how that it was no vanishing notion,

but a settled conclusion; as Christ maketh Peter profess his love

thrice to engage him the more, John xxi. So David, 'I will

keep thy statutes ;' and again, ' I will keep thy testimonies ; ' as if he

had said, Indeed Lord, I will ; it is the settled purpose of my heart

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to return to thee in the sincere obedience of ray whole life. The

note is —

Doct. That purposes ami promises of obedience should not be

slightly made, but with the greatest advertency and seriousness of mind.

1. Because we are usually too slight in devoting ourselves to God :

Deut. v. 27-29, ' Go thou near, and hear all that the Lord our God

shall say ; and speak thou unto us all that the Lord our God shall

speak unto thee, and we will hear it, and do it. And the Lord heard

the voice of your words when you spake unto me, and the Lord said

unto me, I have heard the voice of the words of this people, which they

have spoken unto thee ; they have well said, all that they have spoken.

Oh, that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me,

and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with

them, and with their children for ever.' The Israelites again, when

Joshua puts them to the question whether they would serve the Lord

or other gods, Joshua xxiv. 18, 19, ' We will serve the Lord, for

he is our God. Joshua said unto them. Ye cannot serve the Lord, for

he is an holy God.' What is the reason men are so slight? Partly

because they measure their strength by the present pang of devotion

that is upon them, not considering the latent principle of sin, and that

proneness to transgress that is in their hearts. Partly they take up

duty by the lump, and the general bulk and view of it, without sitting-

down and counting the charges, as Christ advises, Luke xiv. ; whether

they can be content to bear difficulties, renounce lusts, crucify the flesh

with the affections and lusts thereof. A foolish builder doth not think

of storms, Mat. vii. ; if his building stand for the present, he is satis-

fied. Partly because men will promise God fair to be rid of the present

anguish and troubles, yield to anything to be out of the present danger ;

but when they are out, they seldom regard the vows of their distress ;

as those, Ps. lxxviii. 34-37, made great promises, ' but their heart was

not right with God, neither were they steadl'ast in his covenant/ Partly

too when they are out of a temptation, and lusts are not stirring, they

are other men than when in temptation, and so think all will be easy.

2. Because the nature of the work calleth for advertency and seri-

ousness, because it is a work of the greatest moment, and so must be

done with the greatest deliberation. This devoting ourselves to God

both entitleth us to all the comforts of Christianity, and engageth us

to all the duties of it. It entitleth us to all the comforts ; you enter

yourselves heirs to the covenant of grace when you enter into the bond

of the holy oath, or give your hand to the Lord to be his people: 1 Cor.

iii. 22, ' All things are yours, because you are Christ's, and Christ is

God's.' If you have owned Christ as your dearest Saviour and sove-

reign Lord, with love, thankfulness, and subjection, and given him the

supreme command of your souls, then you are Christ's, and God is

yours, and all things yours : glory and salvation shall be yours in the

world to come; grace, help, maintenance, ordinances, and providences

shall be yours in the present world ; and death, as the connection be-

tween the two worlds, as the passage out of the one into the other,

shall be yours also. It is also the beginning and foundation of all

obedience, and if this were once seriously and heartily done, other

things would succeed the more easily. He that is indeed God's will

VER. 146.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 61

use himself for God's glory and service, and God shall have a share in

all that he hath and doth : Eom. xiv. 7, 8, ' None of us liveth to him-

self, and no man dieth to himself ; for whether we live, we live unto

the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we live,

therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.' They came off so freely : 2 Cor.

viii. 5, ' And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own

selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' This enliveneth

our whole work. It is no hard matter to persuade them that have

given up themselves to God to part with anything for God's use.

3. Because of the danger both in regard of sin and judgment, if we

do it not aright.

[1.] In regard of sin, rash and sudden engagements are seldom

sound : Mat. xiii. 20, 21, the stony ground received the word with joy,

and forthwith the good seed sprang up, but the blade soon withered.

Usually sudden undertakings are accompanied with faint and feeble

prosecutions ; and though men are warm and passionate for the present,

within a while it cometh to nothing ; all their promises are broken, as

tow is burnt in the fire.

[2.] In regard of judgment, every consecration implieth an execra-

tion. If you break with God after you have engaged yourselves to

him, your condition is worse ; it aggravateth every deliberate sin, and

hastens judgment, for God will avenge the quarrel of his covenant,

Lev. xxvi. 25. Better never begin, or the word pass out of your

mouths, or thought enter into your heart, unless you be sincere, mean

as you say. It is dangerous to alienate things once consecrated ; this

is the worst kind of sacrilege, that shall not go unpunished.

Use. You see, then, what seriousness we should use in devoting our-

selves to God, or promising obedience to him.

1. Kemember the weakness of a creature, that you may resolve in

God's strength.

2. Consider incident temptations, whether anything be like to

shake you in your covenanted course, that you may arm yourselves

against it.

3. Consider your more particular affections ; where the business is

like to stick most, there are tender parts.

4. Consider the weight and importance of subjection. He will not

be content with a little religiousness by the by, but you must love him

with all your heart and all your soul, and serve him with all your might.

5. Consider the strength of your resolution, that you be irrevocably,

everlastingly put under the sovereignty and command of God. Thus

do, and you will find success and comfort in your deed.

Now to the words themselves. There is first an intimation of a

prayer ; where —

1. The vehemency, / cried.

2. The object or person to whom, to thee.

' I cried.' David keepeth up his fervour. What crying in prayer is

I have showed in the former verse. I shall observe now —

Doct. That great trouble and sense of danger puts an edge upon

prayer, and kindleth our affection in it.

When Israel was under sore bondage, God saith, Exod. iii. 6 ' I

have seen the affliction of my people in Egypt, and have heard their

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cry/ \_ Afflictions make us cry in prayer, not only speak. An ordinary

affection is vox orationis ; it speaketh to God in prayer ; but a vehe-

ment affection is clamor orationis, the cry of prayer. Ordinary

prayers speak to God, but earnest prayers cry to God ; and though

remiss and cold wishes vanish in the air, yet strong cries pierce the

heavens. They have a shrill accent, and cannot be kept out from God :

Judges iv. 3, ' The children of Israel cried unto the Lord ; for he had

nine hundred chariots of iron.' So Judges vi. 5-7, ' They cried to

the Lord because of the Midianites, who came up as grasshoppers.'

David : Ps. xviii. 6, ' In my distress I called to the Lord, and cried to

my God : he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before

him, even into his ears.' He prayed not seldom, but often and fre-

quently ; not slackly, but with fervency and earnestness.

1. Affliction will teach men to pray that never prayed before. The

rude mariners in a storm called every man upon his god : Qui nescit

orare, discat navigare, Jonah i. 5. Those that neglect God at other

times, as if they had no need of him, or pray faintly, are then glad to

seek to him for succour and safety : Ps. lxxiii. 34, ' When he slew

them, then they sought him. and inquired early after God.' The

natural principle of fear of death and love of self-preservation puts

them upon it. So Jer. ii. 27, ' In their affliction they will say, Arise

and save us ; ' Judges x. 10, ' And the children of Israel cried unto the

Lord, saying, We have sinned against thee ; ' and ver. 14, ' Go, and

cry unto the gods that ye have chosen ; let them deliver you in the

time of your tribulation.'

2. Good ones that prayed before will pray better and oftener, and

with greater seriousness. Therefore God puts his own in straits to

quicken their affections : Isa. xxvi. 16, 'Lord, in trouble have they

visited thee ; they poured out a prayer, when thy chastening was upon

them.' So Hosea v. 15, ' I will go and return to my place, till they

acknowledge their offence, and seek my face, in their affliction they

will seek me early.' When we are pressed hard on all sides, then the

throne of grace is more frequented ; we are driven to it. Joab would

not come at Absalom's call till he set his barley-field on fire.

Use 1. Be content to be cast into such an estate that you may learn

to pray ; for, alas ! we are but cursory at other times, but then our

necessities whip us to the throne of grace, that was set up for a time

of need ; then is a time to put promises in suit, to make use of our

interest in God. We mis-expound the voice of God's providence ; we

expound trouble to be his casting off, putting us from him ; they are

his voice calling, his hand pulling us to him : it is a time of drawing

nigh we are allowed : Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in a day of trouble.'

The day of trouble is the fruit of sin, a part of the old curse. When

we think him, feel him an enemy, he is drawing us nearer to him.

Blessed season to bring God and you together, when our troubles chase

us to the throne of grace. God is not wholly gone, he hath left some-

what behind him to draw us to himself.

Use 2. It reproveth them that neglect God in their troubles: Dan.

ix. 13, ' All this is come upon us, yet we have not made our prayer

unto thee.' You defer the dispensation ; now you should make up

your former negligence. Unprofitableness under the rod is an ill

VER. 146.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 63

presage, when God sends a tempest after us. Oh, how frequent and

earnest should we be in the practice of this duty !

1. This is a time proper for it. Prayer is a duty never out of season,

though some seasons are proper and solemn to it. God is always to

be prayed unto, Job xxvii. 11. When freed from trouble and incon-

venience we are not freed from prayer ; still we must profess depen-

dence, subjection, and maintain our communion. But this is a special

season : James v. 13, ' Is any one afflicted ? let him pray.'

2. Though afflictions drive us to the throne of grace, yet if we

come seriously and heartily, we are not unwelcome to him. Those

very prayers which necessity doth extort from us are accepted by God,

and valued by him as an acceptable piece of worship. Therefore such

as look toward God ought not to be discouraged though afflictions

drive them to it, though they sought him not before, or not in good

earnest before ; provided that always they find other errands, and be

careful to maintain a constant communion with him. Most that are

acquainted with God are taken in the briars. Jesus Christ in the days

of his flesh had never heard of many, if their necessities had not

brought them to him — their palsies, and possessions, and fevers, deaf-

ness, dumbness ; thanks to these as their awakening occasions. A

man will say, You come to me in your necessity. God is willing to

receive us upon any terms.

3. How desperate in appearance soever our condition seem to be,

yet crying will bring relief, or help may be found in God for them

that cry to him : Judges iii. 9, ' When they cried, the Lord raised up

a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them, even Othniel

the son of Kenaz : ' Judges iii. 15, ' And when the children of Israel

cried to the Lord, the Lord raised them up a deliverer, Ehud the son

of Gera.' So Psalm cvii. ; frequently.

From that unto thee.

JDoct. In our troubles we must have recourse to God, and sue to him

by prayer and supplication for help and deliverance in due time.

1. Because he is the author of our trouble. In miseries and afflic-

tions our business lieth not with men, but God ; by humble dealing

with him we stop wrath at the fountain-head. He that bindeth

us must loose us ; he is at the upper end of causes, and whoever be

the instruments of our trouble, and how malicious soever, God is the

party with whom we are to make our peace ; for he hath the absolute

disposal of all creatures, and will have us to acknowledge the dominion

of his providence, and our dependence upon him. In treaties of peace

between two warring parties, the address is not made to private

soldiers, but to their chief : 'The Lord hath taken away/ saith Job,

chap, xxxiv. 29 ; ' when he giveth quietness, who then can make

trouble ? '

2. He challengeth this prerogative to be the God of salvation : Ps.

iii. 8, ' Salvation belongeth unto the Lord ; ; and therefore, if we would

be saved, we must seek it of him. Others cannot help if he help not,

for he hath all means and creatures and second causes at his command.

If we lean to means, they may fail, but if we rely upon God, he will

never fail. Therefore, whatever means God offereth for our help,

prayer to God is the best means, and first to be used.

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3. There is comfort in dealing with God, whatever our case be.

(I.) Because of his all-sufficient power. (2.) Because of his good-

will and readiness to help.

[1.] Because of his power and all-sufficiency, so that he hath ways

of deliverance more than we know of, and can save his own when men

do count their case desperate: Dan. iii. 29, ' There is no other God

that can deliver after this sort.' Let the strait be never so great, the

burden heavy, and the creature weak, and at a desperate loss, yet God

can rind out ways and means to do his people good.

[2.] For his good-will and readiness to hear : Ps. lxv. 2, ' Oh, thou

that nearest prayer, unto thee shall all flesh come.' The readiness of

God to hear prayer doth open a door of access to all people who are

sensible of their burdens and necessities. He hath ever showed him-

self ready to hear the cries and groans of his people, and woe be to

them against whom they cry : Ps. xxii. 5, ' They cried unto thee, and

were delivered.' Their cries and groans are not hid from him, and

cannot be shut out: Ps. cvi. 44, 'Nevertheless he regarded their

affliction, and he heard their cry.'

Use. 1. To reprove divers sorts.

1. Some seek to help themselves by impatiency, fretting, unquiet

behaviour in their troubles ; this doth increase their misery. Go, pour

out your hearts before the Lord, that giveth ease : Phil. iv. 6, 7, ' Be

careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with

thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the

peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts

and minds, through Christ Jesus/ Your wrestling with trouble within

yourselves doth but embroil you the more.

2. Some trust in outward helps, seek to men and means ; as Asa to

the physicians, not to the Lord, 2 Chron. xvi. 12. It is not unlawful

to use means, but we must depend upon the Lord for the blessing.

Seek to him first, otherwise looking to man proveth a snare many

ways, as it tempts us to comply with their lusts, to neglect God, maketli

way for the greater sorrow in disappointment. The creature is vain

in itself, made more vain by our confidence: Ps. Ix. 11, ' Give us help

from trouble, for vain is the help of man.' You will be brought to it

at last. The more earnestly we seek God, the more confidence we

may have of the creature.

Use 2. To inform us of the privilege and duty of the godly.

1. Their privilege ; they have a God to go to. The worldly man

sigheth and crieth he knoweth not to whom ; but the godly man pre-

senteth himself in his lamentations to God : ' My friends scorn me,

but mine eye poureth out tears unto God,' Job xvi. 20. He hath a

Father in secret, a Friend in a corner ; they need not go to men, nor

to saints and angels ; they have God himself, and can challenge him

by his office, as the judge of the world, to help poor creatures : Ps.

xciv. 2, ' Lift up thyself, thou judge of the world ; render a reward to

the proud.' Yea, by his peculiar relation to them : Ps. v. 2, ' Hearken

unto the voice of my cry, my king and my God ; for unto thee will I

pray.' They do not cry unto him as a stranger, but one in covenant

relation with them.

2. Their duty to make God their guardian and saviour in all their

VER. 14G.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 65

distress, when in their own sense they are near perishing : Mark viii.

26, 'Arise, save us, we perish;' 2 Kings xix. 19, 'Now therefore,

Lord our God, I beseech thee, save us out of his hand; that all the king-

doms of the earth may know that thou art the Lord God, even thou only.'

When they have a good cause and a good conscience, this they may do

and this they ought to do, and they will have comfort in it.

The last thing which I shall observe is —

Doct. That prayer for deliverance should be accompanied with

serious purposes of obedience. ' Then,' saith David, ' I will keep thy

testimonies.'

1. Because this is the best expression of gratitude and thankfulness.

I take it for granted that every mercy from God deserveth a thankful

return on the creature's part ; as we expect a return of our prayers, so

God expecteth a return of his mercies ; and therefore we should be as

careful to give him what he requireth, as we are careful to seek of him

that which we need ; for even in our commerce with God there is ratio

dati et accepti. I presume, again, that there is no such expression of

thankfulness as obedience. Verbal thanks are but a cold return ;

thanks-doing is the best thanksgiving : Ps. 1. 23, ' He that offereth

praise glorifieth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation aright

will I show the salvation of God.' Yea, once more, that we should

think of this aforehand ; while we are asking the mercy in our distress,

we should engage ourselves to glorify God both in word and deed.

Again, the time that we have our mercies for ; in affliction we consider

and are more serious, and afterwards we should keep the conscience of

our obligation.

2. It is a sign the rod hath done its work, and then it will be

gone, when it hath convinced you of former failings, and put you

upon serious purposes : Job xxxiv. 31, 32, ' Surely it is meet to be

said unto God, I have borne chastisement, I will offend no more.

That which I see not, teach thou me : if I have done iniquity, I will

do no more.' Otherwise what we ask of temporal mercy is either denied

us or we get it in wrath.

3. You have a true notion of deliverance ; you look upon it as an

engaging mercy ; therefore if God alter your condition you are bound

to serve him. The end of our great deliverance is service : Luke i.

74, 75, ' That he would grant unto us, that w T e, being delivered out of

the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness

and righteousness before him all the days of our life/ All deliverances

out of straits are branches and appendices of the great redemption of

our souls unto eternal life, and have the same end and use : Ps. cv.

45, ' That they might observe his statutes and keep his laws.' That

is the end of all deliverance out of trouble, to engage the hearts of his

people to obedience, heart to serve him, opportunity to serve him.

4. A gracious heart desireth nothing to himself alone, and cannot be

content to have the use of any benefit to himself only, but eyes God in

all his enjoyments and all his requests ; therefore his great aim is that

he may be in the better condition to keep God's commandments, for

they ' live unto God ;' Eom. xiv. 7, 8, ' For none of us liveth unto him-

self, and no man dietli unto himself ; for whether we live, we live unto

the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord ; whether we

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live therefore or die, we are the Lord's.' In every state they would be

unto God what they are when they seek to be delivered ; it is that they

may be in the better condition and capacity to serve God, and have

more opportunities to glorify his name.

Use. To persuade us to seek deliverance with these aims.

1. This is the temper of the people of God ; that which urgeth to

prayer is his glory ; that which is their scope is his service. It is seen

partly by the secret workings and purposes of their souls, what they do

with their mercies when they have them ; what they please themselves

with in the supposition of obtaining them. What is it with ? The

satisfying of their revenge, providing for their families, living in pomp

and ease, or that they may serve God ? Ps. lxxv. 2, ' When I shall

receive the congregation, I will judge uprightly ;' if ever God give an

opportunity again. And partly by the preparations ; they are afraid

of a treacherous heart, therefore fitting themselves to enjoy the mercy

before they have it, as the apostle learned to abound, Phil. iv. 11, 12.

Partly by the arguments they urge in prayer: Ps. lxxxviii. 10-12,

' Wilt thou show wonders to the dead ? shall the dead arise and praise

thee ? shall thy loving-kindness be declared in the grave, or thy faith-

fulness in destruction ? Shall thy wonders be known in the dark, and

thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness ?' So Ps. cvi. 47, ' Save

us, Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give

thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.' A true

believer would have comfort, not for his own satisfaction, but to glorify

God.

2. Then we are sure to 'speed when our end is right : James iv. 3,

' Ye ask and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it

upon your lusts.' We may speak it with confidence, our prayers mis-

carry for want of a right end.

3. The equity of this ; God hears us that we should hear him.

SERMON CLXV.

I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy

word. — Veb. 147.

David still goeth on to give us an account of his fervour in prayer, ' I

cried.' That which we have new in this verse is —

1. His vigilancy and diligence, I prevented the dawning of the morn-

ing, and cried.

2. The reason and encouragement of this instant and assiduous

praying, I hoped in thy word.

First, His vigilancy and diligence, ' I prevented,' &c. He rose betimes

to meditate and pray ; the Septuagint, iv dcopia. Hesychius defineth that

time to be wpav airpaKrov, a time of no business ; when others were

sleeping David was praying. The word ' prevented' is emphatical.

David lived as it were in a strife with time, being careful it should not

overrun him ; he pressed to get before it, by doing some good in it,

and to get beforehand with the day.

VER. 147.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 67

Doct. Those that make a business of prayer will use great vigilancy

and diligence therein.

I say, that make a business of prayer ; others that use it as a com-

pliment and customary formality will not be thus affected, or do it as

a thing by the by, or a work that might well be spared, do not look

upon it as a necessary duty ; but if a man's heart be in it, he will be

early at work, and follow it close morning and night. His business is

to maintain communion with God ; his desires will not let him sleep,

and he gets up early to be calling upon God: Ps. lxxxviii. 13, ' But

unto thee have I cried, Lord, and in the morning shall my prayer

prevent thee.' Thus will good men even break their sleep to give

themselves to prayer and calling upon the name of God. So Isa. xxvi.

9, ' With my soul have I desired thee in the night, and with my spirit

within me will I seek thee early/ A man that hath an earnest desire

after God, he will be at it night and day, when others are taking their

rest. Their seeking of God is early and earnest ; but where such strong

desires are not, God is little minded and regarded ; and of all busi-

nesses prayer seemeth that which may be best spared.

That I may fully commend David's practice to you, I shall observe

in this his diligence : —

1. That it was a personal, closet, or secret prayer, ' I cried,' I alone,

with thee in secret.

2. That it was an early morning prayer, ' I prevented the dawning

of the morning.'

3. That it was a vehement and earnest prayer, for it is expressed

by crying, which, as Chrysostom saith, noteth ov rovov -n}? <}>covf)<i

dWa t?}? 8iavoia<i rrjv hiaOecriv — Chrys. in Ps. v. He proveth it by

that of God to Moses, ' Wherefore criest thou unto me ? ' Exod. xiv.

15. And when Moses was silent, yet he crieth ; for crying noteth the

affection of the mind, not extension of the voice. Where I shall note,

that it was an earnest prayer, though private ; and earnest, though as

yet he could get no answer.

4. That it was the prayer of a public person, of a king, and a king

entangled in wars, whose calling exposed him to a multitude of

business and distractions ; yet he had his times of converse with God.

Take all this together, and the pattern will be more fit to be com-

mended to your imitation.

First, It was a personal or secret prayer, ' I cried,' I alone, and

without company. Our Saviour doth in Mat. xviii. 19, 20, encourage

us to public prayer, by the blessed effect of such petitions, where two

or three do agree to ask anything of God in the name of Christ. He

doth suppose that his disciples will make conscience of personal and

solitary prayer, and therefore giveth directions and encouragement

about it : Mat. vi. 6, ' But when thou prayest, enter into thy closet,

and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which seeth in

secret, and thy Father which seeth in secret will reward thee openly.'

He taketh it for granted that every one of his disciples is sufficiently

convinced of being often with God in private, and pouring out his

heart to God alone. It is not if, but when, as supposing they will be

careful of this ; it is not plurally and collectively, ' when ye pray,' but

orav irpoaevxv ' when thou prayest.' Elsewhere the context speaketh

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of public prayer, or the assemblies of saints and of family worship ;

but here he speaketh of personal prayer. Church prayer hath a

►special blessing, when with a combined force we besiege heaven ; as

the petition of a shire and county is more than a private man's sup-

plication ; but yet this is not without its blessing. God is with you

in private. Pray to thy Father in secret, and he that seeth in secret

observeth the carriage and posture and frame of thy spirit ; all thy

fervour and uprightness of heart is known to him. That which is the

hypocrite's fear, that God seeth in secret, is the saint's comfort, that

God seeth in secret : it bindeth condemnation upon the thoughts of

wicked men, 1 John iii. 21, but is their support, John xxi. 17; Rom.

viii. 17, ' He that searcheth the heart knoweth the mind of the spirit'

He knoweth the brokenness or unbrokenness of the heart ; he can

pick out the very language of thy sighs and groans, know where thou

art, and how thou art employed: Acts ix. 11, 'Arise and go into the

street which is called Strait, and inquire in the house of Judas for one

Saul of Tarsus, for behold he prayeth.' In such a street, in such a

house, in such a chamber of the house, there is one a-praying : a

notable place to express God's seeing in secret, where we are, what we

do, and how affected. And then his reward is another encouragement ;

he will reward thee openly, grant thee what thou prayest for, or bless

thee for the conscionable performance of this duty. Openly, either by

a sensible answer of thy prayers, as Dan. ix. 20-22; or with an

evident blessing, as Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the eyes of the

world; God highly favoured them. A secret prayer hath an open

blessing ; or in convincing the consciences of men ; Pharaoh sendeth

for Moses and Aaron when in distress. The consciences of wicked

men are convinced that God's praying children have special audience

with him ; no magicians sent for then, but Moses and Aaron. Thus

God may reward them openly : 1 Sam. ii. 30, ' Those that honour me

I will honour.' But chiefly at the day of judgment: Luke xiv. 14,

' He shall be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.' Then is

the great reward of Christians, and most public : ' Then shall every

man have praise of God,' 1 Cor. iv. 5. Thus you see how our Lord

encourageth us to closet prayer. But let us see other arguments to

engage us to this duty.

1. All the precepts of prayer do include closet prayer : ' Continue

in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving,' Col. iv. 2 ;

' Pray without ceasing,' 1 Thes. v. 17. First God's precepts fall upon

single persons before it falleth upon families and churches ; for God

considereth us first as persons apart, and then in our several com-

binations and societies in joining with others. The duty is rather

imposed upon us than taken up by voluntary choice ; and that only at

stated times, when they can conveniently meet. If we are to continue

in prayer, and to pray without ceasing, we are to make conscience

ourselves of being often with God. Every person that acknowledgeth

a God, that hath a Father in heaven, must come and profess his

dependence upon him.

2. The example of Christ, which beareth the force of a law in things

moral. We read often of Christ's praying : Mark i. 35, ' He went out

into a solitary place to pray ; ' and Mat. xiv. 23, and Luke vi. 12, we

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read he prayed a whole night to God. Now let us improve this

instance. Christ had no such need of prayer as we have ; the God-

head dwelt in him bodily ; nor such need of retirement ; his affections

were always in frame ; yet he went out from the company of his

disciples to pray alone to God. This pattern is very engaging, for if

we have the spirit of Christ, we will do as Christ did; and very

encouraging, for by submitting to this duty he sanctifieth it for all :

his steps drop fatness, and leave a blessing and virtue behind him.

And it assureth us of his sympathising with us ; he is acquainted with

the heart of an earnest supplicant ; and it is some comfort against our

imperfections ; when we are with God, and our hearts are as heavy as

a log, it is a comfort to think of this particular rjart of his righteous-

ness by which our defects are covered.

3. I shall urge it from God's end in pouring out the Spirit, that we

may pray apart, and mourn apart over our distempers and personal

necessities, Zech. xii. 10-14. Many will say they have no gifts ;

certainly they that feel their necessities will speak of them in one

fashion or another. But this cuts off the objection. The Spirit is

given to help thee : I will pour upon them the Spirit of grace and

supplication, and they shall mourn apart. Such is God's condescension

to the saints, that he hath provided for them not only an advocate

but a notary ; a notary to draw up their petitions, and an advocate to

present them in court. And surely the gifts of the Spirit should not

lie by idle and useless.

4. I might urge you too from the practice of the saints, who are

called God's suppliants, Zeph. iii. 10 ; the generation that seek him,

Ps. xxiv. 6. They delight in God's company, and cannot be content

to stay away long from him. Daniel had his three times a day, Dan.

vi. 10. So David : Ps. lv. 17, ' Evening and morning and noon will

I pray and cry aloud, and he shall hear my voice.' And ' Seven times

a day will I praise thee/ Ps. cxix. 164. And Cornelius prayed to God

always, Acts x. 2 ; not only with his family, but sometimes alone for

his family. They that have a habit of prayer will be thus affected.

Now, to be altogether unlike the people of God giveth just cause of

suspicion.

5. Shall I add our own private necessities, which cannot be so

feelingly spoken to by others, do challenge such a duty at our hands,

or it may be are not so fit to be divulged and communicated to them :

1 Kings viii. 38, ' There is the plague of our own hearts.' Paul had

his thorn in the flesh : 1 Cor. xii. 7, ' I sought the Lord thrice.' No

nurse like the mother ; none so fit feelingly to lay forth our case to

God as ourselves. Private prayer it is a help to enlargement of heart,

for the more earnest men are, the more they desire to be alone : Jer.

xiii. 17, ' My soul shall weep sore in secret places.' Christ went from

his disciples in his agony, when he would pray more earnestly, Luke

xxii. 41, 42. Strong affections are loath to be disturbed, and seek

retirement. Jacob sent away his company when he wrestled with

God, Gen. xxiii. 24. Oh ! then, let all this be considered by you. If

you neglect closet addresses to God, you wrong God and yourselves.

You wrong God, because it is a necessary part of the creature's

homage to God ; and you wrong yourselves, because such duties bring

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in a great deal of comfort and peace to the soul, and many sweet and

gracious experiences, which are not vouchsafed elsewhere. Bernard

saith, The church's spouse is bashful, and Christ will not communicate

his loves in company. You are to use acquaintance with God, and so

peace shall come to us, Job xxii. 21. It argueth little friendship to

God when we seldom come at him, and maintain no personal com-

merce with him. "When we pray with others, we cannot so well tell

who is heard as when we pray alone, and see what God will do for our

souls : Ps. cxvi. 1 , ' I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the

voice of my supplication.' You sought earnestly for such a thing, and

the Lord heard you. To conclude all, a man will not pray with any

savour and delight in public that doth not pray in secret. I observe

in Ezekiel's vision the Lord removed from the temple by degrees;

first from the holy place to the altar of burnt-offerings, then to the

threshold of the house, then to the mountain on the east side of the

city ; there it stood hovering as loath to be gone. So first God is cast

out of the closet, private intercourses are neglected, then out of the

family, and then out of the congregation, and then public ordinances

are laid aside as useless ; then are men given up to a strange giddy

and vertiginous spirit, and all manner of profaneness. As a tree dies

by degrees, first bears no fruit, then no leaves, then no bark ; so carnal

Christians die by degrees.

Secondly, It was an early morning prayer, ' I prevented the dawn-

ing of the morning, and cried.' I would not lay a burden upon anjr

one's conscience ; so God have his due at any time of the day, it is

enough. In colder climates, those of a weaker constitution may not

be able to rise so soon, and therefore if any other time of the day be

fittest for commerce, all circumstances considered, it cometh to the

same issue. Yet that the morning is our golden time, and should not

be neglected out of sluggishness, whatever dispensation there be for

weakness, these considerations may evince.

1. The example of Christ and his saints. We read of our Lord

Jesus Christ, Mark i. 35, ' That in the morning, rising a great while

before day, he went out and prayed.' This example bindeth those to

receive it that can receive it. If you would take the opportunity of

the morning, it deserves to be considered by us how willing Christ was

to deny his natural rest to be with God in private. And have not we

more need ? And accordingly the saints have practised this : Ps. v.

3, ' My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, Lord ; in the morning

I will direct my prayer to thee, and look up.' Upon which Chrysostom

saith, Before thou washest thy hands, wash thy soul by prayer. So

again, Ps. lix. 1G, ' I will sing aloud of thy mercy in the morning.'

So would David begin his day with praises of God and prayers to him.

So 1 Sam. i. 19, ' And they rose up early, and worshipped before the

Lord.' That was their first work, and they were betimes at it. So the

primitive Christians had their hymnos antelucanos, they sung psalms

to God and Christ in the morning early, as their persecutors informed

against them. See Tertul. Apol. Euseb., &c. Now this is of some

signifiance to Christians.

2. Because whenever we have strong affections to anything, we make

it our morning work, be it good or bad. Good ; so Mary and Mary

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Magdalene came early to the sepulchre of Christ, Mat. xxviii. The

disciples, when they came to wait for the promise of the Spirit, they

met betimes, for the Holy Ghost fell upon them in the morning : Acts

ii. 15, ' For these men are not drunk, as ye suppose, seeing it is but

the third hour of the day/ which was about nine of the clock ; and

some good time had been spent before, as appears by this speech that

was uttered. So Hosea v. 16, 'In their afflictions they will seek me

early.' This is their first and chiefest work : that which urgeth the

heart most, we shall think of in the morning. The objects that have

made deepest impression upon our spirits will present themselves before

any images be received from abroad : Prov. vi. 22, ' Bind my law upon

thy heart ; when thou walkest, it shall talk with thee,' &c. Abraham,

when he went about the work of offering his son Isaac, he rose early

in the morning, Gen. xxii. So, for bad things : if a man be worldly,

his worldly desires and affections compel him to rise early for their

satisfaction, Ps. cxxvii. 3, the drunkard is thinking early of his morn-

ing draught, to be filled with wine! Isa. xv. 11, 'Woe to them that

rise up early to follow strong drink.' The people, when they were

mad upon the calf, Exod. xxxvi. 6, ' They rose up early in the morn-

ing and offered burnt-offerings to it.' Whatsoever hath secured its

interest in the soul will first urge us. So if prayer be our chief

pleasure, it will urge us to be up betimes with God : our delights and

affections solicit us in the morning.

3. It is the choicest time of the day, and therefore should be allotted

to the most serious and necessary employment. It is the choicest time,

partly with respect to the body, because the body is then best refreshed,

and our vigour repaired, which is lessened and spent with the business

of the day ; our memories quickest, senses readiest, natural faculties

most acute. And partly with respect to the mind; our morning

thoughts are our virgin thoughts, more pure, sublime, and defecate,

usually free from worldly cares, which would distract us in prayer, and

will more encroach upon us by our worldly business, and the baser

objects which the necessity of our life engages us to converse with, and

be employed about. Certainly the best time should be taken up about

the best business ; not in recreations to be sure, for this is to knit plea-

sure to pleasure, and to wear away the scythe in whetting, not in work-

ing. They are brutish epicures that rise up from sleep, not to service,

but to their sensual delights and vanities ; as the scripture brandeth

them that eat in the morning, not for strength, but excess, Eccles. x.

16, 17. The morning is the fittest time for business. Now what

business should we do but the most weighty, and that which requireth

the greatest heedfulness of soul, which is our communion with God ?

4. Consider, it is profitable to begin the day with God, and to season

the heart with some gracious exercise; as David, Ps. cxxxix. 18,

' When I awake, I am still with thee.' It sanctifieth all our other

business, as the offering the first-fruits did sanctify the whole lump.

And to whom should the first-fruits of our reason and sense restored

be consecrated, but to him that gave us all, and is the author and pre-

server of them ? When the world gets the start of religion, it can

hardly overtake it all the day : the first thoughts leave a powerful

impression upon it = Micah ii. 1, ' They devise evil upon their beds.

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and when the morning is come they practise it/ With carnal men

sin beginneth in the morning, stayeth in the heart all day, playeth in

the fancy all night. But if you begin with God in the morning, you

take God along with you all the day to your business and employment.

5. This will be some recompense for the time lost in sleeping : half

our lives are consumed in it; our time is parted between work and

sleep. It is the misery and necessity we are subject unto, whilst we

are in the body, that so much of our time should be spent without

doing anything for God, or showing any act of love and thankfulness

to him. None of the other creatures ever stand still, but are always

executing and accomplishing the end for which they were made. And

in heaven the blessed spirits are always beholding the face of God, and

lauding and blessing his name, and need not those intermissions which

we bodily creatures do. Now, though this be our necessity, and so no

sin to need the refreshings of sleep, yet because so much of our time

is lost, by way of recompense, the least that we should do is to take

the next season ; and if health and bodily constitution will permit, to

prevent the dawning of the morning, and to be as early with God as

we can. All the time we can well spare should be given to God. Do

but consider, since thou wentest to bed the sun hath travelled many

thousand miles to give thee light this morning, and therefore what a

shame it is that the sun, being continually in so swift motion, should

return and find him turning and tossing in his bed, like a door upon

the hinges, Prov. xx. 14, after nature is satisfied with sleep ; and that

we should not rise, and own God's mercy in the rest of the night, and

sanctify the labours of the day by some serious address to him. This

meditation is enforced by Augustine, indecus est Christiano, si radius

solis earn inveniat in lecto, posset enim dicere sol, si potestatrm

loquendi haberet, Amplius laboravi heri, quam tu : et tamen cum jam

surrexerim, tu adhuc do?\*mis. So Ambrose on this text, grave est si

te otiosum radius solis orientis in verecundo pudore conveniat, et

lux clara inveniat occidos somnolento adhuc corpore depressos.

Thirdly, It was a vehement and earnest prayer ; for saith David,

' I cried.' Observe —

Doct. It was earnest, though private ; and it was earnest, though he

could get no satisfactory answer.

1. Earnest though private. In all our addresses to God we must

be serious ; whether men see or hear or no, God seeth and heareth. A

hypocrite hath a great flash of gifts in company, but is strait when

alone ; but God's children are most earnest in private, when they do

more particularly open their hearts to God, without taking in the

necessities of others. Christ when he was withdrawn from his discijiles,

then he prayed eKrevearepov, ' more earnestly,' Luke xxii. 44. Jacob sent

away his company to deal with God in good earnest, and then wrestled

with him : ille dolet vere qui sine teste dolet. Peter went out and

wept bitterly. So a Christian trieth it out between God and him,

when he hath a mind to plead for his own soul or for the church ;

therefore hath no outward reason to move him but conscience and

spiritual affection. The pharisees would pray in the synagogues and

corners of the streets; but Christ saith, ' Go into thy closet, and shut

the door, and pray to thy Father in secret/ Mat. vi. 7. This is the

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love and confidence we express to our Father in secret. A man may-

put forth himself with great warmth and vigour before others, that is

slight and careless in secret addresses to God. In these secret inter-

courses we most taste our spirits, and discern the pure workings of

affection towards God. A woman that only bemoaneth the loss of her

husband in company, but banisheth all thoughts of him when alone,

might justly be suspected to act a tragical part, and to pretend sorrow

rather than feel it. Some will pray in secret, but customarily utter a

few cold words; but David saith, ' I cried.' Remember there is one

seeth in secret ; as Christ saith, ' I am not alone,' John xvi. 32 ; and

Mai. i. 14, he is a God of great majesty ; he will not be put off with

anything, with a short good-morrow or a hasty sigh. Consider, if you

pray in good earnest, the prayer will not be lost ; there is a register

kept in heaven : Acts x. 4, ' Thy prayer is come up as a memorial

before God.' Surely a man that believeth and consulteth these things

dareth not be slight, though there be none present but God and his

own soul.

2. It was earnest though the answer was delayed : I cried, I cried ;

I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. The Lord can-

not away with cold asking and a ceasing upon every repulse. You

must continue to pray when God continueth to deny, otherwise you

do not pray in faith ; for when the word warrants you to pray, either

by way of command or promise, you must not give over. David saith

here, ' I cried, for I hoped in thy word.' When providence giveth no

answer, you must take your answer out of the covenant or promise,

and so answer yourself when God doth not answer you : 1 Sam. xii.

23, ' God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray

for you.' You cannot dispense with your duty, whatever the success

be. Sometimes duty keepeth up prayer, sometimes the promise, and

so hope of the mercy prayed for; there is no way to bring the promise

and the providence of God together but by prayer or putting the

promise in suit. Your obedience will be assaulted by the ingratitude

of those whom you pray for, and your confidence by God's seeming

denials ; therefore, as long as God commandeth, and he promiseth

encouragement, you are not to give way, but hold up the suit still,

whatever discouragements there be without. A good dog hunts by

sight as long as he can see his game, but when that is lost, he hunts

by scent. Visible probabilities be a good encouragement to give a

lift to the mercy, when it seemeth to be coming on ; but though it be

out of sight, faith keepeth the scent of the promise, keeps crying still;

he heareth though he doth not answer, and the prayer will not be

lost : but of this before.

Fourthly, It is the prayer of a public person, who had his distrac-

tions, and more occasions than we can possibly pretend unto, yet he

would not lose his praying hours. This consideration will yield us

two notes : —

1. That David had his times of converse with God.

2. That rather than fail of them, he would take them from his

sleep.

1. That he had his times of converse with God : Eccles. iii. 1,

There is a time for all things,' much more for the best things :

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therefore, if you have a time for other things, to eat and drink, and follow

your worldly business, surely you should have a time for prayer. Shall

we have a time for everything, and no time for God? Certainly we could

not want time if we did not want a heart. Many complain they have no

time, and many distractions ; if you have no time to pray, you have no

time to be saved, no time to maintain the life and comfort and peace

of your souls. David had as many employments as thou hast or

canst have, therefore it is but a vain excuse. He that will regard

what his own sluggish heart will allege, will never pray, never retire

or be alone with God : a willing mind will find time in the midst of

the greatest distractions ; whomsoever he compounds with and payeth

short, he will not make bold with God, and serve him by halves.

Look, as David speaks in 1 Chron. xxii. 14, ' Behold, in my trouble I

have prepared for the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold and

a thousand thousand talents of silver.' He was involved in wars, his

exchequer impoverished and diminished, yet he kept vast sums for

the temple. Surely the lean kine should not devour the fat, nor

religion only be thrust out of doors. It is a more happy thing that

Martha should complain of Mary than Mary neglect her duty. Holy

privacy and closet work should not be neglected. It would be no loss

lo our other occasions if we did more prudently divide and allot out

our time, and give God a good allowance rather than straiten him.

Indeed, what part you should give to God is another question.

In the general, it is good to dedicate a certain part and portion of

our time to the Lord of time. Idle servants must be tasked, and

required to bring in their tale of bricks. A prudent allotment, such

as is consistent with our occasions and course of life, would be no

burden to you. I am sure it will make your duties more seasonable

and orderly. It is an expression of love to give him somewhat that

is our own. In the general, we are not tied to the seasons of eating

and drinking, yet for conveniency we have our stated hours. The

most necessary work should have a turn, and not be taken up by

chance, and not left to a mere haphazard ; it will make you more

careful and watchful how you spend your other hours, that you may

not be unfit for duty when your time of worship cometh, 1 Peter

iii. 7.

Again, though we cannot bind you absolutely to a time, they that

are most holy will be most frequent with God. Love will direct.

They that love one another cannot be strange to each other : he that

loveth God cannot be long out of his company. God trusts love ;

that grace is liberal and open-hearted. Christ resorted often to

Bethany, because he loved Martha, Mary, and Lazarus, John xi.

The Spirit of God will direct you by his motions, Ps. xxvii. 8.

Sometimes he sendeth you into the closet ; your own necessities will

put you in mind ; he hath left many wants upon us to bring us into

his presence : James i. 5, 'If any man want wisdom,' &c. ; Heb. iv.

16, ' Let us come with boldness to the throne of grace, that we may

obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.' The interest

of the spiritual life directs you ; you cannot maintain it in any vigour

but by some recourse to God ; some time God must have.

2. Bather than fail, he would take it from his sleep. Other busi-

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ness must give way to the great work and interest, especially the most

inconsiderable interests of recreation. We are bidden to redeem time,

Eph. v. 16, rescue it from meat, sleep, company, and recreation.

Surely this is an equitable proposal, let God have as much time every

day as thou spendest unprofitably. Do but observe the spending of

thy time, and be ashamed that God should have such a little share.

Use. Now you see David's instance, let this persuade you to this

assiduity and diligence, to be ardent and instant in prayer, taking

hold of all opportunities to pursue after God, without whom you can-

not live : Ps. lxix. 32, ' Your hearts shall live, that seek God.' We

cannot preserve any vitality without this. To press this —

1. Eetire often from company to be alone with God. Public duties

are of little profit with us because we neglect private. God com-

plaineth of his people, Jer. ii. 32, ' That they have forgotten him days

without number.' How many days have gone over your heads, and

God never heard from you ! You should no more forget him every

day than a bride would forget her ornaments on the wedding-day.

2. Let me lay this before you ; you should be betimes with God, that

you may not encroach upon your other occasions ; yea, that you may

sanctify your other occasions, and be the fitter for it all the day after.

Let not the soft enemy of sleep steal away your golden hours, and the

flower and choicest part of time. A Christian that makes conscience

of his time should not inure himself to a sluggish course, and turn

in his bed like a door upon the hinges, if your constitution will bear

it, otherwise we lay no blame upon you. The scriptures have many

dissuasives from immoderate sleep, Prov. v. 9, xiii. 4, xxvi. 14, vi.

6. To be sure a Christian is to make conscience of time, and how

he spendeth it ; and we may sin and surfeit in sleeping as well as in

eating and drinking ; and therefore we must watch against the en-

croachments of ease and sloth, lest a sluggish humour grow natural

to us, and a morbid custom that cannot be shaken off.

3. It presseth you to fervency, though in private. As much fer-

vency, sense, and zeal as you would express before men, so much

should we express when alone. The name of God must be sanctified

in all that draw near to him, in private as well as in public, otherwise

he is scorned rather than honoured ; that it may appear you were

sincere in prayer, and have not mean and low thoughts of God, other-

wise you bring a suspicion upon all your public duties. There may

be sometimes more assistance in public, more order and method for

edification, but not more ardour and zeal. Pray with fervency, as to

an all-seeing spirit. Though the Lord delayeth, yet he intendeth the

enlargement of our desires : Lam. iii. 49, 50, ' Mine eye trickleth

down and ceaseth not, without any intermission ; till the Lord looks

down from heaven and beholds.' If you are soon discouraged you

will get nothing.

4. Be sure that God hath his share. If business take up more

time than prayer, because of the urgency of bodily necessities, yet

ordinarily a man should not spend more time in any pastime and

recreations than in religious exercises. It is most equal we should

first seek the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, Mat, vi.

33. The most needful duty should have most time bestowed upon it.

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It i.s an ill character to be ' lovers of pleasure more than lovers of

God,' 2 Tim. iv. 3. It is reasonable to give an equal time to God

and religion as to sports and delights. Most men have no other thing

to do than to eat, drink, and sleep ; if they should compare their re-

ligion and their recreations, they would soon see what a large share of

time one hath above the other.

Secondly, We come to the reason and encouragement of his dili-

gence, / hoped in thy word ; that is, because I have thy word for it, I

do not doubt but in time I shall reap the fruit of my prayers.

Doct, A lively hope, grounded upon the word of God, will put us

upon this vigilancy and diligence in prayer.

The reasons are taken — (1.) From the word of God, which is the

ground of hope : Ps. cxxx. 5, ' I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait,

and in his word do I hope.' And (2.) From the nature of hope, which

is the fountain of prayer.

First, From the word of God, which serveth for two uses — invita-

tion and assurance.

1. For invitation, to give us leave to come to the throne of grace.

David did not come unbidden or uninvited into God's presence ; he

had his word for it ; the promises of the gospel give us liberty, other-

wise we should not assume the boldness to appear before him : Ps. 1.

15. The word is our warrant, it is as it were the holding out of the

golden sceptre : 2 Sam. vii. 27, ' Therefore hath thy servant found in

his heart to pray this prayer unto thee.'

2. For assurance and firm confidence ; before the thing promised

be obtained, God pawneth his word with us, which we must hold till

the performance come. Now they that can thus hold it, and believe

the promise, will be often in prayer, that the word may be both esta-

blished to them, 2 Sam. vii. 25, and fulfilled: Ps. cxvi. 10, ' I have

believed, and therefore have I spoken.'

Secondly, From the nature of hope, which implieth two things, both

which have an influence upon prayer — earnest expectation, and patient

tarrying the Lord's leisure.

1. Earnest expectation : Phil. i. 20, ' According to my earnest ex-

pectation and my hope.' This exciteth the soul by all means to pur-

sue after the thing hoped for. When Daniel understood by books that

the time was come, then was he vehement and earnest, Dan. ix. 2, 3.

Elijah, when he saw a cloud but as big as a man's hand, he saith, 1

Kings xviii. 43, ' Go bid Ahab prepare his chariot ; get thee down,

that the rain stop thee not.' What we look for, we will pray for.

2. Patient tarrying. We read of ' the patience of hope,' 1 Thes. i.

3 ; and so, though they seem long delayed, yet hope in the promise

will make us wait, and abide the performance of them ; because they

are assured they shall find the fruit of them at last.

Use. You see how we pray ; the occasion of prayer is necessity, our

necessities lead us to the promise ; that inviteth us, and giveth us

assurance, and yields matter for faith and hope ; that puts us upon

looking and waiting ; these two make us pray. When we can join

patientiam spei cum ardor e desiderii ; the earnestness of expectation,

that keepeth us from sloth or negligence in the use of the means, or

excites us to call upon God ; and patience, that keeps us from fainting

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or discouragement : hence conieth that earnest diligence and constant

unceasing importunity, so as to give God no rest. The belief of God's

promises do not make us neglect means, but to be more diligent in the

use of them.

SERMON CLXVI.

Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy

word. — Yku. 148.

We hear before of David's diligence in prayer, now in meditation. His

prayer was encouraged by his hope, his hope was fed by the word, and

the word improved by meditation ; for he saith, ' I hope in thy word/

and then, ' Mine eyes prevent the night watches/ &c.

In the words we have —

1. An account of his vigilancy and diligence, mine eyes prevent

the night watches.

2. The duty wherein he was exercised, that I might meditate in thy

v:ord.

The first branch needeth a little illustration — what is meant by

'night watches/ and what by preventing these night watches.

1. What is meant by ' night watches ' ? Drusius telleth us that

the night among the Hebrews was divided into three watches. The

first watch was called the head or beginning of the watches : Lam. iii.

19, 'Arise, cry out in the night, in the beginning of the watches;

pour out thine heart like water before the Lord.' The second was

called the middle watch : Judges vii. 19, ' Gideon came to the outside

of the camp in the beginning of the middle watch.' The third and

last was called the morning watch : Exod. xiv. 24, ' In the morning

watch the Lord troubled the host of the Egyptians.' This was the

rirst division of the night among the Hebrews into three watches ; but

it seemeth afterwards, when they were acquainted with the Romans,

they had four watches ; as Mat. xiv. 21, 'In the fourth watch of the

night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.' For every three hours

they had a new watch, and according to this latter division they were

called, the evening, and the midnight, and the cock-crowing, and the

dawning, Mark xiii. 35. Now whether we reckon by the first or second

division, it cannot be imagined that David should be wholly without

sleep. Rabbi David Kinichi thinketh he gave the first watch to sleep,

and the othe«r two to the meditation of the word, and that he did this

often when the nights were long. I think it is meant of the third and

last watch, and so it agreeth with the dawning of the morning men-

tioned in the former verse ; and this watch, which is called the morn-

ing watch, did David prevent, getting up early to entertain himself

with delightful meditations on the word of God. The Septuagint

reads it, ' Early in the morning.'

2. What is meant by preventing the night watches ? Either that

he was more careful to awake at several times of the night to meditate

on God's word than they to keep their watches who were appointed

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thereunto, or that he did not need to be called upon by them ; for the

watchmen were wont to tell them the seasons and watches of the night,

but he needed not that help, his own desires and delights awakened

him ; so that in effect he saith, When others are so fast asleep that

either they do not wake in the night, or if they do, it is because they

are interrupted in their sleep by the noises of the watch or guard, I

need no such excitation, ' for my eyes prevent the night watches ; '

sleep flieth from them of its own accord, that my mind may be de-

lighted with the meditation of God's word. The points are : —

1. From the duty wherein David was exercised,

Doct. That meditation on the word of God is one duty that Chris-

tians should take care to perform.

2. From the season, his eyes prevented the night watches,

Doct. A gracious heart will take all occasions to set itself a-work on

holy things, and sometimes in the night.

3. From the condition wherein he was ; in some distress, for he saith,

' Save me ;' and his prayers not yet heard, ' I cried, I cried, I cried,'

Doct. That it is needful to meditate on God's promises at such a

time as our suit hangeth at the throne of grace without grant and

effect.

The first will give us occasion to speak of the duty of meditation,

and the necessity and profit of it. What the duty of meditation is, see

sermon upon the 15th verse of this psalm.

Secondly, It is a necessary duty, because it is recommended to us

by God, among other things enjoined in his word. He complaineth

of the neglect of it : Isa. i. 3, ' Israel doth not know, my people doth

not consider ;' they will not think upon God, nor consider what great

things he hath done for them. It is recommended to us in the prac-

tice of the saints, they sometimes meditate upon God : Ps. lxiii. 3, ' I

remember thee upon my bed, and meditate of thee in the night

watches.' When David could not sleep, and had his night rest

broken, his thoughts run upon God presently. Sometimes upon the

works of God : Ps. cxliii. 5, ' I meditate on all thy works, I muse on

the work of thine hands.' On his creation and providence. Some-

times on the word of God, that part which sets forth their duty : Ps.

i. 2, ' But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in that law doth

he meditate day and night.' To make the Christian's life more

orderly and comely ; the apostle commands us : Phil. iv. 8, ' To think

on these things.' Sometimes on the promises and grounds of faith,

for the support of theii souls in a fainting time, as in the text ; especi-

ally that part of the word which is brought unto them by the provi-

dence of God, and so we meditate upon what we read and hear : Luke

ii. 19, ' Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.'

We ponder things when we consider the weight and moment of them,

that our hearts may be affected with them. So Moses: Deut. xxxii.

46, 'And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which

I testify among you this day;' Luke iv. 44, ' Let these sayings sink

into your ears ;' be seriously considered and thought of by you, not be

lost or vanish into the air, or stay in the brain.

Thirdly, It is a profitable duty ; it is a help —

1. To our natural faculties.

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2. To our graces.

3. To our duties.

1. To our natural faculties. To our memories: we complain of

weak memories, but we do not take a right course to cure them.

Good things slip from us as water doth through a sieve ; and why ?

Because we do not weigh them, and meditate upon them by deep and

serious thought. Truths would stay with us longer if we did oftener

think on them. So many a conviction is lost : James i. 23, 24, ' For

if any man be a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like unto a

man beholding his natural face in a glass, for he beholdeth himself,

and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.' Many a com-

fort is lost by neglect : Heb. xii. 5, ' And have you forgotten the

exhortation which speaketh to you as children ? ' A weak impression

is soon defaced. Many a pressing motion is lost for want of a little

diligence to fasten it upon the heart : Heb. ii. 1, ' Therefore we ought

to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest

at any time we should let them slip.' Meditation and serious con-

sideration fasten a truth upon the mind and memory. Deliberate

thoughts stick by us, as a lesson well conned is not easily forgotten.

Civet long kept in a box, the scent remaineth when the civet is taken

out. Sermons meditated upon are remembered long after they are

delivered. So for understanding. We have weak understandings, slow

to conceive of anything that is spiritual and heavenly ; why ? Because

we are so little exercised in the study and contemplation of these

things ; whereas our judgments would ripen, and we would grow more

skilful in the word of righteousness, if we did often meditate on it :

Ps. cxix. 99, ' I have more understanding than all my teachers, for

thy testimonies are my meditation. We see things in transitu, and

know them only by hearsay, without meditation. To move the will

we had need deal seriously with our own hearts ere we can gain them

to a consent. Thoughts are the spokesmen that make up the match

between the soul and the temptation : they were given for the like

office in good things ; they are the first acts of the soul to set a-work

all the rest. Things lie by till we take them into our thoughts and

consideration at leisure, that we may know what is their tendency, and

how they concern us. You cannot imagine the gospel should work as

a charm, and convert us we know not how, before consent and choice.

There is a propounding and debating of terms ; the greatest matters

will not work on him that doth not think of them. God and Christ,

and heaven and salvation, are looked upon in a cold and remiss manner

without this serious consideration. And to excite, and quicken, and stir

our affections, meditation is useful. We complain of deadness, and we

ourselves are the cause, because we do not rouse up ourselves, excite

and compel ourselves, expostulate with ourselves : Isa. Ixiv. 7, ' And

there is none that calleth upon thy name, and stirreth up himself to

take hold of thee. ' Man hath a power to whet truths upon his own heart,

and if we will not make use of it, and reason for God with ourselves,

we are justly left under the power of deadness and stupidness of spirit.

2. It is a great help to our graces. (1.) Faith takes root by medi-

tation : Mat. xiii. 5, ' The seed forthwith sprang up, because it had no

deepness of earth/ A careless slight heart is no fit soil for faith to

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grow in. (2.) Hope is made lively by consideration of the thing hoped

for. (3.) Charity is inflamed by the sight and frequent view of divine

objects in their beauty and amiableness.

3. The duties of religion, reading and hearing, are effectual by

meditation.

The use is for exhortation, to press you to meditation ; it is the

mother and nurse of knowledge and godliness, the great instrument in

all the offices of grace, otherwise we take up things by hearsay ; this

digests them, and maketh them our own.

1. It preventeth vain thoughts, both as it stocketh the heart with

truth, for good seed thick set and well rooted destroyeth the weeds,

and as it seasoneth the heart with a gracious disposition, and inureth

it more to holy thoughts ; whereas those that do not use to meditate,

how are their minds pestered with swarms of vain thoughts, which

wholly divert it and turn it aside from God? Man is mindless of

holy things, and if they turn into the heart by accident, their enter-

tainment is cold and careless, as a man would be used that cometh

into a house full of enemies.

2. How great an affront is it to God to omit this part of communion

with him ; it is irksome to think of him. Saints find it otherwise :

Ps. civ. 34, \* My meditation of him shall be sweet.' Some, God is said

to be near in their mouth, and far from their reins, Jer xii. 2 ; fre-

quently spoken of, but seldom considered by them. That soul that

hath a sincere and unfeigned love to him will take some time to solace

itself with him alone ; to be sure God taketh it kindly at our hand :

Mai. iii. 16, ' A book of remembrance was written for them that feared

the Lord, and thought upon his name ; ' that have frequent and high

thoughts of God in their hearts, without which, love will presently

languish and grow cold.

3. What a neglect it is of God's messages of love that you will not

consider them : Mat. xxi. 5, 'And they made light of it;' and Heb. ii.

3, ' How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation.' He hath

laid out all his eternal thoughts upon a way of salvation, and manifested

it to you, and you entertain it with so much scorn that you will not

set your minds to it, and think it worthy a few sad and sober thoughts.

What ? Is it so tedious to think a thought of your own greatest con-

cernments ? Surely man is strangely depraved to refuse this.

4. What a likely means meditation is to do you good. I know it

is the Lord inclineth the heart, and our thoughts work no further than

God is in them, yea, he giveth us to think, 2 Cor. iii. 5. But as it is

our duty, so it is a very proper means to improve our graces and our

comfort ; for a constant, steady, continued view of truth surely will

work more than a glance. A transient view cannot leave such an

impression upon us as a steady view. We taste things better when

they are chewed than when they are swallowed whole. Meditation

goeth over things again and again, and prieth into every part. And

as it is a constant light, so it is an argumentative consideration of

things. When one scale is not heavy enough, we put in weight after

weight till we gain our point ; bring off the heart from such a vanity,

engage it to such a pursuit by our own arguings with ourselves : Prov.

xii. 14, ' A man shall be satisfied with good by the fruit of his own

VER. 148.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 81

mouth ;' Acts xvii. 11, 12, 'And these were more noble than they of

Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind,

and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so.'

Therefore many believed, because they had searched with all readiness

of mind.

5. This is an argument should prevail with God's children, that we

may know our growth in grace, by the frequency, continuance, and

efficacy of holy thoughts. At first good thoughts are few and rare, the

heart is so crowded with vanity, that there is no room for God or his

word ; for these things keep their interest in the heart and draw the

mind after them, so that days pass over our heads and we forget God,

Ps. x. 11 ; or if they arise in our minds, they find little entertainment

there, but are gone as soon as they come. It is the policy of the enemy

of our salvation to draw our minds from one thing to another, that

good thoughts may pass over without fruit and benefit ; or if we force

ourselves to continue, they do not warm the heart, only weary the

brain. But now when truths are ever with us, they improve us : Ps.

cxix. 98, ' Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than

my enemies, for they are ever with me ; ' Prov. vi. 22, ' When thou

goest it shall lead thee, when thou sleepest it shall keep thee, and when

thou walkest it shall talk with thee.' We have them always ready and

at hand. They that are sound at heart can pause with delight on

heavenly things. It is a good note of some progress, it is a sign the

heart is heavenly, carried out with a strong and prevailing love to

heavenly things, that earthly profits and vain pleasures have not such a

hand over us as they were wont to have. You have gotten the mastery

•over your thoughts, that the best and dearest of them you can employ

for God, with great fervency and continuance : other matters do not

find better welcome, nor so easily jostle them out of doors. By all this

it appears it is a most profitable duty.

Doct. That a gracious heart will take all occasions to set itself

a-work on holy things, and sometimes in the night.

David did frequently rouse up himself in the night to solace his soul

with thoughts of God ; this was a frequent and cheerful exercise and

employment to him.

1. I shall prove this argueth a gracious frame of spirit.

2. Show you some reasons why we should meditate sometimes in the

night.

1. It argueth a gracious frame of heart to take all occasions to

set our minds a-work on holv things ; for there are three things in

it:—

[1.] Plenty of divine knowledge ; the heart is well stocked, and can

entertain itself without help from abroad : Ps. xvi. 7, ' I will bless the

Lord who hath given me counsel ; my reins also instruct me in the

night season.' He had laid up a great deal of truth in his reins or

inward parts, and when sleep fled from his eyes, out it came. So

Prov. vi. 21, ' Bind them continually upon thy heart, and tie them

about thy neck ; ' to be always ready and present with us. It is an

excellent thing to have a good treasure in our hearts : Mat. xii. 35,

' A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good

things.' Mauy a man's heart is stuffed with vanity, and then he is

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vain in his thoughts, and vain in his discourses, and vain in his actions ;

yea, 'the word of God doth not dwell in him richly,' Col. iii. 16; then

your thoughts are very scant and barren ; as he that hath more brass

farthings in his pocket than gold or silver, will more easily pull them

out at every turn. Our leanness of soul and difficulty to meditate

cometh from the want of a stock of knowledge.

[2.] It argueth spiritual delight and strong love : Ps. i. 2, ' But his

delight is in the law of God, and in that law doth he meditate day and

night.' Did we find such comfort as David did, we would break our

sleep for that end. He that delights in the word is much conversant

in it, for ubi amor ibi animus. All the time his necessities can spare,

he will spend it in these private and spiritual exercises. Many men's

time hangs upon their hands ; they do not know how to spend the sum-

mer day nor the winter night ; but one that hath a strong affection to

holy things, he rather wants time, such is his solace and delight in

God. He beginneth his heaven upon .earth, and all the time he can

get he is spending this way. But if we find no such comfort and

repose of soul in meditation, no wonder that we are so averse from it.

Our thoughts follow our affections, delight will set the mind a-work ;

when others are sleeping securely, he mindeth his salvation.

[3.] It argueth sincerity : Ps. xvii 3, ' Thou hast proved mine heart ;

thou hast visited me in the night ; thou hast tried me, and shalt find

nothing.' In the night when darkness concealeth me from the eyes of

men, then I exercise myself in spiritual thoughts. Many put on reli-

gion as a disguise in the day ; in public actions they personate a zeal,

and act a devout part ; but that is to be sincere when God hath a

great share in our closest privacies and retirement.

2. Sometimes take the night as a special occasion : Ps. lxiii. 6, ' When

I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night

watches ; ' Ps. lxxvii. 6, ' I call to remembrance my song in the night.'

There is a double help for meditation in the night —

[1.] Solitude, then we are alone, and therefore fittest to meditate,

when nobody disturbs us.

[2.] The silence of the night is also a help, when nothing is heard

or seen to distract attention.

Use. What use shall we make of this ? We cannot lay a burden

upon your consciences, and by way of absolute necessity exact these

nocturnal meditations from you ; only in the general —

1. As much as our strength and natural necessities will rwrnit, we

should be meditating night and day. It may be a shame to us that

many tradesmen are up afore day to follow their callings, and that they

should excel us. The Christians had their morning hymns to Christ

in the times of persecution.

2. We may press you to the affection, though not to the season ; to

be stored with good matter, and to have a strong delight in this work,

and sincerity to make conscience of private duties.

3. If we wake in the night and our rest is broken off, then to exer-

cise ourselves in holy thoughts. Many times it falleth out that we

cannot sleep ; now we should spend the time in meditation and prayer,

not in vain thoughts, or entertaining ourselves with carnal musings, or

perplexing and anxious thoughts about the troubles that we are under.

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4. If David waked in the night, how much are they to blame that

snort and sleep in the day, even in the time of worship, when others

are entertaining communion with God. Surely if they had earnest

affections this could not always be. The example of Eutychus should

deter these ; Acts xx. 9, ' And there sat in the window a young man

named Eutychus, being fallen into a deep sleep ; and as Paul was

long preaching, he sunk down with sleep, and fell down from the third

loft, and was taken up dead ; ' Mat. xxvi. 40, ' What ! could not ye

watch with me one hour ? '

Doct. That meditation of the promises is very seasonable when the

answer of our prayers is denied.

For this is very powerful to support our fainting hopes, and to cheer

and revive our drooping spirits. There is support in the word, and

comfort in the word ; therefore we should much meditate on the pro-

mises at such a time. The best holdfast that we have of God is by

his promise. Whatsoever his dispensations be, this will give satisfac-

tion enough. Though you cannot find what you would, his word is

certain ; though no appearance of performance, his word is sure enough

to fasten upon. The grounds of faith are more sweet and satisfactory

the more they are examined and looked upon.

SEKMON CLXVII.

Hear my voice, according to thy loving-Mndness : Lord, quicken

me according to thy judgment. — Ver. 149.

In these words you have — (1.) David's prayer ; (2.) The grounds of

his support, or his encouragements in asking.

1. His prayer is double — (1.) General, for audience, ' Hear my

voice ; ' (2.) Particular, for quickening, ' Quicken me.'

2. His encouragements and grounds of confidence in asking are also

two — (1.) God's loving-kindness ; (2.) His judgment. Both together

imply the loving-kindness of God manifested in the word or expressed

and engaged in the promises. The points are three : —

Doct. 1. One blessing which the children of God do see a need often

and earnestly to ask of God is quickening. David ever and anon

reneweth his request, and he is loath to be denied; and therefore,

before he saith, ' Quicken me,' he saith, ' Hear my voice.'

Doct. 2. The main argument which God's children have to plead in

prayer is his own favour and loving-kindness. That is David's argu-

ment in the text, ' Hear my voice, according to thy loving-kindness/

Doct. 3. The mercy and loving-kindness of God, manifested and

impledged in the promises of the gospel, doth notably encourage us to

ask help from him ; for David doth not only say, ' According to thy

loving-kindness,' but, 'According to thy judgment.'

Doct. 1. For the first point, one blessing which the children of God

do see a need often and earnestly to ask of God is quickening. Here

I shall inquire —

1. What is quickening.

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2. Give you some reasons why the children of God do see a need

so often and earnestly to ask it of God.

First, What is quickening ?

1. By quickening some understand restitution to happiness ; for a

calamitous man is as one dead and buried under deep and heavy

troubles, and his recovery is a life from the dead, or a reviving from

the grave. So quickening seemeth to be taken, Ps. Ixxi. 20, ' Thou

which hast showed me great and sore troubles shalt quicken me again,

and bring me up from the depths of the earth.'

2. Others understand by quickening the renewing and increasing in

him the vigour of his spiritual life. That he beggeth that God would

revive, increase, and preserve that life which he had already given, that

it might be perfected and consummated in glory, that he might be

ever ready to bring forth the habits of grace into acts.

The use which we should make of it is to press you —

1. To be sensible of the temper of your hearts, and see whether you

want quickening, yea or no. The feeling of spiritual deadness argueth

some life and sense yet left. You have attained to so much of life, and

do retain it in such a measure, as to be able to bemoan yourselves to

God. Most observe their bodies, but very few their souls : if their

bodies be ill at ease or out of order, they complain. Men that go on

in a track of customary duties see no need of quickening ; therefore

this humble sense is a good sign. Matins and vespers coldly run over

never put us upon the feeling of indispositions, but only duties done

with some spirit and life, as a smith blows not the bellows on cold iron

or a dead coal. Who would seek quickening when not serious in the

work ? They that go on in the cold wont of duties never regard the

frame of their hearts.

2. When you want quickening, ask it of God. He brought us into

the state of life at first, and therefore every moment we must beg of

him that he would quicken us, that he would continue it, and perfect

his own work : Cant. i. 4, ' Draw me ; we will run after thee.' There

is no running, no preserving the vitality of grace, without his renewed

influence : Ps. xxii. 29, ' None can keep alive his own soul.' There-

fore, when we find this deadness or decay of life, to whom should we

go but to the fountain of life to repair it ? No creature doth subsist of

itself, or act of itself.

3. Ask it earnestly. David prefaceth a general prayer before this

request, and saith, ' Hear my voice,' as loath to be denied. Many ask

it of course, rather use it as a mannerly form when they are entering

upon holy duties, than a broken-hearted request. See you desire it

heartily : Ps. cxix. 40, ' Behold, I have longed after thy precepts ;

quicken thou me in thy righteousness.' A man's heart is set upon it,

and will not sit down with the distemper, as contented and satisfied

with a dead frame of heart : quickening is for longing souls, that

would fain do the work of God with a more perfect heart.

4. Expect this grace in and through Jesus Christ, who came down

from heaven for this end : John x. 10, ' I am come that they might

have life, and might have it more abundantly.' That was his end in

coming into the world, to procure life for his people, and not only bare

life, but liveliness and comfort, yea, glory hereafter : he died to pur-

VER. 149.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 85

chase it for ns : John vi. 51, ' This is my flesh, which I give for the

life of the world.' His incarnation and taking on him our nature is

the channel and conduit through which the quickening virtue that is in

the Godhead is conveyed to us ; and his offering up himself in that

nature by his eternal Spirit doth purchase and merit the application

and annunciation of this his quickening virtue to our souls, and pre-

pareth him to be fit meat for souls. That same flesh and human

nature of Christ that is offered up a ransom to justice, is also the bread

of life for souls to feed upon. Souls are fed with meditations upon his

death and sufferings. The bread which he giveth by way of applica-

tion is his flesh, which he gave by way of ransom ; every renewed act

of faith draweth an increase of life from him.

5. Consider how God worketh it in us. The Father of spirits loveth

to w r ork with his own tools. These three agree in one — the Spirit, the

word, and the renewed heart. The one is the author, the other the

instrument, and the last the object. There is the Spirit acting, and

the habit of grace acted upon, and the word and sacraments are the

instruments and means. For God will do it rationally, and by a

lively light. God forceth not the nature of second causes against their

own inclination. It is pleasing to him when we desire him to renew

his work, and to bring forth the actings of grace out of his own seed,

and to blow with the wind, the breath of his Spirit, on the gardens,

that the spices may flow out, Cant. iv. 15. If one of these be wanting,

there can be no quickening. Not the Spirit, for he applieth all and

doth all in the hearts of believers. It is from him that we have the

new life of grace and all the activity of it : Gal. v. 25, ' If we live in

the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.' Then there must be a

renewed heart ; for God doth first infuse the principles of the new life,

and gracious habits and power into the soul, next he doth actuate

those powers, or stir them up to do what is good ; otherwise we do

but blow to a dead coal. Then the word and sacraments come as

God's means which are fitted to work upon the new creature. These

are full of spiritual reason, and suited to the sanctified understandings

of men and women.

6. Consider God's loving-kindness, how ready he is to grant this.

He will not deny the gift of the Holy Ghost to them that ask him,

Luke xi. 13. It is an argument not a 'pari, but a minore ad ma/jus.

God is more able and willing to give than earthly parents, who are but

half fathers. This is a spiritual and necessary blessing, and God is

too fatherly to deny it to his children. You may deny an apple to a

wanton child, but you will not deny bread to a fainting child, the

bowels of a father will not permit you to do that ; you may deny them

superfluities in wisdom, but your love will not permit you to deny them

necessaries. Meat is not so necessary to revive and refresh the body,

as grace for the soul, and his holy inspirations to act and guide you.

And will God deny these requests ?

7. Know when you have received quickening. Many Christians

look for rapt and ecstatic motions, and so do not own the work of God

when it hath passed upon them ; they underrate their own experi-

ences, and so cannot take notice of God's faithfulness. Sense, appetite,

and activity are the fruits of life and quickening.

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[1.] We have the more sense of indwelling sin as a heavy burden,

Horn. vii. 24. None groan so sorely as those that are made partakers

of a new life. Elementa non gravitani in suis locis. A delicate con-

stitution is more sensible of pain. Wicked men scarce feel deep

wounds given to their conscience, nor have any remorse for gross sins ;

God's children, their hearts smite them for the smallest disorders and

irregularities.

[2.] Appetite after Christ, his graces and comforts, 1 Peter ii. 2 ;

the more life any have, the more craving of food to maintain it in

being ; they are always hungering and thirsting after God, Mat. v. 6 ;

our appetite will be after the things that conduce to the maintaining

and preserving that being which they have. If a man lose his appe-

tite, the body pineth and languisheth, and strength decayeth : desire

prepareth the soul to take in its supplies. Your life is in good plight

when that is desired, to Xojckov aSoXov ydXa, and it will be a means of

spiritual growth, a kindly appetite after this milk. They are under a

great decay who have lost their appetite after the gospel.

[3.] Activity in duties. That we may honour Christ : 1 Peter ii. 4,

5, ' To whom coming as a living stone, ye also as lively stones are

built up into a spiritual house.' Christ liveth, and we live by him, as

the stones in the building carry a proportion with the corner-stone ;

so Christians as the body with the head. It must needs be so, because

of God's Spirit dwelling in us, Ezek. xxxvi. 27- ; John vii. 37 ; and

because of the graces in a Christian — faith and love. Faith working

by love is the great evidence of the new creature. If faith and love

be strong, it will quicken us to do much for God ; the apprehension

of faith doth enliven our notions of God, Christ, heaven, and hell ;

faith puts life into our thoughts of him. Love is a notable pleader

and urger : 2 Cor. v. 14, ' The love of Christ constraineth us/ &c.

Secondly, The reasons why, &c.

1. They that have so much to do with God do see a need of it;

for he is a living God, and will be served in a lively manner : Horn,

xii. 11, ' Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.'

They that serve the Lord ; negatively, must not be slothful in business ;

affirmatively, fervent in spirit. God will not be served negligently,

coldly, but with life and earnestness : ' The twelve tribes served God

iv etcrevelq, instantly,' Acts xxvi. 7 ; instantly serving God with the

uttermost of their strength. He that hath a right to our all must

have our best ; surely he will not be put off with every slight thing.

Now the children of God, that are sensible of this, are earnest for

quickening, that they may serve God in such a way as becometh him,

with life and power and zeal ; for the manner in every duty is to be

regarded as well as the matter. A man may do many things that are

good, but there is no life in what he doth. He prayeth, but without

any life in prayer, dead in prayer ; heareth, but no life in hearing, dull

of hearing. All things in a Christian may be counterfeited, but life

cannot be counterfeited, that cannot be painted.

2. They are acquainted with themselves, and observe the frame and

posture of their own spirits. Now they that know themselves will see

a need of quickening —

[1.] Because of the instability and changeable frame of man's heart ;

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it hardly stayeth long in the same state ; now it is up, and anon it is

down, as the constant experience of the saints witnesseth. Sometimes

they have a forwardness and strong propension of heart to that which

is good, at other times a loathness and dulness or unfitness to perform

any spiritual service, when their will is more remiss and their affec-

tions unbent. It is not indeed the constant frame of their hearts, yet

it is a disease incident to the saints ; even good men may feel a slow-

ness of heart to comply with the will of God, and some hanging off

from duty. Spontanece lassiiudhies sunt signa imminentis morbi.

So is this laziness and backwardness of spirit a sign of some great

spiritual distemper. Sometimes they are carried with great largeness

of heart, and full sail of affections ; at other times they are in bonds

and straits, that they cannot pour out their hearts before God : Ps.

lxxvii. 4, ' I am so troubled that I cannot speak.' Sometimes they

have great life and vigour, at other times no such lively stirrings, but

are flat and cold and dead ; when, with Samson, they think to go

forth and shake themselves as at other times, Judges xvi. 20, by sad

experience they find that their locks are gone, that their understand-

ings are lean, sapless, and their affections cold, and their delight and

vigour lost. Man is a sinful, weak, inconstant creature ; his heart is

as unstable as water : and much of this levity and instability remaineth

with us after grace, as is seen in the various postures of spirit that we

are under.

[2.] Because of the constant opposition of the flesh. There is an

opposite principle in our hearts, Gal. v. 17 ; the body of death that

dwelleth in us doth always resist the life of the spirit in us ; and

therefore God must renew the influences of his grace to preserve life.

There are desires against desires, and delights against delights ; this

must needs abate our vigour. The spirit draweth one way, the flesh

another. It is drawing : James i. 14, ' Every man is tempted when

he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed/ It is depressing : Heb.

xii. 1, ' Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of

witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so

easily beset us/ Carnal affections hang as a weight, retarding us in

our heavenly flight and motions. It is warring : Eom. vii. 23, ' I see

another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and

bringing me into captivity to the law of sin/ And therefore the Lord

had need to cherish the new creature and good seed, which cannot but

be weakened with this opposition.

[3.] Because our outward condition doth work a great change in

us. A Christian should, and in some measure doth, carry an equal

mind in all conditions, and keep the same pace whether he goeth

up-hill or down-hill, and have his heart fixed in God whatever falleth

out : Ps. cxii. 7, ' He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is

fixed, trusting in the Lord/ But, alas ! we are much discomposed often-

times, especially at the first onset, by our outward estate ; when under

great afflictions, it puts a damp upon our spirits, and we cannot serve

God so cheerfully : Lev. x. 19, ' And Aaron said unto Moses, Behold,

this day have they offered their sin-offering and their burnt-offering

before the Lord, and such things have befallen me ; and if I had eaten

the sin-offering to-day, should it have been accepted in the sight of the

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Lord.' So Hezekiah, it is said of him 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, when

Hezekiah was sick unto death, and he prayed unto the Lord, and he

gave him a sign, that Hezekiah rendered not again according to the

benefit done unto him, for his heart was lifted up. We are too apt

to be dejected and cast down with worldly troubles, or exalted and

puffed up with worldly comforts, and both bring on deadness upon the

heart, both worldly sorrow and carnal complacency. It is not requi-

site that a child of God should be without all sense of his condition,

and it cannot be supposed that this sense should always be kept within

bounds, and under the coercion and government of grace, considering

our weakness ; and therefore a Christian receiveth some taint from the

changes he passes through, as the water doth from the soil through

which it runneth. He is sometimes in credit, sometimes in disgrace ;

sometimes rich, sometimes poor ; sometimes sick and in pain, at other

times in health and firm constitution of body. Now, though it argueth

small strength to faint in ordinary afflictions, Prov. xxiv. 10, and a

light spirit to be puffed up like a bubble with every slight blast, yet

when troubles are heavy and pressing, God's best servants have been

ready to die and faint, and in a full estate it is hard to keep down

carnal rejoicing. By both, the freedom of following God's service

cheerfully may often be interrupted.

[4.] Because we sin away our life and strength, and by our careless

walking contract deadness and hardness of heart. The mind, like the

eye, is soon offended and out of temper : we forfeit the quickening

influences of his Spirit, upon which the activity of grace dependeth.

To correct our sinful rashness, and to teach us more watchfulness and

caution, God withdraweth, Phil. ii. 12, 13. Be the sin a sin of com-

mission, especially if grievous and heinous ; as David found a shrewd

abatement of life and vigour after his foul sin, Ps. Ii. 11, 12 ; or a

sin of omission, when we neglect God or serve him slightly. If we give

way to deadness, Isa. lxiv. 6, rest in the work wrought, and are more

willing to get a duty over than to perform it with any life and vigour,

God suspends his quickening. If you do not mind the work, why

should God quicken you in it ?

3. The third reason is taken from the nature of God's dispensations.

They do often and earnestly ask quickening, because God giveth out by

degrees, and would keep us in constant dependence : ' In him we live,

move ' (ki,vov/jl€0o) , ' and have our being,' Acts xvii. 28, both as crea-

tures and new creatures. There is a constant concurrence of his

motions and influences by their beings and operations. God will

endear his grace to us by bringing us daily under new debt ; and

therefore he doth not give us all our stock and portion in our hands,

lest we neglect him, as the prodigal did his father. By multiplied and

renewed acts of grace he doth more commend his love to us ; every

day he must quicken us, and in every duty. If so much rain fell in

a day as would suffice the earth for seven years, the commerce between

the air and the earth would cease ; or if a man could eat so much at

one meal as to go in the strength of it all his life, there would be no

ground to pray for daily bread ; therefore God doth dispense his assist-

ances so as you must still wait upon him and be calling to him. He

keepeth grace in his own hand that he may often hear from us.

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Doct. 2. The main argument which God's children have to plead in

prayer is his own favour and loving-kindness. I shall show —

1. That this is a modest, humble, and pious argument.

2. This is a comfortable and encouraging argument.

First, It is a modest argument, and it were good if we could learn

this modesty of David. He was one much in prayer, diligent in keep-

ing God's statutes, abundant in all acts of devotion, spent nights in

meditation, and yet after all this placeth all his hopes in the mercy

and loving-kindness of God, and desireth only to be heard according to

mercy. But in us there is a secret carnal notion of God as if he were

our debtor. If we act for him, or suffer anything for him, we carry it as

if God were obliged to us : Isa. lviii. 3, ' Wherefore have we fasted ? ' &c.

We cannot be at a fast, give a little alms, or make a prayer, but we

think we have merited much at God's hands. Oh ! this is against all

reason. Alas ! what profit can we be to God ? Job xxxv. 6-8. God

is above the injuries and benefits of the creature ; what miss had he

of angels and men in those innumerable ages of duration that went

before any created being ? And as it is against reason, so it is against

all the declarations God hath made of himself to us : Ezek. xxxvi. 32,

' Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord of hosts : be ashamed

and confounded for your own ways.' So Titus iii. 4-6, ' But after that

the kindness and love of God our Saviour towards man appeared, not

by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his

mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of

the Holy Ghost ; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus

Christ our Saviour.' In short, no worth in us, or righteousness of ours,

is that merit and righteousness by virtue of which we are accepted

with God. Our works and righteousness are not that condition by

which we receive and apply this merit ; that is faith. No works or

merit are a motive, or the first inducing cause to move God to give us

that faith, but all is from his loving-kindness and readiness to do good

to the creatures. Again, it is contrary to the practice of the saints

and children of God, who, though never so holy and never so good, yet

still they plead mercy, and this by direction from him who knoweth

what plea is fittest for creatures to use to God, Luke xvii. 10. As it

is not the merit of one part of the earth that it lieth nearer the sun

than another, only the Creator would have it so, so still the scripture

crieth down works and merits in the creature in all these gracious

influences ; they all come from God's bowels of compassion to his

creatures labouring under difficulties. He loveth to act as a free agent

in giving, continuing, and actuating the life of his creatures, whether

natural or spiritual. Yea, lastly, any other principle would be against

our profit, as well as God's glory. Our profit, both as to duty and

success, we should never carry it dutifully to God if we did not acknow-

ledge that all came from grace. Whence cometh impatience, mur-

murings, contempt of things afforded, but from a secret opinion of our

merit and deserving ? They that prescribe to God ascribe too much to

themselves ; that prescribe to God for time, measure, and kind, are hasty,

and murmur under delays and suspensions of grace. And as to suc-

cess, without this modest and humble claim, God rejecteth the request:

' For he resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble,' 1 Peter

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v. 5. Spiritual pride is the worst of all pride. The humble suppli-

cant may expect increase of grace which is denied to others : Ps. cxlvii.

11, ' The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that

hope in his mercy.' Such as fear God, and serve him diligently, and

yet put all their confidence in his mercy, these are those whom the

Lord delights in, to keep communion with them, and pour out his

blessings upon them. This is enough to show you it is a humble,

modest plea.

Secondly, It is a comfortable, encouraging argument ; which that it

may appear to you, let us consider —

1. The nature of it.

2. The kinds of it.

3. The proofs and demonstrations of it.

4. The end of it.

1. The nature of it. The loving-kindness of God noteth his dispo-

sition to do good upon his own motives, or his self-inclination to do

good to his creatures, especially to his people: 2 Sam. vii. 21, ' Ac-

cording to thine heart hast thou done this;' his native willingness to

employ what goodness is in him for the good of his creatures. Now

this cloth much encourage poor sinners to draw nigh to God for such

mercy as they stand in need of. Justice giveth what is due, but mercy

what is needed ; justice seeks a fit object, mercy and loving-kindness

a fit occasion. His justice will not hinder his mercy to be bountiful.

2. The kinds of it. God's loving-kindness is twofold — general and

special.

[1.] There is a general kindness and good-will from God as creator

to all his creatures, especially to mankind. The effects and fruits of

this general kindness flow in the channel of common providence. So

it is said, Ps. cxlv. 9, ' The Lord is good to all, and his tender mer-

cies are over all his works.' God is good to all things, to all persons ;

he bestoweth many common blessings upon the wicked, as natural life

and being, health and wealth, &c. So Ps. cxlvii. 9, ' He giveth to the

beasts his food, to the young ravens which ciy.' To wicked men, Mat.

v. 45. Common blessings do not always argue a good people, but they

always argue a good God. God giveth the beasts their food in due

season, Ps. civ. 27, 28. Now this is some ground of hope, and so im-

proved, Ps. cxlv. 15, 16. If he heareth the cries of the creatures, he

will hear the prayers of the saints ; if a kite, much more a child. You

see the Lord doth not cast off the care of any living creature which he

hath made, but hath a constant eye of providence upon them, that

their hunger may be satisfied, and they may have that sort of good

which is fitting for them, and that in time and season, before they are

spent with wants ; and will he not answer the longings and expecta-

tions and cries of his people, and pity their faintings, and give that

grace which they so earnestly seek ?

[2.] Over and above this common kindness, there is a more entire

special love and kindness towards believers in Christ. This may be

admired rather than expressed : Ps. xxxvi. 7, ' How excellent is thy

loving-kindness, God ! ' This is unto admiration, his common kind-

ness, his preservation of man and beast. This is the fruit of his eter-

nal love : Jer. xxxi. 3, ' With everlasting love have I loved thee, and

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therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee;' and this is ex-

pressed in blessing them with special and saving benefits in Christ.

The effects of his special kindness do all relate to life and godliness,

and are conveyed to us through the conduit of Christ's merit and

intercession, in and by whom he doth fulfil in us all the good pleasure

of his goodness, 2 Thes. i. 11, 12. Now this special kindness must

needs be a mighty encouragement to the saints to come to him (since

he loveth them with such a free and special love) for all that mercy

they stand in need of. The former speaketh the goodness of God to

all his creatures ; this to themselves in particular ; both together a

notable support ; yea, though we have not yet any experience of the

goodness of God, yet since there is such a thing as self-inclination in

God to do good to his people, and, besides this, a readiness to express

his love to all his creatures, more especially to every one, without re-

spect of persons, that cometh to him : Ps. Ixxxvi. 5, ' For thou, Lord,

art good, and ready to forgive, and plenteous in mercy to all them that

call upon thee.' Take the cause, and you do not know what you may

find. It may be your portion and lot.

3. The proofs and demonstrations of this loving-kindness.

[1.] He hath given evident proof and infallible demonstration of it

in Christ : 1 John iv. 12, ' In this was manifested the love of God to-

wards us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world

that we might live through him.' The cause or first motive was love ;

his means was the sending of Christ to be a propitiation ; his end, life

spiritual and eternal. This is such a glorious instance and manifesta-

tion of the love of God, that poor creatures are encouraged to draw

nigh to God for such mercy as they stand in need of. It is a hidden

love ; here is a convincing proof and real demonstration by so glorious

an effect and fruit of it. It was not a well-wishing love only, nor a

love concealed, but manifested, and that by a signal proof.

[2.] The instances of God's loving-kindness to others ; so that

' according to thy loving-kindness,' will be according to that grace and

mercy which thou art wont to show to others of thy servants. All

that have had to do with God will assure you that he is a gracious God,

full of kindness and mercy. There are examples of it, 1 Tim. i. 16 ;

and Eph. ii. 7, ' That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding

riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus/

Instances of God's loving-kindness towards others have a peculiar

fitness and efficacy to convince us how exceedingly gracious God is,

and so to draw us to the same fountain of grace for pardon and life

to ourselves. These examples do more than the doctrinal declaration,

because they do not only show that mercy and grace may be had,

but that it hath been attained unto by those who in all respects did

judge themselves, and were really unworthy of it, as unable to lay

hold of it, and to make good use of it afterwards, as we ourselves.

The ice is broken, the ford ridden before us ; therefore we may

venture our salvation and acceptance with God upon the same

grace.

[3.] His former love to ourselves. At first he took us with all our

faults, and betrothed us unto himself, in loving-kindness and tender

mercy, Hosea ii. 19 ; and therefore he will still do us good, freely

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and bountifully, and so we may answer all objections from God's

wonted goodness towards us. When he hath entered into covenant

with us out of his love and bounty, we may well expect that upon the

same terms he should keep covenant. The continuance is more easily

believed and asked than the beginning and first grant: Ps. xxxvi. 10,

' continue thy loving-kindness unto them that know thee, and thy

righteousness to the upright in heart.' When by experience we have

found what it can do for unworthy creatures, we may the better expect

it should help us on all occasions.

4. The end why God exerciseth it ; which is his glory, even the

glory of his grace and loving-kindness ; that that might be acknow-

ledged and exemplified by those that are partakers of it even to be

altogether glorious : Eph. i. G, ' To the praise of his glorious grace,

wherein he hath accepted us in the beloved ; ' that it may be owned

and esteemed as free and liberal, and working of its own accord. We

only cross God's end when we do not plead it, admire it, and esteem

it highly, and improve it for our comfort ; for this is God's end in

the whole business of our salvation from first to last, that men and

angels might be excited to set forth the praises of his rich mercy and

free grace. And here is a new encouragement to ask gracious supplies

of God, according to his loving-kindness, or upon the account of that

attribute, even that his grace may be more esteemed and exalted in

our hearts : Ps. cix. 21, ' But do thou for me, God the Lord, for

thy name's sake ; because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.' It

concerneth him in point of his chief honour and glory to do good to

his people ; that he may be known, and owned to be a good and a

gracious or loving God.

Use. Well, then, if this be the great plea of the saints —

1. Let us meditate often of the loving-kindness of God, of his pitying,

and pardoning, and lovingly entreating poor sinful and broken-hearted

creatures that come to him. This should be our daily meditation ;

honum est primum et potentissimum nomen Dei, saith Damascene —

it is the first-born and chiefest name of God. We cannot conceive of

God by anything that concerneth us so much as his goodness ; by

that we know him, and for that we love him. We admire him with

reverence for his other titles, but this doth first insinuate with us,

and command our respect to him. The first temptation that ever was

in the world was to weaken the conceit of his goodness in the heart of

the creature ; as if God were envious, harsh, and sour in his restraints ;

still it is a great temptation, yet ' God is good to Israel,' Ps. lxxiii. 1.

Oh ! let us fortify our hearts with frecp:ient thoughts of his goodness

and loving-kindness ! As we should do this every day, so especially

upon the sabbath-day : Ps. xcii. 2, ' I will show forth thy loving-

kindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night/ We should

do this with all the advantage we can use, more especially when we

are in his presence, conversing with him and ministering before him :

Ps. xlviii. 9, ' We have thought of thy loving-kindness, God, in the

midst of thy temple.' We should often and seriously think when we

come to God : Surely now we have to do with a loving and gracious

God, whether we wait upon him in prayer, or the word, or sacraments ;

if any prayer to make or comfort to expect.

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2. Observe the fruits and effects of it, and value them. They that

are students in providence, shall not seek long before they find God

to be a God full of loving-kindness and tender mercy : Ps. cvii. 43,

' Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall under-

stand the loving-kindness of the Lord.' Few regard it, or look after

it ; but they that do pry into the course of his dealings shall not be

without many instances of God's love and free favour to them. Now,

when you have found it out, value it : Ps. Ixiii. 3, ' Because thy

loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' You

shall have rich experiences, such as will fill you with joy unspeakable

and glorious, to be esteemed above all comforts whatsoever.

3. Praise God for it. This should be a lively motive to praise him :

Ps. cxxxviii. 2, ' I will worship towards thy temple, and praise thy

name for thy loving-kindness and for thy truth/ These two are the

cause of all we have ; it is without any deserving of ours, only because

we have to do with a gracious and faithful God : Isa. Ixiii. 7, ' I will

mention the loving-kindness of the Lord, and the praises of the Lord,

according to all that the Lord hath bestowed on us, and the great

goodness towards the house of Israel which he hath bestowed on them,

according to his mercies, and according to the multitude of his loving-

kindness.' The prophet speaketh as if he could never find words

enough, or pregnant enough, to express his sense of God's gracious

dealing, so bountifully had he dealt with his people.

4. Let us improve this loving-kindness and readiness of God's mercy

to help penitent supplicants.

[1.] In a way of trust, the least degree of which is enough to keep

the sinner from running away from him ; how grievous soever his

offences and demerits be, yet come to him ; say, as David, Ps. li. 1,

' Have mercy upon me, God, according to thy loving-kindness ;

according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my

transgressions.' Yea, make it a ground of confidence and support :

Ps. lxix. 16, ' Hear me, Lord, for thy loving-kindness is good ; turn

unto me, according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.'

[2.] In a way of fear, that we may not interrupt the sense of it, or

stop the current of his good-will : Ps. xxvi. 3, ' Thy loving-kindness

is before mine eyes, and I have walked in thy truth.' It is the ground

of all our confidence ; lose not that : the Lord taketh notice of them

that trust in his goodness : Nahum i. 7, ' The Lord is good, a strong-

hold in the day of trouble, and he knoweth them that trust in him.'

There is one word yet undiscussed, ' According to thy judgment.'

Some by judgment understand wisdom and prudence. The word will

sometimes bear that sense : Micah iii. 8, ' But truly I am full of

power by the Spirit of the Lord and of judgment,' &c. ; as we say

a man of judgment, for an understanding person. In this sense,

' According to thy judgment,' will be, as thou thinkest fit ; but surely

'judgment' here is to be understood in the notion of his covenant, or

the rule according to which he judgeth of men, for it is one of the terms

by which the word is expressed. ' Judgment ' is sometimes put for

the covenant of works, or his strict remunerative justice. David

declineth it under this notion: Ps. cxliii. 2, ' Enter not into judgment

with thy servant, Lord.' And this is called by the apostle,

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'judgment without mercy/ James ii. 13. Sometimes for the covenant

of grace, and free promises of God, or that merciful right which he

hath established between hini and his people, wherein God acteth as

an absolving and pardoning judge. Of this", see ver. 132. And of

this the prophet speaketh, Isa. i. 27, ' Zion shall be redeemed with

judgment ; ' that is, by his mercy promised according to his judgment.

David desireth to be quickened. From thence observe —

Doct. 3. That God's mercy and loving-kindness, manifested and

impledged in the promises of the gospel, doth notably encourage us to

ask help from him.

You have heard what encouragement we have by the loving-kindness

of God ; now what we have over and above that by his judgment.

First, Quickening and enlivening grace is promised in the new

covenant.

1. In general, from the general undertaking of the covenant. The

covenant of grace differeth from all other covenants in the world, be-

cause everything that is required therein is also promised ; and there-

fore it is called, ' The promise,' Gal. iii. 18, because God hath promised

both the reward and the condition — faith and perseverance therein, as

well as righteousness, pardon, and life ; the new heart to bring us into

the covenant, and the continual assistance of grace to keep us in that

covenant. And so it differs from the usual covenants that pass be-

tween man and man. Among men, each party undertaketh for and

looketh after his own part of the covenant ; but leaveth the other to

look to his duty and his part of the engagement. But here the duties

required of us are undertaken for by him that requireth them. No

man filleth. his neighbour's hand with anything to pay his rent to

him, or enableth him to do what he hath covenanted to do ; but God

filleth our hand with a stock, yea more than a stock, of habitual grace,

with actual influences, to draw forth habits into act ; and cloth with

strength so far enable us to perform every commanded duty, that in

the performance thereof we may be accepted. Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27,

God owneth there not only the principles of acting, but also the excite-

ment of these principles; yea, the very act itself. He hath under-

taken to infuse the principle, and stir up the acts and exercise of it :

' I will cause you to walk in my statutes.' So Jer. xxxii. 39, 40,

' And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me

for ever, for the good of them and of their children after them, and I

will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn

away from them, to do them good, but I will put my fear in their

hearts that they shall not depart from me.' Besides converting grace,

superadded influences. It differeth from the covenant of works, that

had more of a law, and less of a promise : there was a promise of re-

ward to the obeyer, but no promise of giving obedience. God indeed

gave Adam a stock of habitual grace, but no promise of assisting grace.

There man was to keep the covenant ; here, in effect, the covenant

keepeth us, Jer. xxxii. 40. And indeed therein lieth the exceeding

graciousness of the covenant of grace, that God undertaketh for both

parties, and worketh in his people all that is required for entering

into and keeping this covenant with him.

2. In particular, this part of actual influence, which is more espe-

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cially called quickening, is promised in the covenant of grace ; for the

covenant concerneth mainly the life of grace, the care of which he hath

taken into his own hands, not to lay it down till it be perfected in the

life of glory ; and therefore alloweth his children to repair to him

when their life is any way enfeebled or decayed : so that besides that

the general undertaking of his covenant will' warrant such a plea, his

particular promises of preserving and restoring our life will embolden

us to ask quickening; for with respect to his judgment or covenant

engagement, God is called, ' The God of our life,' Ps. xlii. 8, and ' The

strength of our life/ Ps. xxvii. 1. The care of life, bodily, spiritual,

and everlasting, lieth upon him ; by virtue of the covenant he hath

undertaken to keep it, feed it, renew it in all the decays of it, till we

be possessed of the life of glory.

Secondly, The advantage we have from this promise. We have a

double argument, not only from God's mercy, but his truth; both

which do assure us that God is not only easy to be entreated, but

bound and tied by his own free condescension. His loving-kindness

showeth that he may do it for us ; his judgment, that in some part he

will do it. He is not only inclined, but obliged, which is a new ground

of hope. His promise in the new covenant inferreth a debt of favour,

though not of justice ; when God hath bound himself by promise, both

his mercy and fidelity are concerned to do us good. We have not

only the freeness of God's love to encourage us, but the certainty of

his help engaged in the promise. God inviteth men to him by his

grace, and engageth his truth to do them good. The nature of God

is one encouragement, he is wonderful ready to do good ; but in his

covenant he hath established a right to believers to seek his mercy, so

that all is made more sure and comfortable to us.

Use. To encourage the people of God, when they miss his help in

the spiritual life, to lay open their case to God. The thought of strict

justice striketh us dumb, there is no claiming by that covenant ; but

the remembrance of this merciful right or judgment should open our

mouths in prayer, and loosen our tongues in acquainting God with our

case : Lord, I want that life and quickening which thy promises seem

to speak of. You may do it with the more confidence for these

reasons : —

1. Consider the tenor of this judgment, or the terms thereof, the

mildness of the court in which you plead ; it is not a covenant of

justice, but of favour ; in it grace taketh the throne, not justice ; the

judge is Christ ; the law according to which judgment is given is the

gospel ; our plea is grace, not merit ; the persons allowed to plead are

penitent sinners ; yea, they are not only, allowed to plead for them-

selves, but they have an advocate to plead for them : the very judge is

their advocate ! Oh ! let us hold God to this latter covenant, and

judgment of grace, mercy, and goodness: Lord, upon these terms we

dare come unto thee.

2. Consider the blessing offered in this covenant: Heb. iv. 16,

' Mercy and grace to help.' It offereth mercy for pardon of sins, a

blessing which the law knew not ; and grace to help, that is for our

purpose. It is a covenant which alloweth you expenses to run the

way of God's commandments, gives you straw to make your brick,

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filleth your hand to pay the master's rent. It is not a hard master, to

reap where it soweth not, but will cause you to walk and run whither

it sends you.

3. Consider, there is nothing in God contrary to us, or standeth in

our way, for it is all removed by this judgment or covenant. If any-

thing, it is the justice of God; but that doth not stand in our way,

being satisfied by Christ.

[1.] If you take justice, as it implieth his remunerative and vindic-

tive justice, we have the merit of Christ to plead: there is a ransom

paid by him, to whom the sinner is fled for refuge. So that God may

do us good without any blemish or imputation of defect to his right-

eousness and justice against sin, Kom. iii. 24, 25 ; 1 John i. 9.

[2.] As righteousness implieth the rectitude of his nature : ' In thy

faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness,' Ps. cxliii. 1. These

things, that terrify others, comfort the godly ; the righteousness and

truth of God are their support. His veracity is a part of his right-

eousness, as it becometh every just man to make good his promises.

SERMON CLXVIII.

They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from

thy law. — Ver. 150.

Here in this verse he giveth an account what was the cause of his

frequent and earnest crying unto God, of his hope, meditation, begging

for quickening ; because he was ready to be destroyed by those who

every day went off further and further from God's law ; they were

ready to accomplish their wicked and malicious purpose upon him,

and prepared for it, and even now at his heels to do him harm and

mischief: ' They draw nigh,' &c.

In the words we have —

1. An intimation of approaching danger, they draw nigh that follow

after mischief

2. A description of those from whom the danger was feared, they

are far from thy law.

First, ' They draw nigh,' &c. The enemy is at hand, even at the

doors ; the prophet speaketh as if he did hear the sound of his feet,

yet they are as far from thy law as near to destroy me.

Doct. Extreme danger may sometimes draw nigh unto, and even

tread upon the heels of God's people.

Eeasons.

1. From the implacable malice of their enemies.

[1.] They seek the destruction of the people of God, nothing less

will content them; this is implied in the word mischief in the text: to

/jit] elvai, Ps. lxxxiii. 4, ' Come let us cut them off from being a nation,

that the name of Israel may no more be in remembrance.' That is

their aim, that not one of that denomination be left : Ps. cxxxvii. 7,

' Ease, rase it, even to the foundation thereof,' Nothing will satisfy

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them but utter ruin and extirpation : they that expect milder terms

from the seed of the serpent, flatter themselves with a vain hope.

[2.] They follow this end with all industry and diligence ; this is

implied in the phrase that follow after mischief They watch all

occasions, pursue every advantage to bring their purpose to pass.

Some in scripture are said to follow after righteousness, Isa. li. 1.

It noteth their constant trade and study. It may be rendered pur-

suers of righteousness, as in the text, pursuers of mischief. They that

follow after righteousness are such as continue constant in the serious

and sedulous practice of holiness ; and they that follow after mischief

are such as are unwearied in the prosecution of their malicious

designs. It implieth a metaphor taken from the vehemency of hunts-

men in the pursuit of their foe or prey. So Pro v. xxi. 21, ' He that

followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life ; ' and Heb. xii. 14,

SicotceTe tijv elptfvrjv, ' Follow peace and holiness ; ' as Asahel pursued

Abner, 2 Sam. ii. 19, 'And turned not to the right hand or to the left

from following after Abner.' The Septuagint renders here KaraSico-

Kovres fie avofita, ' They earnestly seek to undo me.'

2. From the providence of God, who permitteth malicious enemies

to draw nigh to his people, and to have many advantages against his

people for holy and righteous ends.

[1.] That this is the usual course of God's providence, to suffer his

people to be reduced to great dangers and extremities, that there is not

a hair-breadth between them and ruin. Paul was in the very mouth

of the lion, 2 Tim. iv. 17, before God delivered him ; by the lion he

meaneth Nero, a bitter enemy to the Christians, and the lamb was

brought bound to him : the prey was in the lion's mouth before

God delivered him, 2 Cor. i. 10, compared with 1 Cor. xv. 32, and

both with Acts. xiv. 19 : I gave my self for dead ; it was a thousand

to one he had not been sacrificed to the fury of the multitude. So

was David often near taking dangers, which he did or could hardly

escape : Ps. liv., the title, ' When the Ziphims discovered him to

Saul.' So Ps. lvii., the title, ' When he fled from Saul in the cave ; '

the army of Saul at the mouth of the cave, and Saul cometh into it,

and yet God blinded him so that he escaped. So the church : Ps.

cxxiv. 1-3, ' If it had not been the Lord that was on our side, now

may Israel say, if it had not been the Lord who was on our side when

men rose up against us, then they had swallowed us up quick when

their wrath was kindled against us.' They were in the midst of their

fears.

[2.] Why is this his usual course?

(1.) To exercise their trust and dependence. Graces are seldom

exercised to the life till we are near the point of death. Now rather

than God will suffer his people to live by sense, without manifesting

grace, and bringing honour to their profession and the truth of his

promises, he will cast them into great dangers. The skill of a pilot

is seen in a storm, so is faith put to it in great conflicts ; as it is in

cares, so in fears : many are reduced to great straits in the family,

no meal in the barrel, no oil in the cruse : John vi. 4-6, ' When Jesus

then lift up his eyes and saw a great multitude come unto him, he

saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat ?

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And this he said to prove him, for he himself knew what he would

do.' A poor believer is put to it : children increase, trading seemeth

dead ; what shall we do ? When danger is danger indeed, then is a

believer tried and exercised : 2 Cor. i. 9, ' But we had the sentence of

death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves, but in God

which raiseth the dead.' We are much given to self-confidence ;

while our mountain standeth strong, and we are entrenched within

the security of worldly advantages and props, we scarce know what

faith and dependence upon God mean. Now, saitli God, I will make

you trust in me ere I have done, and to live alone upon my all-

sufficiency : you may think your reputation will hear you out, but I

will load you with censures that you may trust in me; you think

friends shall help you, but friend and lover shall be afar off ; you

think to shelter yourselves under common refuges, but they shall all

fail and cease, that I may see whether you trust in me ; or that the

common justice and equity of your cause shall bear you out, but I

will send against you those that are maliciously resolved (contrary to

all justice and gratitude), that shall approach and endeavour to mis-

chief you. Who would think that Paul should be in danger of self-

confidence, a man so exercised as he was, so tossed to and fro, so often

whipped, scourged, exposed to clanger ? Alas ! we can hardly see

with other eyes than nature hath, or depend upon invisible help ; we

look at present things, and laugh at danger upon the confidence of

outward probabilities. If we can get a carnal pillow and bolster under

our heads, we sleep and dream many a golden dream of ease and

safety. Now God, that is jealous of our trust, will not let us alone,

and therefore will put us upon sharp trials. It is not faith but sense

we live upon before : that is faith if we can depend upon God when

they draw near that follow after mischief : Ps. iii. 6, ' I will not be

afraid of ten thousands of the people that set themselves against me

round about.' A danger at a distance is but imagined ; it worketh

otherwise when it is at hand : Christ himself had other thoughts of

approaching danger than danger at a distance : John xii. 27, ' Now is

my soul troubled ; ' this vessel of pure water was shaken, though he

discovered no dregs.

(2.) To quicken to prayer. Jonah, that slept in the ship, falls

a-praying in the whale's belly. A drowsy soul is awakened in case of

extreme danger: Ps. cxxx. 1, 'Out of the depths have I cried unto

thee.' Now an ordinary prayer will not serve the turn ; not to speak

a prayer, but to cry a prayer : we do but act devotion before, and

personate the part of the supplicant ; then we exercise it. Now rather

than God's children shall neglect prayer, he exposeth them to great

hazards : Mat. viii. 25, ' Master, carest thou not that we perish ? '

What careless, dead, and drowsy prayers do we perform when all

things go on fairly, and we are well at ease ! Moses cried when

Israel was at a loss, Exod. xiv. 15, the sea before, the Egyptians be-

hind ready to tread upon their heels, mountains on each side.

(3.) That the deliverance of his people may be more glorious :

partly because there is more of his power and care discovered when

our straits are great : 'Israel may now say, We had been swallowed up

quick,' Ps. cxxiv. Rescues in extremity of dangers are more glorious :

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Ps. cxviii. 13, ' Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but the

Lord helped me/ So Ps. xxvii. 2, ' When the wicked, even mine

enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled

and fell.' In great dangers to be overtaken by his enemies. God

doth some way suffer his people to be brought near destruction, but

he doth always prove their friend and helper. David's strength and

courage was seen in that he plucked a lamb out of the lion's mouth,

1 Sam. xvii. 34, 35. And partly because these great straits and

troubles are a means to open our eyes, and waken our stupid senses.

Deliverance is all one to God, whether from great exigencies or in ordi-

nary cases, but is more endeared by extremity of danger. It is as easy

to save a hundred or a thousand, but it inaketh a fuller sound : we are

more sensible of our weakness to help ourselves, to be sure, without his

assistance.

Use 1. Be not offended if God cast you into great dangers ; it is no

argument of God's hatred to destroy you, but of his love to try you,

and to prepare you for the greater comfort, that we may have a more

glorious sight of his salvation. Many, after confidence expressed, have

been put to great trials. The three children were delivered, but put

into the fire first, and the furnace made seven times hotter. Paul's

company suffered shipwreck before the promise of their safety could

be fulfilled. Moses and the Israelites were delivered, yet pursued and

shut up, the Egyptians behind, and the seas before, and steep moun-

tains on each side : Ps. cxviii. 18, ' The Lord hath chastened me sore,

but he hath not given me over to death.' Things at the worst begin

to change ; though it come to such a desperate pass as it must be

speedy help or speedy ruin, such exigencies do mightily conduce to the

glory of God, and the bettering of his people. Whatever weakeneth

our confidence, the greatness of danger should not, for in such cases

God is there.

Use 2. Let us use the more prayer ; it is a time to put promises in

suit : 2 Chron. xx. 12, ' our God, wilt thou not judge them ? for we

have no might against this great company that cometh against us,

neither know we what to do ; but our eyes are unto thee.' The fittest

season to treat with God about help ; for when the creatures are at a

loss, that is the time for God to help. When danger is near, call upon

God for help, acquaint him with it, it is time for him to be near also.

Ver. 151 of this psalm, ' Thou art near, Lord.' The less help of

man's mercy, the more hope of God's help.

Use 3. The greater the danger, the more thankfully should we

acknowledge the deliverance. The woman of Sarepta, when her son

was restored to life, 1 Kings from the 17th verse to the end, said, ' By

this I know thou art a man of God, and that the word of the Lord in

thy mouth is truth.' So ' Israel may now say, If the Lord had not

been on our side, men had swallowed us quick.'

Secondly, A description of those from whom this danger was feared,

' They are far from thy law ;' that is, they do not regard it. This

clause may be added —

1. To amplify or aggravate the danger. As if he had said, Lord,

having oppressed them, they contemn thy law, and all restraints of

conscience and duty. The farther the enemies of the godly are from

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God's law, the nearer to do mischief. So Ps. liv. 3, ' Oppressors seek

after my soul ; they have not set God before them.' So Ps. lxxxvi. 1,

' Violent men have sought after my soul, they have not set thee before

them.' They are likely to be cruel, because profane. When the fear

of God is laid aside, and all respect to his word, there is nothing to be

expected but the worst of evils. They mind not thy law, therefore

care not what mischief they do me.

2. To increase his confidence of help ; for God will not favour a

corrupt party : Ps. cxxxix. 19, ' Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O

God ;' Ps. xciv. 10, ' The throne of wickedness hath no fellowship with

thee.'

Doct. The iniquity of persecutors is some matter of confidence to

the oppressed ; as David, from those that drew near to mischief him,

conceiveth some encouragement because they were far from God's law.

There are several considerations : —

1. Usually the servants of God have been most hated and troubled

by the worst of men ; so it usually falls out that the worst and most

virulent enemies of religion are those that are infamous for other crimes.

They have the greatest pique against them because they cannot endure

the righteousness of God's image on them : Ps. xxxviii. 20. ' They are

my adversaries, because I follow the thing that good is.' So John vii.

7, ' The world cannot hate you, but me it hateth, because I testify of

it that the works thereof are evil.'

2. You may take notice of this wickedness, and represent it so to

God; for he is the judge of the world, and it concerneth him to cut

short their power to do mischief that have such a ready principle to

act it, and are likely to have no other restraints than God layeth upon

them by his providence and the interest of their affairs. But of this

before, about aggravating the danger.

3. When we do so, be sure the thing be true, that they are not only

injurious to us, but open enemies to God and godliness, before we

speak thus of those that hate us, or work any trouble to us in the

world. As long as the cause will admit of a favourable construction,

we should take heed of such suggestions. I observe this the rather,

because man is so partial to himself, that whosoever are enemies to

him, he presently thinketh they are enemies to godliness ; and there-

fore, when we pass our judgment on any person and cause, it had need

be conformed to truth ; for otherwise it argueth great irreverence

towards God to make him conscious to our revenges and private

passions, Ps. cxxxix. 21-24. We had need try our cause, when God's

quarrel and our interest are joined, that there be not some dregs of

private spleen and rash censurings mixed therewith, and that passion

doth not rule us, but duty, in these complaints, and that it is not our

own interest, but God's quarrel, they being open enemies to him. And

therefore we must bo confident that such as we pray against are in a

wicked condition, and engaged in an evil course.

4. When this is clear, there is some comfort and confidence in the

badness of our enemies.

[1.] Because God and we are engaged in a common cause, for our

adversaries are against God as well as against us. Now it is better

to be afflicted by them than to have fellowship with the unfruitful

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works of darkness, or to cry up a confederacy with tlieni that cry up a

confederacy against God, Ps. cxxxix. 22.

[2.] It is a great satisfaction to us to be opposed by evil men, or

common enemies of the power of godliness. Certainly it would be

more grievous to us to be oppressed by them that have a show of

godliness than the openly profane, Ps. lv. 12, 13. The worst that a

professed enemy can do is more tolerable than the injury of a friend.

It importeth a dishonour to be opposed by the good, as having an ill

cause in hand, or unworthy to be assisted ; but it helpeth to make the

cause more clear when we see what kind of persons we have to do

withal, such as we cannot but count wicked, because they have no

regard to God's law. Our cause would not be so clear if it were with

them that fear God.

[3.] The more wicked they are, the more ripe for judgment ; espe-

cially if they be a corrupt party in the visible church ; for where we

perceive wickedness to reign, there we may be sure destruction will

follow.

Use. Well, then, whenever this falleth out, mind God of it, and be

not discouraged. An ill cause will not always prevail. Only let us

be prepared for deliverance, as they are ripe for destruction, otherwise

none so bad but good enough to make a rod to scourge God's children.

And then have patience ; such are our enemies as are God's also ; they

are far from obedience to God's law.

SERMON CLXIX.

Thou art near, Lord; and all thy commandments are truth. —

Ver. 151.

In the former verse, the enemies are represented as near, and near to

do mischief, but far from the law of God. Here in the text there is

somewhat put in opposition to both.

1. For their nearness to do mischief, God is near to help.

2. They are far off from the law. The man of God asserteth that

God's commandments are truth. All their contempt of the law did

not abate and lessen his esteem of it. So that the sum of the verse is,

that the enemies cannot be so ready to hurt as God is to help and

deliver ; they cannot go about to defeat promises as God will go about

to fulfil them. Mark, he compareth the readiness of wicked men to

hurt with the readiness of God, their contempt of the word with the

truth of the word, or God's justification of it. In short, in the verse

we may observe two branches : —

1. Something spoken of God.

2. Something of his law.

1. That which is spoken of God is, that he is near, a present help

to those that persist in the obedience of his will ; for nearness doth not

only import his favour, or inclination to help them, but that he will

not delay his help too long ; his help is at hand, therefore called ' A

present help in trouble,' Ps. xlvi. 1, and 'The Lord is at my right hand,'

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Ps. xvi. 8 ; ready as our second in all conflicts to stand by us, support,

and comfort us in our troubles, yea, to deliver us ; that is the notion of

nearness in the text. Near as the enemies are near, only he is near to

defend as they are near to destroy. When to appearance danger is

nearest, at the same time help and salvation is nearest also, and this

doth allay all our cares and fears : Phil. iv. 5, G, ' The Lord is at

hand, therefore be careful for nothing.' Still present by his provi-

dence, or hastening his second coming : Kev. xxii. 20, 'I come quickly.'

I rather quote that place, for the Septuagint hath it here €771\*9 el, Kvpte,

there 6 Kvpio$ 6771)9, therefore he bids us be careful for nothing ;

certainly the belief of God's nearness should encourage us.

2. That which is said of his word and law is, ' Thy commandments

are truth.' One would think it had been more proper to say, are just

and righteous, than to say are truth. His commandments are just as

the rule of our duty, they are just as the rule of God's process; but

the word commandment is not taken strictly for the mandatory part of

the word, but it is put for the whole covenant, his precepts invested

with promises and threatenings. The commandments thus considered,

with the promises and threatenings annexed, are true. Yea, mark the

emphasis of the phrase, truth itself. The happiness promised to them

that make conscience of their duty will be made good ; and so the

punishments on them that offend God will be inflicted. Now the

joining of these two clauses seemeth to speak thus much : I know that

thou art near me, because thy word is truth. God in his providence

seemeth to be absent sometimes from his people, but upon the assur-

ance of his word we must believe him near. I say, God seemeth to be

far off from his people, for who would think that the God of peace and

all comfort should dwell with them that are broken in spirit ? Isa.

lvii. 15, ' For thus saith the high and holy One that inhabiteth eternity,

whose name is Holy ; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him

also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the

humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.' Or that the

author of all felicity should be present with them that are harassed

and exercised with such sharp afflictions, and hunted up and clown in

the world, but because God hath promised it : Isa. xliii. 2, ' When

thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee ; and through the

rivers, they shall not overflow thee : when thou walkest through the

fire, thou shalt not be burnt ; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee/

We should be satisfied with it ; his word is truth : whatever sense and

reason saith to the contrary, neither distance of place nor afflictedness

of condition do hinder his nearness to us.

Quitting all other points, I shall only insist on this one.

Doct That it is the privilege and happiness of God's children to have

God near unto them upon all occasions.

My great business will be to explain what this nearness is, and then

you will soon find it to be the great happiness and privilege of the saints.

1. What is this nearness ?

2. How is it brought about ?

First, What is this nearness ?

1. God is not said to be nearer to them than others in regard of his

essence, for so he is everywhere present, nullibi inclusus, nullibi ex-

VER. 151.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 103

clusus. So a heathen described God to be a great circle, whose centre

is nowhere, and circumference everywhere ; and in the prophet he

telleth us, Jer. xxiii. 23, 24, 'Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord,

and not a God afar off? do not I fill heaven and earth ? can any hide

him in secret places that I shall not see him ? saith the Lord.' He

filleth all things with his essential presence ; he is in earth, in heaven,

and under the earth : Ps. cxxxix. 7, 8, ' Whither shall I go from thy

Spirit ? and whither shall I flee from thy presence ? If I ascend up

into heaven, thou art there ; if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art

there : if I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost

parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand

shall hold me.' God is here, and there, and everywhere ; the heavens

do not confine and enclose his being, nor the tumults of the earth ex-

clude it : in this sense God is alike near to all things. They that

cannot endure the presence and thought of God, where will they go

from him ? They may run away from God as a friend, but they cannot

escape him as an enemy. Te non amittit nisi qui dimittit, et qui te

dimittit, quofugit, nisi a te placato ad te irafoim? Men may shut

God out of their hearts, and yet he is there, do what they can, and will

be found there one day in the dreadful effects of his anger.

2. Not in regard of his general providence and common sustentation ;

for so ov ixcucpiiv, ' He is not far from every one of us ; for in him we

live, and move, and have our being,' Acts xvii. 27, 28. This general

presence and providential sustentation is vouchsafed to all his crea-

tures, without which they could not subsist, nor move, nor act ; so all

things are enclosed under the hand of his power, and are still under

his disposing.

3. It is meant of his friendly and gracious presence, and those

eminent and gracious effects of his power and goodness which he is

pleased to afford his people. So God is sometimes said to be nigh

unto his people, and they are said to be a people near unto him. The

Lord is said to be near unto them : Ps. xxxiv. 18, ' The Lord is nigh

unto them that are of a broken heart ; ' and again, Ps. cxlv. 18, ' The

Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him, and to all that call upon

him in truth ; ' Deut. iv. 7, ' What nation is so great ? who hath God

so nigh unto them, as the Lord our God is in all things that we call

upon him for ? ' The Lord is said to be nigh, because he is always

ready to hear their prayers, and to direct them in their doubts, comfort

them in their sorrows, defend and protect them in all their dangers,

and deliver them in all their troubles. On the other side, they are

said to be a people near unto God : Ps. cxlviii. 14, ' He also exalteth

the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints, even of the children

of Israel, a people near unto him.' Because they are the special objects

of his mercy and favour. And as to the actual intercourse that passeth

between God and them, God is said to draw nigh to them, as they

are said to draw nigh to God : James iv. 8, ' Draw nigh to God, and

he will draw nigh to you ; ' and so drawing nigh to us on God's

part signifieth grace and blessing ; and drawing nigh on our part,

our duty, love, fear, delight, and reverence of God. Well, then, it is

meant of his friendly gracious presence vouchsafed to his people.

4. This nearness may be understood of his visible presence in his

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ordinances, or of that spiritual inwardness and saving union and com-

munion that is between God and his converted people, or those that

are brought home to him by Christ, and are the members of his mys-

tical body. In some sense it is the privilege of the visible church to

have God near them, because they have the signs of his presence

among them ; as in the former place, Deut. iv. 7, ' What nation hath

God so nigh unto them ? ' It was the common privilege of the nation,

in comparison of the pagans about them, who were a people afar off,

and strangers to the covenants of promise. So Jer. xiv. 9, ' Thou,

Lord God, art in the midst of us, and we are called by thy name ;

leave us not.' Thus God is said to be nigh because he dwelleth in the

churches and walketh in the midst of them ; but those that are con-

verted indeed are in a straiter union with God. All those that are

members of the visible church, and are united to Christ by a visible

and political union, they have great privileges, for they are a society

under God's special care and government, and enjoy the means of

grace and the offers of salvation, and great helps by the gifts bestowed

upon the body, and so have God nearer to them than others, though

they have not the saving fruits of union with Christ and communion

with God. Once more, a people that are nigh unto God visibly and

politically may be cast off; as Jer. xiii. 11. 'For as a girdle cleaveth

to the loins of a man, so have I caused to cleave unto me the whole

house of Israel and the whole house of Judah, saith the Lord ; that

they might be unto me for a people, and for a name, and for a praise,

and for a glory ; but they would not hear ; ' ' yet I will cast them away

as a rotten girdle that is good for nothing,' ver. 10. These words are

the application of a charge given to Jeremiah, to get him a girdle, and

hide it till it was rotten, and then to bring it forth and tell the people

the meaning of this ceremony. He was to get a girdle, not leathern,

nor woollen, such as were commonly worn by the ordinary sort ; but a

linen girdle, such as the better sort of persons were wont to wear. He

was not to wet it, or put it in water, to imply that neither God nor

aught from him had been the cause of the general corruption and

destruction of this people ; but to hide it in a dry place near Euphrates

till it was corrupted. Thus God would lay visibly before their eyes

their own state ; they were as near about him, girded as close to him,

as a girdle about a man's loins, yet then good for nothing. But for

those to whom God is near by saving benefits they cannot be lost, for

where the nearness is really begun, it will continue, and never be

broken off. You may as well separate the leaven and the dough, im-

possibile est massam a pasta sejxirare, &c.

5. In those that are living members of Christ's mystical body we

must distinguish between a state of nearness and acts of nearness. By

converting grace we are brought into a state of nearness unto God,

and in worship we actually draw nigh unto him, and he to us. The

state of nearness is the state of favour and reconciliation with God into

which we are admitted who were before strangers and enemies : Col.

i. 21, 'And you, that were sometimes alienated and enemies in your

mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled.' And also our

participation of the divine nature : 2 Peter i. 4, ' Whereby are given

unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you

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might be partakers of the divine nature ; having escaped the corrup-

tion that is in the world through lust ; ' or life of God, from which we

were formerly alienated by sin : Eph. iv. 18, ' Having their under-

standings darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the

ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart.'

For these three do always go together, the favour of God, the image of

God, and fellowship with God. When Adam lost one, he lost all:

when he lost the image of God, he also lost the favour of God, or fel-

lowship with God, or nearness to him. So then our state of nearness

lieth in the recovery of the favour of God, and the image or life of

God, when we stand right in his grace, and live his life : they are both

great mercies, and both the ground of our fellowship with God, or

nearness to him. Christians ! think with yourselves. Is it not a

great privilege for poor sinful creatures, that could not think of God

without horror, or hear him named without trembling, or pray to him.

without great dejection of heart, to look upon God as reconciled, and

willing to receive us and bless us ! So for the life of God, to have a

life begun in us by the Spirit of God, and maintained by the continual

influences of his grace, till all be perfected in glory, what a privilege

is this ! None but they that live this life can have communion with

God. Things cannot converse that do not live the same life ; as

Adam had no companion or help-meet, but was alone, though all the

creatures came and subjected themselves to him, trees, beasts, men,

&c. : Gen. ii. 18, ' And the Lord said, It is not good for man to be

alone ; I will make him an help-meet for him.' But besides this state

of nearness, there are special acts of nearness, both on God's part and

ours ; he is nearer to us sometimes than at others, when we have more

evidences of his favour inward or outward : inward evidences, when he

quickens, comforts, supports the soul, filletli the heart with joy and

peace in believing ; at such a time God is near, we feel him sensibly

exciting and stirring up his own work in us. The soul always dwelleth

in the body, but it doth not always act alike ; it is ever equal in point

of habitation, but not in point of operation. So Christ doth always

dwell in the heart by his Spirit, but he doth not always act alike, but

kclt evSoKiav, 'according to his good pleasure/ Phil. ii. 13. God is

not alike always present with his people, but never withdraweth that

influence that is necessary to the being of grace : Ps. lxxiii. 23,

' Nevertheless I am continually with thee : thou hast holden me by

my right hand.' So outwardly ; sometimes God hideth himself, some-

times seemeth not to mind the affairs of his people, at other times all

the world shall know that they are near and dear to him : he that

toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye : those that will not see,

shall see and be ashamed for their envy at his people, Isa. xxvi. 11.

So on our part there is a standing relation between us and God, but

our hearts are more or less towards him in worship ; we especially

then draw near unto him, though there be a communion in walking

with God in our whole course. These things must be distinguished,

for actual intercourse may be interrupted or suspended, when our state

of nearness to God ceaseth not.

6. The grounds and reasons of all nearness, or the way how it cometh

about, are these four :—

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1.1 God's covenant with us.

"2.1 Our incorporation into Christ.

3. j The inhabitation of the Spirit in us.

4.] Mutual love between God and us. These are the reasons why

God is near us, and we a people near unto God.

[1.] His covenant with us, or confederation in the covenant. God

promiseth to be our God, and we to be his people: Jer. xxxii. 38,

' And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.' As those

two kings made a league offensive and defensive, 1 Kings xxii. 4, ' I

am as thou art, and my people as thy people, and my horses as thy

horses ; ' so God will be ours as really as we are his ; you shall have a

propriety in God, as God has in you ; not absolutely indeed the same,

but enough for your comfort. You were his before the contract, and

to be at his command ; but he is not at your command : you may sup-

plicate and humbly sue out the effects of your right in God, and may

be sure of speeding, when it is for his glory and your good. We have

a right to God, and all that is in God, but not a right over him, as he

hath over us. We have propriety and interest in God, but not domin-

ion, as we have over the creatures, or as God hath over us. He will

let out his goodness, grace, and mercy to us and for us. God still

keepeth the rank of a sovereign, and yet treateth us as friends : James

ii. 23, ' Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for right-

eousness, and he was called the friend of God.' Yea, children : John i.

12, ' But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become

the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.' When we

give up ourselves to God to serve him, we enter ourselves heirs to all

the privileges of the gospel, and may lay claim to them.

[2.] By union with Christ ; such as are under the covenant of grace

are made members of the mystical body of Christ. This union the

scripture sets forth by the similitude of head and members : Kom. xii.

5, ' So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members

one of another.' Vine and branches : John xv. 1,2, 'I am the true

vine, and my Father is the husbandman; every branch in me that

beareth not fruit, he taketh away; and every branch that beareth

fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit/ Stock and

graff, Bom. vi. 5 ; body and garment : Gal. iii. 27, ' For as many of

you as have been baptized into Christ, have put on Christ.' The con-

verting of meat and drink into our substance : John vi. 56, ' He that

eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.'

House and indweller : Eph. iii. 17, ' That Christ may dwell in your

hearts by faith.' As the members receive sense and motion from the

head, the branches sap from the root, and the graff liveth in the stock,

so we receive all life and being from Christ. Christ first giveth him-

self to us, and with himself all things. We must have himself first,

for it is he in us becometh the fountain of life : Gal. ii. 20, ' I am

crucified with Christ ; nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth

in me ; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith

of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' The

hope of glory : Col. i. 27, ' Christ in you the hope of glory.' Now this

endeareth us to God, and makes us near to him : John xvii. 21, ' That

they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that

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they also may be one in us.' Christ is God-man in one person, and

we are united to him mystically, though not hypostatically ; and so

God and we are brought near together. For we are in him as he is in

the Father, not with an exact equality, but some answerable likeness ;

we are immediately united to Christ, and by Christ to God.

[3.] The inhabitation of the Spirit, that is the fruits of union, as

union of confederation. The same spirit that dwelleth in Christ

dwelleth in us : 1 Cor. vi. 17, ' He that is joined to the Lord is one

spirit.' It is by the same spirit that the union is brought about, the

same spirit that dwelleth in head and members ; this is the foundation

laid on Christ's part for all our communion and commerce with God :

1 John iv. 13, ' Hereby we know that we dwell in God, and God in

us, because he hath given us of his Spirit.' We cannot know our

communion with God as the author of grace by any other gift ; he

maketh his first entry this way, uniting us to himself by his Spirit.

[4.] The mutual love between God and them. Gocl loveth them,

and they love Gocl ; and so they are near and dear to one another :

1 Sam. xviii. 1, ' The soul of Jonathan was knit with the soul of

David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul.' Such love is here

between Christ and believers, and between them and God. God

beginneth, he loveth first, and best, and most ; no father or mother

loveth their children so tenderly as God doth them : Isa. xlix. 15,

' Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have

compassion on the son of her womb ? yea, they may forget, yet will I

not forget thee.' No husband loves his spouse as Christ doth the

church : Eph. v. 25, ' Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also

loved the church, and gave himself for it ; ' not only gave himself to

the church, but for it. Alas ! when we are at our best, we love God

too little. There is a strong love which the saints have to God and

Christ ; they cannot live without him, are always crying, Abba,

Father : Gal. iv. 6, ' And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth

the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.' They

cannot brook his absence, are dejected if they cannot hear from him

at every turn.

7. There being such a ground laid for our nearness, all familiar

intercourses do pass freely between God and us, through Christ, by

whom and through whom are all things, and we by him, 1 Cor. viii.

5. Our commerce with God is in donatives and duties.

[1.] On God's part, it is seen in his readiness to hear our prayers :

Isa. lviii. 9, ' Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer ; thou

shalt cry, and he shalt say, Here I am.' God is at hand ; when we

knock at heaven's gates, he answereth presently, saying, And what

would you have ? If God should make an offer to us as Jonathan

did to David, 1 Sam. xx. 14, ' Whatever thy soul desireth, I will do

for thee,' we would think then we should never want more. What

would the world give for such a promise from an earthly potentate ?

You have it from God, if you like the condition : Ps. xxxvii. 4,

' Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy

heart.' Thou canst not desire anything regularly, and consisting with

the condition of the covenant, with thy delight in Gocl, but thou shalt

have it. In a holy sense, you have God at command, to do for you

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what you would have, as if you had his sovereignty at command : Job

xxii. 27, 28, ' Thou shalt make thy prayers unto him, and he shall

hear thee ; and thou shalt pay thy vows. Thou shalt also decree a

thing, and it shall be established unto thee ; and the light shall shine

upon thy ways.' Decree, and it shall be established ; speak the word,

and it shall come to pass, Is it for us to enact decrees, to appoint

what shall be ? Their prayer is a duplicate or counterpart of God's

decrees. God guideth their hearts to ask such things as are pleasing

to him ; God is ready to help us, to give supplies in all our necessities ;

he is remembering us for good upon all occasions, especially in our

low estate ; when we have none to help, he will help : lea. lix. 1G,

' And he saw that there was no man, and wondered that there was no

intercessor : therefore his arm brought salvation unto him, and his

righteousness it sustained him.' It was when he that dcparteth from

evil maketh himself a prey ; he cannot be safe unless he be wicked ;

and none will bestir himself in the behalf of truth and right, or own

the good cause, by speaking a word for it ; therefore God himself

would take the business in hand : Ps. cv. 14, ' He suffered no man

to do them wrong.' They that are God's confederates, he hath a

w r atchful eye over them ; they are under his defence and protection.

An afflicted people are more sensible of God's presence, help, and

assistance than others are ; for straits and troubles are means to open

men's eyes and waken their senses. ISTow you will ever find God with

you when he seemeth most to forget you. But especially in duties

of worship, the visits of love there, and the entertainment at God's

table : Ps. lxv. 4, ' Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causest

to approach to thee, that he may dwell in thy courts : we shall be

satisfied with the goodness of thy house, even of thy holy temple/

They have many sweet experiences of God, which they find not else-

where ; there he doth comfort, quicken, and revive them.' Ps. xxxvi.

8, ' They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house ;

thou shalt make them drink of the rivers of thy pleasures.' God

biddeth them welcome to this table, and will not send them away

empty ; indeed, there they come to feel joys unspeakable and glorious.

Not that we should build always on sensible experiences, or tie God

to our time, or make an essay of curiosity ; but if they humbly,

resolutely wait upon God according to the encouragements of his

promise, first or last they shall have a full meal, and God will own

them, and fill their hearts with goodness. Thus in answering their

prayers, helping them in straits, visiting in duties.

[2.] On our part, it is delightful to converse with God — •

(1.) In holy duties : Isa. xxvi. 16, ' Lord, in trouble have they visited

thee ; they poured out a prayer when thy chastening was upon them ; '

Job xxii. 21, ' Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace ;

thereby good shall come unto thee.' We have no reason to be strange

to God, for if we were acquainted with ourselves, we should find daily

and hourly some errand to the throne of grace. To forget him days

without number showeth we have little knowledge of God or of

ourselves. Be sure to look after a desire to enjoy God in the duty :

' My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of my God ; my

flesh and my heart crieth out for the living God,' Ps. lxxxiv. 2, 3.

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To rest in an empty ordinance showeth we do what we do rather

to pacify conscience than satisfy spiritual desires. God is to be our

end and object, whom we are to seek and serve ; abs te sine te non

recedam.

(2.) In a course of holiness : ' How can two walk together except

they be agreed ? ' Amos iii. 3. Loveth what he loveth, hateth what

he hateth. Suitableness of disposition is the ground of intimacy : 1

John i. 7, ' If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have

fellowship one with another.' God saith, I will dwell in them, and

walk in them. Walk as ever before God : Gen. xvii. 1, ' I am the

Almighty God ; walk before me, and be thou perfect. 5

Secondly, How we come to be brought into this nearness ? The

reason of doubting is because every man is born a stranger to God :

Ps. lviii. 3, ' The wicked are estranged from the womb ; they go astray

as soon as they be born, speaking lies.' Sin causes a distance between

God and us : Isa. lix. 2, ' But your iniquities have separated between

you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he

will not hear.' Man is averse from God, without God, Christ, covenant,

or hope of any good from him. Christ represents our apostate nature

by the prodigal's going into a far country ; the breach groweth wider

every day, and the distance is increased by actual sin. The wicked

are far from God : Hosea vii. 13, ' Woe unto them, for they have fled

from me ; destruction unto them, for they have transgressed against

me.' While matters stand thus between us and God, there is no hope ;

the rigour of divine justice and the terror of a guilty conscience will

not give us leave to look for any communion with God.

Ans. In this hopeless and helpless estate the Lord Jesus had pity

on us. The great end of the mediator is to bring us to God : 1 Peter

iii. 18, ' For Christ hath once suffered for sins ; the just for the unjust,

that he might bring us to God.' And therefore he is said to be the

way to the Father : John xvii. 6, ' I am the way, the truth, and the

life ; no man cometh unto the Father but by me.' He hath taken our

case into his own hands, and doth, partly by his merit and partly by his

Spirit, bring about this nearness and fellowship between God and us.

1. By his merit he bringeth us into a state of favour ; he opened

the door by his death : Eph. ii. 13, ' But now in Christ Jesus we who

sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ/ To

go to God offended, and appeased by no satisfaction, is terrible to the

guilty creature ; but Christ hath made our peace, so that we have

access into this grace wherein we stand : Eom. v. 1, 2, ' Therefore,

being justified by faith, we have peace with God. through our Lord

Jesus Christ : by whom also we have access by faith into the grace

wherein we stand.' This door which he hath opened by his death, he

keepeth open by his constant intercession : Heb. vii. 25, ' Wherefore

he is able to save unto the uttermost all those that come unto God

through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us ; ' which

our repeated provocations would otherwise daily and hourly shut and

close again : 1 John ii. 1, ' These things I write unto you, that you

sin not : and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father,

Jesus Christ the righteous ; ' and so all distance is removed, and poor

creatures may comfortably come to God.

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2. There is a great averseness in our hearts, and we need not only

leave to come to God, but a heart to come to God. We are fugitives

as well as exiles ; we hang off from God, and are loath to make use of

the offered opportunity ; therefore the imprecation of our liberty is not

only to be considered, but also the application of this grace to our

souls, which is done by the Spirit of Christ. Certainly, as to God, he

considereth us as united to Christ before he will be near to us : Eph.

ii. 13, ' But now in Christ Jesus ye, who were sometimes afar off, are

made nigh by the blood of Christ.' It was purchased by the blood of

Christ, but it is not actually bestowed and applied to the elect until

they be united to Christ, and in him by saving faith, as branches in

the root ; not only through Christ, but in Christ : something for us,

and something in us as to ourselves ; overcome our averseness to set

our hearts to seek the Lord. Nemo te qucerere potest nisi qui prius

invenerit ; vis igitur inveniri ut quceraris ? qucvre, ut inveniaris ;

potes quidem inveniri, non tamen prceveniri. None can be aforehand

with God ; we cannot seek him till we have found him. He will be

sought that he may be found ; and found that he may be sought. He

draweth nigh to us by his preventing grace, that he may draw nigh to

us by further grace ; and inclineth us to do what he requireth, that he

may crown his own work.

Use 1. To persuade us to enter into this state of nearness by taking

hold of God's covenant. It is an excellent thing in the general ; all

will grant that it is good to draw near to God ; but it is not only good,

but good for you, all things considered : Ps. Ixxiii. 28, ' It is good for

me to draw near to God ;' it is our only blessedness. The practical

judgment must be possessed with this truth, and then determine it so

that it may have the authority of a principle ; and then the heart must

be engaged to draw nigh to God by a hearty resolution to come unto

God. Till the heart be engaged, we are too easily enticed away from

God. Now the engaging the heart is by covenant : ' Yield yourselves

to the Lord,' 2 Chron. xxx. 8. All God's servants, they are his by

covenant : Ezek. xx. 37, ' I will cause you to pass under the rod, and

bring you into the bond of the covenant ; ' as sheep, to pass one by one

out of the fold. God doth not covenant with us in the lump and body,

but every man for himself must engage himself to live according to

the will of God. It is not enough that Christ engaged for us as our

surety : Heb. vii. 22, ' Jesus was made the surety of a better testa-

ment ;' something is to be done personally if we would have benefit by

it. It is not enough that the church engage for us as a visible poli-

tical body professing faith in Christ, Ezek. xvi. 7; but every man

must engage his own heart. It is not enough our parents did engage

for us, in behalf of little ones, avouch God to be their God : Deut.

xxix. 10-12, ' Ye stand this day all of you before the Lord your God ;

your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the

men of Israel, your little ones, your wives, and the stranger that is

in thy camp, from the hewer of wood to the drawer of thy water ; that

thou shouldest enter into covenant with the Lord thy God, and into

his oath, which the Lord thy God maketh with thee this day.' We

must ratify their dedication and covenant in our own persons, 2 Cor.

ix. 13, by a professed subjection to the gospel of Christ; this cove-

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riant and oath of allegiance. You eat at God's table to show that God

and you are agreed, and entered into a strict union and fellowship one

with another.

2. Let us live as in a state of nearness to God ; let us fear hirn, and

love him, and walk with hirn, as Enoch did, Gen. v. 24 ; or set the

Lord always before us, as David did, Ps. xvi. 8. How so ? In point

of reverence, in point of dependence.

[1.] In point of reverence, that we may not displease God with whom

we walk : Micah vi. 8, ' Walk humbly with thy God.' Thou shalt

humble thyself to walk with God. It is not a fellow-like familiarity

or the intimacy of equals, but the common subjection of inferiors, the

obedience of children, diligently taking heed lest a breach fall out

betwixt God and them : Deut. xxiii. 14, ' For the Lord thy God

walketh in the midst of thee, to deliver thee, and to give up thine

enemies before thee ; therefore shall thy camp be holy, that he may

see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.' God threatens

to leave them if he saw any filthiness among them. If we sin against

God, we may find him near as a judge to punish, not as a father to

protect us. Besides it is for the honour of God that a people near and

dear to him should study to please him in all things, and that they

should walk worthy of God, with whom they profess to be in covenant,

and whose friendly presence they enjoy. The nearer you are to God

the greater your sins. If you be the spouse of Christ, your sins are

adultery ; if you be the children of God, your sins are rebellion and

parricide ; if you be the friends of God, Christ hath the more cause to

complain : Ps. lv. 12, 13, ' For it was not an enemy that reproached

me ; then I could have borne it : neither was it he that hated me that

did magnify himself against me ; then I would have hid myself from

him : but it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine ac-

quaintance.' Your sins are the injuries of a false friend, if you be of

the household of God. After you had eaten his bread, will you lift up

the heel against him ? Ps. xli. 9, ' Yea, mine own familiar friend, in

whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lift up his heel

against me.' It is treachery of an unfaithful domestic and servant.

Men will endure injuries from strangers better than from nearer rela-

tions. Those that do not belong to God, that are not so dear and near

to him, their sins are not so grievous. In short, if you be the people

of God, whom God will own in the world, you should take care to live

to his honour.

[2.] In point of dependence, did we believe more firmly that God

was so near and so ready at hand, to comfort, support, deliver, and

bless us, this would stay our hearts in all our troubles. Is God near

us ? What should we be afraid of? Ps. xxiii. 1,2,' The Lord is my

shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pas-

tures : he leadeth me beside the still waters.' God admitteth you to

his table to assure you of his bounty and liberality ; he gives you this

support as a sign of reconciliation with you, that God and you are

friends. Now ra t<ov <f>c\cov irdvTa tcoiva. Especially let it check our

fears ; when trouble is near, God is also near, to counterwork our ene-

mies and support his people: Zech. iii. 1, 2, 'And he showed me

Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and

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Satan standing at his right hand to resist him. And the Lord said

unto Satan, The Lord rebuke thee, Satan ; even the Lord that hath

chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee : is not this a brand plucked out of the

fire ? ' Where there is Satan to resist, there is an angel to rebuke ; as

extremities draw nigh, God draweth nigh. When Laban with great

fury followed after Jacob, God followed after Laban, and stepped be-

tween, and commanded Laban not to hurt him. When Paul was like

to be torn in pieces in an uproar, God runneth speedily to his help :

2 Cor. i. 9, 10, ' But we had the sentence of death in ourselves, that

we should not trust in ourselves, but in God which raiseth the dead ;

who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver ; in whom we

trust that he will yet deliver us.' When danger cometh to be danger

indeed, you will find him a present help.

Use 2. To quicken us and encourage us actually to draw nigh to

God with the more confidence ; that is, let us address ourselves to

converse with him in his ordinances, for his favour, mercy, and bless-

ing, that we may not stand afar off, but come boldly. To this end,

consider whither we come, by whom we come, in what manner we

must come or draw nigh to him.

1. To whom we draw near ; to God, as reconciled in Christ. If God

were inaccessible it were another matter ; but divine justice being

satisfied in Christ we come to a throne of grace : Heb. iv. 16, ' Let us

therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain

mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' God's throne is a

throne of justice, grace, glory. To the throne of strict justice no sinful

man can approach ; to the throne of grace every penitent sinner may

have access ; to the throne of glory no mortal man can come in his

whole person ; his heart may be there : so it is said, Heb. x. 19, ' Hav-

ing therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood

of Jesus,' as petitioners are admitted to the prince in the presence

chamber. The way to the throne of glory lieth by the throne of grace ;

we pass by one unto the other. In short, Christ stood before the

throne of justice when he suffered for our sins ; penitent sinners stand

before the throne of grace when they worship him in faith. After the

resurrection we shall ever stand before the throne of glory, and ever

abide in his presence. Our business now is with the throne of grace,

to give answer and despatch our suits. There is a threefold throne of

grace — the typical, which was the mercy-seat : Fs. lxxx. 1, ' Thou

that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth;' the real, which is

Christ: ' Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption

that is in Christ Jesus ;' the commemorative, which is the Lord's

.supper, where is a representation of wisdom and obsignation of the

grace of Christ in the New Testament. This throne of grace is set up

everywhere in the church ; it standeth in the midst of God's people, as

the tabernacle did in the midst of Israel ; for God is always in all

places nigh unto such as call upon him in truth : John iv. 23, ' The

hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship

the Father in spirit and in truth ; for the Father seeketh such to wor-

ship him.' Access to God may be had everywhere, therefore let us

come.

2. By whom we come ; by Jesus Christ : Eph. iii. 12, ( In whom we

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have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him ;' upon

account of his merit and intercession. We should come without fear

or doubt to him, de facto, as if his blood were running afresh.

3. How we come ; with a true heart : Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near

with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having a heart sprinkled

from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

SERMON CLXX.

Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded

them for ever. — Ver. 152.

In this verse is a further illustration of the last clause of the former.

He had said there, ' Thy commandments are ipsissima Veritas ; ' now

he amplifieth that saying from God's ordination and appointment,

' Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast

founded them for ever.' The prophet ends this octonary and paragraph

with some triumph of faith ; and after all his conflicts and requests to

God, goeth away with this assurance, that God's word should be in-

fallibly accomplished, as being upon his own experience of unchange-

able and unerring certainty. Two things you may observe in the

words : —

1. The constant and eternal verity of God's testimonies, thou hast

founded them for ever.

2. David's attestation to it, I have knoivn of old that it is so. What

the word of God is in itself; and then what is the opinion of the

believer concerning it.

First, What the scriptures are in themselves.

1. For their nature ; they are God's testimonies, or the significations

of his will.

2. For their stability ; they are founded (there is a great emphasis

in that word), and that by God, ' Thou hast founded them.'

3. For their duration, and everlasting use ; in that word ' for ever,'

of an eternal use and comfort.

Secondly, David's attestation or persuasion of this, ' I have known

of old. 5

I here observe —

1. His persuasion.

2. The date and standing of his persuasion ; it was ancient, ' I have

known of old.'

1. His persuasion, ' I have known.' There is a twofold knowledge

—the knowledge of faith, and the knowledge of sense ; both agree

with the words.

[1.] The knowledge of faith : ' I know that my Redeemer lives,' that

is, I believe it ; what we read concerning thy testimonies. Other

translations read, by thy testimonies : ' I have known by thy testi-

monies.' The Septuagint, eyvcov m toiv jxaprvpiwv aou, have been

persuaded of this by thy Spirit out of the word itself.

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[2.] The knowledge of sense and experience : I myself have known

by sundry experiences heretofore, which I shall never forget.

2. The date and ancientness of this persuasion, ' of old.' It was not

a late persuasion, or a thing that he was now to learn. He always

knew it since he knew anything of God, that God had owned his word

as the constant rule of his proceedings with creatures, in that God had

so often made good his word to him, not only by present and late, but

old and ancient experiences. Well, then, David's 'persuasion of the

truth and unchangeableness of the word was not a sudden humour, or

a present fit, or a persuasion of a few days 1 standing, but he was con-

tinned in it by long experience. One or two experiences had been no

trial of the truth of the word, they might seem but a good hit ; but

his word ever proveth true, not once or twice, but always. What we

say ' of old,' the Septuagint reads, tear apya<$, ' from the beginnings,'

that is, either —

[1.] From my tender years. Timothy knew the scriptures from a

child, 2 Tim. iii. 15 ; so David very young was acquainted with God

and his truth.

[2.] Or from the first time that he began to be serious, or to mind

the word in good earnest, or to be a student either in God's word or

works, by comparing providences and promises, he found, concerning

his testimonies, that God had founded them for ever.

[3.] Lastly, ' of old,' may be what I have heard of all foregoing

ages, their experience as well as mine : 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 points are three : —

Doct. 1. There is an everlasting stability, and a constant unchange-

able truth in God's testimonies.

Doct. 2. This must be known by us, or apprehended by us.

Doct. 3. Experiences of former times should give us encouragement

to trust God for what is future.

Doct. 1. There is an everlasting stability and a constant unchange-

able truth in God's testimonies.

Proof. Ps. cxi. 8, 'All his commandments are sure ; they stand fast

for ever and ever.' The word of God is of perpetual use and comfort,

not in one condition, but in all ; in every age of the world you have

the effects of it : it shall be made good to us in the world to come :

2 Cor. i. 20, ' For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him

Amen ;' of one invariable tenor, and of a sure and certain accomplish-

ment. They do not say Yea and Nay, but Yea and Amen ; Yea to

our hopes, and Amen to our desires.

Reasons. It must needs be so, if we consider —

1. Their author.

2. Their foundation.

3. Their use.

First, Their author is God, who is the self-same God, and needs

not say and unsay ; for he has wisdom enough to foresee all events ;

power enough to answer all difficulties that may stand in the way of

his promises ; authority supreme, and so is above all controlment.

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Sometimes men command, but without reason ; sometimes they pro-

mise, but without performance ; sometimes they threaten, but without

effect : therefore the word of man dieth and may come to nothing ;

they forget their promises, or may be cast into such circumstances as

to be unable to perform them : but these are God's testimonies, and

therefore are pillars that cannot be shaken ; they are laid by God him-

self, who hath ordained them to stand firm for ever. His people shall

find more in his performance than they could perceive in his promise,

and his enemies shall find more weight in his judgments than they

could apprehend in his threatenings : 2 Tim. ii. 19, ' The foundation

of God standeth sure ;' O^ixekla, his obligation, not a foundation in the

builder's sense, but in the lawyer's sense. His obligation or bill of

contract, that is, his promise or covenant with us in Christ, remaineth

unchangeable. A bill or bond is called drj/^eXla. God will own his ser-

vants if they will be faithful to him. See Hammond.

Secondly, They are founded ; the testimonies of God, if taken for

the promises of the gospel, as they ought to be, are built on two

foundations : —

1. One foundation is the unchangeableness of God's nature : Heb.

vi. 18, ' That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for

God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' God cannot change,

cannot lie. God can no more break his promise than cease to be God ;

his love, truth, power is all unchangeable.

2. The other foundation is the blood of Christ ; in him they are

Yea and Amen. The things promised are purchased with a great price ;

surely that blood was not shed in vain : ' Other foundation can no man

lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ,' 1 Cor. iii. 11.

Thirdly, Their use.

1. To be testimonies or declarations of God's mind and will to the

creature ; not only for the regulation of our actions, but the measure

of God's dealings. God's covenant in respect of the commands is the

rule of man's duty ; in respect of the promises and threatenings, they

are the rule of God's judgment or process with us. Now, it is for

the honour of God and satisfaction of man that this should be stated

and held good in all ages and cases ; therefore God hath established

a process and rule of dealing with his creatures that shall never be

changed. If your cause will hold good according to God's testimonies,

it will hold good before his tribunal. Otherwise we could not know

certainly that we do please or maintain any commerce with him, or

know what to expect from him.

2. To be props and pillars of our confidence ; so the scriptures, as

they are founded themselves, so they are a foundation for us to build

upon : Eph. ii. 20, ' And are built upon the foundation of the apostles

and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone ; ' they sup-

port the weight of the building. Now, foundation-stones must not be

movable, or laid loosely and carelessly, for then all the building will

be weak and tottering ; therefore there is a sure word and sure pro-

mises for poor creatures to build upon. The apostle calls it fieftaio-

repov \6yov, 2 Peter i. 19, ' A more sure word of prophecy,' comparing

it to the voice from heaven, whereof he spoke immediately before.

We are upon more certain terms, now God guideth us by scripture,

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than if he guided us by oracle : quoad nos, it is so, though every

declaration of God be alike evident and certain in itself. A transient

voice is more easily mistaken and forgotten than a standing authentic

record. Consider it as subject to jealousies, forgetful ness, mistakes ;

it is so. The general voice of the gospel gives more encouragement

to sell-undoing sinners than a voice from heaven calling us by name.

Use 1. To humble us for our uncertainty and inconstancy, when the

testimonies of God are so stable and unchangeable. The scriptures

are as firm as a rock ; but, alas ! we are unstable as water, both as to

faith and obedience. There should be a proportion inter regulam et

regulation, between the rule and the thing ruled, the measure and what

is measured, the stamp and the impression. We carry it so as if the

word spake one thing to-day, and another to-morrow ; as if God would

sometimes maintain the cause of his people, and at other times forsake

them ; as if he sometimes loved sin, and hated righteousness ; would

sometimes be good to penitent sinners, at other times turn away from

them. We profess to walk by his rule, and yet live so disproportionable.

1. In faith, like waves of the sea rolled hither and thither, our de-

pendence and trust now and anon changing with the posture of our

affairs, not suited to the eternal verity of the promises. In crosses,

confusions, and difficulties, we are at an utter loss : James i. 6, ' But

let him ask in faith, nothing wavering ; for he that wavereth is like

a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed.' If we believe

it to-day, why not to-morrow ? Do difficulties abate anything of the

certainty of God's word, and make it questionable ? Then it would be

in the power of man to disannul the promise, and God could never lay

a sure ground of hope.

2. In obedience. The weakness of our faith and dependence

necessarily inferreth that they that do not trust God cannot be long

true to him : James i. 8, Sfyvxps dtcaTacrTaTos, ' A double-minded man

is unstable in all his ways/ Sometimes when we are soul-sick, we

mourn and complain of sin, and seem to have a passionate hatred of

sin ; at other times, when the fit is over, we give it harbour and enter-

tainment, and embrace our Delilah again ; whereas the same reasons

that once made us hate sin should still make us hate it, for sin is sin still.

The scripture doth not one while condemn it, and another while allow

it ; but we are not swayed by our rule, but act as we are inclined by

our changeable affections, and therefore complain of sin to-day, and

commit it to-morrow, and lick up our vomit again. So for duty :

Hosea vi. 4, ' Your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early

dew it passeth away.' Nothing so fickle and changeable as man in

anything that is good, so vain and inconstant are we in our motions

and devotion ; pangs that can no more endure a trial than the morn-

ing cloud and early dew can endure the heat of the rising sun ; it

cometh by fits.

3. In our opinions and professions, how do we say and unsay, and

build again the things we have destroyed, and destroy the things we

have builded ; so that Ave know not where to have them, and are like

children tossed to and fro, aud carried about with every wind of

doctrine ! Eph. iv. 14, where are two metaphors ; they are compared

to children for inconstancy in their choice, and to ships destitute of

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skilful masters, tossed this way and that way with contrary winds and

tides. So they with divers doctrines and opinions. Sometimes taken

with one opinion, sometimes with another ; irepi^epoixevoi,, circled about

by all the winds in the card. Is this becoming the constant unerring

certainty of the scriptures ? It will be necessary for us to quit this

childish temper ; God will not always bear with it in us, whatever he

may do in babes ; therefore let us not receive the truth of God lightly

and uncertainly, but fix ourselves in the knowledge, the love, and

practice of the truths that are there commended to us : Gal. i. 6, 'I

marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the

grace of Christ, unto another gospel.' This lightness is a disease

incident to our natures, soon off, soon on ; that other gospelling, or pre-

tence of a purer way.

Use 2. Is comfort to the people of God —

1. In all the particular changes that pass over our heads. Our

estate and condition is many times changed, but God's word is no more

changed than himself is changed ; all things shall come to ruin sooner

than these foundations be overturned : Mat. v. 18, ' Till heaven and

earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law till

all be fulfilled.' The promises are still the same, even as God is :

Mai. iii. G, ' For I am the Lord, I change not ; therefore ye sons of

Jacob are not consumed.' And these mercies we should take comfort

in : Heb. xii. 28, ' Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot

be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably,

with reverence and godly fear/ So also 1 John ii. 17, 'And the world

passeth away, and the lusts thereof, but he that doeth the will of God

abideth for ever.'

2. In times of general confusion, when that which they apprehended

to be right and a duty proveth a sin, when wickedness is established

by a law : Ps. xciv. 20, ' Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship

with thee, which frameth mischief by a law ? ' and all that is just and

right seemeth to be perverted. There is a God in heaven, who will

judge not according to the opinions of the times, but according to the

reality of things revealed in his holy word. These ordinances of men

shall be forced to give way to those eternal testimonies ; a duty in

former times, a sin now.

3. Comfort against the encounters of violence, when we seem to be

borne down with force, and have no hope. The testimonies of God are

firm and steadfast, that none shall overthrow and frustrate them. They

are but as the dashing of waves against a rock : Isa. xxviii. 15,

' When the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come

unto us.'

4. It is a comfort in prayer ; so David useth it here. Yea and

Amen, that relateth to our desires, as before.

Use 3. To persuade us to behave ourselves to the word of God as an

unchangeable unerring rule.

1. To the directions and precepts of it. There are no other terms

to be expected, but what God hath set down in the word ; there-

fore frame yourselves to observe them, and be constant in this prac-

tice, then will you have the everlasting comfort of it. Bind them

upon your hearts : you must take up Christ's yoke one time or other ;

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do not think that he will alter the ordinances of his wisdom and jus-

tice for your sakes : Ps. cxix. G6, ' Teach rue good judgment and

knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments.'

2. To the promises of it. They are founded for ever, whatever

carnal reason suggests to the contrary iu the hour of temptation. To

this end consider what promises are. They are declarations of the

purposes of God. Both confirm you. As they are purposes of God,

they imply immutability : Heb. vi. 17, ' Wherein God, willing to

show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, con-

firmed it with an oath.' God's counsel is immutable, for God being

an intelligent agent, of most perfect knowledge and profound wisdom,

can will and determine nothing but according to the best and most

exact understanding. There can be no cause of revocation, either for

want of wisdom or justice, for he is absolutely both wise and just ; nor

from inconstancy of will, for ' the strength of Israel is not as man that

he should repent ; ' nor can his will be frustrated for want of power,

for he is almighty. But now when this purpose is declared, that

draweth on a further obligation : Ps. Ixxxix. 34, ' I will not alter the

thing that is gone out of my lips.' There is a debt ariseth, and a

right established of the creatures. To change counsel would imply

weakness ; to alter a promise, wickedness and unfaithfulness, which

were the highest blasphemy to imagine in God, especially when this

declaration is made with such emphatic averment, confirmed by an

oath : Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two immutable things, in which it was

impossible for God to lie, we may have strong consolation ; ' which is

such a sacred assurance, yea, by seals and signs. Yet, again, your

very believing bindeth it the faster: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Kemember the

word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.'

Would God invite a trust, and then decline it? The more you

believe, the sooner you see the effects of the promise. This is the

difference between promises and threatenings. Christ saith, ' Be it

unto thee according to thy faith.' God's threatenings are fulfilled

whether man will or no ; let him believe or not believe, God will

throw the ungodly into hell. But in promises it is otherwise ; then

they do good to us when by faith we embrace them ; believe, and thou

shalt be established. Besides God's two immutable things, faith is an

anchor sure and steadfast, Heb. vi. 19 ; therefore let us not entertain

the promises of the gospel with a loose heart ; you may know it by your

slightness and carelessness about them, if you do not esteem them as

great : 2 Peter i. 4, ' To you are given exceeding great and precious

promises ; ' they contain spiritual and eternal riches, and deserve to be

greatly esteemed. By your addictedness to sense and to present things

you seem to declare that you think a bird in the hand is better

than two in the bush, happiness to come but conjectural and uncer-

tain. It is a fancy to live by faith, if it doth not support us in diffi-

culties and afflictions : Ps. cxix. 40, ' This is my comfort in my

affliction, thy word hath quickened me ; ' when you look on all the

promises as a dry stick, or as words and wind ; if they do not engage

us to the earnest pursuit of heavenly happiness, and the blessedness

which they contain and offer : Heb. xi. 13, ' These all died in faith,

not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and

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were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they

were strangers and pilgrims on the earth/

Boot. 2. That this unchangeable certainty and everlasting verity of

God's testimonies should be known by us, that so a sure word should

be entertained by a pure faith. David acknowledgeth here his own

certainty.

1. What it is to know this. To know signifieth three things — to

understand, to consider, to believe ; all have place in this point.

There must be a clear apprehension, a deep and serious consideration,

and a firm assent and sound belief of this truth.

[1.] It is needful we should understand the unchangeable and ever-

lasting verity of the scriptures ; for how shall we believe what we do

not know, and venture our souls upon what we are ignorant of ? 2

Tim. i. 12, ' I know whom I have believed ; ' John ix. 36, ' Dost thou

believe on the Son of God ? And he said, Who is he, that I might be-

lieve on him ? ' True faith is not content to go on implicit grounds,

but seeks for clear knowledge of the ground it goeth upon. Nor

can there be solid faith without knowledge of that which we do

believe. Who will venture his soul on the bottom of the scriptures

till he knoweth they are of God, and unchangeably fixed as the rule of

life and charter of his happiness, especially since they require us to

crucify our lusts, and sacrifice our interests, and perform those duties

which are unpleasing to nature, upon the hopes which they offer, and

bid us with confidence and joyfulness to wait upon God for his salva-

tion in the midst of all pressures and afilictions. If we build hand-

over-head we build on the sand, not on the rock.

[2.] To know signifieth to consider. This is also necessary, be-

cause all knowledge is improved by consideration, without which it is

but as ignorance or oblivion at the best, till consideration doth awaken

it. Certainly it can have no efficacy upon us, breed no delight and

hope in us. A transient view doth not acquaint us with things as

serious meditation ; the truth lieth by unimproved ; as a man that

passeth us by occasionally knoweth us not so much as he that doth

intimately converse with us. Therefore, if we would improve our

knowledge, excite the soul to its act of faith and choice, there must be

consideration. We are bid to consider the Lord Jesus, Heb. iii.

1 ; to give heed to the gospel, Heb. ii. 1, to consider its worth and

certainty. The schoolmen have a distinction, certitudo cognitionis

seu specidationis, and certitudo adhcesionis ; the former lieth only

in a clearness of the mind, the last in its power upon the affec-

tions and the will. The object rightly propounded produceth the

former from the understanding, not expecting the consent of the will ;

the latter followeth imperium et consensum voluntatis, the command

and consent of the will. The former ariseth from the evidence of the

tiling ; the latter from the worth, weight, and greatness of the thing,

the gospel truth. Of this latter sort we read, 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is

a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief ; ' and there-

fore must not only be apprehended, but seriously considered by us,

that we may adhere to it with all our hearts. Though illumination is

helped by contemplation, yet much more the latter, where firm adherence

is expected. Men may apprehend the truth of things, when corrupt

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affections and a perverse will keep them from closing with tliem ; but

when a man so knows a thing as to consider it both his duty and inte-

rest to close w T ith the goodness and truth of it, then doth he rightly

know it.

[3.] To know signifieth assent and firm believing ; as John xvii. 8,

' They have known surely, dXrjOw, that I came out from thee.' So

Acts ii. 3G, ' Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly,

aacfiaXm, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified

both Lord and Christ ; ' to know it so as they might safely build upon

it. This is mainly necessary, considering the many temptations and

assaults that we shall meet with to shake us ; this assent must be very

strong, well rooted and built upon sure ground. And because it doth

not consist in puncto, it must be always growing, Mark ix. 24, ' Lord,

1 believe ; help thou my unbelief ; ' till it grow up to the certainty of

the thing on which it is built. There is an objective certainty in

things that is beyond that subjective certainty in persons about them ;

but because it is built on divine revelation, or God's testimonies, we

should still increase in it.

2. Whence we know it, there is the difficulty. The doubt will not

lie here, whether God's testimonies be of everlasting verity, but how

we shall know them to be God's testimonies. For it is per se notitm,

that God is true, that he cannot lie, or give a false testimony : 1 John

v. 9, ' If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater.'

But how doth it appear this is God's testimony ? for that word that is

propounded to be believed as such, cannot be perceived easily, neither

is it known of itself to the understanding, neither is it demonstrable by

evident reasons as to make infallible conclusions. The word's giving

testimony of itself doth not solve it ; indeed one part may give testi-

mony to another, and one revelation be confirmed by another, as the

New Testament giveth witness to the Old, and confirmeth its autho-

rity ; but how shall we know that to be God's testimony ? I answer,

we have it —

[1.] Partly from the self-evidencing light of the scriptures them-

selves ; they have passed God's hand, and have his signature upon

them, as all his works make out their author. There are characters

of his wisdom, power, goodness, and holiness impressed upon them :

2 Cor. iv. 2-4, ' By manifestation of the truth commending ourselves

to every man's conscience in the sight of God : but if our gospel be

hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the god of this world

hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of

the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine

unto them.' The gospel being the result of God's wisdom, and suited

to the heart of man, for whose use it was calculated, it hath something

in itself to commend it to our consciences. It cannot be imagined

that the hand of God should pass upon anything, and there should be

nothing of his character left on it to show it came from God. Look

upon any fly or gnat, any flower of the field or pile of grass, and you

may see some impressions to discover the author of them. So certainly

if God shall set himself to write a book, or set forth a frame of doctrine

to do man good, surely he hath discovered his wisdom and holiness

and grace therein, and that in plain and legible characters, that, if

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man were not prepossessed and leavened with prejudice and corrupt

affections, he could not choose but see it. That there is such an

objective evidence or aptitude in the doctrine itself to beget faith in

those that consider it, is plain from that of the apostle : 2 Cor. iv.

2-4 5 ' By the manifestation of the truth we commend ourselves to

every man s conscience in the sight of God ; ' without miracle, or other

confirmation, if they had a clear eye : it is light which discovereth

itself, and all things else. The reason why it is not seen is not in the

object, because of any defect there, but the faculty, the visive faculty ;

their eyes are blinded with worldly lusts. Well., then, when things

are spoken so becoming the nature of God, and so agreeable to the

necessities of man, and with such an evidence of reason, not to the

law only, but also to the gospel, as to establishing of a way of com-

merce between God and us, and exempting us from the grand scruples

that haunt us, though these things could not be found out by human

wit, yet now they are revealed, they carry a great suitableness there-

unto.

[2.] And partly by the testimony of the Spirit, this is one way of

confirming the truth of the gospel : Acts v. 32, ' We are his witnesses

of these things, and so is the Holy Ghost, whom God hath given to

them that obey him ; ' where the apostles are mentioned as one sort

of witnesses, and the Holy Ghost as another. The great office of the

Spirit is to testify of Christ Jesus : John xv. 26, ' Even the spirit of

truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me.' The

doctrine of the gospel concerning Christ's coming and power is so

great a mystery that it is not believed and received in the world with-

out the Spirit. Upon the beginning of Christ's ministry, in his

baptism, the Spirit appeared in the form of a dove. Now the Holy

Ghost doth two ways bear witness of Christ — eVre^z/co?, are^co?, arti-

ficially, and inartificially. Artificially, per modum argumenti ; and

inartificially, per modum testis ; partly as he doth afford sufficient

matter of confirmation and conviction in those miraculous operations

in the primitive times, and also as he doth persuade the heart, and

convince us of the truth of the gospel.

[3.] There is experience of the truth of the word in God's hearing

prayers : Ps. lxv. 2, ' thou that nearest prayer, unto thee shall

all flesh come.' Fulfilling promises : Ps. xviii. 30, ' Thy word is a

tried word ; he is a buckler to ail that trust in him.' Punishing the

wicked : Hosea vii. 12, ' I will chastise them as their congregation

hath heard.' Kewarding according to the rules set down in the word,

Eom. i. 18, and Heb. ii. 3 ; but of this by and by.

3. Why we must understand, consider, and believe?

Ans. Both in order to our comfort and duty.

[1.] Comfort. If the certainty of the scriptures were more under-

stood, believed, and thought of, we should be more fortified against

fears and sorrows, and cares and discouragements, whencesoever they

do arise ; for as fire well kindled doth easily break forth into a flame,

so assent freely laid doth fortify the heart against trouble. It is very

notable when the apostles would raise the joy of faith, they plead the

certainty of the doctrine they delivered ; for it was comfortable in

itself, suitable to the necessities of man ; all that needed was to assure

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others of the truth of it — see 1 John i. 1-4 — that their joy might be

complete and full, upon this certainty of evidence, and complete de-

monstration. We could not be so comfortless and dejected, if we

were persuaded of the reality of these things. So 2 Peter i. 8, ' Be-

lieving, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious.' We should

love Christ, and rejoice in the believing confident expectation of

enjoying of him. And where this is firmly believed, afflictions cannot

damp or hinder this joy. A firm trust in the promises of the word

will fill a man with comfort, and strengthen him against all diffi-

culties, Ps. lvi. 4-10.

[2.] Our obedience would be better promoted, it would be a remedy

against boldness in sinning and coldness in duty : Heb. iii. 12, ' Take

heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing

from the living God.' You cannot drive a dull ass into the fire :

Prov. i. 17, ' Surely in vain is the net laid in the sight of any bird.'

Men do not believe the everlasting verity of the scriptures, and

therefore are so bold and venturous ; they think they shall do well

enough after all God's threatenings : Zeph. i. 12, ' And it shall come

to pass that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and will punish the

men that are settled upon their lees, that say in their hearts, The

Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.' Secondly, coldness in

duty. How do the scriptures reason against neglect ? Heb. ii. 1-3,

' Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which

we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip ; for if the

word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and

every disobedience received a just recompense of reward, how shall

we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? ' The word spoken by

angels was X0709 fiefiaios. Was only worth questioned ? No ; but

the truth also, because so little believed, therefore so little thought of,

less desired, least of all pursued and sought after : 2 Peter i. 16,

' We have not followed cunningly-devised fables, when we made

known to you the power and coming of the Lord Jesus, but were eye-

witnesses of his majesty/

Use. Oh ! study to be informed more and more of this great truth.

Let us think of and often consider the unerring certainty of the scrip-

tures. It is a truth not to be supposed and taken for granted, but

known, that you may build sure. Man is apt to suspect evangelical

truths, as being cross to his lusts and interests. You will find it of

use, not only in great temptations, when we are apt to question all,

Ps. lxxiii. 13, but in ordinary practice, in every prayer: Heb. x. 22,

' Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith.' It is

not an assurance of our particular estate, or our title to eternal life,

but a full assurance of the word and promise of God, that is neces-

sarily required in every one that will draw nigh to God : ' Let us ask

in faith, nothing doubting,' James i. 7, 8.

2. Do not content yourselves with a light credulity, but grow up to

a full persuasion : 2 Tim. iii. 14, ' But continue thou in the things

which thou hast learned, and hast been assured of, knowing of whom

thou hast learned them ; ' and Col. ii. 2, ' That their hearts being com-

forted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full

assurance of understanding;' not a fluctuating doubting knowledge,

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but a full persuasion of the truth of the gospel : Luke i. 4, ' That

thou rnayest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast

been instructed ; ' Col. i. 23, ' If thou continue in the faith, grounded

and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel ; ' a

rooted persuasion that it is the undoubted truth of God : the firmness

of faith should answer the firmness of God's word. There are several

degrees of assent, conjecture, opinion, weak faith, and receiving the

word in much assurance, 1 Thes. i. 6. There is belief, confidence,

assurance, and full assurance. Belief is grounded on God's word in

general, and all the truths and propositions therein contained. Con-

fidence, on the promise ; the one goeth before the other : fidelity is

before dependence and belief ; for the promise is first a truth, and so

to be considered, before it can be conceived under the formal notion

of a promise. Full assurance is grounded on the fidelity and immut-

ability of God ; no man believeth so far but he may believe more.

JDoct. 2. That experiences of former times should give us en-

couragement to trust God for what is future. ' Thy testimonies I

have known of old/ saith David.

So the children of God make use of them. See David's instance,

1 Sam. xvii. 36, ' Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear, and

this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them. Moreover

David said, The Lord hath delivered me from the paw of the lion, and

the paw of the bear, and he will deliver me out of the hand of this

Philistine.' Thus he argueth from former experience to future deliver-

ance : I trust in the same God, who is able to give the same strength,

and why should I not look for the same success ? So Jacob : Gen.

xxxii. 10, 11, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of

the truth thou hast showed to thy servant ; for with my staff I passed

over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands : deliver me, I

pray thee, from the hands of my brother Esau.' So Ps. xxiii. 5, 6,

' Thou hast prepared a table for me in the presence of mine enemies :

surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life.'

He hath been good to me, and if it be for his glory, he will be still

good to me ; he hath been my God, and will be my God, and shall be

my God for ever : 2 Cor. i. 10, ' Who hath delivered from so great a

death, and doth deliver ; in whom we trust he will yet deliver us.'

In all respects of time we stand in need of deliverance ; when one is

past, another cometh ; there have been dangers, there are dangers,

and there will be dangers ; but God hath, cloth, and will deliver. It

is a trade God hath used, an art he is versed in, and never at a loss

about. Our God is a God of salvation, and is excellent in working

of it.

Eeasons of the point.

1. God's constancy and unchangeableness. God is the same, always

like himself, for mercy, power, and truth ; he is never at a loss : what

he hath done, he can do, and will do. I am, is God's name, not I

have been, or shall be. His providence is new and fresh every morn-

ing, Lam. iii. 23. God is but one God, Gal. iii. 20 ; always like

himself. As he hath delivered, so he doth, and will : Isa. lix. 1.

' Behold the Lord's hand is not shortened that he cannot save, neither

his ear heavy that he cannot hear.' No decay in him. When we give

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to another, we give from ourselves ; we waste by giving. The crea-

tures are at a stint, and soon spend their allowance ; but God cannot

be exhausted ; there is no decrease of love and power, no wrinkle upon

the brow of eternity.

2. Experience begets confidence : Rom. v. 3, 'And patience experi-

ence, and experience begets hope.' The heart is much confirmed when

it hath faith and experience of his side. If we were as we should be,

the promise should be beyond all experiences, for it is the word of him

that cannot lie. Experience addeth nothing to the certainty of the

promise, nor any authority to it ; only in regard of our weakness, it

is a help and sensible confirmation against our distrustful cares and

fears. Sense and experience is not the ground of faith. We must

believe God upon his bare word ; yet it is an encouragement : John

xx. 29, ' Because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed.' Then

more encouraged when Christ felt. We have a double proof and

experience: —

[1.] What God is able to do for us.

[2.J What God will do again, when his own glory and our need

require! h it.

[1.] We know what God can do ; former deliverances are as so many

monuments and significations of his power : Isa, li. 9, 'Awake, awake,

arm of the Lord ; art not thou he that cut Eahab, and wounded the

dragon ? awake, and put on strength, as in the ancient days.' Eahab

is Egypt, Ps. Ixxxvii. 4 ; the dragon, Pharaoh, Ezek. xxix. 3, the

dragon or crocodile of Egypt. Can he do this, and not do that ?

Upon every experience, we that learn by sense should be more strongly

persuaded of God's power. It is a complaint they will not learn after

all these signs and wonders : Mat. xvi. 9, ' Do ye not understand,

neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many

baskets ye took up?' Upon every experience we should have high

thoughts of God's power and all-sufficiency. The great controversy

between Christ and his disciples was their not profiting in faith.

[2.] We see and know what God is willing to do for poor sinners.

He is not sparing of necessary supplies and comforts ; he hath been a

present help. We have no cause to believe the contrary ; it is only

distrust saith he will not ; it is a suspicion and jealousy without cause.

It may be, for it hath been : 1 Sam. xvii. 36, ' The Lord hath delivered

me,' &c. Particular and special confidence is not so usual now, but

w T e have no reason to be discouraged in the ways of God ; though we

cannot be absolutely confident, yet we should not balk duty out of

distrust and jealousy. In such faintings take the cordial of experi-

ence : Ps. lxxvii. 10, ' And I said, This is my infirmity ; but I will

remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.'

3. Former mercies are pledges of future ; by giving, God becometh

our debtor : Mat. vi. 25, ' Is not the life more than meat, and the body

more than raiment ? ' If he gives life, he will give food ; if he gives

a body, he will give raiment : one mercy is an earnest of another.

Rom. viii. 32, if he give us Christ, he will give us all things; if he

give grace, he will give glory ; if we have the first-fruits, Rom. viii.

23, we shall have the harvest ; if we have the beginning, Phil. i. 6,

we shall have the ending. There are some dispensations that are but

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as a tendency to other mercies, given out in such a way as to invite

hope.

4. We are the more endeared to God by his own mercy and tender

care of us : Zech. iii. 2, ' Is not this a brand plucked out of the burn-

ing ?' The danger heightens the mercy.

Use 1. To reprove the people of God for their diffidence and distrust,

when, after many experiences of God, they can no more quiet their

hearts concerning future events ; upon every new trouble as much

tormented and perplexed as if never known nor heard anything of God

before. David : 1 6am. xxvii. 1, ' I shall one day perish by the hand of

Saul. 5 When God hath abundantly done enough to evidence his power

and love unto his : Ps. lxxviii. 19-21, 'They said, Can God furnish

a table in the wilderness ?' &c. When we are to credit God in another

work, as the disciples after the miracle of the loaves. When new

temptations assault us, we should not be disheartened. What were

God's motives before to help ? Because you were in misery ; the

same you may expect again.

Use 2. To press you —

1. To observe your experiences, and compare them with the word.

All that God doth is full of truth and faithfulness : Ps. cxi. 7, ' The

works of his hands are verity and judgment, all his commandments

are sure ;' exactly according to what he hath promised ; they certainly

come to pass. Especially observe your experiences in your troubles and

temptations, what hath been your greatest comfort and support then.

2. Begin to do so betimes; long experience is a great advantage.

Most Christians are to be blamed that they begin so late to know God,

or to observe the truth of his word, or that adjourn and put it off.

Fruits planted late are seldom ripe and come to anything. When we

have a long journey to go, we set forth early. Begin with the Lord

betimes, if you would thrive in faith. The longer experience you have

had of God, the more you will believe in him : Ps. xxii. 9, 10, ' Thou

art he that took me out of the womb ; thou didst make me hope when

I was upon my mother's breast : I was cast upon thee from the womb ;

thou art my God from my mother's belly.'

3. Kemember and improve experiences. 'They that know thy name

will put their trust in thee.' Let not new troubles startle us, after we

have found the power and goodness of God so ready for our help.

SERMON CLXXI.

Consider mine affliction, and deliver me ; for I do not forget thy

laiv. — Ver. 153.

In this verse observe —

1. David's petition, consider mine affliction, and deliver me.

2. His argument, for I do not forget thy law.

First, His petition is double — for pity and deliverance ; the one is

preparative to the other.

1. That God would consider his case.

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2. Deliver him' from the danger into which he was cast by his

enemies.

Secondly, His reason is taken from his constant obedience, ' For I do

not forget thy law/ The phrase is a meiosis, and noteth —

1. His diligence ; he did carefully observe.

2. His constancy ; he never departed from the obedience of God's

word, whatever temptations he had to the contrary.

I shall give you some brief notes.

Doct. 1. That God's choicest servants in this world have their

afflictions.

David saith, 'Mine affliction;' and others of God's children have

their share of the sorrows and vexations of this world. This will be

so whether you consider them as men or as Christians.

1. As men : Job xiv. 1, ' Man that is born of a woman is of few

days, and full of trouble.' So Job v. 7, ' Man is born to trouble as the

sparks fly upward ;' and Gen. xlvii. 9, c Few and evil have the days of

the years of my life been.' It is well they are so few, since so evil.

As our relations and comforts are multiplied, so are the occasions of

our sorrow. God never intended the world to be a place of our rest,

but our exercise ; it is a middle place between heaven and hell, and

hath somewhat of either. In our passage to the other world we must

look for it, it is that we are born to. Many are born to great honour

and estate, but they have another portion goeth along with it ; they

are born to trouble. Ever since sin entered into the world, punish-

ment entered with it. Vitam auspicatur a supplicio. In heaven full

of days, full of comforts ; but here it is otherwise, few, and full of

trouble. Unusquisque nostrum, cum nascitur, ex hospitio hujus mundi

excipitur, initium sumit ex lacrymis — Cyprian de Pat. Austin, in/cms

nondum loquitur, et jam prophetat — Serin. 24, de Verbis Apost.

2. As Christians. A man is no sooner brought home to God but he

must expect to be hated by the world : John xv. 19, 'If ye were of

the world, the world would love his own ; but because ye are not of

the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world

hateth you.' Assaulted by Satan : Luke xxii. 31, ' Simon, Simon,

behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he might sift you as

wheat.' Chastened by the Lord himself for their trial and humilia-

tion : Heb. xii. 8, ' But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are

partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.' Our own corrupt hearts

will be vexing us, thwarting all the motions of the new nature : Gal.

v. 17, ' For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against

the flesh : and these are contrary one to the other ; so that ye cannot

do the thing that ye would.' The lusts of the flesh are as pricks and

thorns in our sides. In short, wicked men will hate us because we are

so good : 2 Tim. iii. 12, ' Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ

Jesus shall suffer persecution.' God will afflict us because we are no

better : Isa. xxii. 9, ' By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be

purged, and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.' A Christian is

too strict and pure for the world, and is not strict and pure enough for

God ; and therefore must look for afflictions to mortify sin from God's

hand, and great enmity from the world, if he meaneth to keep up the

majesty of his profession.

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Use. It presseth us —

1. To look for crosses.

2. To prepare for them.

3. When they come, bear them with more patience.

1. Look for them. The first day that we begin to be Christians we

must reckon of the cross. Christ hath drawn up the form of our in-

denture, to which every one must yield and consent before he can call

him Master : Mat. xvi. 24, ' If any man will come after me, let him

deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' In Luke it is,

' take up his cross daily,' Luke ix. 23. Though there be fair days as

well as foul in Christianity, yet we must every day be ready. As por-

ters stand in the street waiting for a burden for them to carry if they

be hired to it, so must a Christian every day be prepared to take up

his burden if God shall call him to it ; yea, ' daily' noteth not only

continual readiness, but the frequency of our conflicts ; as if every day

there were some exercise of our faith and patience. If God keep us to

the cross all the days of our lives, we must be content. Once more,

taking up the cross daily showeth that private and personal calamities

are a part of the cross as well as the afflictions of the gospel. Afflic-

tions from God as well as afflictions for God ; such as sickness, death

of friends, loss of estate, by an ordinary providence ; though not en-

during persecution for the name of Christ, yet enduring affliction at

the will of Christ. Ordinary crosses do not exclude the comforts of

Christianity. These occasion experience of God and trial of grace,

and are a part of God's discipline for the mortifying of sin, happy

opportunities to discover more of God to us ; yea, there is more reason

of submission to God in these, because God taketh us into his own

hands. A man that stormeth when a bucket of water is cast upon

him is patient when wet to the skin with the rain that conieth from

heaven. Well, then, we must be daily ready for all these things ; if

we take up the profession of stricter Christianity with other thoughts,

we should soon see our mistake. It is a vain thing to flatter ourselves

with the hopes of a total exemption ; many think they may be good

Christians, and yet live a life of ease and peace, free from troubles and

afflictions. This is all one as if a soldier going to the wars should

promise himself peace and continual truce with the enemy ; or as if a

mariner committing himself to the sea for a long voyage should pro-

mise himself nothing but fair weather and a calm sea without waves

and storms ; so irrational is it for a Christian to promise himself a life

of ease and rest here upon earth.

2. Be prepared for them, otherwise our looking for them is in vain ;

and to this end would Christ have us reckon upon the cross, that we

may be forewarned. He that buildeth a house doth not take care that

the rain should not descend upon it, or the storm should not beat upon

it, or the wind blow upon it ; there is no fencing against these things,

they cannot be prevented by any care of ours ; but that the house may

be able to endure all this without prejudice. And he that buildeth a

ship doth not make this his work, that it should never meet with waves

and billows, that is impossible ; but that it may be tight and stanch,

and able to endure all weathers. A man that taketh care for his body

doth not cark for this, that he meet with no change of weather, hot

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and cold, but how his body may bear all this. Thus should Christians

do ; not so much take care how to shift and avoid afflictions, but how

to bear them with an even and quiet mind. See Chrysostom, Horn.

35, in 1 Cor. As we cannot hinder the rain from falling upon the

house, nor the waves from beating upon the ship, uor change of

weather and seasons from affecting the body, so it is not in our power

to hinder the falling out of afflictions and tribulations ; all that lieth

upon us is to make provision for such an hour that we be not over-

whelmed by it, We need get a stock of spiritual comforts, that all

may be peace within when trouble without ; and as afflictions abound,

so may comforts. We had need get a sound back, be much morti-

fied, and weaned from the vanities of the world : Heb. xii. 13, ' And

make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned

out of the way, but rather let it be healed.' If we have any weak part

in our souls, there the assault will be most strong and fierce. A gar-

rison that looketh to be besieged taketh care to fortify the weak places ;

so should a Christian mortify every corrupt inclination, those that are

most pleasing. We need much resolution. A Christian had need be

a resolved man, well shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace,

Eph. vi. 15, or else in a hard way he will soon founder and halt. That

eroifiaala, that preparation, is a resolved mind, to go through thick

and thin, and to follow Christ in all conditions : Acts xxi. 13, eroifMos

e'x&>, ' I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem for

the name of the Lord Jesus/ A well-shielded established mind in the

comfort and hope of the gospel ; unless we be thus prepared and armed

with a mortified heart, and a thorough persuasion of the truth and worth

of gospel privileges, and thereupon a resolution to encounter all diffi-

culties and hardships, we shall not long be faithful to Christ ; but after

we have launched out into the deep with him we shall be ready to run

ashore again. Now most Christians are not mortified, and so they trip

up their own heels. Most Christians are not resolved, and so take

to religion as a walk for recreation, not a journey, so as to be prepared

for all weathers.

3. When they come, bear them with more patience. A resolution

which we thought strong out of a trial, is often found weak in a trial ;

for we have other apprehensions of things when we know them by

experience, of what we have when we know them only by guess and

imagination. Therefore, notwithstanding expectation and preparation,

there must be a care of patience in troubles and afflictions, that we

bear them with an equal and Christian mind ; not suffering as per-

force, by compulsion and constraint, but willingly : it is not enough

to bear the cross, but according to Christ's law wc must take it up.

It is said of the three children, Dan. iii. 28, that they yielded their

bodies willingly, cheerfully suffered themselves to be cast into the

furnace, rather than worship any but the true God. Many suffer, but

it is unwillingly, and with repining and impatience, under the hand of

God, like refractory oxen that draw back, and are loath to submit their

necks to the yoke. Patience perforce, is no true patience, little better

than the Buffering of the devils and damned in hell, who suffer misery

and torment against their wills. Rebellion, murmuring, and want of

subjection is the very curse of crosses : the sacrifice that went strug-

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gling to the altar among the heathen was counted unlucky. Two

things feed this impatience : —

[1.] Men think none suffer as they do : ' Is any sorrow like unto my

sorrow ? ' Lam. i. 21. Every one hath the greatest sense of his own

burden, therefore they think none hath so heavy and grievous an one

as they have. It were well if they did this in feeling of sin. Paul

felt his burden greatest in that respect : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' Christ Jesus

came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief.' But alas !

in afflictions, all God's children have their trials ; many fare more

grievous. When you lament the feared loss of an only child, what

think you of the Virgin Mary ? Luke ii. 35, 'A sword shall pierce

through thy soul.' Generally, 1 Peter v. 9, ' The same afflictions are

accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Every Christian

hath his measure of hardship and suffering ; you are not singular and

alone ; your lot is no harder than the rest of the saints of God through

the world ; others are poor, and carry it well, and are cheerful ; such

an one under a painful disease, very patient in an acute fever, racked

with stone, &c. If they, why not thou ?

[2.] They could bear any other cross but this that is now upon

them. Christ biddeth us to take up the cross indefinitely, whatever

God is pleased to lay upon us ; we must not be our own carvers, but

stand to God's allowance. The wise physician knoweth in what vein

to strike. God knoweth us best, and what is fit for us. Many in their

troubles wish God would afflict them in any other kind, lay any trouble

upon them but that which is laid, and think they could bear it better.

The poor man wisheth any other cross but poverty ; the sick man he

could bear poverty better than pain or sickness ; he that hath a long

and lingering sickness wisheth for a sharp fit, so it might be short ;

e contra, another that hath a sharp and violent sickness had rather

have a lingering distemper. Thus apt are we to dislike our cross

which God layeth on us for the present. This is disobedience and

folly too ; for if God should leave us to ourselves to choose our own

crosses, we should choose that affliction which is hurtful and danger-

ous for us.

Doct. 2. That in our afflictions we should run to God by prayer.

So doth David here, so should we.

1. We may do so.

2. AVe must do so.

1. We may do so ; we have leave to come to God. Affliction is a

fruit of sin, a part of the curse, introduced into the world upon the

breach of the old covenant ; yet then the throne of grace standeth

open for us : when God seemeth most angry, we have liberty to come

to him. In afflictions we are apt to think God an enemy, and that

he beginneth to put the old covenant in suit against us ; but our

trouble should not be our discouragement, but our excitement ; the

throne of grace was for such an hour ; Heb. iv. 16, ' Let us come

boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find

grace to help in time of need ;' and it is God's allowance : James v. 13,

' Is any among you afflicted ? let him pray : is any merry ? let him

sing psalms.'

2. We must come ; it is a duty God hath required at our hands :

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Ps. 1. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble;' and Job xxii. 27,

' Thou shalt make thy prayer, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt

pay thy vows.' God will have us come and speak to him in our

most serious frame, and act faith by putting promises in suit, and

take new vows and resolutions to part with sin, when we feel the bitter

effects of it. He knoweth it preventeth distracting fears and cares,

when we can commend our condition to his pity and powerful provi-

dence : Phil. iv. 7, in every thing we are to make our requests

known to God ; and he knoweth this maketh us sensible of his provi-

dence and dominion over us in all conditions. Prayer is an acknow-

ledgment of his sovereignty over all causes and events ; the affliction

could not come without his appointment, nor go away without his

leave : it is a kind of breaking prison, to hope to get through without

supplication to God : Job xxxiv. 28, 29, ' So that they cause the cry

of the poor to come unto him, and he heareth the cry of the afflicted :

when he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble ? and when he

hideth his face, who then can behold him ? whether it be against a

nation, or against a person only.'

Use 1. It informeth us of the goodness of God, that he is willing

to receive us upon any terms. When afflictions drive us to liim, he

doth not turn away his face from us. Those very prayers that are

extorted from us by necessity, he accepts as a piece of worship done to

him, provided we do not neglect him upon other occasions, for that is

hypocrisy : Job xxvii. 10, ' Will he delight himself in the Almighty ?

let him always call upon God.' We ought not therefore to be dis-

couraged if our acquaintance with God begin in the time of our afflic-

tions, and these set us a-work to think of him. Man will say, You

come to me in your necessity ; but then God is willing to receive us.

Christ had never heard of many, if their necessities had not brought

them to him — palsy, possession, deaf, dumb, fevers. Long would God

sit upon the throne of grace unemployed if he did not send trouble

and secret rack with it to bring us into his presence ; so that that

which in appearance doth drive us off from him, doth in effect make

us draw near to him.

2. It informeth us of the folly of them that neglect God in their

troubles : Dan. ix. 13, ' All this is come upon us, yet made we not our

prayer before the Lord our God.' You defeat the dispensation ; now

you should make up your former negligence. When we are pressed

hard on all hands it should put an edge upon our prayers, otherwise

our afflictions will turn to a sad account ; when God sendeth a tempest

after us, and this will not bring us back to him ; we are summoned to

make our appearance, and will not come. Joab would not come till

Absalom set his barley-field on fire.

Use 2. To encourage us to come to God in our afflictions. Now is

a time to put the promises in suit, to begin an interest if we have none,

to make use of it if we have any ; then our weakness and nothingness

is discovered, that we may more apply ourselves to God ; and a time

of need will be a time of help : Ps. xlvi. 1, ' God is a refuge for us, a

very present help in trouble ;' that is, when trouble is trouble indeed,

then therefore we should call for it most earnestly ; a necessitous crea-

ture is a fit object for mercy. You expound providences amiss if you

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think afflictions are a casting off. No ; they are God's voice calling

j'ou, nay, his hand pulling you to him. Blessed seasons to bring God

and us together ; then God's aim is accomplished : Hosea v. 15, ' I will

go, and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and

seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early; 5 Isa. xxvi.

16, ' Lord in trouble have they visited thee ; they poured out a prayer

when thy chastening was upon them.' Afflictions do not work thus

simply, for then they would work upon all, but as accompanied with

some drawings of the Spirit. Every condition is blessed when it

bringeth you nearer unto God ; though crosses be great trials to any,

yet if they chase us to the throne of grace, God is not wholly gone, but

hath left somewhat behind him to draw us to him. It is desertion in

point of felicity, but not in point of grace.

Doct. 3. One great request of the children of God in prayer is that

he would consider their affliction.

This David promiseth in the first place. So elsewhere : Ps. cxxxii.

I, ' Kemember David, Lord, and all his afflictions.' He beggeth

God to take notice of his person and condition. So also Ps. xxv. 18,

' Look upon my affliction and my pain, and forgive all my sins.' He

beggeth that his groans might not be passed over. So Hezekiah, Isa.

xxxvii. 17, where many words are used to this effect : ' Incline thine

ear, Lord, and hear ; open thine eyes, and see, and hear all the

words that Sennacherib hath sent to reproach the living God.' If God

would but take notice, hear, and see, all would be well. And as for

personal calamities, so in public and church cases : Ps. lxxx. 14,

'Eeturn, we beseech thee, Lord God of hosts; look down from

heaven, and behold, and visit this vine.' If God will but come and

see, it is enough. So in the Lamentations, chap. i. 9, < Lord, behold

my affliction, for the enemy hath magnified himself.' So again, ver.

II, 'See, Lord, and consider, for I am become vile.' Yet again,

ver. 20, ' Behold, Lord, for I am in distress.' Thus do the chil-

dren of God lay open their miseries before him, in confidence of his

pity.

But why do the children of God press this point so earnestly, as if

they did doubt of his providence and omnisciency ? God knoweth all

things, and can forget nothing. I answer —

1. Though God be not ignorant and unmindful of our condition,

yet we are to put him in remembrance : Isa. lxii. 6, ' Ye that make

mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he

establish, and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.' Christ

is the advocate, we are solicitors and remembrancers for others, and

humble supplicants for ourselves. Indeed, in so doing, we do not put

God in mind, but put ourselves in mind of the providence of God,

which is most graciously conversant about us in our afflicted condi-

tion, which is a great comfort and support to us. The moving of God

to consider begets faith in us that he will consider ; and so we wrestle

with God, that we may catch a heat ourselves.

2. The sight of misery is a real argument. It is clear that we are to

use arguments in prayer ; for God dealeth with us as rational crea-

tures, and as such we are to deal too with him. Now, among argu-

ments, our afflictions and miseries are real ones ; they have a voice

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to work upon his pity, and to move him to have mercy upon us. He

being inclined to compassion, his eye doth affect his heart, as a beggar,

to move pity, will not only plead with his tongue, but uncover his

sores ; so do the saints lay open their misery, and unfold their estate

before the Lord ; for God so loveth his people, that the very show of

their miseries moveth him to help them. Thus God saith that ho

would show mercy to his people, ' for I have seen with mine eyes/

Zech. ix. 8. God seeth our case, and every degree of our trouble is

marked by him, which bringeth it the nearer to his heart ; yea, God's

people themselves are comforted under their saddest sufferings by the

Lord's seeing and marking thereof : Ps. x. 14, ' Thou hast seen it,

for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.'

It is enough to them thou hast seen it. So Ps. xxxi. 7, ' I will be

glad and rejoice in thy mercy, for thou hast considered my trouble,

and known my soul in adversities/ It '-is a mighty comfort that God

hath an eye upon them in particular, and hath friendly affections

towards tliem.

3. The Lord is said to consider when he doth in effect declare his

not forgetting, or remembering us for good ; and therefore, though

God cannot but see and consider our trouble, yet we cannot rest satisfied

with it, till by real effects he maketh it evident, that we may know,

and all the world may know, that he doth consider us, and regard our

condition ; and this is that which saints beg so earnestly, that he

would, by some act or work, experiment the truth, or make it appear

that he hath heard and seen and taken notice of our sorrows. Though,

the saints believe his omnisciency and particular providence, yet they

cannot rest satisfied till they feel it by some effect, by giving real

support or help in need, according to covenant ; and so must all the

places before mentioned be interpreted.

Use. When we, or the church of God, or any of the people of God,

are in any distress —

1. Let us go to God and beg that we may see, and the world may

see, that he hath regard to us in our sorrows, and doth not wholly

pass us over. To this end, impress upon your hearts the belief of

these two things — the eye of his pity, and the arm of his power.

[1.] The eye of his pity, which is more than bare omnisciency; it

imports his knowledge accompanied with a tender love. This is often

spoken of in scripture : Exod. ii. 28, ' God looked on the children of

Israel, and had respect to them.' So Exod. iii. 7, 'And the Lord

said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt,

and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters, and have

known their sorrows;' Acts vii. 34, I8a>v elhov, 'I have seen, I have seen

the affliction of my people ;' or seeing, I have seen. The very sight of

God is a comfort and support to a sinking soul ; it is some comfort to

us to have our crosses known to such as we are assured do love us, if

they condole with us, though they be not able to help us ; so that the

Lord looketh upon us with a merciful, pitiful eye.

[2.] As God will cast the eye of his pity on us, so he will put forth

the arm of his power ; as he hath a merciful eye, so he hath a power-

ful hand, ready to help ; though sometimes we sec nothing of this :

2 Chron. xvi. 9, ' For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout

VER. 153.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 133

the earth, to show himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart

is perfect towards him.' There is his care and effective providence.

2. Be sure you keep up your qualification : ' I do not forget thy

law.' Many times when men in their prosperity do not regard. God

and his commandments, he regardeth them in their straits ; for though

we forget the duty of children, he doth not forget the mercies of a

father. But surely he will not forget them that do not forget his

law ; therefore it is not credible that God. should forget us and our

condition, that we should be more mindful of his law than he of our

affliction. He that puts us in mind of his law will also put himself

in mind of the troubles we endure for the keeping of it ; for certainly

God is more mindful of his part of the covenant than we can be of

ours. See Christ's argument, John xvii. 10, ' And all mine are thine,

and thine are mine, and I am glorified in them.'

Doct. 4. We may ask deliverance from temporal troubles ; not only

support, but deliverance. So doth David.

1. God hath promised : Ps, 1. 15, ' Call upon me in the day of

trouble ; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.'

2. Much of God is discovered in it. His wisdom : 2 Peter ii. 9,

' The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation/

We are at a loss many times, but God is never at a loss. His power:

Dan. iii. 17, ' If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver

us, and he will deliver us out of thy hand, king;' when the wrath

of the king was great, and the fiery furnace burning before them.

His goodness : God is sufficiently inclined to it by his own grace, and

delights to do it : Ps. cxlix. 4, ' The Lord taketh pleasure in his

people ; he will beautify the meek with salvation.' He loveth the

person of believers, and loveth their prosperity and happiness, and

delighteth to see them do well in the world. He hath pleasure in the

prosperity of his servants, Ps. xxxv. 27, which is a good encourage-

ment to pray for it : 2 Sam. xiv. 1, ' Joab perceived that the king's

heart was towards Absalom.' Yea, not only his love, but the con-

stancy and unweariedness of his love : 2 Cor. i. 10, ' Who delivereth

us from so great a death, and doth deliver ; in whom we trust that he

will yet deliver us.' There are all respects of time. Solomon saith,

Prov. xxv. 17, 'Withdraw thy foot from thy neighbour's house, lest

he be weary of thee, and so hate thee.' Men waste by giving, but I Am

is God's name ; we still need, and he is still a-giving : 2 Tim. iii. 11,

' Thou hast fully known my persecutions, afflictions, which came unto

me at Antioch, &c. ; but out of them all the Lord delivered me.' So

many troubles, so many gracious experiences of God : Ps. xxxiv. 19,

' Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth

them out of them all;' Job v. 19, 'He shall deliver thee in six

troubles, yea, in seven shall no evil touch thee.' Seven is the num-

ber of perfection. God can and doth deliver us as often as we need

deliverance ; when clouds return after the rain, or one evil treadeth

on the heels of another ; he hath a succession of mercies, for our suc-

cession of sorrows. We are dismayed when we see one trouble is

over and another cometh. We have the same God still, the same

certainty of his mercy in delivering. Many times God so delivereth

that the troublers of his people shall come in their room : Prov. xi. 8,

134 SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SER. CLXXI.

1 The righteous is delivered out of trouble, and the wicked cometh in

his stead ; ' as the leprosy of Naaman went to Gehazi. His faithful-

ness, which he hath laid at pledge with us, that he will make a way

to escape: 1 Cor. x. 13, 'God is faithful, who will not suffer you to

be tempted above what you are able ; but will with the temptation

also make a way for you to escape, that you may be able to bear it.'

His dominion and sovereignty : Ps. xliv. 4, ' Thou art my king,

God ; command deliverances for Jacob.' He hath all things at his

command, all second causes, the hearts of his enemies.

3. We have greater opportunities to serve God : Ps. cxix. 134,

1 Deliver me from the oppression of man, so will I keep thy precepts ; '

Luke i. 74, 75, ' That he would grant unto us that we, being delivered

out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holi-

ness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.'

Use. They are too nice that think we may not ask of God temporal

mercies. It is lawful to ask them if we ask them lawfully, with a

submission to God, and for his glory, that we may serve him more

cheerfully ; so you may ask a deliverance out of your troubles.

Doct. 5. Those that would have God to deliver them out of their

afflictions should be sure they do not forsake their duty.

All the evil that David suffered could not weaken his love to the

law of God, nor draw him from the obedience of it. And what was

the issue ? He pleadeth this in prayer to God.

Reason 1. Because if we do so, the nature of our sufferings is altered,

both as to God and man. As to man, we do not suffer as evil-doers :

1 Peter iv. 15, ' But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief,

or as an evil-doer, or as a busy-body in other men's matters ; ' which

will much darken our comfort and glory in suffering ; though for the

main you have an interest in God, if by your miscarriage you have

deserved the stroke of human justice. As to God, your sufferings are

not castigatory, but probatory : Eev. ii. 10, ' The devil shall cast some

of you into prison, that you may be tried ; ' not punished, but tried.

Reason 2. Because uprightness giveth boldness with God in prayer :

1 John iii. 21, 'If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence

towards God.' So Paul showeth he was capable of their prayers, or a

fit object of them : Heb. xiii. 18, ' Pray for us ; for we trust we have a

good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' It is an error

to think that justification giveth us only comfortable access to God,

and sanctification hath no influence at all upon it. We lie in some

secret sin, then our plea is spoiled. If God give thee a heart to adhere

close to him in a constant course of obedience, the more you may be

assured to be delivered. The joy of our faith is mightily confirmed by

the conscience of our constant respect and observance of the word of

God, and firm adherence to him.

Use. If we would boldly come to God in our straits, let us not forget

or forsake our duty, nor throw off the profession of godliness, whatever

we suffer from men : Ps. xliv. 17, ' All this is come upon us, yet have

we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.'

Yea, from God ; though he seem to cast us off, taketh no care of us :

Job xiii. 15, ' Though he slay me, yet I will trust in him.' Diogenes

VEE. 154.] SEKMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 135

Laertius telleth us of a cynic that went to Athens to Antisthenes to

be taught by him ; when often met with a repulse, yet still insisted on

his request.

SERMON CLXXIL

Plead my cause, and deliver me : quicken me according to thy

word. — Ver. 154.

In this verse are three requests, and all backed with one and the same

argument.

1. The three requests are —

[1.] That God would own his cause.

[2.] Deliver him out of his troubles.

[3.] And in the meantime, before the deliverance came, quicken

him.

In the first he intimateth the right of his cause, and that he was

unjustly vexed by wicked men ; therefore, as burdened with their

calumnies, he desireth God to undertake his defence, ' plead my

cause.'

In the second he representeth the misery and helplessness of his

condition ; therefore, as oppressed by violence, he saith, ' deliver me ; '

or, as the words will bear, ' redeem me.'

In the third ; his own weakness and readiness to faint under this

burden ; therefore, ' quicken me.'

Or, in short, with respect to the injustice of his adversaries, 'plead

my cause ; ' with respect to the misery of his condition, ' deliver me ; '

with respect to the weakness and imbecility of his own heart, ' quicken

me.' God is his people's patron, to defend their cause ; his people's

redeemer, to rescue them out of their troubles ; the author and foun-

tain of their life, to quicken them and support them : accordingly we

may beg of him, as the Psalmist doth here, defence of our cause, the

deliverance of our persons, and the support of our hearts.

2. The reason and ground of asking, ' According to thy word.' This

last clause must be applied to all the branches of the prayer : plead

my cause, according to thy word ; deliver me, according to thy word ;

quicken me, according to thy word : for God in his word engageth for

all, to be advocate, redeemer, and fountain of life. This word that

David buildeth upon was either the general promises, made to them

that keep the law, or some particular promise made to himself by the

prophets of that time. The sum of all is this : If we believe the word

of God to be true, we may in a righteous cause with comfort and con-

fidence ask defence, deliverance, and support.

I begin with the first request, 'plead my cause.

Doct. When we have to do with unjust and wicked adversaries, we

should desire God to plead our cause ; or, as the original will bear, to

judge our judgment, or contend our contention — icpivov ttjv Kplaiv

fxov, Septuagint — litiga litem meam. So others.

There is a threefold cause that cometh usually into debate : —

13G SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. [SER. CLXXII.

1. Inter hominem et hominem, between man and man ; as between

the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent : Gen. iii. 15, ' And

I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed

and her seed : it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel ; '

those that are born after the flesh, and those that are born after the

spirit : Gal. iv. 29, ' He that was born after the flesh persecuted him

that was born after the spirit ; ' the children of God and men of this

world : John xv. 19, 'If ye were of the world, the world would love its

own ; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out

of the world, therefore the world hateth you.' As between wolf and

lamb, raven and dove. This is an old controversy, that will never be

reconciled. It is often set afoot in kingdoms, in cities, in townships,

in villages, and families, and will continue till the world's end. For

■while there are two seeds, there will be strifes and enmities. Now, in

this quarrel and strife, sometimes success is cast on this side, some-

times on that, as God seeth fit either to favour, or to try and correct

his servants. Usually the world prevaileth, being more numerous ;

only let me tell you, this controversy doth not always appear to the

world unveiled or bare-faced. Enmity to godliness is such an odious

thing in itself, and hath so often miscarried, that it is not for its interest

to appear openly and in its own colours, but under the mask and dis-

guise of other pretences, which are the more plausibly taken on when

the holy seed have scandalised their profession, and made the way of

truth to be evil-spoken of ; and yet it is the old enmity and antipathy

still, as appeareth by the parties contesting, their aims and designs,

and the means and ways they use to compass them, with scorning of

faith and piety,

2. Inter hominem et didbolum, between man and the devil : he is

called avTiSiKos, the adversary, 1 Peter v. 8, ' Your adversary the devil

like a roaring lion walketh about continually seeking whom he may

devour ; ' and such an adversary as hath law of his side, and by law

would carry it against all the children of fallen Adam, if there were

not a new court erected, where grace taketh the throne. So Rev. xii.

10, he is called ' the accuser of the brethren ; ' but it is our comfort

that as there is an accuser, so there is an advocate : 1 John ii. 1, ' If

any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the

righteous, who also is the propitiation for our sins/ We shall do well

to put our cause into his hands, and then it cannot miscarry. Satan

will not be more ready to accuse than Christ to plead for us ; and he

hath a greater interest in the court of heaven than our adversary hath,

stronger arguments to plead, merits to represent ; therefore make him

your attorney, to appear in court for you.

3. Inter hominem et Deum. God hath a controversy with us about

the breach of his law, and our undutiful carriage to him. Now you

can never reason it out with God. It was Job's presumption to think

that he could order his cause before him : Job xxiii. 3-5, ' Oh that I

knew where I might find him, that I might come even to his seat ! I

would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments :

I would know the words which he would answer me ; and understand

what he would say unto me.' No ; there is no trusting to the equity

of our cause, or hope to clear ourselves before God's judgment-seat.

VER. 154.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 137

We have no way left but submitting and humbling ourselves, and

suing out our pardon in a broken-hearted manner ; no way but yield-

ing to the justice of the first covenant, and putting in the plea of favour

and grace according to the second : Ps. cxxx. 3, 4, ' If thou, Lord,

shouldest mark iniquity, Lord, who can stand ? but there is forgive-

ness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.' If you deny or excuse

sin, you stick to the first covenant, and plead innocency, and then God

will deal with you according to the tenor of strict justice ; but if you

humbly confess sin, and acknowledge your guiltiness and shame, then

you may plead mercy. Justice dealeth with the innocent, mercy with

the guilty.

"We speak now of the first, of the strife between men and men, or

the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent, who do not only

oppress them by violence, but seem to have a plea against them in law,

because of the seeming justice of their quarrel, and the calumnies and

slauders wherewith they burden their cause. Therefore David beggeth

God to plead his cause for him ; and elsewhere, that God would stand

by him, not only as a champion and second, but as a patron and advo-

cate : Ps. xxxv. 1, ' Plead my cause against them that strive with me ;

fight against them that fight against me ; ' as they allege false things

against him, and condemn him as being in an evil cause and evil way ;

so plead my cause against them that strive with me ; as they opposed

him with violence, so fight against them that fight against me.

In this point —

1. The nature of God's pleading our cause.

2. The necessity of it.

3. What hopes there are that he will plead the cause of his people.

First, The nature of this pleading would first be explained ; and

here —

1. In what quality God pleadeth for us. In all judicial proceedings

there are the principal contending persons, and those are called ultor

et reus, the plaintiff and defendant ; and the manner of proceeding in

judgment is, that the plaintiff bringeth forth his bill, and the defen-

dant his answer. But besides these principal contending persons, there

are the witnesses, the advocate, the judge. Now, in some sense God

might be all these, testis, advocatus, et judex, without any wrong

and injustice. Our witness to attest for us, as he knoweth all things,

and knoweth our hearts ; for as such do the saints often appeal to him.

Our advocate to plead for us, for he is tender of the credit of his peo-

ple, and hath undertaken to preserve them from the strife of tongues :

Ps. xxxi. 20, ' Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from

the pride of men, thou shalt keep them secretly in thy pavilion from

the strife of tongues.' As a judge to give sentence in our behalf, or

such a decree whereby the adversary may be convinced of our right-

eous cause, and our innocency cleared ; and all this may be called

God's pleading, either as testis, advocatus, or judex. But I rather

confine it to the last. God's pleading is rather as a judge; not as

advocatus, but as patronus ; that is a more proper and honourable

name. Zonaras tells us that the Komans called their patrons to£?

K-rjhe/xoviKov'i ; and it was enacted in the law of the twelve tables, si

patronus clienti fraudem fecerit, sacer esto. If any man had deceived

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his client, he was accursed, devoted to slaughter, and any man might

kill him. Clientes quasi colentes, patroni quasi patres, saith Servius.

So that to deceive a client was as to deceive a son. This was begun

by Eomulus, who commended the common people and worser sort to

the nobles, leaving every man his liberty to choose whom he would

for his patron ; and that defence of them was called patronage ; and

the jus pair onatus during this constitution consisted in these duties

and offices ; they were to defend the poor in judgment, to answer for

them in all points of law ; they were to take care of them that none

might wrong them present or absent ; they were omnem accusatoris

■impelum sustinere ; and this jus patronatus was of such authority

among the ancients, that Marcus Cato telleth us that first the name of

father was most sacred, next that of patron. It were long to say all

that might be said of them ; this is enough, that their principal work

was to be present at all causes wherein their poor client was concerned,

and to appear for him and defend him, as they would their own cause.

Advocates were taken in afterwards, when laws were multiplied, to

suggest what was law ; they were men skilful in the law. See Hall's

lexicon. Now thus it is God pleads the cause of his people as their

patron, who hath taken them into his tutelage and clientship ; not as

mterceder, but defender. They have betaken themselves to his tui-

tion, and desire to honour and serve him ; God will therefore take part

with them against their enemies. He doth not only hear pleas and

debates on either side, but interposeth as the patron and chief party

concerned in the strife, and having withal the power of a judge, will

pass sentence on their behalf, and see it executed.

2. The manner of God's pleading. It is not a verbal or vocal, but

a real and active plea. God pleadeth not by words, but by deeds, by

his judgments, and powerful providence, righting the wrongs done to

them. For since, as I said, there concur in God the relations of judex

and patronus, he maketh the one serviceable to the other. As their

patronus he owneth the cause, taketh it upon himself, as the answer-

able party, and then useth his judicial power in defence of his people.

Now the property of a judge is to pronounce sentence, and then to put

his sentence in execution. Gocl hath pronounced sentence in his word,

and he puts the sentence in execution in his providence ; and that is

God's pleading. Many times there is sententia lata, but dilata ; long

ago was sentence passed, but it is not speedily executed, Eccles. viii. 11.

Because sentence is not speedily executed upon an evil-doer, therefore

do they vaunt and insult over his people, as if God had forsaken and

disclaimed them, and would never more own their cause and quarrel ;

but when God seeth fit to appear, and to show himself in this mixed

relation of judge and patron, the world will have other thoughts of

their cause ; and therefore, Isa, iii. 13, ' The Lord standeth up to plead,

and standeth to judge his people.' He will bring matters under a

review, and will powerfully show himself against their oppressors. To

this pleading Job alludeth when he saith, Job xxiii. 6, ' Will he plead

against me with his great power ? ' if he should use his almighty and

invincible power against me, he would easily ruin me. So Ezek.

xxxviii. 22, ' I will plead against him with pestilence and with blood;'

against Gog and Magog, that is, the Scythians, Turks, and Tartars.

VeR. 154.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 139

So that you see that God's pleading is not by speaking, or by word of

mouth, but by the vengeance of his providence against those that

wrong his people. \_ So against Babylon : Jer. li. 36, ' Thus saith the

Lord, Behold I will plead thy cause, and take vengeance for thee.'

But that this is a mixed act of patron and judge, see 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.'

When God's people provoke him to anger by their sins, he casteth

them into troubles ; and then their adversaries are chief, and their

cause is much darkened and obscured : all this while God is pleading

against them, but it is not the enemies' quarrel, but his own vindica-

tion of abused mercy and goodness. But when once the controversy

is taken up between. God and them, by their submission, and clearing

his justice, and imploring his mercy, then God will plead their cause,

and take their part against the instruments of his vengeance (and clear

their righteous cause), who only sought their own ends in afflicting

them. When God hath exercised their humility and patience, he will

thus do. And how, I pray you, will he plead for them ? The text

saith there, by executing judgment for them ; that is, by putting his

sentence in execution, and then will restore to them their wonted privi-

leges, and own them in the public view of all, and make manifest they

are his : he will bring them forth to the light, and they shall see his

righteousness.

3. The effect of God's pleading, which is the clearing of God's

people, and the convincing of their adversaries ; which God doth

partly by the eminency and notableness of the providences whereby he

delivereth his people, and the marks of his favour put upon them :

Neh. vi. 16, ' And it came to pass that when all our enemies heard

thereof, and all the heathen that were about us saw these things, they

were much cast down in their own eyes ; for they perceived that this

work was wrought of our God.' Their own judgments were convinced

of their folly in opposing the Jews ; the extraordinary success showed

the hand of God was in it : by such incredible and remarkable occur-

rences doth God bring about their deliverance. So Micah vii. 10,

when God shall plead her cause, ' Then she that is mine enemy

shall see it, and shame shall cover her which said unto me, Where

is the Lord thy God ? mine eyes shall behold her ; now shall she be

trodden down as the mire of the streets.' Those who mocked her faith

should be confounded at the sight of her deliverance. Thus God

delights to make the happiness of his people conspicuous. So Bev.

iii. 9, ' Behold I will make them which are of the synagogue of Satan

(which say they are Jews, and are not, but do lie), behold I will make

them to come and worship before thy feet, and to know that I have

loved thee.' He will make their enemies to know that he hath loved

them, and ask them forgiveness for the wrongs and outrages done to

them. Partly by the convictions of his Spirit, undeceiving the world,

and reproving them for the hatred and malice against his people :

John xvi. 8, ' The Comforter, when he is come, shall reprove the world

of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment.' The word is i\ey%ei r not

comfort, but convince or reprove ; put them to silence, so as they shall

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not in reason gainsay. The object, the world, the unconverted, if not

the reprobate. The things whereof convinced, of sin and righteous-

ness and judgment, of the truth of Christ's person and doctrine.

This was spoken for the comfort of the disciples, who were to go

abroad and beat the devil out of his territories, by the doctrine of the

cross, that were weak men destitute of all worldly sufficiencies and

props and aids. Their master suffered as a seducer, their doctrine

cross to men's carnal interests, for them in this manner to venture

upon the raging world was a heavy discouraging thing. Now the

Spirit should come and convince the opposing world, so far that some,

terrified before, brought to evangelical repentance : Acts ii. 37, ' Now

when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart;' soon desire

to share in their great privilege : Acts viii. 18, 19, ' And when Simon

saw that through laying on the apostles' hands, the Holy Ghost was

given, he offered them money, saying, Give me also this power, that

on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost ; '

but he was yet in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. Some

almost persuaded: Acts xxvi. 28, 'Then Agrippa saicl unto Paul,

Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.' Some forced to

magnify them, who did not join with them : Acts v. 13, ' And of the

rest, durst no man join himself to them, but the people magnified

them.' Some would have worshipped them, being yet pagans : Acts

xiv. 11-13, ' And when the people saw what Paul had done, they

lift ur> their voices, saying, in the speech of Lycaonia, The gods are

come down to us in the likeness of men. Then the priests of Jupiter,

which was before their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates,

and would have done sacrifice with the people.' Others bridled that

were afraid to meddle with them : Acts v. 34, 35, ' Then stood there

up one in the council, a pharisee, named Gamaliel, a doctor of law,

had in reputation among all the people, and commanded to put the

apostles ibrth a little space, and said unto them, Ye men of Israel,

take heed to yourselves, what ye intend to do as touching these men.'

That Christ, that Messiah, that righteous person, one able to vanquish

the devil, thus without any visible force, and with mere spiritual

weapons, by this conviction of the Spirit, did the Lord subdue the

world to the owning and receiving Christ's kingdom ; at least, not

go on in a high hand to oppose it. God cleared Christ as righteous,

and Lord.

Secondly, The necessity of this pleading.

1. Because the people of God are often in such a condition that

none will plead their cause unless the Lord plead it ; and therefore

we are driven to him as our judge and patron. God's design is not

to gain the world by pomp and force, but by spiritual evidence and

power ; and therefore, as to externals, it is often worse with his people

than with others; for the world is upon their trial, and therefore

though God will give sufficient means of conviction, yet not always

such evident marks of his favour to the best cause in temporal things

as that mere sense shall lead them to embrace it. No ; he will only

set a good cause a-foot, and then suffer it to be exposed to the hatred

of the world, and sometimes to be overborne as to any temporal

interest it can get, that the mere evidence and love of truth may gain

VER. 154.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 141

men, and not any secular motives. All the countenance and owning

God will give to it is by infusing courage and constancy to his servants

to suffer for it, and so they overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and

not loving their lives to the death, Rev. xii. 11. He speaketh of such

a time when the church seemeth weakest, like a poor woman travail-

ing ; and her enemies seem strongest, like a great red dragon ready

to devour the child as soon as born. Now, though at such a time the

church is overcoming, and the devil and his instruments are but

pulling down their own throne, and establishing Christ's while they

•are shedding the blood of his saints, yet none of this appeareth and

is visibly to be seen. Though suffering be a feeling and ratifying of

the truth, yet to the world's eye it seemeth a suppressing and over-

bearing of it. Therefore few will own such a despised, hated,

persecuted way ; and the difficulty is the greater when there is much

of God's truth owned by the persecuting side, and the contest is not

about the main of Christianity, but some lesser truths, and so the

opposition is more disguised ; then certainly it may be said, Isa. lix.

4, 'None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth;' all half

friends are discouraged, therefore nothing is left the people of God,

but their prayers, ' Lord plead my cause.' David in the text appealeth

to God's judgment when he was deserted by men, burdened by pre-

judices, oppressed by man's wrong judgment. So often God's people

are not able to defend themselves, and few in the world will own them,

or be advocates for them, then God will take their cause in hand. In

the civil law, if a man could not get an advocate, metu adversarii, the

judge was to appoint him one to plead for him ; so God taketh notice

of his people's condition : Jer. xxx. 13, ' There is none to plead thy

cause, that thou mayest be bound up.' Often among men none can

or dareth undertake the defence and patronage of oppressed right.

2. Though we have a good cause and hopeful instruments, yet wo

cannot plead it with any effect till God show himself from heaven.

Nay, though the cause be never so right and just, and instruments and

means hopeful, yet it requireth God's power to keep it afoot ; for the

justice of the cause must not be relied on, nor probable means rested

in ; but God must have the trust of the cause, and the glory of main-

taining it ; otherwise by our own ill managing, or by some secret and

unseen opposition, it wili miscarry : Ps. ix. 4, ' Thou hast maintained

my right and my cause; thou safest in the throne judging right.'

This is a work wherein God will be seen, while it is in agitation, or

under decision. God will have the trust, and when it is over, he will

have all the glory.

Thirdly, What hopes or grounds there are to expect that God will

plead the cause of his people.

1. He can.

2. He will. Infinite power and infinite justice can do it.

1. He can. The Lord is able ; he that pleadeth our cause hath

infinite power: Prov. xxiii. 11, ' Their redeemer is mighty, he shall

plead their cause with thee.' It is easy to bear down a few afflicted

creatures, that have no strength or heart to oppose, being in bonds,

and under oppression ; but there is a mighty God, who when he

pleadeth any one's cause, he will do it to the purpose, really and

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effectually delivering thein for whom he pleadeth : Jer. 1. 34, ' Their

redeemer is strong, the Lord of hosts is his name ; he will thoroughly

plead their cause, that he may give rest to the laud, and disquiet the

inhabitants of Babylon.'

2. He will, considering —

[1.] Their relation to God.

[2.] God's relation to them and to the whole world.

[1.] Because of their relation to him. The dominus, the lord whom

they had chosen, was to be their patronus. They that have put them-

selves under God's protection, and are faithful to him, keeping close

to his word, he will plead their cause, and manage it as his own : Isa.

li. 22, ' Thus saith thy Lord, the Lord and thy God, that pleadeth the

cause of his people, Behold I have taken out of thy hand the cup of

trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my fury ; thou shalt no more

drink it again.' He being their sovereign Lord, had undertaken to

protect his servants ; he counteth the wrongs done to them done to

himself : Acts ix. 4, ' Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me ?' especially

since molested for his truth.

[2.] Because of his relation to them. He is the supreme potentate

and the righteous judge of the world, and so bound by his office to

defend the weak and innocent when oppressed : Ps. cxlvi. 7, ' He exe-

cuteth judgment for the oppressed. Those that should maintain right

upon earth, and punish wrongs, are often prevaricators ; but the judge

of all the earth will do right ; he is an impartial judge, and will main-

tain the cause of his people : Prov. xxii. 22, 23, ' Kob not the poor,

because he is poor, neither oppress the afflicted in the gate ; for the

Lord will plead their cause, and spoil the soul of those that spoiled

them/ Though no relation to him, yet, if poor, if afflicted, if destitute

of human help, the Lord taketh himself to be the patron of all such,

much more his people.

Use 1. To rebuke our fears and misgiving of heart. When we see

the best men go to the wall, and to be made objects of scorn and

spite, we are apt to say, as the church doth in the prophet Isaiah,

chap. xl. 27, ' My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is

passed over from my God;' that is, in effect, that God doth wholly

neglect them, and will not plead their cause. Oh no ! He knoweth

what strife there is between us and our adversaries, and how good our

cause is, and how much he is concerned in it ; only we must wait his

leisure, and bear his indignation until he plead. True submission to

God ought to prescribe no day to him, but refer all to his will.

Use 2. Let us commit our cause to the Lord, as the expression is,

Job v. 8, ' I would seek unto God, and unto God would I commit my

cause ;' who is the friend and advocate of the afflicted, and hath pro-

mised to be so, and to keep us from the hand of the wicked and the

mouth of the wicked ; from their hand and violence so far as it shall

be for his glory : Isa. xlix. 25, ' I will contend with him that contendeth

with thee, and I will save thy children ; ' and from the mouth of the

wicked : Ps. v. 15, ' He saveth the poor from the sword, and from their

mouth, and from the hand of the mighty ; ' from slanders that may

endanger their life and credit. So ver. 21, c Thou shalt be hid from

VER. 154.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 143

the scourge of the tongue;' from their bitter reproaches. Therefore

commit your cause to God. But then —

1. Be sure that your cause be good, for God will not be the patron

of sin. Unless he hath passed sentence for us in his word, it is bold-

ness to appeal to him ; as Baalam, that would hire God by sacrifices

to curse his people. Hasty appeals to God in our passion and revenge-

ful humours are a great dishonour to him. Sarah appealed : Gen. xv.

3, -The Lord judge between me and thee ;' and David appealed: 1

Sam. xxiv. 15, ' The Lord therefore be judge, and judge between thee

and me, and see and plead my cause, and deliver me out of thy hand.'

But there was more of justice in David's appeal in the case between

him and Saul than in Sarah's appeal in the case between her and

Abraham ; it would have been ill for her if God had taken her at her

word ; it showeth that even God's children are too apt to intitle him

to their private passions.

2. Let us be sure that there be no controversy between God and our

persons, when yet our cause is good. The Israelites had a good cause,

Judges xx., but there was once and again a great slaughter made of

them, before they had reconciled themselves to God. There must be

a good conscience as well as a good cause, otherwise God will plead

his controversy against us before he will plead our controversy against

our enemies : Jer. ii. 35, ' Yet thou sayest, Because I am innocent,

surely his anger will turn from me : behold I will plead with thee,

because thou sayest I have not sinned.' Because we have a good

cause, we think God hath no cause to be angry with us ; therefore he

will first plead in judgment against us. So Hosea xii. 2, ' The Lord

hath also a controversy with Judah, and will punish Jacob accord-

ing to his ways, according to his doings will he recompense him.'

Though God may approve what is right in worship and profession,

yet he will punish our shameful disorders and unanswerable walking

in his people.

3. Let us pray in a right manner, with confidence, with earnestness.

[1.] Confidence that God will plead our cause when he seeth it good

and for his own glory, whether there be any likelihood of it, yea or

no ; for he hath promised to support the weak and humble, and pro-

tect the innocent against their oppressors : Ps. cxl. 12, ' I know that

the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the

poor.' God is party with you, not against you, and leave him to his

own ways and means. Faith should support us when sense yieldeth

little comfort and hope. He knoweth how to justify your cause, and

deliver your persons ; and you should know that he will do it, and can

do it, though the way be not evident to you, and God seem to sit still

for a while.

[2.] Earnestly. Oh ! be not cold in the church's suit. If you be

Sion's friends, and are willing to take share and lot with God's peo-

ple, awaken him by your incessant cries. Nay, it is God's cause : Ps.

lxxiv. 22, ' Arise, Lord, plead thine own cause ; remember how the

foolish man reproacheth thee daily.' The godly are not maligned for

their sins, but their righteousness. So Ps. xxxv. 23, ' Stir up thyself,

and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.'

There is a long suit depending between the church of God and her

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enemies; desire that God would determine it, and declare what is

right and what is wrong.

Secondly, He begged God in the text to redeem or deliver him ; the

word in the text, ^N-^, the usual word for goel, redeemer ; the Sep-

tuagint, XvTpascrai fxe, ' ransom me.' Here he craveth that as his cause

might be in safety, so his person.

Boot. We may beg a deliverance or a release from our troubles,

provided we do not beg it out of an impatiency of the flesh, but a

desire of God's glory.

God delights to be employed in this work. What hath he been

doing all along in all ages of the world, but delivering his people from

those that oppressed them ? He delivered Jacob from the fury of

Esau ; Joseph from the malice of his brethren : Gen. xxxvii. 21,

' And Reuben heard it, and he delivered him out of their hands, say-

ing, Let us not kill him/ Daniel from the lions' den : Dan. vi. 22,

' My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths, that

they have not hurt me ; forasmuch as before him innocency was found

in me, and also before thee, king, have I done no hurt.' Peter from

prison: Acts xii. 11, ' And when Peter was come to himself, he said,

Now I know of a surety that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath

delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation

of the people of the Jews.' And will not he do the like for his suffer-

ing servants ? How came his hand to be out ? he delivered Israel

out of Egypt, out of Babylon ; he can do it again, it doth not cost him

much labour : Ps. lxviii. 2, ' As smoke is driven away, so drive them

away ; as wax melteth before the fire, so let the wicked perish at the

presence of God.' Therefore refer your deliverance to God, and when

you are in a way of duty, be not thoughtful about it : there is a price

paid for it ; Christ redeemed us from temporal adversity so far as it

may be a snare to us. God hath his times ; we may see it, unless he

hath a mind to sweep away the unthankful and froward generation

that provoked him to so much anger : Num. xiv. 22, 23, ' Because

all those men that have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did

in Egypt, in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times,

and have not hearkened unto my voice : surely they shall not see the

land, which I sware unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that

provoked me see it ;' Jer. xxix. 31, 32, ' Thus saith the Lord concern-

ing Shemaiah the Nehelamite, Because that Shemaiah hath prophesied

unto you, and I sent him not, and he caused you to trust in a lie ;

therefore thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will punish Shemaiah the

Nehelamite and his seed ; he shall not have a man to dwell among

this people, neither shall he behold the good that I will do for my

people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the

Lord.' It may be, we may be more broken and afflicted first : Deut.

xxxii. 3G, ' For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for

his servants, when he seefli that their power is gone, and there is none

shut up or left.' Oh ! let us desire to see the good of his chosen : Ps.

cvi. 5, ' That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in

the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.'

It is a favour : Ps. 1. 23, ' Whoso offereth praise, glorifieth me ; to him

that orderelh his conversation aright will I show the salvation of God.'

VER. 155.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 145

Thirdly, For quickening, ' Quicken me ; ' in which he prayeth either

to be kept alive till the promises be fulfilled, or rather to be comforted

and encouraged in waiting.

Doct. We need continual influence from God, and lively encourage-

ment, especially in our troubles.

1. We are apt to faint before God showeth himself: Isa. lvii. 16,

' I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth ; for the

spirit should fail before me, and the souls which I have made.' The

devil's design is to tire and weary us out. Some are of a poor spirit,

that they will tire before their strength faileth them : Prov. xxiv. 10,

' If thou faint in a day of adversity, thy strength is but small.' Yea,

there is a readiness to faint in the best through many troubles, delayed

hopes. Those that have upheld others by their good counsel are apt

to sink themselves.

2. At least we are clogged, cannot so cheerfully wait upon God, and

walk with him : Heb. xii. 12, ' Wherefore lift up the hands which

hang down, and the feeble knees.' We grow weak, slothful, remiss

in God's service. Fear and sorrow weakeneth the hands, indisposeth

us for duty.

Use. Let us encourage ourselves, rouse up our heavy hearts, and

wait for God's quickening ; let us not give God cause by our negli-

gence to deny support to us.

SERMON CLXXIII.

Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

— Ver. 155.

David had begged his own deliverance, as one of God's servants or

clients, in the former verse ; now he illustrateth his petition by show-

ing the opposite state of the wicked. They could not with such con-

fidence go to God, or put in such a plea for deliverance : ' Salvation

is far from the wicked.' Some read it prayer-wise, Let salvation be

far from the wicked ; for in the original the verb is understood, and it

is only there, Salvation far from the wicked; but most translations read

it better proposition- wise ; for as the man of God comforts himself in

his own interest and hopes, so also in this, that God would not take

part with the wicked enemies against him, who had no interest at all

in his salvation and protecting providence, and therefore would keep

him from their rage.

In the words —

1. An assertion.

2. The reason of it.

1. In the assertion we have the miserable condition of wicked men,

salvation is far from them.

2. In the reason we have the evil disposition of wicked men, ' They

seek not thy law ; ' which will give us the true notion and description

of them, who are wicked men ; such as seek not God's statutes, busy

not themselves about religion, study not to please God.

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In the words two propositions : —

Doct. 1. That salvation is far from the wicked.

JDoct. 2. They are wicked who keep not God's statutes.

Doct. 1. That salvation is far from the wicked. Salvation is of two

sorts — temporal and eternal. The proposition is true in both senses ;

they are far from salvation, and salvation is far from them. To be

for from salvation is to be in a dangerous case, as to be far from light

is to be in extreme darkness. To be far from God's law, ver. 150, is

to be extremely wicked ; to be far from oppression, Ps. liv. 14, is to

be in a most safe condition. So that the point is —

That the wicked are in a very dangerous case, both as to their tem-

poral and eternal estate.

First, Temporal salvation is far from them, and they are in a

dangerous condition as to their outward happiness. This seemeth to

be the harder part, and to have most of paradox in it ; but this will

appear to you if you consider —

1. That all these outward things are at God's disposal, to give and

take according to his own pleasure: Job. i. 21, ' The Lord gave, and

the Lord hath taken away ; ' not the Sabeans and the Chaldeans :

1 Sam. ii. 7, 'The Lord maketli poor, and maketh rich ; he bringeth

low, and lifteth up/ He that cast the world into hills and valleys

disposeth of the several conditions of men, that some shall be high

and some low, some exalted, some dejected. All things that fall out in

the world are not left to the dominion of fortune or blind chance, but

governed by the wise providence of God : ' Their good is not in their

hands,' Job xxi. 16.

2. That it belongeth to God, as the judge of the world, to see ut

malts male sit, et bonis bene. Gen. xviii. 25, ' That be far from thee

to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked : and

that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee.

Shall not the judge of all; the earth do right V Eom. iii. 5, ' But if

our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we

say ? Is God unrighteous that taketh vengeance ? (I speak as a man.)

God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world?' Job xxxiv.

17, ' Shall even he that hateth right govern ? and wilt thou condemn

him that is most just ? ' Job xxxiv. 11, ' For the work of a man shall

he render unto him, and cause every man to find according to his ways/

He is not indifferent to good and evil, and alike affected to the godly

and the wicked ; but hateth the one, and loveth the other. He hateth

the wicked : Ps. v. 5, ' Thou hatest all the workers of iniquity ; ' and,

on the other part, he loveth the good and the holy : Ps. xxxv. 27, ' He

hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servants ; ' it is his delight to see

them happy and nourishing. This different respect is often spoken of

in scripture: Ps. xxxi. 23, 'The Lord preserveth the faithful, and

plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.' That he will uphold and main-

tain those that are faithful to him, and avenge himself upon the pride

and oppression of the wicked ; though all the world be against the

godly, God will preserve them and ruin the wicked, though all the

world should let them alone. So 1 Peter iii. 12, ' For the eyes of the

Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open unto their prayers ;

but the face of the "Lord is against them that do evil.' There is a

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watchful eye of God over the righteous, to supply their wants, to direct

them in their ways, to uphold them against clangers, to comfort them

in their griefs, to deliver them out of all their troubles. God hath an

eye to take notice of their condition, and an ear to hear their prayers ;

but his face is set to pursue the wicked to their ruin : so that this is

enough to assure us that holiness is the way to live blessedly, even in

this life, where misery most aboundeth, because this is a part of the

care that belongeth to the judge of the world

3. Besides his general justice as the ruler and judge of the world,

and the condecency that is in such a dispensation to the rectitude of

God's nature, there is his covenant declared in his word, wherein he

promiseth temporal happiness to the godly, and threateneth misery and

punishment to the wicked. And God ever stood upon the truth of his

word, to make it good in the eyes of the world ; therefore it will be

with men as their condition is set forth in the word of God. A pro-

mise there is as good as accomplishment, and a threatening as sure as

performance ; and therefore, accordingly as the word saith of them, so

is salvation far or near from them. Now search all the word of God,

and see if it speak anything of hope and comfort to the wicked, or them

that make a trade of provoking God. Nay, they are well enough

aware of that, and therefore will not come to the light, care not to

busy themselves in the scriptures ; for they say of them as Ahab of

Micaiah, ' He prophesieth nothing but evil to me ;' and justly enough,

for they can see nothing there but their own doom. If they are evil, it

can speak nothing but evil: Isa. iii. 10, 11, ' Say ye unto the righteous, It

shall be well with them ; for they shall eat of the fruit of their doings.

Woe unto the wicked : it shall be ill with them ; for the reward of his

hands shall be given to him.' This is the tenor of the whole word

of God : so Eccles. viii. 12, 13, ' Though a sinner do evil a hundred

times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be

well with them that fear God, which fear before him : but it shall not

be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are

as a shadow ; because he feareth not before God.' It is a certain truth ;

it is a certain evident truth, for it is judicium cerii axiomatis. I do

know and confidently affirm that it shall be well with them that fear

God ; but it shall not be well with the wicked, that is, it shall be very

ill with them.

But here cometh in the great objection of sense, How can these

things be so ? We see the contrary, that all things come alike to all :

Eccles. ix. 1,2,' The righteous, and the wise, and their works, are in

the hand of God : no man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is

before them. All things come alike to all ; there is one event to the

righteous, and to the wicked ; to the good, and to the clean, and to the

unclean ; to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not : as

is the good, so is the sinner ; and he that sweareth, as he that feareth

an oath/ That those outward things are given indifferently to good

and bad, and the wicked are as free from temporal punishment as

others, and enjoy all prosperity in this world, even sometimes to the

envy and offence of God's children, and the hardening of their own

hearts ; and, which is more, that often it happeneth to the just accord-

ing to the work of the wicked, Eccles. viii. 14, and to the wicked

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according to the work of the righteous ; that is, evil to good men, and

good to evil men. As to outward things, the advantage is usually on

the side of the worst.

Ajis. 1. By concession; we must grant what is to be granted, that

temporal things not being absolutely good or evil, the Lord taketh a

liberty in the dispensation of them. The eternal promises and threat-

enings, being of things absolutely good and ill, are therefore abso-

lute and peremptory. None that live godly can tail of the eternal

promises ; none that goeth on still in his trespasses can escape the

eternal threatenings. But the temporal promises and threatenings, being

of things not simply good and evil, are not so absolutely fixed, but God

will take a liberty sometimes to cross his hands, out of his general

indulgence to give prosperity to the wicked, and out of his fatherly

wisdom to chasten the godly ; and so all things come alike to all. Is

Abraham rich ? So is Nabal ; yea, so the godly may be afflicted when

the wicked triumph ; as Lazarus pined with want when Dives fared

deliciously every day, and Jerusalem was in a heap of ashes when

Babylon flourished.

2. By correction. The wicked have no right by promise or cove-

nant, and so salvation is far from them ; for this promise or covenant-

right inferreth two things — (1.) A sanctified enjoyment ; (2.) A more

sure tenure.

[1.] A sanctified enjoyment ; they that have salvation by promise,

they have it as an effect of God's special love, and so have it as a

mercy, not as a judgment ; but without this they have it only by God's

general indulgence, and so it may be a snare : Ps. lxix. 22, ' Let their

table become a snare before them, and that which should have been

for their welfare, let it become a trap,' and promote their ruin, not

only eternal, but temporal. If they be not by these common mercies

brought to repentance, the greater shall their condemnation be, and

their downfall the more speedy. For while they let loose the reins,

anU run headlong into all sin, God is the more provoked against them,

and his anger, that was a little delayed and put off, is the more severely

executed. It is a blessed thing to have salvation by covenant : Bom.

viii. 28, ' All things shall work together for good to them that love

God, to them that are the called according to his purpose.' When we

are sanctified to God, saith Baxter, all things are sanctified to us ; to

serve us for God, and to help us to him.

[2.] Our tenure is more sure, and we can with more confidence wait

upon God for it. In this sense salvation is far from the wicked, be-

cause they cannot lay claim to God's favourable providence, or look for

the continuance of it with any confidence, because they have no right,

no promise to build upon. The word of God speaketh no good to

them, whatever God may do out of his general indulgence : James i.

7, ' Let not that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord.'

Now the misery of this appeareth by considering wicked men either as

in prosperity or adversity.

(1.) If they be still at ease for the present, yet they are not upon

sure terms, because they know not how soon God may break in upon

them and theirs : Job v. 3, 4, 'I have seen the foolish taking root ;

but suddenly I cursed his habitation. His children are far from safety '

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(the notion of the text), ' and are crushed m the gate, and there is none

to deliver them.' In the eye of the godly they are far from salvation.

I judged him unhappy for all his wealth, foretold his sudden destruc-

tion, which God would speedily bring on him and his ; I read his

doom. So Job viii. 11-13, ' Can the rush grow without mire ? can

the flag grow without water ? Whilst it is yet in its greenness, and not

cut down, it withereth before any other herb : so are the paths of all

that forget God ; and the hypocrite's hopes shall perish.' A wicked

man cannot lift up his head above others for want of God's favour to

uphold him, as the rush or flag cannot grow without mire or water.

The prosperity of wicked men, when it is most green and flourishing,

yet wants its sustenance, which is God's blessing. This is the condi-

tion of wicked men in the opinion of the good. But what is it in his

own opinion ? Take him in his serious and sober moods, he always

liveth miserably and expecting a change, as knowing that God oweth

him an ill turn : Job xv. 21, ' A dreadful sound is in his ears : in his

prosperity the destroyer shall come upon him.' He trembleth secretly,

as if danger were always near ; therefore cruel and mischievous against

whom they fear, that shut the door against their own danger, for every-

thing that is fearful will be cruel.

(2.) If he fall into adversity. In their troubles they have not a God

to go unto, nor promises to build upon ; therefore it is said, Prov. xv.

29, ' The Lord is far from the wicked, but he heareth the prayer of

the righteous.' God's children have ready access to a sure friend, and

are assured of welcome and audience when they come ; but they are

at their wits' end, know not which way to turn : Job xv. 22, ' He be-

lieveth not that he shall return out of darkness, and he is waited for of

the sword;' that is, full of terrors of conscience and distracting dis-

turbing fears, hath no hope to be delivered, but lives as if he had a

sword hanging over his head.

Use 1. To show us the reason why the people of God, when they

grow wicked, are often disappointed in that salvation which they ex-

pect : Isa. lix. 11, ' We look for judgment, but there is none ; for

salvation, but it is far from us.' Why ? Because they had exceed-

ingly sinned against God, and scandalised their profession. There was

a horrible depravation of the people of God in those times, and there-

fore all their prayers and fasts and seekings of God could not prevail

for a deliverance.

Use 2. Comfort in a good cause, wherein the godly are opposed by

the wicked. There is a double comfort : —

1. Because the prosperity, power, and pride of the wicked is not to

be regarded ; for though they flourish for a while, and all things flow

in upon them according to their heart's desire, yet salvation is far

from them. God is engaged both for the rectitude of his nature, the

quality of his office, as judge of the world, and the tenor of his

covenant, to employ his power and terror for their ruin ; and though

lie may for a while spare them, and they take occasion from this in-

dulgence to do more and more wickedly, yet you should not be dis-

mayed if you see them engaged in ways or courses that are naught and

wicked ; you may say, I know they cannot prosper in them. When

they are lifted up in the prosperity of their affairs, you should lift up

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your hearts by faith, see a worm at the root of their happiness :

evBov TO KCIKOV, &C.

2. Because by the rule of contraries, if salvation be far from the

wicked that seek not God's statutes, then deliverance is near to the

godly that fear God and desire to be faithful with him, how hard so-

ever their condition seemeth to be for the present : Ps. lxxxv. 9, 'Surely

his salvation is nigh unto them that fear him.' You should be con-

fident of it. They that please God cannot be always miserable ; it is

nearer than we think of, or can see for the present. There is a surel/j,

or a note of averment put upon it. It is better be with the godly in

adversity, than with the wicked in prosperity ; when they are men

appointed as sheep for the slaughter, yet there is a way of ransom and

escape ; but the wicked, at their best, are in the appointment of God

as the stalled ox, or as swine fatted for destruction ; when fattest, then

nearest to destruction and slaughter.

Secondly, As to eternal salvation, so they are in a dangerous case.

1. The phrase here used by the Psalmist seemeth to be used to

obviate their vain conceit. They think they shall do well enough, and

have as much to show for heaven as the best ; it is near in their con-

ceit, but far indeed : 1 Cor. vi. 9, ' Be not deceived ; know ye not that

the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? ' Thoughts of

impunity are natural to us ; those that are in the ready way to hell are

apt to think they shall get heaven at last, as if God would turn day into

night; but alas ! it is an eternal truth, 'salvation is far from the wicked.'

2. There is somewhat of a meiosis in the expression, less being said

than is intended. The man of God saith that salvation is far, but he

implieth that damnation is near ; certainly the one it doth imply the

other : Heb. vi. 8, ' The ground that beareth briers and thorns, is

eVyu? Kardpas, nigh unto cursing.' They are upon the borders of hell,

and ready to drop into those eternal flames which shall consume God's

adversaries.

3. Once again, the longer they continue wicked, the farther off is

their salvation every day ; farther off from heaven, and nearer to hell.

A godly man, the more progress he maketh in virtue, the nearer he is

to his salvation: Eom. xiii. 11, 'Now is your salvation nearer than

when ye first believed.' Not only nearer in point of time, but nearer

in the preparation of their hearts ; not because older, but because

better : and so by consequence, wicked men go farther and farther off,

and therefore they are said to treasure up wrath against the day of

wrath, Eom. ii. 5. Every sin they commit puts them a degree farther

off from salvation, as every degree of grace is a step nearer heaven.

Reason 1. The inseparable connection that is between privileges and

duties. The gospel offereth salvation conditionally ; if we forsake the

condition, we fall short of the privilege ; and therefore if we be wicked,

salvation is far from us. When God took Abraham into covenant

with him, he doth not tell him only what privilege he should enjoy,

but also bindeth him to walk suitably: Gen. xvii. 1, 'I am God

Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.' God will take care

of our safety, if we will take care of our duty. The covenant is called

a bond : Ezek. xx. 37, ' I will bring you into the bond of the covenant;'

because it hath a tie upon us, as well as upon God. We are not at

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our own liberty, to walk as we list ; there are bonds upon us ; not

vinculo, careen's, the bonds of a prison, gins and fetters, but vinculo,

nuptiarum, the bonds of wedlock. Now, they that cast away these

bonds from them, as the wicked do — (Ps. ii. 3, ' Let us break their

bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us ; ) — and will be their

own men, and walk by their own will, have no title to the privileges

that accrue by the marriage ; such licentious spirits are at liberty, but

to their own woe ; they have a liberty to go to hell, and undo their

own souls. It was the wisdom of God to bind us to displeasing duties

by the proposal of comfortable privileges. Every man would desire to

be saved, and to be happy for evermore, but corrupt nature is against

holiness. Now without dioliness there is no happiness. The con-

ditional promise doth more bind and draw the heart to it, when we lay

hold of it, by yielding to perform the condition required ; then may we

groundedly expect the privilege promised. We would have salvation,

but we cannot unless we submit to God's terms ; for Christ came not

to gratify our selfish desires, but to subdue us to God. We would

have sin pardoned, we would be freed from the curse of the law and

the flames of hell, but this can never be while we walk in our own

ways, and are averse to holiness of heart and life, for God would even

sweeten duties by felicities.

Reason 2. Because of the perfect contrariety between the temper of

wicked men and this salvation, so that they are wholly incapable of it.

1. They care not for God, who is the author of this salvation ; he is

not in all their thoughts, words, and ways : Ps. x. 1, ' The wicked

through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God ; God is

not in all his thoughts.' They are far from him, though he be not far

from every one of them ; he is within them, and round about them, in

the effects of his power and goodness ; but they never think of him, nor

take care to serve and please him ; that is the reason in the text, ' They

seek not thy statutes.' If they seem to draw nigh to him at any time

in some cold and customary duties, they do but draw nigh to him with

their lips, but their hearts are far from him : Isa. xxix. 13, ' This

people draw near to me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour

me, but have removed their heart far from me ; and their fear toward

me is taught by the precepts of men.' Or as it is in another prophet,

Jer. xii. 2, ' Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.'

They profess to honour God with a little outward and bodily service,

but have no love and affection at all to him.

2. They slight Christ who is the procurer of this salvation ; however

they could like him as their Saviour, they like him not as their guide

and governor. So he complaineth, Ps. Ixxxi. 11, ' My people would

not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me;' and Luke

xix. 14, ov Oekofxev tovtov (3aai\ev(rat e'<£' ?7/ia9, ' His citizens hated

him, and sent a messenger after him, saying, We will not have this

man to reign over us.' Men cannot endure his bonds and yokes : Ps.

ii. 3, ' Let us break his bands asunder, and cast away his cords from

us ; ' that they should deny themselves their own wisdom and will, and

wholly give up themselves to the conduct and will of Christ. It is his

spiritual kingdom that is most contrary to our carnal affections, for

if there were no king in Israel, then every man might do what is

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best in his own eyes. They would not be crossed in their licentious-

ness of life, and therefore when Christ bringeth his bonds and cords with

him, they set him at nought.

3. They despise the word, in which we have the offer of this salva-

tion, and counsel and direction given us how to obtain it. There God

calleth upon us to be saved : 1 Tim. ii. 4, ' He will have all men to be

saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth.' But most slight

his voice, and thereby put all hope far away from themselves. See

Acts xvi. 26, compared with the 48th verse ; in the 26th verse. ' To

you is the word of this salvation sent.' Mark first, he calleth the

gospel the word of salvation, because there we have the way and means

set forth how it was procured for us ; there we have counsel given us

what we must do on our parts that we may be interested in it ; there

also we have the promise and assurance on God's part, that, so doing,

we shall obtain it. Mark again, he saith this word of salvation was

sent to them ; he doth not say brought, but sent. The preaching of

the gospel is governed by God's special providence. When salvation

is offered according to his mind and in his name, we must look upon

it as a message from heaven, directed to us for our good ; not by the

charity or good-will of men, but by the grace of God. Now if you

despise this, what will be the issue ? See ver. 46, ' Since ye put away

the word of God from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlast-

ing life' (that is, by this obstinacy and perverseness), you become in-

capable of receiving benefit of it. That phrase, ' ye judge yourselves,'

is very notable. There is a judging ourselves unworthy that maketh

way for the applying of the gospel unto us, rather than taking it from

us, as the publican judged himself, and went home justified; but a

humble self-judging is not meant here, but an obstinate, contemptuous

refusal of eternal life. All unconverted men are unworthy of eternal

life, but they that refuse grace offered judge themselves unworthy of

eternal life ; put it out of all question, clear God, if he thus judge them

by their fact, declare their condemnation just.

4. They refuse the beginnings of this salvation and foregoing pledges,

which God vouchsafeth in this world by way of taste and earnest.

Grace is the beginning and pledge of glory ; to be turned from sin is

a great part of our salvation : Mark i. 21, ' He shall save his people

from their sins.' It is not only salvation when freed from misery, but

salvation when freed from sin ; not only from evil after sin, hell, and

punishment, but from the evil of sin ; from a proud, lazy, self-loving

heart : ' He hath saved us by the washing of water,' Titus iii. 5.

When the power of sin is broken, and the life of grace is begun in the

soul, then do we begin to be saved. The spirit of holiness is the

earnest of our inheritance, and an earnest is part of the sum : Eph. i.

13, 14, ' In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of

truth, the gospel of our salvation, in whom also after that ye believed,

ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise ; which is the earnest

of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to

the praise of his glory.' Therefore holiness is a part of eternal salva-

tion. Now without this we cannot have the other part ; they that

slight holiness shall never see God.

5. They despise the salvation itself, rightly understood, partly be-

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cause they only value it under a fleshly notion, as a state of happiness

and ease, not as a state of immaculate and sinless purity ; for so it is

wholly unsuitable to them. What should a carnal sensual heart do

with heaven ? or how should they desire it that hate the company of

God, the communion of saints, the image of God ? God maketh meet :

Col. i. 12, ' Giving thanks to the Father, who hath made us meet to

be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' There is jus

hccreditarium, et jus aptitudinale ; though they do not desire to be

saved for it, they would love holiness more. Partly because those

conceits that they have of the adjuncts of salvation, and that happi-

ness and personal contentment which results to them, they do not

practically esteem it as to value it above the delights of the flesh and

the vanities of the world, and they do not think it worthy the pursuit,

but for the interests of the bodily life, cast off all care of it : Heb. xii.

16, 'As Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright ;' Mark

xxii. 5, ' They made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm,

another to his merchandise.'

Use 1. It informeth us of two things : —

1. That wicked men are the authors of their own ruin. Salvation

doth not fly from them, but they fly from it ; they are far from the

law, and therefore is salvation far from them. They will not take the

course to be saved, for they care not for God and his statutes ; it is but

just, ut qui male vivit, male pereat, that they which despise salvation

should never see it.

2. That the wicked buy the pleasures of sin at a dear rate, since

they defraud their own souls of salvation thereby. Their loss you have

in the text, ' Salvation is far from them ;' and their gain is nothing but

a little temporal satisfaction ; and are these things worthy to be com-

pared ? What is it maketh you wicked, but the ease and sloth of the

flesh, and the love of some carnal delight ? And are you contented to

perish for this whoredom from God ?

Use 2. Let it exhort us to believe and improve this truth ; for if

men did surely believe it, there would not be so many wicked men as

there are, neither would they dare to lie in sin as long as they do.

Oh ! consider, if the wicked have no part nor portion in the salvation

offered, nor any jot of God's favour belonging to them, the wicked

should not flatter themselves with presumptuous hopes, but break off

their sins by repentance.

1. God's mercy will not help you ; though he be a God of salvation,

yet he will not save the impenitent and such as go on still in their

trespasses : Ps. lxviii. 19-21, ' Blessed be the Lord who daily loadeth

us with benefits, even the God of our salvation. Selah. He that is

our God is the God of salvation, and unto God the Lord belong the

issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies,

and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.'

You must not fancy a God all honey and sweetness, and that his mercy

should be exercised to the wrong of his justice ; the Lord will not

spare the abusers of grace whoever he spareth : Deut. xxix. 19, 20,

1 And it shall come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse,

that if he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall- have peace, though

I walk in the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst ;

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the Lord will not spare him, but then the auger of the Lord and his

jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are

written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his

name from under heaven.'

2. No doctrine preached in the church will bear you out ; not law,

for that discovereth both sin and the curse. Oonvinceth of sin : Eom.

iii. 20, ' By the law is the knowledge of sin,' what is sin, and who is

the sinner ; that bindeth you over to the curse : Gal. iii. 10, ' For as

many as are of the law are under the curse ; for it is written, Cursed

is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the

book of the law to do them.' The gospel, that showeth a remedy

against sin, but upon God's terms, that first with broken hearts we sue

out our pardon : 1 John i. 9, ' If we confess our sins, he is faithful and

just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'

Sin must be condemned, confessed, before pardoned. And then, that

in the way of holiness we should seek salvation and eternal life. The

way and end must not be separated : Horn. vi. 22, ' We must have our

fruit into holiness, if we would have our end to be eternal life.' The

pure and undefiled have only part in this salvation, but it is far from

the wicked. Christ disclaims the unholy and unsanctified : Mat.

vii. 23, ' Depart from me, ye that work iniquity.' You may as well

expect the way to the west should bring you eastward, as to walk in

the ways of sin and hope to come to heaven at last ; to think God will

save us, and suffer us to walk in our own ways ; or that this undefiled

inheritance shall be bestowed on dirty sinners. This had been pleas-

ing to flesh and blood, but it is the devil's covenant, not God's. That

article, you shall be saved, and yet live in your sins, is foisted in by

Satan, that false deceiver, to flatter men with vain conceits.

3. Do you hope of repentance hereafter, but in the meantime ye run

a desperate hazard to leave the soul at pawn in Satan's hands ? It is

not easy work to get it out again. Who would poison himself upon a

presumption that before it cometh to his heart he shall meet with an

antidote ? Judicial hardness is laid on them that withstand seasons

of grace : Isa. lv. 6, ' Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye

upon him while he is near;' Prov. i. 24-26, ' Because I have called

and ye refused, I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded,

but ye have set at nought all my counsels, and would none of my

reproofs ; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your

fear cometh;' Luke xiv. 24, 'None of those men that were bidden

shall taste of my supper.'

4. The heart is more hardened the longer you continue in this

course : Heb. iii. 13, ' But exhort one another daily, while it is called

to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.'

Inveterate diseases are seldom cured ; a tree that hath long stood, and

begun to wither, is unfit to be transplanted : Jer. xiii. 23, ' Can the

Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? then may ye also

do good that are accustomed to do evil.'

5. There is a stint and measure as to nations : Gen. xv. 16, ' The

iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.' Persons, vessels of mercy,

vessels of dishonour : Kom. ix. 22, 23, ' What if God, willing to show

his wrath, and to make his power known, endured with much long-

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suffering the vessels of wrath, fitted to destruction ; and that he might

make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he

had before prepared unto glory ? ' Meet for heaven, ripe for hell.

Saints like a shock of corn in season ; so when sinned enough, then

away to hell.

But this exhortation is like to be lost, because nobody will apply

it ; let us see, then, the character of wicked men.

Secondly, ' They seek not thy statutes.'

Doct. They are wicked men who seek not God's statutes.

Here I must inquire —

1. What it is to seek God's statutes.

2. Show why they are wicked that do not seek them.

First, What it is to seek God's statutes ? There —

1. The object or thing sought is God's statutes, those rules and

counsels which he hath given us to guide us in our service of himself,

and pursuit of true happiness. These are all enforced by his authority,

and enacted as laws and statutes, which we cannot transgress without

violation and contempt of his authority. Now, he saith ' statutes '

indefinitely, because they must all be regarded without exception, for

they all stand upon the same authority. It is said of Ezra, that good

scribe, Ezra x. 7, ' That he prepared his heart to seek the law of the

Lord, and to do it ; ' that is, to be thoroughly informed of, and to

practise whatsoever was enjoined in the law of God ; so must we

prepare our hearts to do all. And because our Christian law is

broader, and compriseth gospel too, which is the law of faith, we must

take care of all which God hath given us in charge, and all that is

adopted into our rule of faith and repentance, as well as moral duties ,

and because there are minutula legis, and (3apvrepa vo/jLov, therefore

our chief care must be about the weighty things ; and those of greater

moment must be sought most earnestly. Therefore it is said, Mat.

vi. 33, ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God and the righteousness

thereof ; ' these concern the change of our estate.

2. The act of seeking. The word implieth earnest and constant

endeavour : I seek for that which I mind and pursue with all my

heart, and use all means that I may obtain it, till I do obtain or find

it. Thus we are bidden to seek that which is good : Amos v. 14,

' Seek good, and not evil, that ye may live ; ' and Zeph. ii. 2, ' Seek

ye the Lord, all ye meek of the earth, which have wrought his

judgments : seek righteousness, seek meekness ; it may be ye shall

be hid in the clay of the Lord's anger.' So Christ : John v. 30, ' I

seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father, which hath sent

me.' And here the Psalmist speaketh of seeking God's statutes.

[1.] It implieth earnest endeavour (for a man's heart is upon what

he seeketh), that it be the business of our lives, not a thing done by the

by, but our epyov, our work to please God, and to this all other things

must give way. Many think it is a foolish thing for them to trouble

their heads with matters of religion, and to lay bands of strictness

upon themselves ; but it must not only have its turn and respect

among other affairs, but be indeed as the great affair of our lives.

There is no business of such weight and necessity, because the saving

of our souls lieth on it ; and therefore it must be followed in good

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earnest ; as a man, when he is seeking a thing, qnitteth all other cares,

and mindeth that only.

[2.] Constant endeavour, seeking till we find; as the woman for

her lost groat : Luke xv. 8, ' What woman having ten pieces of silver,

if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle and sweep the house,

and seek diligently till she find it ? ' So we must not content our-

selves with our first and cold essay, as many, if they find not success

upon some fair attempt, give over all care of religion, as if it were a

tedious thing, not to he endured. Now seeking implies a resolute

diligence, and persevering endeavours till. we find.

3. The end of seeking after God's statutes is to have them and

keep them ; as Christ saith, John xiv. 21, 'He that hath my com-

mandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me.' First hath,

then keepeth. To have the commandments is to know them, to

understand our duty and prove what is the revealed, holy, and

acceptable will of God concerning us, Rom. xii. 2, that it may have

the authority of a principle in our consciences. To keep them is to

endeavour actual obedience thereunto, and to regulate our practice

thereby : for both these ends do we seek, and in both these respects

do men show their wickedness.

[1.] We must make it our business to know the tenor and compass

of our duty, and we are said to seek after this, because it will cost us

pains ere we can obtain it. All knowledge will cost us industry,

especially divine and practical knowledge, as he that applieth his

heart to the understanding of his duty will soon find : Prov. ii. 4, ' If

thou wilt seek for it as for silver, and search for it as for hid treasures/

Now this the wicked cannot endure ; they indulge the laziness of the

flesh ; they know they that increase knowledge increase sorrow. If

they did know more of their duty, they should be troubled for not

observing it ; for knowledge will be urging duty upon the conscience,

it bringeth a great obligation along with it : and as an obligation, so

an irritation or provocation ; it will call upon them to do that which

they have no mind to do ; yea, and further, a self-condemnation and

accusation, or sting for not doing it, or breaking any of God's statutes :

therefore to prevent their own trouble, they are so far from seeking

light, that they would shut it out, and quench those convictions that

break in upon them ; therefore the language of wicked men is, Job

xxi. 14, ' Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways ; \*

the language of their hearts, and lives, if not of their tongues. They

do not only err in their minds, but err in their hearts ; they have no

will to know, would not trouble themselves about religion, or acquaint-

ing themselves with God, neglect the means of grace.

[2.] We must make it our business to observe them, or our serious

study to keep at a distance both in heart and practice from every

known sin, eschewing what the Lord forbiddeth, and endeavouring

every good duty which the Lord commandeth. This will cost us

pains indeed, and requireth much seeking to get such a frame of heart,

and whoever trieth it will find it long ere he can attain to it :

Eom. vii. 18, ' To will is present with me, but how to perform that

which is good I find not.' He sought for ; his words imply that ;

but he could not do as he would ; there was not a total omission, but

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a coming short of his aims. We must seriously give up ourselves

to the observation of God's will, and attend upon this work. This

wicked men do not seek, it is the least of their cares : Ps. lxxiii. 27,

' Lo, all they that are far from thee shall perish.' The whole stream

and course of their affections, lives, and actions do run from God

to the creature ; they care not whether they please God, yea or no :

Prov. xix. 16, ' He that keepeth the commandments, keepeth his own

soul ; but he that despiseth his ways, shall die.' He slights his way

that goeth on as his own heart leadeth him; as a traveller that

regardeth not to choose his way, but goeth through thick and thin, he

despiseth his way, so he that careth not whether his way be pure or

filthy. Well, then, the sum is, wicked men care not to know and

obey God's word.

Secondly, Reasons why they are wicked that do not seek God's

statutes.

1. Because omissions, where they are of duties absolutely necessary

and total and universal, do necessarily draw sins of commission along

with them, do argue a state of wickedness. But such is the case

here ; to live in a known sin, whether of omission or commission, is

damnable : James iv. 17, ' To him that knoweth to do good, and

doeth it not, to him it is sin ;' but especially when total, &c. The

wicked are thus described, them ' that forget God ; ' Ps. ix. 17, ' The

wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God ; '

Job viii. 13, ' So are the paths of all that forget God ; ' Ps. 1. 22,

' Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and

there be none to deliver.' This layeth a man open to all sin, and

maketh way for his destruction. So Zeph. i. 6, - They have not sought

the Lord, nor inquired after him ; ' that is enough to damn them,

if they do not break out into excess.

2. Because they are guilty of great wrong to God and to their own

souls.

[1.] To God ; it is a contempt of his authority when men will not

study to know and do his declared will ; that is, make it their business

to do so ; for it is a great slighting of him, looking upon his direction

as of little importance : Hosea viii. 12, ' I have written to him the

great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing,'

and therefore were strangers to it, as if there were no danger in

walking contrary to it.

[2.] To themselves ; God's statutes concern our salvation as well as

his own glory : Luke vii. 30, ' The pharisees and lawyers rejected the

counsel of God against themselves.' Thus a wicked man is felo de

se : Prov. viii. 35, 36, ' Whoso findeth me, findeth life, and shall

obtain favour of the Lord ; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth

his own soul ; all they that hate me, love death.'

Use 1. You see now who are far from salvation, they that do not

study the word of God to conform themselves thereunto.

Use 2. Let us be sure to be far from the disposition of the wicked ;

let us with all our hearts seek to comply with the precepts of God, and

be more diligent and earnest in bringing our hearts to a true scriptural

holiness, that we may not be in this danger.

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Motives: —

1. From the excellency of these statutes. To be employed in the

service of God is the greatest honour and the roost blessed life upon

earth. If it be irksome, it is a sign of a disease, and some great dis-

temper or inclination to some base dreggy delights of the flesh. If the

soul were rightly constituted, it would be our greatest pleasure, honour,

and content; other work spendeth our strength, this increaseth it:

' The way of the Lord is strength to the upright.'

2. From salvation ; it is great, sure, near. Great, both as to body

and soul ; sure, God's word passed is unalterable ; near, should we faint

in the sight of our country, and be sluggish and negligent, when

heaven is at hand ?

3. There is present content in the sight of our qualification and clear

distinction from the wicked.

SEEMON CLXXIV.

Great are thy tender mercies, Lord : quicken me according to

thy judgments. — Ver. 156.

In the former verse we presented you with the judgment of God

against the wicked ; we shall now present you with a more comfortable

argument, his mercies to his people. Whenever we think or speak of

the damnable condition of the wicked, we should remember the grace

of God, that hath made the difference between us and them. We

were by nature no better than they, only mercy interposed for our

rescue, and snatched us as brands out of the burning. So here David

flieth to God's mercy, as the original cause of all that he had or hoped

for from him : ' Great are thy tender mercies, Lord,' &c.

In the words there is —

1. An eulogy, or an ascription of praise to God, ' Great are thy

tender mercies, Lord.'

2. A prayer, ' Quicken me according to thy judgments.'

The one maketh way for the other; for because God's mercies are

so great, therefore he is encouraged to come unto him for help. In

the eulogy we have the thing praised, God's mercy. It is set forth by

a double adjunct, one taken from the quality, the other from the

quantity. From the quality, it is tender and bowel-mercy ; from the

quantity, it is great. Or the word may be rendered ' many ; ' the

mercies of God, as one saith, are many and mother-like. Having laid

this foundation for his hope, the man of God proceedeth to his prayer,

which is our second branch, where you have the request, ' Quicken

me;' the argument, 'According to thy judgments ;' that is, thy pro-

mises in the new covenant as we before explained the word. Those

promises are called judgments, because they are rules of proceeding in

the new court which God hath set up.

Many things might be observed from these words.

1. That the primary cause of all that we have and expect from God

is his mercy. The man of God beginneth here, when he expected dif-

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ferent usage from the wicked, or that God should deal with him in

another manner than with them.

2. That this mercy is so great and large, that it is every way suffi-

cient for our help.

3. The terms and rules according to which we are to expect this

mercy are set forth in the new covenant, where God hath bound him-

self to show mercy to his people, upon such conditions as are there

specified. So that this covenant doth inform us and assure us both of

God's mercy and God's quickening.

4. One special new- covenant blessing is the preservation of the life

of grace in our souls. There is a great necessity of it, because in the

spiritual life we are subject to fainting ; and the children of God have

a great value and esteem for it, for they are more sensible of soul-dis-

tempers than other men ; and when they see others stark dead in tres-

passes and sins, they are the more displeased with their own remaining

deadness, and therefore would have the distinction between them and

wicked men made more clear and sensible, by the activity and vigour

of grace, and their diligence and care of salvation (which the wicked

neglect) , awakened by new influences from God ; and therefore do

they so often pray for quickening. According^, God in the new cove-

nant, as the God of their life and salvation, hath undertaken to keep

them fresh and lively ; and therefore, whenever we are under deadness,

we should not be satisfied with it, or think it a light evil, but present

our condition to God, looking to the promise of the new covenant,

wherein God hath promised to put his Spirit into our hearts, to cause

us to walk in his ways.

But because all these points have been often discussed, I shall only

handle this one point.

Doct. That in the Lord Jehovah there are great and tender mercies.

1 . I shall open the mercy of God.

2. The adjuncts, the greatness and tenderness of them.

First, I shall open the mercy of God. That mercy is one of God's

attributes, the scripture is plain and clear : Ps. lxii. 12, ' Also unto

thee, Lord, belongeth mercy.' He had said before, ' Once hath God

spoken, and twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God.'

This is an evident and certain truth, that God is almighty, and hath

all power to avenge his enemies and reward his friends ; but because

this is not a sufficient foundation for our trust, there wanteth more to

invite the creature to depend upon God than his bare power and ability

to help us, there must be also an assurance of his readiness to do what

he is able ; and that we have in this other attribute, which is as proper,

and as much belonging to God as power, and that is mercy ; yea, it is

an attribute in the exercise of which God delights most of all : Micah

vii. 18, ' Because he delighteth in mercy.' God delighteth himself in

all his attributes, yea, in the manifestation of them to the world, but

chiefly in acts of mercy ; these come readily from him, and unextorted.

Though God willeth the punishment of a sinner, for the manifestation

of his justice, yet these acts of his vengeance are not so pleasing to

God as the acts of his mercy ; for he never doth them of his own

accord, but is provoked. Acts of mercy flow from him like life-honey,

but acts of vengeance are his strange work, Isa. xxviii. 21. Bees give

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honey naturally, sting when provoked. Therefore God is nowhere

called pater ultionum, whereas he is called pater miser ationum, 2 Cor.

i. 3, ' The father of mercies.' It is the original and fountain cause of

all our comfort ; get an interest in his mercy, and all his other attri-

butes shall be for our good. Mercy will set a-work his wisdom to

contrive, his power to accomplish, what is for our comfort and salva-

tion ; his justice and wrath to avenge your quarrel. All other attri-

butes are serviceable to mercy. Among the things that are ascribed

to God there is this order, that one is given as a reason of the other.

As in the business of our salvation. Why doth God discover himself

with so much wisdom and power ? Because of his mercy. Of his

mercy hath he saved us, Titus iii. 4, 5 ; of his mercy quickened us,

Eph. ii. 4, 5 ; of his mercy begotten us to a lively hope, 2 Peter i. 3.

But what moved him to show mercy to us ? You can go no higher,

unless you assign a cause like itself; God, who is rich in mercy, out

of his great love wherewith he hath loved us ; indeed, so he showed

mercy because he would.

1. The goodness of the divine nature, as it doth discover itself

to the creature, is called benignity or bounty, sometimes grace, and

sometimes mercy. The first issue or effect of the divine goodness is

his benignity or bounty, by which God, by giving something to the

creatures, showeth himself liberal or bountiful ; this is his goodness to

the creature as a creature. Thus he hath given being to all things, bare

life to some, sense to others, and to man and angels reason and grace.

The next term by which the goodness of God is expressed is grace,

by which he freely giveth to the creature all that good which they

have, beyond all possibility of requital. The third term is mercy,

which implieth the ready inclination that is in God to relieve our

misery notwithstanding sin. These three terms agree in this, that

they all express the goodness of God, or his communication of himself

to the creature. God knoweth himself, loveth himself, but he cannot

be said to be bountiful, or gracious, or merciful to himself; these

things respect us. And again, that none of these can be reciprocated,

or turned, back from the creature to God. We may love God, who

hath loved us first, 1 John iv. 19, but mercy or grace never results

from the creature to God. We know God, and love him, but cannot

be said, to be merciful to him. He giveth out mercy and grace, but

receiveth none. Thus they agree ; but they differ in that bounty or

goodness respects the creature as a creature, grace respects the crea-

ture as being able to make no recompense to God, or to merit anything

at his hands ; but mercy addeth these two things to the former, as

supposing us in misery. The object of it is persona miserabilis, or as

finding us under demerit or ill-deserving, and appoints a remedy for

us. God doth good to the angels, that never sinned, out of grace ; but

to man fallen, out of mercy ; so that his mercy is nothing else but his

proneness to help a man in misery notwithstanding sin.

2. We must distinguish between mercy as it is an attribute in God,

and the acts and effects of it as they are terminated upon the creature.

As it is an attribute in God : Ps. ciii. 8, ' The Lord is merciful and

gracious.' So it is infinite, as his nature is ; but in the effects as to

us there is a great difference. Mercy is one in the fountain, many in

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the streams, because there are divers effects, divers ways of showing

mercy. Mercy in the effect may cease, as when the angels turned

devils, and when God threateneth to take away his mercies from us ;

but God doth not cease to be merciful in himself : the effects of God's

mercy are more or less, but the attribute in God is not so. Mercy as

an attribute doth not oppose justice ; but the effects of God's mercy

may be, and are, contrary to the effects of his justice, as punishment

is contrary to blessing.

3. God's mercy is either general, or special, or peculiar. First,

God's general mercy hath for the object of it not only men, even

them that are strangers to the faith, but also all the creatures ; for it

is said, Ps. cxlv. 5, ' His tender mercies are over all his works.' God

helpeth the poor brute creatures in their needs, and doth supply them

with provision convenient for them. Then there is his special mercy

to man, helping and succouring him in his misery, notwithstanding

sin ; and so the giving of Christ to be the Saviour of the world :

Titus iii. 4, ' But after the loving-kindness of God our Saviour to

mankind appeared ; ' his man-kindness, this was pity to us above the

angels : no remedy was plotted for them. And then his peculiar

mercy is to his elect in Christ. So the Lord saith, Koirt. ix. 15, ' I

will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' This is again seen

either in the first grace, or bestowing that upon us, or in all the sub-

sequent grace that we stand in need of.

[1.] The first grace is pardoning all our past sin, or receiving us

into a state of favour upon our repentance. So it is made the motive,

Joel ii. 13, ' Turn unto the Lord, for he is merciful ; ' penitent sinners

will find him so to be. The apostle saith, 1 Tim. i. 13, ' But I

obtained mercy, rjketjOrjv ; I was overwhelmed in mercy.' So also in

giving us a heart to repent and turn unto him, 1 Peter i. 3. We

were unworthy and miserable sinners, could not help ourselves, and

then his eye pitied us and his hand saved us ; by his preventing grace

he brought us home to himself.

[2.] In all the subsequent grace that we stand in need of. So the

objects of his mercy must have a qualification ; such as fear God, Ps.

ciii. 13 ; such as love him, and keep his commandments, Exod. xx. 6;

that walk according to the rule of his word exactly, Gal. vi. 16. To

the merciful, Mat. v. 7 ; for to the unmerciful God will not show

himself merciful, James ii. 13 ; but to those that are thus qualified

he reneweth his pardoning mercy, in taking away the guilt of our

daily failings, Ps. xxv. 7. His sanctifying mercy, by freeing them

more and more from the dominion of sin, Kom. vi. 14. His preserv-

ing mercy, by delivering them from afflictions, so far as it is con-

venient : Ps. cxix. 41, ' Let thy mercies come unto me, Lord ; even

thy salvation according to thy word ; ' Lam. iii. 22, ' It is of the

Lord's mercy we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.'

His rewarding mercy : Jude 21, ' Looking for the mercy of God

unto eternal life.' So Ps. lxii. 12, ' Also unto thee, Lord, belongeth

mercy ; for thou renderest to every man according to his work.' He

will graciously accept, reward, and crown every sincere and faithful

servant of his when they have done their work. Sincerity and faith-

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fulness shall be accepted and rewarded, when infirmities and weak-

nesses shall be pardoned and covered.

Secondly, Let me now open the two adjuncts of his mercy.

1. It is tender mercy : Luke i. 78, ' Through the tender mercy of

our God.' The word signifieth bowels ; as when you see a poor

miserable creature, your bowels work within you, especially if you be

related to him. Misericordia complectitur affectum ei effectum. Let

us take the nearest relation. If you be a lather, we need not much

entreat a father to pity a poor helpless child ; his own bowels wdl per-

suade him to it : Ps. ciii. 13, ' Like as a father pitieth his children, so

the Lord pitieth them that fear him/ Or if you think passions in

females more vehement, take the relation of a mother ; as Hagar was

affected to Ishmael when the water was spent in the bottle ; she sat

over against the child, and lift up her voice and wept, Gen. xxi. 16.

God will take the affections of a mother ; as Isa. xlix. 15, ' Can a.

woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion

on the son of her womb? yea, she may forget, yet will I not forget thee. ;

It is passionately set out by the prophet. If all the compassions of

all fathers and mothers were joined together, it were nothing to God ;

he is the father of mercies, he is pitiful and merciful, James v. 11.

It is true there is in God no sickness, or trouble of mind, no commo-

tion ; but there is pity and tender love, though no perturbation, which

will not stand with the perfection of his nature ; that is, he layeth to

heart, and taketh notice of our misery. The tenderness of God inay

be known by the compassion which Christ had in the days of his flesh,

for he was the express image of his Father's person, Now we read,

Mat. ix. 36, ' When he saw the multitude, he was moved with com-

passion on them, because they fainted, and were as sheep scattered

abroad that had no shepherd.' Their teachers did not do their duty

to them in any profitable way ; this wrought upon Christ's heart, when

he saw the multitude. So when he saw many sick and under

noisome diseases, Mat. xiv. 14, when they followed him, he pitied

them, and helped them. So Mat. xv. 32 ; Jesus had compassion

on the multitude, when they continued with him three days, and had

nothing to eat. The care of man's welfare lieth near unto Christ's

heart. Before the disciples took notice of it, he taketh notice of the

people's necessities, and is affected with it ; he would not send them

away fasting. The two blind men, when they feelingly laid out their

miseries, Mat. xx. 34, ' Jesus had compassion on them, and touched

their eyes.' So Luke vii. 13 ; the widow of Nain lamented her only

son, the Lord saw her, and had compassion on her, and said unto her,

Weep not. This for a taste what a tender heart Christ had. And in

heaven he is still a merciful high priest ; he came down on purpose

to acquaint himself with our griefs and sorrows. Surely he is touched

with the feeling of our iufirmities, and God's pity, though it hath no

trouble with it, is real, operative, and efficacious.

2. His tender mercy is seen in his readiness to hear and help, and

come in to the cry of his people, if they be but anything humble and

profitable in their afflictions : Isa. lviii. 10, ' And if thou draw out

thy soul to the hungry, and satisfy the afflicted soul, then shall thy

light rise in obscurity, and thy darkness be as the noon day ; ' Luke

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xv. 20, ' And he arose and came to his father ; but when he was yet

a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran and

fell on his neck, and kissed him.' When the son was coming, the

father ran to meet him : Isa. lxv. 24, ' Before they call, I will

answer ; ' as if God could not tarry to hear the prayer made : Ps.

xxxii. 5, ' I said, I would confess my transgression unto the Lord,

and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin;' Jer. xxxi. 19, 20, 'Surely

after I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I

smote upon my thigh : I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because

I did bear the reproach of my youth. Is Ephraim my dear son ? is

he a pleasant child ? for since I spake against him, I do earnestly

remember him still ; therefore my bowels are troubled for him, I will

surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.' The first relentings of

the creature work upon the bowels of God's mercy ; when we do but

conceive a purpose, the Lord is easy to be entreated.

3. By the motives that do induce God to show mercy, the bare

sight of our misery, and therefore the saints do so often represent their

condition: Ps. lxix. 20, 'I am poor and sorrowful; let thy salvation,

Lord, set me on high.' You see he bringeth no other argument

but his grief and misery. Justice seeketh a fit object, mercy a fit

occasion: Dent, xxxii. 36, 'For the Lord shall judge his people, and

repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is

gone, and there is none shut up or left.'

Thirdly, The next adjunct is 'great.' The mercies of God are sel-

dom spoken of in scripture but there is some additional word to show

their plenty and excellency ; as Ps. cxxx. 7, ' For with the Lord there

is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption;' 1 Peter i. 3,

' Which according to his abundant mercy ;' and Eph. ii. 4, ' But God,

who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he hath loved us.'

So Eph. ii. 7, 'The exceeding riches of his grace,' virepfiaWovra

ttKovtov. Paul thinketh he can never word it enough: when he

speaketh of mercy, he saith it over over-abounded ; all to show the

multitude and greatness of God's mercies. So Ps. Ii. 1, we read of the

multitude of his tender mercy. It must needs be so if we consider —

1. How many there are to whom God hath done good, even as

many as there have been, are, and shall be creatures in the world.

None that ever had a being, but tasted of God's goodness. Nay, for

his special mercies, the same persons that are pardoned, all the elect

from the beginning of time, till the day of judgment. What hath

God been doing these thousands of years that the world hath con-

tinued, but multiplying pardons and passing acts of grace in favour of

his people ? Time would be no more, but only that there are some

more whom God meaneth to pardon : 2 Peter iii. 9, ' Not willing that

any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.' When

we come to heaven, how many monuments of grace shall we see there!

A man would think that the unthankful world had given discourage-

ment, and God should wait no longer; but yet there are some vacant

places to be filled : ' In my Father's house are many mansions,' John

xiv. 2. We waste by giving, give from ourselves what we give to

another ; but this fountain is never dry : Rom. v. 10, ' The free gift

is of many offences.'

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2. How many benefits he bestoweth on every one, many repeated

acts of grace of the same kind, divers kinds of benefits, bodily mercies,

sonl mercies : Ps. xl. 5, ' Many, Lord my God, are thy wonderful

works which thou hast done ; and thy thoughts, which are to usward,

they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee : if I would declare

and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' Private

mercies and public mercies, mercies in hand and mercies in hope :

Ps. xxxi. 19, ' Oh! how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up

for them that fear thee, which thou hast wrought for them that trust

in thee before the sons of men.' We have not one sin, but many

sins ; not one misery, but many miseries ; therefore we have many

mercies. The creatures are always in some necessity, and so are

always an object of mercy. How many supports this life continually

needeth ! all which the providence of God supplieth to us.

3. The greatness of these effects, the sending of his Son : 1 John

iv. 9, 10, ' In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because

that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might

live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that

he loved us, and sent his Son to be a propitiation for our sins.' The

gift of the Spirit himself to be everlastingly with us, John xiv. 16,

and by present troubles to prepare us for future glory, 2 Cor. iv. 17,

and Rom. viii. 18. Surely nothing but mercy, and great mercy, could

do all this for us.

Use 1. To exhort us to consider of this, and to meditate much upon

this attribute. To this end I shall lay down a few considerations : —

1. All that come to God should consider of his mercy ; it is the

great motive to repentance, and beginning our acquaintance with

God : Joel ii. 13, ' And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and

turn to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to

anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil/ Our

distrustful and unbelieving thoughts draw an ill picture of God in our

minds. We think him a hard and austere one, that is more ready

to condemn us than to receive us to mercy. Thus we look upon him

in the glass of our guilty fears. Oh no ! he is merciful, if we will

but stoop to him. Besides, it is a great check to our pursuit of carnal

vanities : Jonah ii. 8, ' They that seek after lying vanities forsake

their own mercies.' Thus to the secure and careless, when they con-

sider all this grace and tender mercy, it is the great means to over-

come them with kindness. A serious consideration of what God hath

done and is ready to do for us: Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you by the

mercies of God.' Saul wept when David had spared him, 1 Sam.

xxiv. 16. If we had not let all ingenuity : ' I am not worthy of all

the mercy and truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant,' Gen.

xxxii. 10. Then when we come to a reckoning and audit with God,

how great is the sum of them ! There are more effects of his mercies,

and of more diverse kinds : Ps. cxxxix. 17, ' How precious also are

thy thoughts unto me, God ! how great are the sum of them ! '

2. It is not enough to know that God is merciful, but we must also

consider how great and tender his mercy is ; for God's children are

wont to have great and large thoughts of it. We must think of it as

becometh the infiniteness of his nature whose mercy it is : Isa. Iv. 8,

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9, ' For my thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor my ways as your

ways, saith the Lord : for as the heavens are higher than the earth,

so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your

thoughts;' Hosea xi. 9, 'For I am God, and not man.'' We must

not straiten God to our scantling ; our drop is soon spent. Peter, a

good man : What ! forgive seven times a-day ? How tender it is !

It is so natural to God. Acts of punitive justice are exercised with

some reluctancy, but he rejoiceth over them to do them good; he is

strongly inclined to let out his goodness to unworthy and miserable

sinners who deserve the contrary from him. The sea doth not more

naturally flow, nor the sun more naturally shine, nor fire more natu-

rally burn, than God doth naturally show mercy. These thoughts

will answer all the doubts and fears of a penitent. Thou canst never

have too large thoughts of God.

3. We shall never have such great and large thoughts of God's

tender mercy as when they arise from our own experience and par-

ticular observation. To know God by hearsay will not work upon

you as when we have seen him ourselves ; as they said unto the

woman, John iv. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for

we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ,

the saviour of the world.' We do not think or speak of God with any

sense and life, affection and admiration, till we have studied his

nature and observed his ways ; otherwise we speak by rote when

we praise him for his mercies, and it is but an empty compliment :

Ps. ciii. 1-3, ' Bless the Lord, my soul, and all that is within me

bless his holy name : bless the Lord, my soul, and forget not all

his benefits : who forgiveth all thy iniquities, and healeth all thy

diseases,' &c.

4. Then will our own experience inform us of the greatness and

tenderness of mercy, when we are sensible of our sins and miseries.

When a man seeth his sins great, his dangers great, then he will see

God's mercies towards him great also : Ps. lxxxvi. 13, ' For great is

thy mercy towards me, for thou hast delivered my soul from the

lowest hell.' We do not know the greatness of the pardon but by the

"greatness of the debt, nor the greatness of our protection and deliver-

ance but by the greatness of the danger. God continueth trouble

upon his people, that they may be sensible of the sweetness of the

mercy, and his help in their deliverance : Rom. v. 8, ' But herein God

commendeth his love to us, that while we were yet sinners Christ died

for us.'

5. When our sense of sins and miseries hath most recommended

mercy to us, we should magnify it, both with respect to supplication

and gratulation.

[l.j With respect to supplication. When we are under fears and

discouragements, we should oppose and set these great and tender

mercies in the balance against our doubts and fears. Our sins are

many, our troubles great, yet let us not be discouraged from praying,

and making our supplication to God ; for God will pardon a penitent

people, and help a sensible supplicant. The more sensible of our

misery, the fitter objects for mercy. What is it that troubleth us ?

fear of not speeding with God in prayer ? You hear how soon he

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relenteth when you relent and lie at his feet ; for to what use cloth

pardoning mercy serve but to encourage broken-hearted sinners ?

' We have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful kings.' Ben-

hadad having lost the day, and in great fear of losing his life with

his kingdom, his friends comforted him with the fame they had heard

of Israel's kings, 1 Kings xx. 31. We know most certainly it is hard

to raise up truly poor, downcast sinners, how presumptuous soever

they have been before. God would have these by all means to be

encouraged; so that though you have many objections from your

unworthiness, the multitude and greatness of your sins. Or is it the

power of men, and difficulty of our deliverance? God's mercy is

beyond the proportion of their cruelty. The more violent and ungodly

our oppressors are, the more hope of God's pity towards us: Ps.

lxxxvi. 14, 15, '0 God, the proud are risen against me, and the

assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul, and have not set

thee before them : but thou, Lord, art a God full of compassion,

and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth.'

[2.] Let us magnify it as to gratulation : Gen. xxxii. 10, ' I am

not worthy of all the mercy,' &c. Less than the least of all thy mer-

cies. Let us consider our unworthiness ; that God may have all

the glory.

Use 2. To press us to be merciful : we should be like God, let us

put on bowels of mercy: Col. iii. 12, ' Put on therefore, as the elect of

God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of

mind, meekness, long-suffering ; ' Luke vi. 36, ' Be ye therefore merci-

ful, as your heavenly Father also is merciful.'

SERMON CLXXV.

Princes have persecuted me toithout a cause : but my heart standeth in

awe of thy ivord, — Ver. 161.

In this verse we have —

First, David's temptation.

Secondly, The godly frame of his spirit.

First, In David's temptation, take notice of —

1. The nature of it, it was a persecution.

2. The instruments of it, Saul, and the chief men about him, princes.

3. The malice and groundlessness of it, tvitliout a cause.

Secondly, The godly frame of his heart, but my heart, &c. And

there we have —

1. The seat of his affection, my heart.

2. The kind of the affection, standeth in awe.

3. The object of it, the ivord of God.

First, With David's temptation I will not meddle any further

than an introduction, or the necessity of an exposition enforceth me a

little to reflect upon. And —

1. From the nature of it. Persecution is one of the ordinary trials

of God's children. As God chasteneth them because they are no better.

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Isa. xxvii. 9, so the world persecuteth them because they are so good,

John xv. 19. This ever hath been and ever will be the lot of God's

children while there are two seeds in the world : Gen. iii. 15, ' And I

will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed

and her seed.' And the apostle saith, Gal. iv. 29, ' But as then he

that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the

spirit, so it is now.' The first place speaketh of the antipathy between

the church and its open opposites ; the second was in Abraham's

family, and it is brought to comfort the true members of the Christian

church against those persecutions which they sustained from the false

apostles and such as adhered to the Jewish synagogue. Isaac was

begotten by the power of God's Spirit, according to the tenor of the

promise ; Ishmael by the ordinary strength of nature, a figure of the

regenerate and unregenerate, John i. 13. Persecution is a thing

common to the church in all ages, then and now ; therefore, as they

grow worse, let us grow better ; and let us be content to take the

ordinary way, by the cross, to come to the crown.

2. The instruments of his trouble were Saul and his chief men

about him. The man of God had said, ' Many are my persecutors,'

ver. 157 ; now he showeth they were not mean ones, and of the in-

ferior sort, but such as by their power were able to crush him, such as

by their place should be a refuge to him. I observe, the trial is the

sorer when our trouble cometh not only from the basest of the people,

but from the rulers themselves. No doubt a great part of the people

followed Saul in his persecuting of David, yet the nobles most troubled

him. In the primitive times, lapidibus nos invadit inimicum vtdgus

— the base riff-raff were most ready to stone the Christians ; but this

was mere brutish rage : a multitude, though they have power, yet they

have no authority. But when the rulers were set against them, and

persecuted them with edicts and punishments, then the greatest havoc

was made of them. To see God's ordinance abused maketh the trial

the more grievous. The godly should be defended by their governors,

for therefore they are called the shields of the earth, Ps. xlix. 9. But

now when they persecute them for righteousness' sake, it is a sore but

no strange temptation. They may do so partly out of ignorance : 1

Cor. ii. 8, ' Which none of the princes of this world knew, for had they

known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory ; ' and partly

out of prejudice and blind zeal ; so the corner-stone is refused by the

builders, Ps. cxviii. 22, applied to Christ's persecutors: Acts iv. 11,

' The stone that was set at nought by you builders is become the head

of the corner ;' and partly by the instigation of evil men. Wicked men

labour to engage those who are in power against the people of God,

and make them odious to them : Prov. xxix. 10, ' The bloodthirsty

hate the upright.' Flattery giveth the first onset to the work of im-

piety, Acts xxiv. 1-3. And partly because riches and power efferate

men, swell them with pride, fill them with enmity against the ways of

God : Ps. cxxiii. 4, ' Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning

of those that are at ease, and the contempt of the proud/ Well, then,

let us not be dismayed though great men be prejudiced against us,

and we have powerful enemies in church and state : Mat. x. 17, 18,

' But beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the councils, and

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they will scourge you in their synagogues ; and ye shall be brought be-

fore governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and

the Gentiles.' Though we be persecuted with censures, civil and eccle-

siastical, and both judicatures thunder against us : John xvi. 1, 2,

' These things have I told you, that you should not be offended ; they

shall put you out of the synagogue ; yea, the time cometh when they

that kill you will think they do God good service.' It is a stumbling-

block to see power, which is of God, bent against God and his interest ;

the beast in the Kevelations pushed with the horns of the lamb. But

Christ hath told us of these things beforehand, that we should be fore-

armed against them. Christ's followers must not only look for injuries

from wicked men in a tumultuous way, but ordinarily carried by fixed

judicatures ; thrown out of the church by excommunication, and out of

the world by death. Let us bless God that our rulers deal more

Christianly by us ; and let us not irritate them, but show all love and

meekness and obedience ; and let the mild government of our gracious

sovereign move us to pray to God for the continuance of his life, and

the prosperity of his affairs : it is but a necessary gratitude that we

should pay him for the rest and peace we enjoy under him.

3. The malice and groundlessness of this persecution, ' without

cause.' David did not suffer for his deserts as an evil-doer ; he had

done nothing disobediently against Saul's authority ; when he had

spared him in the cave, he giveth him an ample testimony : 1 Sam.

xxiv. 17, ' Thou art more righteous than I, for thou hast rewarded me

good, but I have rewarded thee evil.' Again, he had another testimony

when he surprised his camp sleeping : 1 Sam. xxvi. 21, ' Return, my

son David ; I will no more do thee harm, because my soul was pre-

cious in thine eyes : behold I have played the fool, and have erred

exceedingly.' Theodoret expoundeth this of the next verse, with

application to these passages. When David found Saul asleep he would

not kill him, and this was more comfort to him than if he had slain

and obtained all their spoils. Observe, we may the better represent

our case to God when we suffer without a cause ; then our sufferings are

clean sufferings, more comfortable to us, and honourable to God. It

was Daniel's glory that they could find no occasion or fault against

him, but only in the matter of his God, Dan. vi. 4, 5. Blameless car-

riage disappoints the malice of wicked men, or shameth them. Cajus

Sejus vir bonus nisi quod Ghristianus. Now a pretended crime doth

not take away the glory from us. Saul pretended that David was an

enemy to his life and crown, but David declared the contrary by word

and deed ; he might have slain him twice. ' Put to silence the ignorance

of foolish men,' 1 Peter ii. 15. There may be in man's court a cause

which before God is no just cause, as when we are punished for the

breach of law which is contrary to our duty to God : Ps. xciv. 20,

' Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which f rameth

mischief by a law ? '

Well, then, whatever we suffer, let it be without a cause. There is

cause enough on God's part to afflict and strike us for our sins ; but

on man's part, let us not procure sufferings to ourselves by our provo-

cations. We shall hereby have more peace in sufferings, and bring

more honour to religion : 1 Peter iii. 17, ' For it is better, if the will

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of God be so, that ye suffer for well-doing, than for evil-doing ; ' 1

Peter iv. 15, 16, ' But let none of you surfer as a murderer, or as a

thief, or as an evil-doer. Yet if any suffer as a Christian, let him not

be ashamed ; but let him glorify God in that behalf.' Surely Christ's

cross is more comfortable than the cross of Barabbas.

Secondly, Let us come to his gracious frame of heart, to stand in

awe of the word, but my heart standeth in awe of thy ivord.

JDoct. It is a gracious frame of heart to stand in awe of the word

of God.

God's people are often described by it : Prov. xiii. 13, ' Whoso de-

spiseth the word shall be destroyed ; but whoso fcareth a command-

ment shall be rewarded.' There are many fear a judgment, when, to

visible appearance, it is like to tread upon the heels of sin ; yea, and

some fear a threatening, at least when it is like to be accomplished ;

but who fears a commandment but a gracious heart ? This is reason

enough to draw back if a commandment stand in the way ; it is more

than if there was a lion in the way, or a band of armed enemies, or an

angel with a drawn sword, such as stood in the way to stop Balaam.

They have a deep reverence of God's authority, and dare not break

through, when God by his law hath fenced up their way. So Isa. lxvi.

2, ' To him will I look that is of a poor and contrite spirit, and trern-

bleth at my word ; ' a man that is affected according to his doom and

sentence passed in the word ; if the word speaketh bitter things, or the

word speaketh peace, accordingly the man is affected ; this is the man

that God will look at : Ezra ix. 4, ' Then were assembled unto me

every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel.' None so

careful to redress disorders, to use all the means they can to prevent

judgment, as those that tremble at God's word ; and therefore they

above others did assemble to Ezra. A man hath gained a great point

when he doth not value his condition by external probabilities, but by

the sentence of the word. It is hopeful if the word speaketh good unto

it, sad when the word speaketh bitter things. This man will be other-

wise affected than the most are, and more careful to please God. Once

more : Ezra x. 3, ' Those that tremble at the commandment of our

God.' Shechaniah referreth the reformation to them. These are per-

sons exactly conscientious ; they make God's commandments their rule,

and tremble at the apprehension of having anything done against God's

will. None so fit as they to judge of cases of conscience and to regu-

late affairs ; men that enlarge themselves, and do not stand so nicely

on the will of God, will be more lax and complying with their own

lusts and the humours of men.

1. I will show you what it is to stand in awe of the word.

2. Then give you the reasons why they that are godly will do so.

First, What it is to stand in awe of the word. We will determine

it by opening the circumstances of the text. And —

1. Let us take notice of the seat of this affection, the heart, ' My

heart standeth in awe of thy word.' A true reverence of the word of

God must be planted in the heart, or else all outward profession of

respect is but hypocrisy : Ps. 1. 16, 17, ' Unto the wicked God saith,

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest

take my covenant into thy mouth ? seeing thou hatest instruction, and

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castest my words behind thy back.' Many may solemnly pretend to

piety, and talk of it, and perhaps preach of it, to others, but do not

exactly reform their carnal practices ; they do but abuse themselves

and deceive others. So strangely are many bewitched with their own

deceitfulness of heart and power of Satan, that they can without re-

morse of conscience profess the true religion, pretend to a covenant

with God, yet affront that religion by being loose and scandalous, and

can break the covenant without any scruple ; such are contemners of

God's word, however they seem reverencers of it. That psalm speaketh

of the collection of the gospel church : ' Gather my saints together, who

have made a covenant with me by sacrifice ; ' not that of bulls and

goats, but by Christ Jesus. But many profane this covenant, and are

carried away by every temptation, some as greedy thieves and extor-

tioners, some as filthy adulterers, some as haters of godliness, some as

injurious slanderers and whisperers and backbiters. In the Christian

world, this prediction is too plainly verified ; the carnal Christian and

the serious Christian profess respect to the same Bible, to believe the

same creed, to enter by the same baptism, to claim privilege by the

same covenant, yet hate one another, and are as contrary one to an-

other as perfectly as infidels and pagans. On the one side, there is

mouth-respect to the word, on the other, heart-respect ; the one in

outward covenant with God, the other brought into the inner court.

God beareth long with the former sort, but will not bear always : so

Jer. xii. 2, ' Thou art near in their mouth, but far from their reins.'

They profess thee in word, but deny thee in heart and in deed ; draw

near thee in show and pretence as a people in league with thee, but

their hearts, love, and affection are wholly estranged from thee ; and

would take it ill to have their religion disproved or questioned, yet are

not brought under the power of it. So Isa. xxix. 13, ' This people

draw near unto me with their mouth, and with their lips honour me,

but have removed their heart from me, and their fear towards me is

taught by the precepts of men;' because of tradition, teaching by

authority, maintaining or enjoining the worship of God. A worship/

and respect to God they will have, but such as doth not proceed from

an impression upon their hearts, but only in compliance with their

customs.

2. The kind of the affection, ' standeth in awe.' There is a twofold

awe of the word — (1.) One that drive th us from it ; (2.) Another that

draweth us to it.

[1.] Fear and awe of the word which driveth us from it is spoken

of John iii. 20, 21, 'For every one that doeth evil hateth the light,

neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he

that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made

manifest that they are wrought in God:' Carnal men, who live con-

trary to the light of nature and scripture, that they cannot endure any-

thing which should put them into serious remembrance of God, This

is an effect of legalism and slavish fear, which as it bewrayeth itself in

its carriage towards God himself, so also in its carriage towards his

saints and word. Towards God himself: a slavish fear of God is

always accompanied with an aversation or turning away from him ; as

guilty Adam was afraid of God, and hid himself in the bushes, Gen. iii.

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10 ; and still an unsound conscience is shy of God, and hangeth off

from him. So towards the saints, who have God's image printed upon

them ; they fear the saints and hate them ; as Herod feared John, and

put him to death, Mark vi. 20. Still men malign what they will not

imitate. Natural conscience in them doth homage to the image of

God, shining forth in the lives of his people ; they see an excellency

in them which they have not ; and because all those who keep up the

majesty of their profession are objects reviving guilt, they hate them ;

and if their hatred be more than their fear, they destroy them when it

is in their power. So for the word ; they are afraid of the word, so as

to stand at a distance from it, and cannot endure it, no more than sore

eyes can the light of the sun. They have a mind to cherish their lusts

and carnal practices, and therefore hate the light which disproveth

them ; as they that would sleep draw the curtain to keep out the

light ; whereas, on the contrary, the godly delight to have their ways

tried and made manifest by this light ; it is a refreshing light to them,

but a reproving and discovering light to others ; it convinceth them to

be what they are. Now they shun all means of searching and know-

ing themselves, by wishing such things were not sin, or not desiring to

know them so, and that there were not a God to punish them. But a

sincere man is otherwise affected; he is jealous and suspicious of him-

self, he bringeth his work to God's balance, and cannot quiet his con-

science without God's acceptance.

[2.] There is an awe of the word, not that maketh us shy of it, but

tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not

the fruit of slavish fear, but holy love ; it is not afraid of the word, but

delighteth in it, as it discovereth the mind of God to us, as in the next

verse. This is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear ; when

we consider whose word it is, God's ; who is our God, and hath right

to command what he pleaseth ; to whose will and word we have

already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of

him in all well-pleasing ; who can find us out in all our failings, as

knowing our very thoughts afar off, Ps. cxxxix. 2 ; and having all our

ways before him, and being one who will not forgive our wilful trans-

gressions : Josh. xxiv. 19, ' He is a holy and jealous God ; he will

not forgive your transgressions and your sins,' that would impenitently

continue in them ; and so we receive the word with that trembling of

heart which God so much respects.

3. The object, ' thy word ; ' that is, the whole word of God — the

precept with its double sanction, the threatening and the promise ; the

precept is the rule of our duty ; the sanction, of God's proceeding. We

are to stand in awe not only of the threatening, but the precept itself ;

for love to God hath a great influence in producing this awe of the

word. It is in angels and heavenly creatures, whose happiness is

absolutely secured to them, Jude 4. The great ground of it is God's

authority ; and that is seen in the precept as much as in the sanction.

God's will is the reason of our duty, and his will declared in his word

is the rule of it ; and the saints obey intuitu voluntatis — a bare sight

of his, though no inconvenience should follow of it : 1 Thes. iv. 3, ' For

this is the will of God ;' 1 Thes. v. 18, ' For this is the will of God

concerning you in Jesus Christ ; ' 1 Peter ii. 15, ' For so is the will of

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God,' &c. But yet I would not exclude the sanction ; no, not the sad

part of it; neither the threatening, nor the promise ; because I dare

not contradict any of the Holy Ghost's methods ; nor exclude his

argument from having an influence upon our obedience, as he telleth

us of Moses, who had an eye to the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 2G.

So of Job, who was tender of doing anything contrary to the will of God,

because destruction from God was a terror to him, Job. xxxi. 23. To

be afraid of God's judgments in a holy manner is not sin, but a grace,

a great point of our duty ; yea, a matter of faith to apprehend that

destruction which God in his word threateneth to sinners. Unbelief

of the threatening had a great predominancy in the first sin : ' Ye

shall not surely die,' Gen. iii. 4 ; and still it is a main ingredient.

Men embolden themselves to rebellion because they look upon God's

wrath as a vain scarecrow, and that he doth only frighten us with a

deceitful terror and a flash of false fire. But yet reflection upon the

threatening must not be alone, that breedeth legalism ; nor yet upon

the promises alone ; but a deep awe and reverence of God's authority

must be the main thing that swayeth the conscience. A Christian

should have no more to move or stop him, than to know what God

will have him do or not do. That terror that doth arise from a mere

slavish fear of God as a judge and avenger is not right ; but such an

awe as doth at once arise from looking upon God at once as a wise

lawgiver, a gracious father, and righteous judge. A son, a child, if

lie take liberty to break the bonds of duty, shall smart for it : though

a believer obeyeth and keepeth off from sin upon higher and nobler

terms than wrath, yet he maketh a good improvement of these terrors

also ; for godly fear is influenced by God's being a consuming fire :

Heb. xii. 29, 30, ' Let us have grace, whereby we may serve God

acceptably, with reverence and godly fear ; for our God is a consuming

fire.'

Secondly, We come to the reasons why we should stand in awe of

the word of God.

1. From the author of it ; it is God's word, not the word of a weak

man, but of the great and mighty God. His authority is supreme,

his power infinite, his knowledge exact, his truth unquestionable, his

holiness immaculate, his justice impartial. The same reasons which

move us to fear God do move us also to reverence his word ; and add

this above all the rest, that therein his truth is impawned to us, and

by it he obligeth himself to make good both his threatenings and his

promises. Three things I shall take notice of, which showeth God's

stamp and impress upon the word : —

[1.] Its authority in searching the heart: Heb. iv. 12, 13, '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, joints

and marrow ; and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the

heart ; ; that is, as a sharp sword doth pierce asunder between joints

and marrow, so doth the word divide soul and spirit ; and is a dis-

cerner, that is, of the convictions of the mind, and the disposition and

inclination of the soul, or sensual appetite. The soul cleaveth to the

sin when the mind or spirit disliketh it ; or plotteth pretences to hide

it from himself or others, even in those sins which lie as hidden in the

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mind as the marrow in the bones. Secret purposes fall under its j udg-

ing power as well as practices accomplished. And what use must

we make of this, but that we stand in awe of the word, avoiding what

it forbiddeth, and following what it commandeth. Now, to evidence

this property of the word, he urgeth the omniscence of God, whose

word it is : ver. 13, ' Neither is there any creature that is not mani-

fest in his sight ; for all things are naked and open to him with whom

we have to do.' As the sinner's secret thoughts are under the sight of

the all-seeing God, so they are under the piercing power of his word ;

for God joineth with his word, and giveth it that discovering and

piercing virtue. So the apostle of the word preached or explained it :

1 Cor. xiv. 24, 25, ' He is convinced of all, and judged of all ; and

thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest ; and so falling down

on his face, he will worship God, and report that God is in you of a

truth.' The word is the rule, God is the judge ; and the word being

assisted by God, God is there where the word is ; and so doth ransack

the conscience, and discover men to themselves in order to judgment.

[2.] It hath a mighty power and force, because of the spirit that

goeth along with it : Eom. i. 16, ' It is the power of God to salvation ; '

1 Cor. i. 22, ' The gospel is the power of God, and the wisdom of God.'

It is powerful to convince, even there where it converts not ; as Felix

trembled, Acts xxiv. It is powerful to convert from one religion to

another, from one state to another. (1.) From one religion to another :

'Have any of the nations changed their gods?' Jer. ii. 11. There

needs much ado to bring men from a false religion wherein they have

been brought up, how vain and foolish soever it be ; yet this power the

word hath. Though the doctrine of a crucified Christ were so distaste-

ful, partly as now drawing men from their old temples, and altars, and

ceremonies, wherein they were educated, especially as incredible, offer-

ing life by one that died ; and partly as contrary to the carnal gust, as

requiring duties distasteful to flesh and blood, and engaging in troubles

and persecutions, yet it prevailed. (2.) Converting men from a state of

nature to a state of grace, so that they are as it were born. To bring

men to hate what they naturally love, and love what they naturally

hate ; it is hard to alter the nature of things, Isa. xi. 6 ; to quicken the

dead, to purify the unclean, confirm the weak, to meeken the proud

and passionate : Oh ! who would not reverence such a word, such a

law and doctrine, as can do all this ? Yet this and much more hath

the word done.

[3.] Its authority : Eccles. viii. 3, 4, ' Where the word of a king is,

there is power/ or authority to back it. How is it where God is ?

We reckon not of the words of a private person, though never so

wise: Eccles. ix. 16, 'The poor man's wisdom is despised, and his

words are not heard.' Where the command of a king cometh, it

cometh with authority ; for he hath power to back it, and to avenge

himself on whosoever shall contradict it ; but wise counsel, where there

is no authority to enforce it, is little regarded. But now with God is

sovereign majesty, and in his word, wherein sentence is pronounced

concerning every person and action, according to which judgment doth

proceed and will be executed.

2. The second reason is taken from the matter of the word : it is

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direction about our everlasting - concernments : Deut. xxxii. 46, 47,

' Set your hearts unto all the things which I command you this day ;

for it is not a vain thing, it is your life/ In a matter of life and

death a man cannot be too exact and nice ; yea, in the obedience or

disobedience of the word, life or death eternal is concerned ; yea, in

every action morally considered, the word telleth you what is the merit

of it, and what will be the event, or an evil or a good estate. Man

would fain know his destiny, whether happy or miserable ; here you

may know whether you shall live for ever with God. Man in his laws

doth not threaten or promise beyond his power ; his power reacheth io

men's outward estate, and no further, and is only limited to the bounds

of the present life ; therefore the sanction of their laws are never ex-

tended beyond the promises or threats of present and outward good, to

give or take away men's liberty, wealth, estate, life at most. But God

threatenetk everlasting fire, Mat. xxv. 41 ; promiseth an inheritance

immortal, 1 Peter i. 4. As God commandeth inward holiness, right-

eousness, love, so eternal rewards, and eternal penalties, things that

concern us more nearly than estates, liberties, peace, yea, our lives

themselves.

3. The third reason, because of the profit of standing in awe of the

word.

[1.] It fortifieth us, and preserveth us in such temptations as arise

from the fear of man. Where there is a reverence and awefulness of

God's word, the greater awe overcometh the less. In such a temptation

a man may miscarry two ways — by distrust of God, and disobedience

to him. The one is the cause of the other. Now that we may not dis-

trust him, it is good to set fear against fear, God against the creature :

Jer. i. 8, ' Be not afraid of their face, for I am with thee to deliver

thee, saith the Lord His powerful protection should encourage us

against their wrathful disposition : Isa. li. 12, 13, ' Who art thou, that

thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and the son of man,

that shall be as grass, and forgettest the Lord thy maker ? ' The

immortal and almighty God is able to bear us out. A due sense of

the power of the Almighty checketh the fear of men. Or by disobed-

ience we dishonour him : certainly a gracious heart feareth more to

offend God than to fall into any temporal inconvenience : Isa. viii. 12,

13, ' Neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid ; but sanctify the Lord of

hosts himself, and let him be your fear and dread ;' 1 Peter iii. 14, 15,

'But if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye, and be not

afraid of their terror ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts.' But

let him be your fear and your dread. Be afraid to offend so holy a

majesty. The countenance of princes is very awful unto men, but the

fear of God's wrath should overcome the fear of man's displeasure, even

of the greatest : Heb. xi. 27, ' He feared not the wrath of the king,

because he saw him that was invisible.'

[2.] It maketh a man sincere. When a man standeth in awe of

the word, he obeyeth in presence and absence, Phil. ii. 12, and avoideth

secret as well as open sins, Gen. xxxix. 9, sins of thought as well as in

deed — heart-sins, which the laws of men cannot take hold of; but the

fear of God is instead of all laws, 2 Cor. i. 12. Conscience is to them

more than shame of men. Something without keepeth back wicked

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men ; but something within, the godly. Abner's question was not good,

' How shall I hold up my face to thy brother Joab ? ' 2 Sam. ii. 22.

He should have said, How shall I hold up my face to the Lord thy

God ? Though an upright man might do wickedly, uncontrolled of

man, and nobody seeth him or punisheth him, yet reverence of God

and his word restraineth him.

[3.] It maketh a man punctual and exact when afraid to do anything

contrary to God's revealed will. It is universal, and it is powerful. It

is universal; the soul that maketh conscience of the word is more

thorough in obedience : there will be failings, but, for the main, his

heart is sound with God ; and lesser failings are retracted by repent-

ance, Ps. cxli. 1, 2. And powerful : ' Stand in awe, and sin not,' Ps. iv.

4 ; this will cause us to stop in an evil course, on the remembrance of

our duty ; as David's heart smote him when he cut off the lap of Saul's

garment. Some think the text then verified, ' My heart standeth in

awe of thy word. ; ' a commandment was in his way.

Use 1. To show us what frame of spirit they are under who despise

the word.

1. All do so who deliberately and voluntarily prefer their own will

before the will of God : 2 Sam. xii. 9, ' Wherefore hast thou sinned in

despising the commandment ? ' They obey their own inclination,

whatever the word saith to the contrary. Despising the command-

ment is the root of all sin, as formality of wilful sin. Oh ! that men

did regard this as they ought ! considering that to despise command-

ments is to despise the Lord himself, and what it is for poor worms to

despise the God of heaven and earth. Nay, that God that is our

judge, he hath power to cast both body and soul into hell-fire— the

God whom we are bound by so many ties to obey.

2. When swayed by delight and profit against the course of our

duty. Esau sold his birthright to keep him alive, yet despised it,

Gen. xxix. 31, and Heb. xii. 16.

3. The case is more aggravated when we cast a precept behind our

backs for a light pleasure or small profit ; the greater is our contempt to

break with God for a little trifle ; sell the righteous for a pair of shoes.

Use 2. To press us to get this blessed frame of heart, to stand in

awe of the word.

1. It is a great curb in actual temptations: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How

then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God ? '

2. It is a great help in reading and hearing : Acts x. 33, ' Now

therefore we are all present before God, to hear all things that are

commanded thee of God/

3. A great help in humiliation and suing out our pardon : Ps. cxxx.

3, 4, ' If thou shouldest mark iniquity, who could stand ? but there is

forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

For means to get this aweful frame of heart.

1. Faith is necessary. Sundry articles of religion have influence

upon it. God's power : Mat. x. 28, ' Fear not them that can kill the

body, but fear him that can cast both body and soul into hell-fire.'

God's providence, that he observeth human affairs, and accordingly

doth reward and punish : Hosea vii. 2, ' And they consider not in their

hearts that I remember all their wickedness, now their doings have

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beset them about, before my face ; ' and Heb. ii. 2, ' And every trans-

gression and every disobedience received a just recompense of reward.'

A day of judgment: Eom. ii. 5, ' But after thy hardness and impeni-

tent heart, treasurest up wrath against the day of wrath, and the reve-

lation of the righteous judgment of God;' eternal recompenses of

heaven and hell, or the state of the world to come. Those who believe

not these things are bold and venturous, and out of a daring confidence

will put it to the trial whose word shall stand, God's or theirs : Jer.

xliv. 28, ' And all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land

of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose word shall stand, mine or

theirs ; ' which shall be fulfilled or made good : Heb. xi. 8, ' By faith

Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, being moved

with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house.'

2. Love is necessary, for reverence ariseth from love. David was

afraid to displease so good a God, to whom bound by so many ties.

Surely love breedeth a greater tenderness than a bare sense of danger :

Hosea iii. 5, ' Fear the Lord and his goodness.' That which maketh a

wicked man presumptuous maketh a child of God aweful ; he hath to do

with a good God, and therefore would not offend him, nor cross his

will.

3. A humble penitent spirit is necessary for this frame of heart.

Josiah, when he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes: 2

Kings xxii. 19. ' Because thy heart was tender, and thou humbledst

thyself before the Lord, when thou heardest what I spake against this

place, I have heard thee, saith the Lord ; ' and 2 Chron. xxxiv. 27,

' Because thy heart was tender,' &c. ; troubled at God's anger. To some,

nothing is of less consideration with them.

4. A good stock of knowledge, or frame of divine truths : Ps. cxix.

11, ' Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against

thee ; ' Prov. vi. 21, 22, ' Bind them continually upon thy heart, and

tie them about thy neck ; when thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when

thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou wakest, it shall talk

with thee.' A treasure of knowledge not only got by heart, but im-

pressed on us by his Spirit. The great new-covenant blessing, Heb. viii.

10, is God's law written upon the heart by the finger of the Spirit, as

before on tables of stone, on the directive and imperative powers, the

heart and mind ; and this maketh us conformable to it in heart and

life. God's law is said to be in the heart of the godly, that maketh

them willing to obey : Ps. xl. 8, ' His law is in my heart ; ' tender to

offend : Ps. xxxvii. 31, ' The law of God is in his heart, none of his

steps shall slide.' He loveth what is commanded, and hateth what

is forbidden ; he hath a sense of it, to keep from usual guilt.

5. Advised consideration and watchfulness : ' Let thine eyes look

right on, and thine eyelids straight before thee ; ponder the path of

thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.' When you are about to

do anything, examine and consider it, whether God alloweth it, yea or

no. Will it please or displease, honour or dishonour God ? If he

disallow, forbear, how safe, profitable, or comfortable soever it be ; if

he allow it, then engage : this holy fear must never be laid aside :

Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling;' 1

Peter i. 17, 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.'

VER. 162.] BERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 177

SERMON CLXXVI.

I rejoice at thy word, as one that jhideth great spoil. — Ver. 162.

In the text —

1. An assertion or declaration of his delight in the word, ' I rejoice

at thy word.'

2. An illustration of it by a similitude, taken from those who have

gotten some notable prey and booty, 'As one that findeth great spoil.'

First, The similitude is very expressive, taken from the joy which

a conqueror in battle doth find in the spoil of his defeated enemies.

The same similitude is used Isa. ix. 3, ' They joy before thee according

to the joy in harvest, as men rejoice when they divide the spoil.'

He speaketh there of the highest joy; in a time of peace, joy of the

harvest is the greatest joy ; in a time of war, victory obtained after

a hazardous fight, and rich spoil and booty gotten. To heighten that

joy, several circumstances concur : —

1. Deliverance after a doubtful conflict. No man goeth to war

but carrieth his life in his hands, and the event is very uncertain.

Now when it is unexpectedly determined on our side, there is great

rejoicing.

2. The joy of victory, especially to be victorious in a battle.

3. There is booty and spoil, whereby men are enriched, and so

profit as well as pleasure.

4. The joy of honour and triumph over fallen enemies.

5. Peace and ease from toil. All these make the joy of victorious

men in a battle to be a great joy.

Secondly, It was a fit similitude for David to use, who was a great

warrior, and so a man not unacquainted with the joy of victory. A

gracious heart spiritual]' seth every occasion that falleth out in their

ordinary callings : here is great joy, but this is nothing to the know-

ledge of God's will.

Thirdly, Every Christian is a warrior against Satan, the world, and

the flesh ; so it is a fit similitude for them. Victory over sin and

Satan is above all the conquests in the world ; this is a part of the

good news the word bringeth to us, Col. ii. 14, 15 ; John xvi. 33.

Now observe, in the former verse David had expressed his reverence

to the word, now his delight.

First, Our trembling at the word doth not hinder our delight in it ;

none more cheery than the aweful soul : Acts ix. 31, ' They walked

in the fear of God and comfort of the Holy Ghost ; ' and Ps. cxii. 1,

' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly

in his commandments.' Those who are most observant of God's

will, and careful to follow it, have the greatest contentment in their

souls.

Secondly, Joy should be mingled with reverence, lest it degenerate

into slavery and a scrupulous fear.

Doct. That God's people do greatly rejoice in his word.

1. It is not an ordinary delight which is here set forth, but such

as is high and intense, such joy as the richest and most gainful victory

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can raise in any worldly man. It is incredible, and cannot be expressed,

v much joy and comfort the word of God yieldeth to good men ;

: herefore so many similitudes used: 'More than in all riches/ Ps.

cxix. 14 ; ' Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb,' vcr. 103 ; ' I love

it above gold, and above fine gold,' ver. 127. A joy greater than the

joy of worldly men.

2. It is not a light flash, or a fantastical impression, but a solid

consolation, such as is affliction-proof and death-proof, when the

strength of this joy cometh to be tried and assaulted by deep

afflictions. Therefore the heirs of promise are said to have strong

consolation, Heb. vi. 18. So ver. 50 of this psalm, 'This is my

comfort in mine affliction, thy word hath quickened me.'

3. This joy, which is the mark of a sound believer, is delighting to

know, believe, and obey God's word. For it is in the way of his

testimonies, Ps. cxix. 14. It is in his commandments they delight

greatly. Study and contemplation breedeth a pleasure, but nothing

like practice. The pleasures and delights of the mind do certainly

exceed those of the body, for the more noble the faculty is, the more

capable of delight. A man in study hath a truer pleasure than the

greatest epicure in the most exquisite enjoyments of sense. Now

moral delights exceed those which are the mere result of contemplation,

as they give us a more intimate feeling of the worth of things. Again

those delights which are supernatural, and come from the Spirit, as

the pleasures of faith and obedience do, exceed those of the natural

mind as much as those do bodily pleasures, as being exercised about

nobler objects, which are the sense of the favour of God, and recon-

ciliation with him, and the hopes of eternal life ; and as coming from

a higher cause, the Spirit of God. Therefore, upon the whole, there

is no true delight and contentment but what proceedeth from a careful

performance of God's commands, strictly abstaining from what may

displease him, and cheerfully practising all that he requireth of us.

Truly the present gratefulness of such an employment, and the suc-

ceeding comforts of such practices, are a continual feast ; all other

pleasures to this are nothing worth. The obedience of faith to a

believer is more than any worldly advantage. It is a sweet thing to be

exercised in the word of God, in reading and hearing it with serious

meditation, but much more to be brought under the power and

practice of it.

Reason 1. The godly find glad tidings in the word, suitable to their

soul's necessities, and therefore rejoice in it. For the object of delight

is bonum conveniens et svfficiens ; here is enough to content them,

and it is very suitable. There is pardon of sins, and that is ground

of joy : Mat. ix. 2, ' Be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee ; '

there we hear of a Saviour : 1 Tim. i. 15, ' This is a faithful saying,

and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world

to save sinners.' When the gospel was preached at Samaria, Acts

viii. 8, ' There was great joy in that city.' Zaccheus received Christ

joyfully, for he brought salvation to his house, Luke xix. 6. There

is the true way of mortifying sin and sanctifying the heart : Ps. xix.

8, ' The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the soul ; the com-

mandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' There we are

VER. 162.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 179

told of the joys of the world to come : 1 Cor. ii. 9, ' Eye hath not

seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the

things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' We should

exult for joy to hear of those things. Thus you see the word of God

affordeth such comforts, such matter of rejoicing, as cannot be par-

alleled. A poor man, when he findeth a treasure, receiveth it with a

joyful heart. Oh ! what inestimable treasure do we find in the word

of God ! the way of eternal salvation is there made manifest.

Reason 2. The saints have felt benefit by it ; they have been

renewed and sanctified by it, therefore they prize it : James i. 18, 19,

1 Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should

be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures. Therefore be swift to hear.'

There they have found powerful heavenly truths, by which their souls

are made new ; they have tasted God's love in the doctrines and

promises thereof, and against a taste there is no disputing, 1 Peter ii.

2, 3. Experimented sweetness is beyond all arguments ; they have

been revived and comforted by it in their troubles, as at the 93d

verse of this psalm more largely, ' I will never forget thy word, for by

them thou hast quickened me.' God hath done their souls good by

it. It is the charter of their hopes, ver. Ill of this psalm. Whatever

calamities they meet with in the world, there they see ground of peace,

and composedness in their soul.

Reason 3. They love God, and they hear more of him in the word

than they can elsewhere. The soul that loveth God heareth and

seeth his blessed name in every leaf ; they find the effects of his

goodness in creation, some fruits and pledges of his love in daily

providence, but there they find his great eternal and wonderful love

in Christ ; there they know God's will, and it is their desire to be

subject to it, and therefore value it, not only as the charter of their

hopes, but as the rule of their duty.

Use 1. To condemn them —

1. That find no sweetness in the word of God ; they do not mind

the business of salvation, and then no wonder if they have a slight and

mean esteem of the word.

Two reasons of this contempt : —

[1.] Their scope is not fixed. All means are regarded with respect

to the end. Now, if they do not make the everlasting enjoyment of God

their end, the scriptures are of little use to them, a trouble rather than

a comfort, because they disturb them in pursuing their lusts ; but a

man that would enjoy God, get to his holy hill, is apprehensive of the

benefit.

[2.] They are not affected with their wants, and therefore esteem

not the word ; for the great benefit of the word is to teach us a remedy

for sin and misery. Now they that mind not the misery and danger

in which they stand go on carelessly and despise the word of God :

Prov, xxii. 3, ' A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself,

but the simple pass on, and are punished.' They little think of the

evil which is near them, and so slight the counsel of God.

2. Those that will not believe them that find sweetness in it, as if all

were fantastical and imaginary. Are the wisest and most serious part

of mankind deceived ? and hath the carnal fool only the wit to discern

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the mistake ? Surely in all reason it should be otherwise. These tell

us of those delights and transports of soul in meditating on the pro-

mises, in purifying their hearts by the precepts ; and though a stranger

intermeddleth not with their joys, yet surely these find them. All

that is spiritual and supernatural is suspected by those who are drowned

in matters of sense, John xii. 29 ; a voice from heaven is thunder ;

the motions of the Spirit, fumes of wine, Acts iii. 13 ; joy in the Holy

Ghost but a fancy, &c.

3. Them that count it an alphabetary knowledge fit for beginners.

David was no novice, yet he rejoiced in the word as one that found

great spoil ; the more conversant he was in these holy writings, the

more he delighted in them. No ; it is not only children's meat ; there

is not only milk there, but strong meat also, Heb. v. 14. It is our rule

to walk by, till our blessedness be perfected. The continual storehouse

of our comforts, Rom. xv. 4. It is the continual means of growing

into communion with God in Christ.

Use 2. To exhort us to delight in the word of God. It is the work

and mark of a blessed man : Ps. i. 2, ' But his delight is in the law of

the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' As far as

the necessities of the present life will bear it, they are still getting

more knowledge of true blessedness, and the way that leadeth to the

enjoyment of it. This is their business and pleasing study. His

work is to form his heart to a sincere, uniform, impartial obedience.

And as he doth increase in godliness by the help of the word, his soul

is more satisfied ; all the joys of the world to this are nothing to him.

Are your hearts thus set to know the Lord and his revealed will, and

the way of life ?

SERMON CLXXVII.

i" hate and abhor lying : but thy laiv do I love. — Ver. 163.

In this verse the man of God showeth his affection to the word by

the hatred of those things which are contrary to the word. Observe

here —

1. Affection set against affection.,

2. Object against object.

•First, Affection against affection, hatred against love. Love and

hatred are natural affections, which are good or evil according to the

objects to which they are applied. Place love on the world, sin, and

vanity, and nothing worse ; place hatred on God, religion, holiness, and

it soon proveth a hellish thing. But now, set them upon their proper

objects, and they express a gracious constitution of soul ; let us hate

evil, and love good, Amos v. 15, and all is well. Man needeth affec-

tions of aversation as wetl as choice and pursuit. Hatred hath its

use as well as love. Love was made for God, and things that belong

to God, and hatred for sin. It was put into us that, at the first ap-

pearance, sense, or imagination of evil, we might retire ourselves and

fly from it ; and is anything so evil as sin, so contrary to God, so bane-

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ful to the soul ? The office of love is to adhere and cleave to God,

and whatever will bring us to the enjoyment of him ; and the office

of hatred is that we may truly and sincerely turn from all evil with

detestation, according to the nature and degree of evil that is in it.

The emphasis of the text is notable, ' I hate and abhor ; ' it must be

a thorough hatred, which David, Ps. cxxxix. 22, calleth a ' perfect

hatred.'

Secondly, Here is object set against object. As love is opposed to

hatred, so the law to lying ; for the word of God is truth, and requireth

truth of all that submit to it ; pure sincerity and simplicity. Some

render the word more generally. The Septuagint dSifclav eixia^aa /cal

i(38eX.v^dfxev, ' I hate and abominate iniquity.' Other translations

render it not so ; they expound it so that one kind is put for all the

rest, and fitly ; for every sin is a falsehood, and often called in this

psalm, ' A false way, and a lie,' and will fail and beguile all them

who are delighted with it. And the purport and drift is, that we

should admit, omit, commit nothing which is contrary to the word of

God, which is the great object of a holy man's love.

The points are three : —

Boct. 1. They that love the word of God must hate sin.

Boct. 2. That a slight hatred of a sinful course is not enough, but

we must hate and abhor it.

Boct. 3. That among other sins, we must hate falsehood and lying,

and all kind of frauds and deceits.

For the first point.

Boct. 1. They that love the word of God must hate sin.

This implieth four things : —

1. That our love must be demonstrated by such effects, otherwise it

is but pretended, if we do not avoid what it forbiddeth ; for our love to

God and his word is mostly seen in obedience and dutiful subjection

to him and it ; for God's love is a love of bounty, our love is a love of

duty. He is said to love us when he blesseth us, and bestoweth on us

the effects of his special grace and favour ; we are said to love him

when we obey him. These propositions are clear in scripture, that our

love to God is tried by our love to the word, and our love to the word

by our hatred of sin : John xiv. 21, ' He that hath my commandments,

and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; ' and ver. 23, ' If any man

love me he will keep my words.' On the contrary, our enmity to God

and his word is determined by our love to sin. Enmity to God : Col.

i. 21, ' Enemies in your minds by evil works.' To his word : Rom. viii.

7, ' The carnal mind is not subject to the law, neither indeed can be.'

Habitual sin argueth a malice or hatred of God and his holy law ;

and actual sin, an actual hatred. It is finis operis, if not opcrantis;

whether a man thinketh so or no, it is the intent of the action ; a

rebellion or an act of disloyalty against God. Yea, there is not only

a virtual hatred in sin, but a formal hatred ; not only implied, but

expressed : they wish there were not a God to punish them and call

them to an account, such a law to forbid such practices as they affect,

or that such things were not sin. Well, then, it is not some kind of

pleasure in the study of the word will show our love to the word, but

an impartial, entire, and uniform obedience, strictly abstaining from

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such thing's as it forbiddeth, and carefully practising what it requireth

at our hands.

2. That our hatred of sin must flow from such a principle. A man

may hate sin upon foreign and accidental reasons, and so that abstain-

ing from sin is not a true hatred, but a casual dislike ; as when we

forbear some sins, but retain others that suit better with our condition,

callings, employment, temper, or because of some difficulty in compass-

ing, shame in practising, or repugnant to our natural temper. No ; it

must be out of a principle of love to God ; Ps. xcvii. 10, ' Ye that love

the Lord hate evil.' So Ps. cxix. 113, 'I hate vain thoughts, but thy

law do I love.' A hatred of sin arising from love to God and his

word is the only true hatred ; that is hatred of sin as sin, as it is

avofxia, 1 John iii. 4, ' A transgression of the law ; ' as it is ingratitude

to God, contrary to our obligations to him, not only as destructive to our-

selves ; not principally timore pamce, but amove virtutis. The word of

God furnisheth us with divers reasons and arguments to move us to hate

sin. They all have their place, but some are more noble and excellent

than others ; as when a man hateth sin because God hath forbidden it.

True hatred cometh from a love of the contrary ; therefore he that

hath a vehement love to the law hateth all things which are contrary

to it : Mat. vi. 20, ' He will hate the one, and love the other.' There

is no serving two masters ; love to the one enforceth hatred of the

other. To love the good and hate the evil are inseparable.

3. The more we hate sin the more prepared we are to love the law.

A carnal heart hateth the law : John iii. 20, ' He that doeth evil hateth

the light ; ' and Rum. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is not subject to the

law.' He that doth not hate sin hateth the word of God. We cannot

delight in it till our affections be purified and sanctified. Men's evil

practices and dispositions cause them to hate the light ; it is a reprov-

ing light. Can sore eyes delight to look upon the sun ? or an unsound

heart delight in that which will so ransack and search the conscience ?

4. According to the degree of love, so will the degree of our hatred

be. They that have the highest love of the law will have most hatred

of sin ; they hate every lesser contrariety, a vain thought, Ps. cxix.

113. They do not only hate open and scandalous sins, but sin carried

on in a more close and cleanly manner ; yea, they groan under the

relics of corruption, and feel it a heavy burden : Bom. vii. 22-24, ' For

I delight in the law of God after the inward man ; but I see another

law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bring-

ing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members ; ' and

then, ' wretched man that I am ! ' Next to the object of our affection,

the principle or spring of it must be regarded ; and next to the spring

and rise of it, the degree must be looked after, that we love the good

and hate the evil proportionably ; that is to say, that our hatred must

be proportionable to the evil of the thing hated, and our love to the

good of the thing loved. And indeed, where the one is the other will

be; where j a great love, a great hatred; where a little love, a little

hatred: Ps. cxix. 127, 128, 'I love thy commandments above gold,

yea, above fine gold ; therefore I esteem thy precepts in all things to

be right, and hate every false way.'

Use. Well, then, if we would show our love to the word, we must

VEK. 163.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 183

truly, sincerely, and constantly turn from all known sin with detestation

and abhorrence ; for hatred of sin is an infallible evidence of love to

the word. Now hatred of sin, if it be right —

1. It is universal, etV ra <yivrj, to the whole kind ; as Hainan thought

scorn to lay hands upon Mordecai alone, but sought to destroy the

whole race of the Jews, Esther iii. 6. One sin is as inconsistent with

the love of God as another. There may be as much contempt of God's

authority in a sin of thought as in a sin of practice, in a small sin as

in a greater. There may be much crookedness in a small line, and in

some cases the dye is more than the stuff : ' I hate every false way.'

It is twice repeated in this psalm, in ver. 104, and ver. 128. To

hate what God hateth : Pro v. viii. 13, ' The fear of the Lord is to hate

evil. ;

2. It is implacable ; it aimeth at the utter extirpation and expul-

sion of sin. They seek to remove the guilt, to weaken the inclination ;

they groan sorely under the very being of sin, that anything of sin is

left : ' wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body

of this death ? ' Kom. vii. 24.

3. It is still growing. At first it is a dubious case. Men that are

convinced have some mind to let sin go, or a wish that Christ would

save them from it ; but it is with such reserves, that they have rather

a mind to keep it than let it go ; as Pharaoh had no mind to dismiss

Israel, and therefore stood bucking with God ; or as David, when he-

sent out forces against Absalom, yet ' be tender of the young man.'

Pleasing lusts, we have but a remiss will against them ; our love to it

is greater than our dislike of it ; therefore so unstable, James i. 8. But

when the soul is converted, the soul is armed with a resolution, 1 Peter

iv. 1. Then the love of sin is weakened in their hearts, and the

strength and vigor of it abated ; the soul is armed with a serious pur-

pose to give it up, and shake off this servitude, in the confidence of that

grace which is purchased for them by Christ's death ; there is a godly

inclination and bent of soul to live unto God. Again, as our com-

munion with God and sense of his love is increased in us, so our hatred

of sin groweth more keen and fierce. When God had told what he

would do for Ephraim, ' What have I any more to do with idols ? '

Hosea xiv. 8. I have had too much to do already. What ! any more ?

In what proportion there is a sense of God's love, in the same propor-

tion a hatred of evil. Moses, when he had talked with God in the

mount, at his return he is full of indignation, and broke the tables.

So those that have had sweet communion with God have a more

severe displicency against their corruptions, and there is a more lively

principle at work in their hearts, for the expulsion of them. Every

act of kindness on God's part layeth a new obligation, and their hatred

is awakened by the holy use of the ordinances.

4. The constant discoveries of hatred against sin are watching and

striving against it ; they are ever careful that they may not offend

God : Acts xxiv. 1 6, ' And herein do I exercise myself, to keep a con-

science void of offence both towards God and men ; ' and keep striv-

ing, and a serious resistance, even when they are foiled : Kom. vii. 15,

' The evil that I hate, that do I.' A Christian always hateth sin,

though he doth not always prevail against it. In sins of daily infirmity,

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striving is conquering; but in other sins, they prevail against theniby

degrees ; sin doth not carr}' it freely, nor reign in them : ' For sin shall

not have dominion over you ; for ye are not under the law, but under

grace/ Bom. vi. 14.

Doct. 2. That a slight hatred of a sinful course is not enough, but

we must hate it and abhor it: Rom. xii. 1), ' Abhor that which is evil ;

cleave to that which is good.' Hate it as hell, as the word signifieth.

We do too coldly speak against evil, too slackly follow after that

which is good. If our pursuit after God were more earnest, and our

hatred of evil more serious and severe, we should be other manner of

Christians than we are. There is a twofold hatred — (1.) The hatred

of offence and abomination ; (2.) The hatred of enmity and opposition.

By the one our hearts are turned from sin, by the other turned against

it. Now both these are necessary for a Christian that would be safe.

Hating and abhorring implieth not only a naked abstinence, or a

simple refusal, but an enmity ; not a forbearing the act, but a mortifying

the affection. We must not only leave off evil, but abhor it ; and not

only abhor it, but pursue it with a hostile hatred, purposing, watching,

striving, praying against it, thwarting the flesh, and contradicting the

motions thereof.

Reason 1. It is not else a hatred becoming sin\_. which is so great an

evil, so opposite to God's law, and derogatory to God's glory, so mis-

chievous to us. There is a great deal of evil in sin, a great deal of

evil after sin, that we can never hate it enough. It is the evil of evils,

that brought all other evils into the world; it is the violation of a

righteous law, 1 John iii. 4 ; a contempt of God's authority : Exod. v. 2,

' Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?' Ps. xii. 4, ' Our

tongues are our own ; who is lord over us?' It is a defacing of his

image, and a casting off the glory and honour of our creation : Rom.

iii. 23, ' We have sinned, and are come short of the glory of God.' Ps.

xlix. 12, ' Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not ; he is like

the beasts that perish.' A despising of his power by a silly worm, as

if we could make good our party against him : 1 Cor. x. 22, ' Do we

provoke the Lord to jealousy? are we stronger than he?' It sepa-

rateth from communion w r ith God : Isa. lix. 2, ' Your iniquities have

separated between me and you.' It preferreth base satisfactions before

the enjoyment of him : 2 Tim. iii. 4, ' Lovers of pleasure more than

lovers of God ;' as if the base and brutish pleasures of the flesh were

to be preferred before the love of God.' This and much more may be

said of sin ; and is any hatred too great for it ? Ps. ci. 3, ' I will set

no wicked thing before mine eyes : I hate the work of them that turn

aside ; it shall not cleave to me.'

Reason 2. No other hatred will serve the purposes of grace. A love

that is cold will soon fail ; so also will a hatred. Where our zeal is

not set against sin we soon fall into a liking of it ; therefore the soul

is not sufficiently guarded by a slight hatred. If sin be not detestable,

it will soon seem tolerable. There is a brabble between many and their

lusts, and in all haste sin must be gone ; but the quarrel is soon taken

up, and sin stayeth for all that. Where the enmity is not great, a

man's agreement with sin may be soon made. Therefore not only an

offence, but a hostile hatred is required, such hating and abhorring as

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will not admit of reconciliation. Like the hatred of Amnon to Tarnar,

' The hatred wherewith he hated her was greater than the love where-

with he loved her/ 2 Sam. xiii. 35; he hated her with hatred greatly.

Did we more strongly dissent from sin, it would not so easily prevail

over us. Sin dieth when it dieth in our affections, when our hearts

are set against it : ' Get you hence/ Isa. xxx. 22. Get you gone ; be

there from henceforth an utter divorce between me and you. This

is to hate and abhor.

Use 1. To show us the reason why so many are entangled again in

the sins they seemed to renounce and forsake. They have frequently

resolved to forsake their sins, but these resolutions have come to no-

thing ; they have striven against them, but as a great stone that hath

been rolled up hill, it hath returned upon them with the more violence;

or as in rowing against the stream, when the tide hath been strong

against them, and they have been driven the more back, and therefore

are discouraged. Yea, they have prayed, and found little success, and

therefore think it is vain to make any further trial. What shall we

say then to these ? If the premises were clear, yet the inference and

conclusion is wrong and false ; for we are not to measure our duty by

the success, but God's injunction. God may do what he please th, but

we must do what he hath commanded. Abraham obeyed God, not

knowing whither he went, Heb. xi. 8. Peter said unto Christ, ' We

have toiled all night, and have caught nothing ; nevertheless at thy

command we will cast forth the net. 3 Though the first attempt suc-

ceed not, yet afterwards sin may be subdued and broken. In natural

things we do not sit down with one trial or one endeavour, but after

many disappointments pursue our designs till we complete them. A

merchant will not leave off for one bad voyage, nor an ambitious man

because his first essays were fruitless ; and shall we give over our con-

flicts with worldly and fleshly lusts ? That showeth our will is not

fixedly bent against them, because we cannot presently subdue them.

• He that will be rich/ 1 Tim. vi. 10. If you had such a will to be holy

and heavenly.

2. There is a fault in these purposes, in these strivings and prayers ;

they do not come from a heart thoroughly set against sin.

[1.] These purposes are not hearty and real, and then no wonder

they do not prevail. There may be a slight purpose, and there is a full

purpose, Acts xi. 23. If thy purposes were more full and strong, and

thoroughly bent against sin, they would sooner succeed. Is it the fixed

decree and determination of thy will ? When you are firmly resolved,

your affections will be sincere and steadfast, you will pursue this work

close ; not be off and on, hot and cold, unstable in all your ways ; your full

purpose, or the habitual bent of your hearts, are known by your drift and

scope. Or it may be this purpose may be extorted, not the effect of thy

judgment and will, but only thy conscience awakened by some present

fear. Many are by some pangs and qualms of conscience frighted into

some religiousness ; but this humour lasts not long : Ps. lxxviii. 35-37,

' And they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High

their redeemer ; nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth,

and they lied to him with their tongues ; for their heart was not

right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant,' In their

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dangers they remembered God, but their hearts were not right with

him. Ahab, in his fears, had some relentings ; so had Pharaoh. The

Israelites turned to the Lord in their distress, but they turned as fast

from him afterwards ; resolves not of love, but fear. So are these resolu-

tions wrested from you by some present terrors, which, when they cease,

no wonder that they are where they were before. Violent things never

hold long ; they will hold as long as the principle of their violence

lasteth. Or it may be you rest in the strength of your own resolutions.

Now God will be owned as the author of all grace, who reneweth and

quickeneth every affection in us ; still we must have a sense of our own

insufficiency, and resolve more in the strength and power of God, and

rely upon the grace of Jesus Christ, by his Spirit mortifying the deeds

of the body, as knowing that without him you can do nothing, neither

continue nor perform our resolutions. Men fall again as often as they

think to stand by their own power. There is much guile and false-

hood in our own hearts ; we cannot trust them. The saints still

resolve, God assisting : Ps. cxix. 8, ' I will keep thy precepts ; oh, for-

sake me not utterly ;' ver. 32, ' I will run the way of thy command-

ments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' They beg God to keep up

their inclination and bent against sin : ver. 36, ' Incline my heart to

thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

[2.] As to striving. Let us examine that a little ; if it be so seri-

ous, so diligent, so circumspect as it should be. Certainly that is no

effectual striving when you are disheartened with every difficulty ; for

difficulties do but influence a resolved spirit, as stirring doth the fire.

No question but it will be hard to enter in at the strait gate, or walk

in the narrow way. God hath made the way to heaven so narrow and

strait, that we may the more strive to enter in thereat, Luke xiii. 24.

Now shall we sit down and complain when we succeed not upon every

faint attempt ? Who then can be saved ? This is to cry out with the

sluggard, ' There is a lion in the way.' Should a mariner, as soon as

the waves arise, and strong gusts of wind blow, give over all guiding

of the ship ? No ; he is resolved upon his voyage. To give out upon

every difficulty is against all the experience and wont of mankind.

Again, this striving and opposing is but slight, not accompanied with

that watchfulness and resolution which is necessary. Many pretend

to watch against sin, yet abstain not from all occasions of sin. If we

play about the cockatrice's hole, no wonder we are bitten. Never

think to turn from thy sins, if thou dost not turn from the occasion of

them : Pro v. iv. 15, 'Go not in the way of evil men, avoid it, pass not

by it, turn from it, and pass away.' This is a practice becoming the

hatred of sin. Evil company is a snare. If thou hast not strength to

avoid the occasion, which is less, how canst thou avoid the sin, which

is greater ? He that resolveth not to be burnt in the fire must not

come near the flames. Job made a covenant with his eyes, Job xxxi.

1. Our Saviour taught us to pray, ' Lead us not into temptation/

He doth not say, into sin. Temptation openeth the gate to it. Cer-

tainly itargueth a hankering of mind when we dally with temptations ;

as the raven, when he is driven from the carrion, loveth to abide

within the scent of it, so they have an inclination to sin when they

forbear the practice of it.

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[3.] For praying. We oftener pray from our memories than from

our consciences, and from our consciences enlightened than hearts

renewed by grace. Prayer, as it is the fruit of memory and invention,

is but a few slight and formal words said of course, a body without a

soul ; as dictated by conscience, it may be retracted by the will, at

noli modo. Austin, when he prayed against his youthful lusts,

timebam ne me excluderet Deus, was afraid lest he should be heard

too soon ; at best but half desires, faint wishes, like Balaam's wish to

die the death of the righteous. The soul of the sluggard desireth,

and hath nothing. God never made promise that lazy wishes should

be satisfied. If you pray against .sin with your whole heart, he will

hear you. The great fault is the want of this thorough hatred

of sin.

Use 2. Take heed of two things : —

1. A secret love to \_ your sins.

2. A remiss hatred against them.

1. A secret love to sin. Job speaketh of some that hid sin as a

sweet morsel under their tongues, Job xx. 12, loath to let a lust go ;

and David of regarding iniquity in our heart, Ps. lxvi. 18. First

there is a secret liking of sin, which in time will prove baneful to the

soul ; some lust is spared, and continueth unmortified. It doth not

remain so much, as it is reserved, and there keepeth possession for

Satan. This will in time eat out all our other virtues, and bring a

stain upon those good properties wherewith God hath endowed us.

Sin was never heartily cast out, therefore they are in time ensnared

again, and drawn away by some sensitive lure.

2. A remiss hatred of sin. No ; there must be a total and full aver-

sion. Hatred and indignation is the soul's expulsive faculty ; it cannot

be kept in good plight without it. It is the lively and active principle

which sets the soul a-work, in avoiding what is hurtful to the spiritual

life : it concerneth us to keep it up in strength and vigour. The

reason why even believers do so often sin through weakness is because

the will doth not so strongly dissent as it should. Though we do not

deliberately give our assent, it should more potently awaken our dis-

pleasure. But certainly the reason of wilful sin is want of a strong

hatred. Though convinced of evil, yet we go on like a fool to the

correction of the stocks, Prov. vii. 22.

Doct. 3. That among other sins, we must hate falsehood and lying,

and all kind of frauds and deceits.

1. I shall open the particular notion of lying in the text.

2. Show you the reasons against it.

First, To open the particular notion of lying.

1, In the vulgar acceptation and sense of it, we take it to be speak-

ing an untruth, or that which is false, with an intention to deceive.

Now this is a sin contrary to the new nature : Col. iii. 9, ' Lie not one

to another, since ye have put off the old man with his deeds.' It is

not only contrary to that natural order which God hath appointed

between the mind and the tongue, but to that sincerity and true holi-

ness which is our great qualification and the fruit of regeneration.

Therefore God saith, Isa. lxiii. 8, ' Surely they are my people, children

that will not lie.' God presumeth that his people will not deal falsely,

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but speak as they think, and think of what they speak as it really is ;

and that Christians will not deceive and circumvent others, since they

are members of the same mystical body, and should seek one another's

welfare, as much as they do their own : Eph. iv. 25, ' Wherefore put

away lying ; speak every one truth with his neighbour ; seeing ye are

members one of another.' No ; it is more unseemly in a Christian,

more inconsistent with grace. In short, no sin maketh a man more

like the devil : John viii. 44, ' Ye are of your father the devil, and the

lusts of your father ye will do : he was a murderer from the begin-

ning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him.

When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own ; for he is a liar, and

the father of it.'

2. Concealing the truth which should be confessed. God would

not have his people hide themselves in necessary truths ; he would have

them believe with the heart, and confess with the mouth, Bom. x. 9,

10. And Christianity is called a confession, Heb. iii. 1 ; and all

Christians are saved either as martyrs or as confessors.

But how far we are to confess lesser truth is a great case of conscience.

Certainly we must do nothing against a truth, not appear in the garb

of a contrary party, nor must we lie hid when God in his providence

crieth out, Who is of my side, who ? We read of some, John xii. 42,

who ' believed in Christ, yet they did not confess him, lest they should

be put out of the synagogue ; for they loved the praise of men more

than the praise of God.' Faith is in a very weak condition when

confession is not joined with it, when men will not own Christ in

troublous times, and appear in their own shape. Men that have much

to lose have many worldly considerations ; they think these lose more

than they can gain, and lose by the praise of God rather than the

praise of men. Now the sincere Christian saith in these cases, ' I

hate and abhor lying.'

3. It is contrary to that obedience to God which we do profess.

There is a practical lie as well as a virtual lie, when our practices do

not correspond with our profession ; there is a lie acted, as well as a

lie told. So Ephraim is said to compass God about with lies, Hosea

xi. 12. To say we have fellowship with God, and walk in darkness,

is a lie, 1 John i. 6, a lie that tendeth to the disgrace of religion, in

opprobrium Christi: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and

keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.'

So he that speaketh much of the Spirit, and walketh after the flesh.

Reason 1. God is a God of truth. God cannot, nor will not lie,

and his people must be like him.

Reason 2. His word is the word of truth, his law requireth truth ;

and all falsehoods and deceits are contrary to that justice and charity

which it establisheth. His gospel is a gospel of truth : Eph. i. 13,

' After ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation/

Reason 3. He requireth and worketh truth in the reins and inward

parts : Ps. Ii. 7, ' Behold thou desirest truth in the inward parts.'

Use. Oh ! then, hate and abhor lying. You cannot be accepted of

God else : Jer. v. 3, ' Lord, are not thine eyes upon the truth ? '

You cannot have grace in your own hearts : 2 Cor. i. 12, ' This is our

rejoicing, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, we have had our con-

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versations in the world ;' nor long continue undiscovered before men :

Prov. xxvi. 26, ' His wickedness shall be showed before the congre-

gation.' Let us not lie to God in our promises we make to him : Ps.

Ixxviii. 34-36, ' When he slew them, then they sought him ; and they

returned and inquired early after God; and they remembered that

God was their rock, and the Most High their redeemer : nevertheless

they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their

tongues.' In your worship, do not compass him about with lies, com-

plain of burdens which you feel not, express desires which you have

not. In your profession, do not make it a veil and cover for your lusts.

A wicked or carnal design is inconsistent with uprightness of heart.

As to men, abhor all false and deceitful practices and speeches. When

the apostle biddeth us abhor that which is evil, he first saith, Let love

be without dissimulation, Bom. xii. 9. You are not to live by interest,

but by conscience. Therefore abhor all hypocrisy, falsehood, treachery,

which are unworthy any ingenuous man, much more a Christian.

SERMON CLXXVIII.

Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments. —

Ver. 164.

In these words the man of God giveth further proof of his love and

delight in the word, by praising God for that benefit.

His praise is illustrated —

1. By the frequent repetition of that duty, seven times a day do I

praise thee.

2. The subject-matter, because of thy righteous judgments, i.e., God's

dispensations agreeing with his word.

First, The frequency of the duty, ' seven times a day ;' that is, very

often ; numerus definitus pro indejinito, a number certain put for an

uncertain. Seven is often used for many, as Lev. xxvi. 18, ' I will

punish you seven times more for your sins ;' that is, not exactly seven,

but many and divers times : Prov. xxiv. 16, 'A just man falleth seven

times a day, and riseth up again : Prov. xxvi. 25, ' There are seven

abominations in his heart;' 1 Sam. ii. 5, 'She that is barren hath

borne seven, and she that hath many children is waxed feeble.' So

here, I give thanks to thee as often as I meditate of them. Some of

the Jewish rabbis stick in the very literal number, seven — twice in

the morning, before the reading of the law, and once after it, and at

noon, and so in the evening as in the morning ; so Rabbi Solomon.

Indeed elsewhere, Ps. lv. 17, ' Evening and morning and at noon will

I praise the Lord ; ' but whether with such scrupulous observation of

hours is not certain.

Secondly, The subject-matter, 'Thy righteous judgments,' whereby is

meant —

1. God's most righteous laws and precepts, called the ordinances of

judgment and justice, Isa. lviii. We caunot sufficiently bless God for

the benefit of his word.

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2. The dispensations of his providence suiting therewith, whether

they concern us or others. The word is fulfilled in the punishment of

the wicked, and in giving the promised reward to the righteous. All

God's dealings are righteous judgments, and matter of praise is still

offered to us from the comforts and blessings of his providence.

There is no question of that ; the smallest of his mercies should not

be overlooked, though notable mercies should be continually remem-

bered, Ps. lxviii. 19. Not only daily benefits, but great deliverances

are a standing ground of thanksgiving : Ps. lxvi. 2, ' Sing forth the

honour of his name, make his praise glorious, show forth his salvation

from day to day ,' especially now the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

ami the great salvation is more clearly revealed, we should never

think of it, nor read it, nor hear of it, without some considerable act

of joy and thankfulness. Again, so for the dispensations of God to

others, in protecting his people, in punishing his enemies. It is a

great confirmation of faith to see promises and threatenings fulfilled

on others, how punctually God niaketh good his word to all that trust

in him, Ps. xviii. 30 ; on all those that reject it and despise it : 'As

we have heard, so have we seen,' Ps. xlviii. 8. They that believe the

word of God, and do mark what is foretold in the word, shall find the

event and work of providence suitable to the prediction.

3. God's righteous judgments afflicting of us doth also yield matter

of praise, as they work together for good to such as love him, Rom.

viii. 28 ; and the saddest corrections afford necessary and profitable

instructions: Ps. xciv. 12, 'Blessed is the man whom thou chastenesi.

and teachest him out of thy law ;' Ps. cxix. 71, ' It is good for me

that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes ; ; though

not barely for the afflictions themselves, yet for their fruit and issue,

that our souls are bettered and humbled by them, and as we see the

faithfulness of God in them.

Boot. That the people of God should never cease lauding and mag-

nifying the name of God because of his righteous judgments.

David was never weary of praising God; every day he praised God,

and often every day : love sweetened it to him. We shall praise him

evermore in the world to come, there it will be our sole employment ;

but even in this world we should not count it a burden, but praise

him yet more : Ps. lxxi. 14, ' I will yet praise him more and more,'

still magnifying his greatness.

Here I shall speak —

1. Of the duty, that we should praise God.

2. Of the continuance, that we should not cease praising God.

3. The grounds of it in the text, because of thy righteous judg-

ments.

First, The duty.

Secondly, The motives to it.

First, The duty, and there we have — (1.; The nature of it ; (2.) The

grounds of it ; (3.) The formality ; (4.) The fruit of it.

1. The nature of it. There are three words used in this matter —

blessing, praising, giving thanks. Sometimes they are used promis-

cuously, at other times there is a distinctness of notion to be observed .

Blessing is used: Ps. ciii. 1, 'Bless the Lord, my soul.' Blessing

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relateth to his benefits ; it respects the works of God as beneficial to

us ; his mercy, love, and kindness to us. We bless him who hath

blessed us, Eph. i. 7. Praise relateth to his excellences, as we may-

praise a stranger for his excellent endowments, though we are not

benefited by them: Ps. cxi. 1, 2, 'Praise ye the Lord; I will praise

the Lord with my whole heart, in the assembly of the upright, and in

the congregation : the works of the Lord are great, sought out of all

them that have pleasure therein.' It is a great part of our work to

praise the Lord ; not that he at all needeth it, for he is infinitely

perfect, but he deserveth it, and by this means we testify our love and

reverence of him, and strengthen our own dependence on him, and

gain others to him, when we speak good of his name. The other

word is thanksgiving : Ps. cvii. 1, 'Oh! give thanks unto the Lord, for

he is good.' This differeth from the two former, because praise may

be expressed in words, gratitude and thankfulness in deed ; also it

hath respect to benefits as well as blessings ; but we show our grati-

tude by obedience. But these are often coincident ; indeed, there is

a mixture of all in the true praising of God ; excellences and benefits

are to be acknowledged with heart, mouth, and life.

2. The grounds of it. Faith and love must be at the bottom of

our praise, if we would not have it slight and formal ; for the more

lively apprehensions we have of God's perfections, which is the work

of faith, and the more sensible of his goodness and mercy, which is the

work of love, the better is this service performed. Therefore, unless

these praises flow from a believing, loving soul, they are but an empty

prattle and a vain sound. Faith is necessary, that is the eye of the

soul to see the invisible one, Heb. xi. 27. It giveth us an apprehen-

sion of the Lord's excellences in order to love and trust. So also, in

order to praise, faith sets us before the throne, and doth withdraw the

veil, and showeth us the eternal God, who liveth and reigneth for

ever, dispensing all things powerfully, according to his own \_ will :

that is all the sight we have of God in this life — a nearer vision is

referred to our future glory ; here we see him by faith. Again, love,

or a deep sense of the goodness of God, which enlargeth the heart

towards him, and forceth open our lips, that our mouths may show

forth his praise, Ps. li. 15. There he meaneth God's giving a sweet

and renewed sense of pardoning mercy : Ps. lxiii. 3, ' Because thy

loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.' An

intimate sense of the Lord's love sets the tongue a-work to speak of it.

Praise, then, is the result of faith and love. None else do it seriously,

delightfully, but where these graces reign and prevail in the heart.

3. The formality of it is an acknowlegment of the divine virtues,

benefits, and perfections, manifested to us in his word or works, or

both. These must be acknowledged by some outward expression:

words, whereby we express our inward thoughts and apprehensions.

Our tongues are called our glory : Ps. lvii. 8, ' Awake up, my glory ;'

Ps. xvi. 9, ' My heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth.' When that

scripture is quoted, Acts ii. 26, it is said, ' My tongue is glad,' rjyaX-

Xtdaaro r\ yXcoo-crd [jlov. So the Septuagint. So called, not only as

speech is our excellency above the beasts, but because God is thereby

glorified and praised ; given us to this end and purpose, to bless God,

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James iii. 5). As our understanding was given us to know God, and

think on him, so our speech to speak of God, to declare his excellent

perfections, and to stir up others to praise him with us.

4. Holiness, the fruit of it ; for as Job said, the sides of the poor

blessed him, Job xxxi. 20, so must our lives praise God, 1 Peter ii. 9,

show forth his virtues, not in word only, but in works. Our lives

must be a constant hymn to God, though we should be silent. We

remember the Lord's excellences, that we may imitate them, and

express them to the life. The children of God serve only for this use,

to represent God to the world, as the image in the glass representeth

the person that looketh in it. So Isa. xl. 21, ' This people have I

formed for myself ; they shall show forth my praise.' The impression

of all the divine attributes and perfections must be left upon us, and

copied out by us, plainly represented in our wisdom, purity, faithful-

ness, and godliness

Secondly, The motives, because there is no part of God's worship to

which we are more indisposed. Self-love will put us upon prayers

and supplications, but love of God upon praises. We are inclined to

the one by our own necessities, but we need to be stirred up to the

other by pressing arguments. I will only mention those which are

heaped up together in one place : Ps. cxlvii. 1, ' Praise ye the Lord,

for it is good to sing praises unto our God ; for it is pleasant, and

praise is comely.'

1. It is good and profitable, a piece of service acceptable in God's

sight : Ps. 1. 23, 'Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.' It is a part of

that spiritual worship required under the gospel, beyond all the sacri-

fices of the law. In other duties we expect something from God, but

in this we bestow something on him.

All God's praises are a believer's advantage ; every attribute is his

storehouse: 'This is my beloved and my friend,' Cant. v. 16; Ps.

cxxxv. 5, ' For I know that the Lord is great, and that our Lord is

above all gods.' Yea, it is profitable as it is acceptable : Ps. lxvii.

5-7, ' Let all the people praise thee, God ; let all the people praise

thee ; then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God,

shall bless us ; God shall bless us, and all the ends of the earth shall

fear him.' Pliny telleth us of a fountain that would rise, and swell,

and overflow, at the playing of a pipe or flute, and when that ceased,

would stop again. The fountain of mercy riseth, and swelleth, and

overfloweth with new supplies of mercy when we praise and acknow-

ledge the old.

2. It is pleasant and delightful, full of sweet refreshment. He that

knoweth not this work is pleasant is unacquainted with it ; for this

ravishing, transporting joy is matter of experience. When is the

gracious heart more delighted than when it feasts with God ? All acts

of obedience have a pleasure accompanying them, especially acts of

worship, being the nobler part of the spiritual life ; and among them

praise : Ps. cxxxv. 3, ' Sing praises unto his name, for it is good and

pleasant.' It is our duty in heaven to praise God, when we are in our

highest felicity ; therefore this is a work wherein we should rejoice to

be employed. It is our reward rather than our work, the heaven that

we have upon earth ; and nothing so fit to cheer up the spirit as to

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remember what a God we have in Christ. The very nature of it hath

allurement enough to a gracious heart : Ps. xcii. 4, ' For thou, Lord,

hast made me glad through thy works ;' when God blesseth our medi-

tations of his works with gladness.

3. It is comely and honourable to be about the employment of angels,

to be heralds to proclaim the Lord's glory ; nothing so comely for us

as creatures, who have our whole being from him. As new creatures,

we are set apart to be to the praise of his glorious grace in Christ,

Eph. i. 12. It beareth all men as a debt, which they owe to God,

though the wicked have no power to perform it. Indeed the new song

doth ill become the old heart ; but when there is an obligation and a

capacity, then it is comely indeed. It becometh them to pay, and God

to receive it from them : Ps. xxxiii. 1, ' Praise is comely for the up-

right.' All are bound to praise God, yet none will do it cheerfully and

acceptably save the godly : they have obligations above all people in

the world ; they have a capacity and a heart to do it, and from them

God most expecteth it.

Secondly, The continuance, that we should never cease praising

God. David saith here, ' Seven times a day,' which is the number of

perfection ; and elsewhere you shall find equivalent expressions : Ps.

xxxiv. 1, 'I will bless the Lord at all times; his praise shall be con-

tinually in my mouth.' So Heb. xiii. 15, ' Let us offer the sacrifice of

praise continually, giving thanks unto his name.' So Eph. v. 20,

' Giving thanks always unto God for all things.' What is the meaning

of these extensive particles, 'continually,' 'always,' 'and at all times' ?

I answer — It is not to be understood as if we were without intermis-

sion to be employed in the actual exercise of formal and distinct

thanksgiving. No ; there are other necessary duties, which sometimes

must divert us from it ; but the meaning is —

1. That there is continual occasion of praising God. God is con-

tinually beneficial to us, blessing and delivering his people every day,

and by new mercies giveth new matter of praise and thanksgiving.

And there are some standing mercies which should never be forgotten,

but be remembered before God every day, as redemption by Christ,

with all the abundant benefits ; and therefore the gospel church is

represented by four beasts, or four living wights, together with fonr-

and-twenty elders, who ' rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy,

holy Lord God Almighty,' Rev. iv. 8. This is spoken to show that

matter doth still continue of lauding and blessing God ; and David

saith, Ps. lxxi. 8, ' Let my mouth be filled with thy praise, and with

thine honour all the day.' There is no moment of time wherein we

are not obliged to praise and glorify God.

2. This must be understood of the preparation of the heart without

intermission. We must cherish that disposition of heart which is

necessary for it. A habit of thankfulness, a heart deeply affected with

the Lord's excellences and mercies, should ever be found in us, and

never laid aside ; the instrument must be kept in tune, though it be

not always played upon. David saith, Ps. lvii. 7, ' My heart is fixed,

God, my heart is fixed ; I will sing, and give praise.' There must

be a prepared heart, or a fixed purpose to praise the Lord. A renewed

sense of God's favour, and fresh experience of his goodness to us, do

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draw forth this preparation into act ; yet the preparation must still

remain with us, and we are to watch against dulness and indisposed-

ness for this holy work. This preparation is more or less at times, for

special mercies do raise, enliven, and inspirit the heart ; but some

measure of a thankful disposition, or bent and inclination to praise

God, must never be wanting. As the Vestal fire among the Komans

was ever kept in, on special occasions it was blown up ; so there should

be a habitual frame of heart to praise God at all times, but upon

some special occasions it must more especially be excited and stirred

up to it.

3. We must keep a constant course, and certain order of worship-

ping and praising God, both in public and private. In scripture they

are said to do a thing always who do it upon stated occasions ; as

Mephibosheth did eat continually at David's table, 2 Sam. ix. 13 ; not

as if always eating, but at the eating times ; and the disciples are said

to be continually in the temple, praising and blessing God, Luke xxiv.

53 ; that is, at the appointed times of worship. So we are to set forth

certain times to bless and praise the Lord, who is continually good to

us ; especially on the sabbath. See the 92d psalm, the title, with the

first verse, ' It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to

sing praises unto thy name, Most High ! ' We are not to omit any

occasion of formal and direct thanksgiving ; acknowledge mercy and

faithfulness, the two pillars of our confidence ; as it is to be done con-

stantly, which the former head called for, so frequently, that is, we

must take every just occasion to perform it, let no special opportunity

pass. The Lord's mercies are new every moment, Lam. iii. 21, and

he loadeth us with his benefits daily, Ps. lxviii. 19. Therefore as God's

hand is ever open to bless, so should our mouths be ever open to

praise; and we should never go from this exercise nisi cum ammo

revertendi, but with a purpose to return to it again. We have poor

temporary affections towards God, and are very rare and infrequent

in these duties ; though we are daily receiving more and more bene-

fits, yet we are slow and backward to this work. Every hour, every

minute, every moment, God is obliging us to it anew ; therefore we

should say, ' I will praise him more and more.'

Thirdly, The ground of praising mentioned in the text, ' Because of

thy righteous judgments.' Here observe —

1. The term is one of the notions by which the word of God is ex-

pressed. Surely all kind of mercies are the matter of praise, especially

spiritual mercies ; and among these, his word, for this is a great favour

in itself ; the church can as ill be without it as the world without the

sun. Ps. xix., he compareth the sun and the law together. This is a

peculiar favour : Ps. cxlvii. 19, 20, ' He hath given his word to Jacob ;

he hath not dealt so with every nation ; praise ye the Lord.' The

benefit of the scriptures is a precious gift of God to the church, and so

it should be valued and esteemed; not counted a burden, as it is to

them who are wholly earthly, and mind not heavenly things.. Alas !

what should we do without this help to ease our burdened minds, to

understand God's providences, and learn the way to happiness, without

these pure precepts and heavenly promises ? What is it that raiseth

in us the joy of faith, the patience of hope, that directcth us to a

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straight and certain way to glory, but the word of God ? This is the

hook of books, the food and comfort of our souls : Ps. lvi. 10, ' In God

I will praise his word, in the Lord I will praise his word/ The best

hold that faith can have of God is by his word. Let us own his word,

and then, whatever his dispensations be, we have cause to praise him ;

here is a sure hope to fix upon, and a sure rule to walk by. It cannot

be told in a breath what benefit we have by it : here is matter of

glorying, and firm confidence ; we need not fear men or devils as long

as we have such a firm bulwark to secure us : here we have God's will

made known, to give us notice of a blessed estate, and God's promise

to give us an interest in it.

2. It noteth the dispensation of his providence, fulfilling his promises

unto the faithful, and executing his threatenings on the wicked. He

is the same in his works that he is in his word. His judgments are

declared in his holy word, and executed in his righteous providence ;

and therefore it is said of them that have not his word, Ps. cxlvii. 20,

' As for his judgments, they have not known them; praise ye the Lord.'

Where they have not his word, the Lord's dealing with men injustice

and mercy, and the course which he observeth in ruling the world, is

not understood ; it lieth much in the dark, so that his providence is

complicated with his word ; and as it is the sentence of his word exe-

cuted, is matter of praise. Well, then, we must praise God for his

righteous government of the world, according to his word ; whether it

concern the church in general, or us in particular : Pie v. xvi. 7,

' True and righteous are thy judgments.' But because particular

providences come nearest home, and do most affect us, I shall instance

in them : —

[1.] Let me show you how we should praise God for his favours,

and fulfilling of promises to us, and hearing our prayers, and remem-

bering us for good in our low estate. Joshua leaveth this note when

dying, Josh, xxiii. 14, 'I am going the way of all the earth; and ye

know in all your hearts and all your souls, that not one thing hath

failed of all the good things which the Lord hath spoken to you ; all

are come to pass, not one thing hath failed thereof.' Trust God, and

try him, and you will return the same account with this, which was

the result of all his experience. And Solomon taketh notice of God's

fulfilling promises, 1 Kings viii. 20, 24, ' And the Lord hath per-

formed his word that he spake ; who hath kept with thy servant

David my father that thou prornisedst him ; thou spakest also with

thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand/ There is none of

any acquaintance with God but find much of this. Now they should

therefore praise the Lord, and love him ; so David, Ps. cxvi. 1, ' I

will love the Lord, who hath heard the voice of my supplication.'

When we have 'put promises in suit, and challenged God upon his

word, he hath stood to it, justified our confidence; every fresh experi-

ence in this kind should excite new love and praise-

[2.] In time of affliction, when divine dispensations go cross to our

affections, and it may be to our prayers, yet even then should we praise

the Lord. Job when the Lord had taken away, he blesseth the name

of the Lord, Job i. 21. The Lord is worthy of praise and honour when

he giveth and when he taketh away, when he emptieth and when he

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filleth us with blessings. A child of God is of a strange temper ; he

can fear him for his mercies, Hosea iii. 5, and praise him for his judg-

ments, as in the text. It argneth a great measure of grace to give

thanks to God at all times and for all things : 1 Thes. v. 17, 18, ' Re-

joice ever more ; pray without ceasing ; in everything give thanks/

Simply we cannot give thanks for afflictions as afflictions, as we cannot

pray for them, nor joy in them, but as they are a means of good to us.

A thankful frame of heart bringeth meat out of the eater, encourage-

ment out of the saddest providences, and taketh occasion to lift up itself

in the praises of God even from those things which are matter of greatest

discouragement and heartless dejection to others. It seeth the hand

of God working for good to him. And then, on the other side, an un-

thankful, repining, murmuring spirit soureth all our comforts, is ever

querulous, whether crossed or pleased ; it entertaineth crosses with

anger, and blessings with disdain. It is hard to be in any condition

on this side hell wherein we have not cause to praise God ; even in

great calamities, either for their fruit and issue, as our souls are bettered

and humbled by them: Ps. cxix. 65, ' Thou hast dealt well with thy

servant, according to thy word/ Wherein ? In giving him faith, and

sensible and seasonable correction, ver. 67 ; and presently, ' Thou art

good, and doest good,' ver. 68. Or else for their mitigation, as to

deem them not insupportable, 1 Cor. x. 13 ; that we are not consumed,

Lam. iii. 22 ; that not to the full merit of our sins : Ezra ix. 13, 'Thou

hast punished us less than we have deserved ; ' that comforts come

along with them ; that our afflictions do not exceed the measure of our

comforts, 2 Cor. i. 5 ; that we have a good God still, who knoweth

how to turn all to our advantage. Let us be persuaded he is well

affected to us in Christ, and we will take anything kindly at his hand.

All this is spoken that poor murmuring souls may not set out from so

blessed a work ; yea, when other arguments fail, we may see the wis-

dom, justice, and faithfulness of God in his sharpest corrections : Ps.

cxix. 75, ' I know that thy judgments are right, and in faithfulness

thou hast afflicted me.' It is a great honour to God to speak good of

his name when his hand is smart upon us.

Use. Let me press you now to three things : —

1. To the work.

2. Frequency and constancy herein.

3. To suit often God's word and works together.

First, To the work of praising God. Many are often complaining

or begging, but seldom praising or giving thanks. Oh ! surely this

should be more regarded, not always taken up with complaints against

ourselves, and supplications for mercies ; but should some time give

thanks, and praise the Lord ; it is the noblest part of our work, it is

nearest the work of heaven. As love is the grace of heaven, so praise

is the duty then in season. It is good to be preparing, setting our

hearts in order for our eternal estate ; it is the work of angels ; when

we praise God, we do the work of angels. The angels, according to

the opinion of the ancient Hebrews, do every day sing praises to God,

and that in the morning ; which they gather because the angel said to

Jacob, Gen. xxxii. 26, ' Let me go, for the day breaketh ; ' which place

the Targum of Jerusalem thus explaineth, Let me go, for the pillar

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of the morning ascendeth, and behold the hour approacheth that the

angels are to sing. However that opinion be, sure we are that the

angels ever bless God, and laud his holy name : Isa. vi. 1-3, the angels

cried one to another, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts ; the whole

earth is full of his glory.' They were blessing God for creation ; then

the morning stars sang for joy, Job xxxviii. 4-6, for the nativity of

Christ, Luke ii. 13, 14. They apprehend more of God's excellency

and perfection in himself and in his works than we do, and are more

sensible of his benefits than we are. Now if this be the work of angels,

the highest and greatest of them, surely this work should be more

prized by us. It is nobler than other duties ; we serve God in our

callings, but this work is a part of our misery, this burden was laid

upon Adam after his fall, that in the sweat of his brow he should eat

his bread, Gen. iii. 19. Though honest labour be a part of our

obedience, yet it is also a part of our trouble and exercise. There are

works of righteousness ; as to give every man his due, these are good

works ; but they concern the benefit of man, the good of human

society ; whereas praise is more immediately directed to the honour of

God. There are works of mercy, to relieve the poor, to help the dis-

tressed, to support the weak, to comfort the afflicted ; these are good

works indeed, and a very noble part of our service, to be reckoned to

our thank-offerings as praise: Heb. xiii. 15, 16, 'By him therefore

let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit

of our lips, giving thanks to his name : but to do good and to com-

municate forget not, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' It is

godlike to do good, and a more blessed thing to give than to receive,

Acts xx. 35 ; as God giveth to all, and receiveth of none ; but still

this redoundeth to men. There are opera cultus, the fourth sort of

works, works of worship ; internal, as humbling our soul, repenting of

our sins, and asking pardon ; these are good works indeed, but such as

imply our misery and imperfection. External, as prayer, hearing, and

reading, and other acts of communion with God ; but when we give

thanks, this is more noble. In other duties, God is bestowing some-

thing on us ; but here, in our way, we bestow something upon God.

In prayer, as beggars ; in hearing, as scholars and disciples, we come

to expect something from him. Here we come to put honour upon

God ; in our way it is a kind of recompense, or paying our debts to

him, by word or deed.

Now the reasons why men are so backward to this work are —

1. Because we have so little of the love of God. Self-love puts us

upon supplication, but the love of God upon praise and thanksgiving.

It is a token of great love to praise God without ceasing. We are

eager to have blessings, and then forget to return and give God the

glory.

2. And partly neglect of observation. We do not gather up matter

of thanksgiving : Col, ii. 4, ' Continue in prayer, and watch in the same,

with thanksgiving.' We should continually observe God's answers and

visits of love, manifestations of himself to the world. The reason,

then, why we have no more pleasure in praising God is, because we

observe not so needfully as we should his mercy and truth fulfilled.

(Secondly, To frequency and constancy therein. Frequency in this

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duty doth not beget a satiety and loathing, but rather a greater delight

to continue in it. But here arise two questions : —

Quest. 1. What time must be necessarily spent in acts of worship

and adoration, prayer, praise, and immediate converse with God ?

Ans. 1. It is a truth that our whole time must be given to God, for

a Christian is a dedicated thing, a living sacrifice, Kom. xii. 1. Now

the beast offered in sacrifice with all the appurtenances was God's ; a

Christian, by the consent of his own vows, is not master of anything.

After a vow of all, we must not keep back part, as did Ananias and

Sapphira. A Christian hath given his whole self, time, and strength to

God.

2. Though our whole time be given to God, yet for several uses and

purposes. God's service is not of one sort, and he is served in our

callings as well as in our worship. Man in paradise was to dress the

garden, Gen. ii. 15, as well as to contemplate God. Common actions

may become sacred by their end and use : Isa. xxiii. 18, ' And her

merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.'

3. These several duties must not interfere and clash one with

another, for God's commands are not contrary, but subordinate. We

must not so attend upon religion as to neglect the service of our gene-

ration, as instruments of God's providence ; nor suffer the lean kine to

devour the fat, the world to encroach upon religion.

4. The particular seasons for each duty are not determined and set

down in scripture.

[1.] Partly because God trusteth love, and Avill see whether we have

a mind to cavil and wrangle and dispute away duties, rather than prac-

tise them.

[2.] And partly because he would leave something to the conduct of

his Spirit, and the choice of spiritual wisdom : Ps. cxii. 5, ' A good

man will guide his affairs with discretion.'

[3.] And partly because men's occasions and conditions are different,

and he would not have his law to be a snare.

[4.] And partly because there are so many occasions to praise God,

that if we do not want a heart, we will be much and frequent in this

duty.

5. Though there be no express rules, there is enough to prevent care-

lessness and looseness. God calleth to us in very large and comprehen-

sive terms, 'alwaj's/ 'continually,' ' and in everything.' The example

of the saints who night and day were praising God : ' Paul and Silas

at midnight sang praises to God/ Acts xvi. 29. So Ps. cxix. 62, ' At

midnight will I rise to give thanks to thee, because of thy righteous

judgments.' And in the text, ' Seven times a day.' Besides, there are

daily solemn services, personal and domestic, to be performed, Mat.

vi. 11 ; ' Watching daily at my gates,' Pro v. viii. 34. Morning and

evening they were to offer a lamb, Num. xxviii. 4.

6. There are general hints and limits enough to become 1 love : Ps.

lxxi. 14, ' But I will hope continually, and will praise thee yet more

and more.' Enough to keep the heart in good plight, and maintain

faith and hope in God, and keep up a spiritual intercourse of com-

munion with God by daily offering up prayers and praises to him.

1 So in original. — Ed.

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Quest. 2. Whether it be convenient to state and fix a time ?

David had his set times, so had Daniel ; and surely, all occasions,

opportunities, and abilities considered, it may be a help to us, and make

the spiritual life more orderly, to have set, stated, fixed times for the

performance of this duty.

Thirdly, To suit God's word and works together, laws and judg-

ments : Eom. i. 18, ' God hath revealed his wrath against all ungod-

liness and unrighteousness ;' Heb. ii.2, ' Every transgression and every

disobedience received a just recompense of reward.' Deliverances and

promises fetch all out of the covenant : Ps. cxxviii. 5, ' The Lord shall

bless thee out of Zion ; ' that relateth to the covenant made to the

church ; this checketh atheism, sweeteneth our duties, allayeth our

fears, and resolveth our doubts, and helpeth us in the delightful ex-

ercise of praising God.

SEBMON CLXXIX.

Great peace have they thai love thy law, and nothing shall offend

them. — Ver. 165.

All that live in this world find this life a warfare, Job vii. 1 ; much

more must the godly expect difficulties and conflicts: Ps. xxxiv. 19,

'Many are the troubles of the righteous.' To the eye of flesh, no

condition seemeth worse and more obnoxious to misery than the con-

dition of those that serve God ; yet in reality none are in a better

estate ; whatever happeneth, they are at peace, built on the corner-

stone which God hath laid in Zion, and therefore in all the commo-

tions and troubles of the world they are safe. This is that which

David here observeth.

In the former verse he had told us that it was his custom to praise

God seven times a day for his righteous judgments, and now he

showeth the reason, namely, from the ordinary course and tenor of

these judgments, or dispensation of his providence, which was to give

peace to them that keep his law, ' Great peace,' &c.

In these words you have —

1. A privilege, great peace have they.

2. The qualification, that love thy law.

3. The effect, nothing shall offend them.

Let me open these branches.

First, The privilege is peace, and that is threefold — (1.) External ;

(2.) Internal; (3.) Eternal.

1. External, in the house, the city, or country, and societies where

we live. In this sense it is taken, Ps. exxii. 6, 7, ' Pray for the peace

of Jerusalem ; they shall prosper that love thee ; peace be within thy

walls.' Now this is not all that is meant here, for this is a common

benefit, though often vouchsafed for the sake of them that love God ;

as music cannot be heard alone, though intended but to one person,

yet others share with him in the benefit of it. Or if you understand

it of his own personal peace, or being at amity with men, they do

not always enjoy that. God's best children are often forced to be

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men of contention, that is, passively ; they are contended Jwith and

troubled in the world, Jer. xv. 10. And therefore the apostle saith,

Eom. xii. 18, 'If it be possible, as much as lieth in yon, live peaceably

with all men.' It is not always to be had, but we should endeavour

to live in peace with all men.

2. There is internal peace, arising either from justification, Rom.

v. 1 ; or sanctification : Isa. xxxii. 17, ' The fruit of righteousness is

peace;' or from contentment with our condition, Phil. iv. 7. By

justification we have peace, when God is reconciled and made a

friend ; by sanctification we have peace, when we walk evenly with

God ; and by contentment we have peace, when our affections are

calmed and rightly ordered, or set upon more worthy and noble

objects, so that we are not troubled at the loss of outward things.

These are the ingredients necessary to eternal peace, which is, I suppose,

principally intended here — inward comfort and contentment of mind.

3. There is eternal peace, that happy and quiet estate which we shall

enjoy in heaven, when we are above all desertions, temptations, and

the trouble of hostile incursions, when we shall never have frown

more from God's face, when our sun shall always shine without cloud

or night, when our strife is over, and our enemies that do infest

us now are all overcome. There is no Satan to tempt us, no serpent

in the upper paradise, no world to trouble or divert us ; for all the

wicked are bound hand and foot, and cast into unquenchable fire ;

there is no flesh to clog us, for all is perfect. This glorious estate

is called peace in scripture ; as Ptom. ii. 10, ' God will give glory,

honour, peace to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and

also to the Gentile ;' and Eom. viii. G, ' To be carnally mind is death,

but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' By death is meant

the torments of hell, and by life and peace the joys of heaven. And,

speaking of the blessedness of those that die in the Lord, he saith, Isa.

lvii. 2, ' They shall enter into peace.' Now this cannot principally be

intended here, for the man of God speaketh of what we have, not of

what we hope for ; and he speaks of God's righteous dispensations

here in the world, for which he praised him ; and therefore it is meant

of our peace here ; but yet it is the sense of peace and happiness we

shall have in heaven that hath an influence upon the tranquillity of

our hearts and minds here.

Secondly, Let me a little explain the qualification, ' that love thy

law.' The word ' law ' is sometimes taken in a limited sense for the

decalogue or moral law ; or else, more generally, for the whole doc-

trine of the covenant, the whole tenor of religion, law, and gospel. So

here and elsewhere ; as ' The isles shall wait for thy law,' Isa. xlii. 4 ;

that is, shall readily receive and embrace his doctrine. So Dan. vi. 5,

'We shall not find occasion against this Daniel, unless we find it in

the law of his God;' that is, in his religion. So Ps. i. 2, 'But his

delight is the law of the Lord.' By the law of the Lord is meant the

whole word of God. Well, now, it is said they love his law ; not only

keep it, but love it. A child of God is sometimes described by his

faith, sometimes by his hope or by his fear, but more often by his

love, that commanding and swaying affection that sets the whole soul

a-work. They love thy law ; there is emphasis in that.

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Thirdly, Here is the consequent, 'Nothing shall offend them.' The

Septuagint renders it ovk ecrrcv avToh o-icdvSaXov, they have not

scandals, they have their troubles, but no stumbling-blocks: 1 John ii.

10, ' There is no occasion of stumbling in them.' There is the same

word used there which the Septuagint useth here. Scandal is either

active or passive, given or taken ; that which is taken out of weak-

ness, as young professors, or out of pride and malice ; they interpreted

many things in a worse sense when they knew it might be interpreted

in a better. Now, nothing shall scandalise them. Peace with God

prevents the scandals of weakness, and love to the law prevents scan-

dals out of pride and malice. Nothing shall scandalise them. Many

things are apt to scandalise men, as God's judgments, for which David

did so often every day and so solemnly praise God. But they that

love his law, and thereby obtain great peace, they will not stumble

at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires and

expectations, because they have a sure covenant, that is, a sure rule,

and sure promises. They are not scandalised by the miscarriages of

men; they can distinguish between the art and the artificer; if the artist

fail, the art is not to be blamed. The reproaches that are cast upon

the ways of God, it doth not offend them, for they have found God in

that way others speak evil of. Gold is gold though cast into the dirt ;

dogs will bark at the moon when it shineth brightest. Would any

man be troubled if a cripple mock him for going uprightly ? Shall

we leave the ways of God, wherein we have found comfort and peace,

because others speak against them ? He is not offended at this. But

that which is meant here is such an offence as turneth them from God,

otherwise a good man may fall and stumble, but not into final apos-

tasy, and he is usually kept from lesser offences. A child of God may

be offended in lesser cases, but not so offended as to fall and break his

neck.

But why is it called great peace ? It noteth the excellency of this

kind of peace ; it is not only peace, but great peace, such as is rich

and glorious: Phil. iv. 7, ' A peace that passeth all understanding ;' or

it may note the degree and quantity of it, abundance of peace, as it is,

Ps. xxix. 11, and Ps. Ixxii. 3 ; I speak peace to them that are afar

off; or peace like a river, Isa. xlviii. 18, or pure peace.

Three points I shall handle —

Doct. 1. That it is the property of God's children to love his law.

Doct. 2. Those that love the law shall have great peace.

Doct. 3. This blessed peace niaketh a man hold on in the way of

obedience, whatever impediments, stumbling-blocks, or discourage-

ments he meets withal.

First point, That it is the property of God's children, not only to

keep his law, but to love his law.

This is often spoken of in this psalm ; now I prove it thus : —

Reason 1. They love God, and therefore they love his law : how

doth that follow? The love that passeth between God and us

is not an arbitrary love of equals, but the necessary dutiful respect

that inferiors owe to their superiors, such as children owe to their

father, servants to their master, subjects to their prince and governor.

Therefore it is not a fellow-like familiarity, but a dutiful submission

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and subjection to God's authority ; and therefore, if we love God, we

will love his law. It is God's condescension that he will use us like

friends in regard of communion, and converse with us, as Abraham was

called God's friend, James ii. 23 ; yet we are but servants, though we

are used like friends, and there is a debt and bond of duty lying upon

us ; and so if we bear any respect to God, it must be determined by

our respect to his laws, and demonstrated by our obedience to them,

not by acts of ordinary courtesy and kindness. This is often spoken

of : John xiv. 15, ' If ye love me, keep my commandments ; ' and ver.

21, ' He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that

loveth me ; ' John xv. 14, ' Ye are my friends, if you do whatsoever I

command you.' Though none condescendeth to such acts of kindness

and friendship as God in Christ hath done, yet still he standeth upon his

sovereignty : ' If ye love me, keep my commandments.' God's love to

us is indeed a love of bounty, but our love is a love of duty and service.

I have not yet done with this reason. It necessarily follows from the

love of God, though you abstract him from the notion of a sovereign

and lawgiver, and should love him only because of the excellency of his

nature. Now thus I argue : The same reasons that carry us to love

God, do carry us also to love his law ; for he that loveth God, will love

anything of God, wherever he finds it. He will love his word, he will

love his saints ; but chiefly his word, for that is most to be loved, because

that hath most of God in it. The law is a copy of his holiness ; the

tract of God is in the creatures, there is his vestigium. His image is

in his saints, they resemble his divine qualities, but his most lively print

and character is upon his word. The image of God in his saints is

obscured by their infirmities, but the law of God is perfect, there is no

blemish there ; this is the fairest copy and draught of his holiness.

Nay, once more, in this argument abstract the consideration of his

authority and the perfection of his being, yet our obligations to God

as our benefactor will enforce this love to his word, and make it sweet

to us, because it is the letter of our friend and benefactor, and the

signification of his will to whom we owe life and breath and all things;

and therefore, though the law did not deserve to be loved for its own

sake, yet it should be sweet for his sake from whom it cometh. He

hath evidenced much love to us, as we are creatures ; but much more

love in Christ, as we are sinners ; and it should be acceptable to us

upon his account. Love and gratitude will constrain us to do his will

and regard his commands, 2 Cor. v. 14. If we have any sense of our

great obligations to him, it must needs be so.

Beason 2. God's children find such an excellency in his law that

they must needs love it. As it is —

1. A plain clear word, that doth fully discover the will of God, and

not leave duty to our own uncertain guesses. It puts duty into a

plain stated course, how we may come to be blessed for ever more ;

Ps. cxix. 105, ' Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.'

Light is pleasant, but darkness is uncomfortable. When Aristotle was

asked why all men do love the light, his answer was, That was the ques-

tion of a blind man ; sense discovereth sufficiently why we should love

the light. Certainly if you ask why men do not love the word of God,

it is because the god of this world hath blinded their eyes, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

VEK. 165.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 203

2. It is a good word, because it is suited to our necessities ; so we

read, Heb. vi. 5, ' If so be ye have tasted the good word.' Is food good

when a man is hungry ? Is drink good when a man is thirsty ? Then

the word of God is good, for it suiteth with the necessities of our souls,

as these things do with our bodies: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful say-

ing, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the

world to save sinners.' The gospel is a doctrine fitted for hungry con-

sciences. If our inward senses were not benumbed, and we were not

so Christ-glutted and gospel-glutted as we are, oh ! how precious would

these tenders of grace be to our souls !

3. It is a pure word ; so David gives the reason in the 140th verse

of this psalm, ' Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.'

Hypocrites will now and then relish the comforts of the gospel, be

affected with the word, because it speaketh such good things to poor

sinners ; but God's children love the word for its purity and holiness.

It meeteth with every sin, and directeth them to every duty necessary

for the enjoyment of the blessed God. It is not comfort only must

draw our love, but holiness. This argueth the life and power of grace,

when we would not have the law of God less strict and holy than it is,

but love it for this very reason, because it is pure, strict, and holy.

You would not think a beggar loves you because he liketh your alms,

but he is loath to stay with you for your service, and live under the

orderly government of your family. Most men's love to the word is

such, they delight in the comforts of it as an alms, but they hate the

duty of it as a task ; they had rather let the duties of it alone, if it

could be without danger, and forbear them if they durst. Oh ! but

when your hearts consent to the purity of the law, and you would

choose that life which it points out unto you rather than any life in

the world, or the most absolute freedom that the heart of man can

imagine, so that you love your master the more because he hath ap-

pointed you such work, this is true affection to God and his word :

you had rather live in holiness than sin, if you had your freest choice ;

it is a sign then you love holiness for holiness' sake, and admire that

in the word which is most worthy, its strictness.

4. It is a sublime word : ver. 129, ' Thy testimonies are wonderful,

therefore doth my soul keep them/ Here are excellent truths, glorious

mysteries, fit to exercise the sharpest Avits in the world, a study fitter

for angels than men, 1 Peter i. 12. I do not speak this to stir up

curiosity, which is a moral itch, a lust of the mind, and nothing more

opposite to true love than lust, but to raise men to a due esteem of the

scriptures, which they are wont to contemn for their simplicity and

plainness ; it is full of high mysteries, though it may be read with

profit by simple people, or any who desire knowledge. Sensual men,

that are drowned in worldly delights, only look to the comfort of the

animal life, and value all things as that is gratified ; but those that

look to the spiritual life, and the ennobling of their souls, they will find

the only sublime wisdom in the word of God : Deut. iv. 6, ' Keep these

statutes and do them ; for this is your wisdom and understanding in the

sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely

this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' What pitiful

notions had the philosophers, and the wisest of the heathen, concern-

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ing God, and angels, and providence, and the creation of the world,

and the souls of men, and the happiness of the other world, and the

way to attain it ! When the heathen came to be first acquainted with

the Jews, they wondered at their wisdom and skill. These things

would beget admiration in us if we did meditate on them, and con-

tented not ourselves with a slight and customary rehearsal of them.

Here are deep mysteries to exercise the greatest wits, and therefore

consider them more.

5. It is a sure word : Ps. xix. 7, ' The testimonies of the Lord are

sure, making wise the simple.' These directions may be safely relied

upon, and will not disappoint us ; for they are not the guesses of

deceived men, nor the collections only of the most observing and wisest-

men, or the result of their infallible experiences, but inspiration of the

infallible God ; and therefore a sensible heart, that knoweth what it is

to live in a troublesome world, and hath been exercised with doubts,

knoweth the comfort of a sure rule and sure promises. Oh ! what a

comfort is this in the midst of the uncertainties of the present life !

Reason 3. There is no keeping the law without loving the law.

There is a keeping the commandments by way of defence, and by way

of obedience ; a keeping of them by way of preservation, when we

will not suffer them to be violated or wrested from us by others ; and

a keeping of them by way of observation, when we are mindful of

them, are careful to observe them ourselves. This latter is the mean-

ing of the scripture notion of keeping the law. Now this cannot be

without love ; nothing can hold the heart to it but love. What bonds

will you cast upon yourselves ! But if a temptation come, you will

break them all, as Sampson did the cords wherewith he was bound.

It is not your promises, vows, covenants, resolutions ; not your former

experiences of comfort, when put to no trial ; all is nothing to love.

To evidence this to you, three things are needful — labour, valour, and

self-denial.

1. To keep the commandments is a laborious thing, and requireth

great diligence. Now love is that disposition that maketh us laborious

and diligent. If anything keep a man to his work, it is love. Labour

and love are often put together : Heb. vi. 10, ' God is not unrighteous,

to forget your work and labour of love ;' 1 Thes. i. 3, ' Your work of

faith, and labour of love.' It is not a slothful and idle affection, but

will make a man take any pains, and endure any toil, nescit amor

molimina — love never findeth difficulties. The reason why they object

difficulties is because they love not. The church of Ephesus, when

she lost her first love, she left her first works, Rev. ii. 4. Our Lord

Jesus, when he had work for Peter to do, gageth his heart upon this

point : John xxi. 15, ' Simon Peter, lovest thou me ? feed my sheep,

feed my lambs.' No man can endure the toil of the ministry, and

the many troubles and difficulties he meeteth with in the discharge

of it, without love to Christ. It is love sets all the wheels in the soul

a-going.

2. To keep the commandments requireth spirit and courage, not

only the labour of an ox, but the animosity and courage of a lion ; for

we are not only to work, but fight and contend for our duty against

the enemies of our salvation. Now the most valorous and courageous

VER. 165.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 205

affection is love. A cowardly lover is a monster, one that hath all

liver and no heart. The poets in their fictions ascribe the valour of the

person whom they would represent as noble and heroical to the strength

of their love. Certainly the heroic acts of the martyrs came all from

love. Others will not be at the charge of keeping the commandments

of God that lie cross to their profits and pleasures ; but love will cause

us to do the will of God, whatever it cost us. Yea, it is loath to serve

God with that which cost nothing : Cant. viii. 6, 7, ' Love is strong

as death, many waters cannot quench love.' Death conquereth the

stoutest, but cannot conquer love : ' They loved not their lives to the

death,' Kev. xii. 11. The waters of affliction cannot quench it, no

threatenings, no promises can quench it. Love will not be bribed

from Christ, nor frighted from Christ. You will be assaulted on both

sides, with hopes and fears, but nothing shall fright or allure the soul

from Christ.

3. To keep the commandments there needeth much self-denial and

submission, that he may have a heart to stoop to the least intimation

of the will of God, though it be against your own will, and against

your own carnal sense and inclination and interest. A man can never

keep the commandments till he thus deny himself ; therefore the world

wondereth what is the reason that men do so submit against their

humour and interest. And say, If this be to be vile, I will be more

vile ; as holy David said : nothing can do this but love. When a

man loveth you, you have the keys of his heart, you can open and shut

it when you please. Sampson like a child submitted to Delilah, because

of his love to her. So Gen. xxxiv., Hamor and Shechem submitted to

any terms, to be circumcised, because of the delight the young man

had to Dinah ; the father loved the son, and the son loved Dinah,

and therefore both submitted to that hateful, painful ceremony.

Jacob's service for Rachel seemed but a few years because of his love

to her, Gen. xxix. 20. So if we love the law of God, we will submit

to the duties of it, against the hair and bent of our hearts.

Use 1. Examination.

1. Do we receive the truth of God in the love thereof? Do we

embrace the offers of Jesus Christ heartily? Acts ii. 41, ' They re-

ceived the word gladly.' Do you keep up your relish of the gospel,

delight to hear of Christ, to read of Christ, to meditate of Christ, and

the doctrine of salvation ? not one part, but all ? Ps. i. 2, ' His delight

is in the law of God ;' the whole law. Ungodly men will catch at

promises, seem to show a love to these, but grudge at the mandatory

part of the word. Do you delight when it is pressed upon you, when

you are warned of your danger ? know most of your duty, and the

way how to attain your blessedness ? Do you love it most when you

feel the tragical effects of it ? As the apostle saith, ' The command-

ment came, and sin revived, and I died.'

2. Do you heartily take Christ's yoke upon you, and frame your-

selves to practise what he hath required of you ? They that love the

law cannot rest in mere speculations, and be careless in the duties

required of them. Love cannot be hidden, but it will break forth into

action. If it be in your hearts, it will break out in your lives : Ps.

xl. 8, ' The law of God is in my heart.' You will make conscience

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of duty, 1 John ii. 4. Love is found to be solid and real when we are

tender of Christ's laws ; in vain else do we talk of the new birth, of

the work of grace, or having an interest in Christ, and the like, unless

we keep his law.

3. Do you practise it willingly, and without grudging ? 1 John v.

3, ' His commandments are not grievous.' They that love the law

will not count the work tedious. God doth not look to the work,

praying, hearing, strict observing his ordinances, or Lord's day ; but

minds the will for the deed, not the deed for the will, whether willingly

or unwillingly. God dealeth with us as rational creatures. If your

ox draw your plough, and your ass carry his burden, you care not

much whether it be done willingly or unwillingly ; but God dealeth

with us as obliged, and looketh that love should constrain us, and

influence our actions ; and God dealeth with us as renewed creatures,

that have a suitableness to their work, Heb. viii. 10 ; Ps. xl. 2, when

rather from him than with him he delights greatly in God's command-

ments ; Ps. cxii. 1, delights to know, believe, and obey God's word;

and God expects it from us, because of the pleasures that do accom-

pany w r ell-doing, Pro v. iii. 17. The speculation of a worthy truth

affects the mind, but practice doth more, as more intimately accquainted

with it.

Use 2. It shows —

1. How far they are from the temper of God's people that dispute

away duties rather than practise them, cavil at their work rather than

readily accept it.

2. They do not love the law that are always full of excuses, and

pretend occasions to neglect the service of God ; excuses are always a

sign of a naughty heart. The sinner's non vacat is indeed non placet:

Luke xiv. 18, ' They all began to make excuses.' If we did not want

a heart, we should not want an occasion to manifest our respects to

God.

3. It shows how far they are from the temper of God's people that

are easily discouraged with difficulties; love will make us break

through all, 2 Cor. v. 14. Love hath a constraining force, counts

nothing too dear to be parted with for God's sake ; they that are weary

of well-doing, they are out of their element; as they in Malachi 1

inquired, When will the sabbath be over ? They that brought but a

sorry lamb, cried out, Oh, what a weariness ! Again, they that love

the law are not troubled about the strictness of the law, but the

unsuitableness of their own hearts. God's children are grieved for

that weariness and uncomfortableness they find in God's service ; glad

of any enlargement of heart. Lust is grievous, but not the command-

ment : Kom. vii. 24, ' wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver

me (not from the law, but) from the body of this death ?' But others,

when the truth shineth round about them, they receive it not in the

love thereof.

Doct. 2. Those that love the law shall have great peace. Let me

prove this.

1. They shall have peace.

2. Great peace.

First, They shall have peace.

- Amos. — Ed.

VEE. 165.] SERMONS UPON PSALM. CXIX. 207

1. Because the God of peace is their God ; they are assured of his

love and favourable acceptance. Tranquillus Deus tranquillat omnia —

if God be with us, who can be against us ? If he smileth on us, it is

enough, though all the world should be against us ; for it is God's

wrath that niaketh us miserable, and God's love that ruaketh us

happy.

2. Jesus Christ, who is the Prince of peace, is their Saviour, Isa.

ix. 9. He hath made articles of peace between God the Father and

us, and drawn them into a covenant of grace, called the covenant of

his peace, Isa. liv. 10 ; and this founded upon his blood, which is the

price given to purchase our peace, and to set all things at rights

between God and us, Col. i. 20 ; Isa. liii. 5. Having made peace

between God and us. No less would serve the turn completely to

satisfy the justice of God for our wrong, and to purchase his favour

for us.

3. The Spirit, who is a Spirit of peace, Gal. v. 22 ; it is one of his

fruits ; he worketh it in us as a sanctifier and as a comforter.

[1.] As a spirit of sanctification he doth dispossess Satan, and sub-

clueth that rebellious disposition that is naturally in us against God,

and maketh us accept the offer of friendship and reconciliation with

God, and to yield up ourselves servants to righteousness, unto holiness,

and then accordingly to walk as people that are at amity with God.

(1.) Your first resignation in faith and repentance is a ground of

peace, and wrought in us by the Spirit : Horn. xv. 13, ' Now the God

of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound

in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' Together with our

faith, and in and by our faith, the Holy Ghost worketh this joy and

peace ! When we come to sue out our pardon in his name, to receive

the atonement, and to resign up ourselves to God's use, then is the

foundation laid : ' Give the hand to the Lord,' 2 Chron. xxx. 8.

(2.) This peace is confirmed by holy walking in the Spirit, or per-

fecting holiness through the power of the Holy Ghost: Gal. vi. 16,

' As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon

them ; ' Jer. vi. 16, ' Ask for the good old way, and walk therein, and

you shall find peace to your souls/ Keep close to God and you will

have peace, otherwise not. Peace with God and thine own conscience

is a very tender thing ; you had need be chary of it. If you grieve

the Spirit, you will find it to your bitter cost. When sinful dispositions

are indulged and nourished, our peace is beclouded, and hangeth on

uncertain terms.

[2.] As a comforter, whose office it is to give us a sense of God's

love, and to help conscience to judge of our state and actions. The Spirit

representeth God as a Father, and showeth us what things are given

us of God, and dissipateth and scattereth all the black thoughts that

are in the soul : Isa. lvii. 19, ' I create the fruit of the lips to be peace.'

Peace is a sovereign plaister, God maketh it stick, and then all the

world cannot deprive them of this peace. Creation and annihilation

belong to the same power ; the world can never give, nor take ; it is

God's work, and he will maintain it.

Secondly, It shall be great peace, as to the nature and degree of it,

as was before explained.

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1. For the nature of it ; it is not an ordinary peace, but of a higher

nature: John xiv. 27, 'My peace I leave with you, my peace I give

unto you ; not as the world giveth, give 1 unto you : \* let not your

hearts be troubled.' Wherein doth it differ from the world's peace?

The world's peace is oftentimes in sin, a concord in evil, a lethargy por-

tending sadder troubles ; but this is a holy peace. Prov. iii. 17. That

is a crazy peace that is soon broken and distorted, depending on the

uncertainty of present affairs and the mutable affections of men ; the

more secure they are, the sadder trouble at hand : but this is an ever-

lasting peace, which we have now in the way, and shall have in death,

and then for ever. The world's peace is outward ; it is but at best a

freedom from outward troubles, when they are at enmity with God ;

but this is a peace with God himself, Prov. xvi. 7. The world's peace

pleaseth the outward man, but this is a solid soul-satisfying peace, a

peace that guardeth heart and mind, Phil. iv. 7.

2. For the degree, it is many times in a great measure enjoyed ; it

may be more or less, as an interest in God's favour is more or less

in us. And it is not perfect in this life ; there may be clouds and

interruptions, but as our holiness increaseth, so doth our peace ; a little

holiness, a little peace ; but they that love thy law, have great peace.

Object. How have God's children grea/t peace ? None seem more

troubled and harassed with outward afflictions, nor walk more mourn-

fully than they do.

Ans. It is true this peace doth not exclude trouble from carnal men

in the world ; they may have little outward peace, yet they shall have

as much of that as God seeth good for them, Job" v. 23, 24 ; but in-

ward peace, which is peculiar to them. They have God for their

friend, are quieted with a true sense and apprehension of his love and

favour to them. It is true, as to this inward peace, God's children may

sometimes be without it ; they that love the law have a greater sense

of sin than others. Wicked men swallow sins without remorse ;

but they are very apprehensive of displeasing God. But we must

distinguish between the time of settling this peace, and when it is

settled. For a time they may walk sadly ; their peace is not grown

up ; light is sown for the righteous. Many times they sow in tears,

but reap in joy. ►Sometimes their love to the law is intermitted, so

their peace may be interrupted : But their worst condition is better

than a carnal man's best, as the darkest cloudy day is brighter than

the brightest night ; there is some comfort and staying upon God in

the worst condition.

Use 1. Let us from hence see the sad condition of carnal men. This

clause, ' love thy law,' is exclusive, and confineth it to one sort of men.

The unjustified, the unsanctified want this peace. Godsaith of them,

they should not enter into my rest, Ps. xcv. 11. The rest is begun in

this life in reconciliation with God and peace of conscience, and per-

fected in an everlasting refreshment in that to come. Their sins are

not pardoned, and therefore continually fear ; they have often refused

God's peace, and therefore cannot enjoy comfort with any security, nor

bear troubles with any patience and quiet of mind, nor come into God's

presence with any cheerfulness, nor wait for eternal rest with any

certain hope: 'There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,' Isa.

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xlviii. 22 ; Ps. lvii. 20, 21. It is not allowed to wicked men, nor

vouchsafed to them. It is true they may have a peace, but it is either

in sin or from sin ; they do not mind the condition of their souls, a

blind presumption that merely cometh from God's forbearance, or

worldly happiness in prosperity. Carnal men seem to be in as great

quietness as the children of God ; as the deep sea in a calm, which

seemeth to be as quiet as other waters, until a storm and tempest doth

arise, then troubled, and cannot rest.

Use 2. To persuade us to love the law of God by this argument,

because we shall have great peace ; for the promise is made to this

love.

But you will say, How must we show love to the law of God, that

we may obtain this effect ?

I answer — Practise the duties it calleth for in order to peace.

1. Accept the articles of peace, that are proclaimed between God

and mankind in and through Christ. Eph. ii. 17, there is peace

preached, not only to them that are afar off, but to them that are

nigh ; there is not only a price paid, but an offer made. Embrace it,

lay hold upon it by faith ; God is in good earnest with you, 2 Cor. v.

20. Oh ! love this good word ; it is the gladdest tidings that ever

sounded in the ears of lost sinners. Now is your time, agree with your

adversary while he is in the way, before you be cast into prison, Luke

xii. 58. If you lose this opportunity, and do not embrace the offered

friendship, God will be exceeding angry: Heb. ii. 3, ' How shall we

escape if we neglect so great salvation ? ' 2 Chron. xxx. 8, ' Therefore

give the hand to the Lord.'

2. Perform the duty of thankfulness which God requires, Mat. xi.

29. Peace is the fruit of sanctification, as well as justification; it is

not to be found elsewhere, Isa. xxxii. 17.

3. Be much in communion with God and trading with heaven :

' Acquaint thyself with God,' Job xxii. 21.

4. Be tender of your peace, when it is once settled, of doing anything

that may cause war between God and the soul, Ps. lviii. 8. Take heed

of venturing your peace for the vanities of the world, those sinful and

foolish courses which will lay you open to God's wrath and displeasure :

Ps. xxxvii. 11, ' The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight

themselves in the abundance of peace.'

SERMON CLXXX.

Great 'peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend

them. — VePv. 165.

I now come to the effect, ' Nothing shall offend them.' The Septuagint,

ovk earcv avTois GK&vhaXov, there is no scandal in them. The apostle

John applieth the same phrase or form of speech to him that loveth

his brother, ovk eaTiv iv avrS) aKtivSakov, there is no occasion of

stumbling in him. The meaning is, they shall not be in danger of

vol. ix. . " o

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those snares and temptations which the world is full of, and which

frequently bring other men to sin and ruin ; or nothing shall wound

or hurt them, or cause them to fall in their journey to heaven.

Doct. That the love of God's law is a great means to carry a believer

straight on his way to heaven, whatever temptations he hath to the

contrary.

Here I shall inquire —

1. What scandals and offences are.

2. How a believer is preserved.

First, What scandals and offences are? I answer — Scandals

literally signifieth temptations, or inducements to sin, any stumbling-

block or hindrance laid in a man's way, by which the passenger is

detained or diverted, or at which, if he be not careful, he is apt to

stumble or fall. Spiritually it signifieth anything that may discourage

or divert us from our duty to God, or may occasion us to fall, to the

great loss or ruin of our souls.

Now, concerning these scandals or offences, I shall give you these

distinctions. With respect to the subject, there are three sorts of

scandals: — (1.) Taken, but not given; (2.) Given, but not taken;

(3.) Both given and taken.

1. There is offence taken where none is given. Thus Christ

himself, in his person, sufferings, doctrine, may be an offence to the

carnal and unbelieving world. In his person, as he is said to be, 1

Peter ii. 8, ' A stone of stumbling and a rock of offence to them that

stumbled at the word, being disobedient, whereunto they were also

appointed.' He that is to the believer a corner-stone elect and

precious, is to the obstinate prejudiced unbeliever, with allusion to

those that travel by land, a stone of stumbling, to those that 'travel

by sea, a rock of offence ; his slender appearance was an offence to

them. As to his sufferings, it is said, 1 Cor. i. 23, that ' Christ

crucified is to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolish-

ness.' They had not a Messiah to their mind, though such an one as

the scriptures had before described. His doctrine : Mat. xv. 12, ' His

disciples said to him, Knowest thou not that the pharisees were

offended when they heard this saying ? ' Again, John vi. 61, when

they murmured at his saying, Except ye eat my flesh, 'Doth this

offend you ? ' Flesh and blood are apt to stumble in God's plainest

ways : at the doctrine of God, which is strict and spiritual ; the

worship of God, that is simple and without pomp ; the dispensations

of God, in chastising and afflicting his people ; they are all an offence

to carnal and worldly men, and so through their sin prove an impedi-

ment to the success of the gospel. But this offence is causeless,

and without any just ground ; and without special grace, when it

prevaileth with men, will prove their eternal ruin and destruction.

God never intended to satisfy men's lusts and humours ; truth must be

taught, whoever be displeased ; therefore all our care must be to avoid

this kind of offence : Mat, xii. 6, ' Blessed is he that is not offended

in me,' that doth not stumble at Christ because of the cross, nor the

holiness of his doctrine, nor the simplicity of his worship, nor the

despicableness of his followers, nor the troubles that attend his service.

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2. Offence may be given where none is taken, as when men counsel

others to evil, or reproach the holy ways of God ; as when Peter

dissuaded Christ from suffering : Mat. xvi. 23, ' Get thee behind me,

Satan, for thou art a-KaSaXov, an offence to me.' It was scandalum

■in se, though not ratione eventus, — not that Christ was offended by it ;

when the heart is guarded against evil counsel, or the infection of evil

example. So for reproaches, they are a means of betraying the soul

into sin, and prejudicing it against godliness ; but the godly are well

fortified, they can see loveliness in such ways as are hated and dis-

countenanced in the world. As David : Ps. cxix. 127, ' They have

made void thy law, therefore I love thy commandments above gold,

above fine gold ; ' and Moses, Heb. xi. 26, ' Esteemed the reproach

of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt/ They are no

more moved at the world's scorn than a man that is straight and

upright would be at the mocks of cripples because he doth not limp

and walk after their fashion ; they can see honour in disgrace, and

beauty in God's despised ways.

3. Offences also may be both given and taken ; as when one pro-

voketh, and another is provoked to evil, enticed by false doctrine,

corrupt counsel, or evil example. False doctrine : Mat. xv. 14, ' The

blind lead the blind, and both fall into the ditch ; ' not one, but both,

the blind follower as well as the blind guide. Or by corrupt counsel,

as Ahab was seduced by the false prophets, 1 Kings xxii., and Amnon

by his friend Jonadab was drawn to incest, 2 Sam. xiii. 6 ; he as

readily obeyeth the other's wicked counsel, as he was to give it. So

for evil example ; it secretly tainteth us. The prophet complaineth,

Isa. vi. 5, ' I am a man of polluted lips, and I dwell among people

of polluted lips.' It is hard to avoid the contagion of iniquities with

which we do daily and familiarly converse, as to live in an infected

air without tairt, or to walk in the sun and not be insensibly tanned.

We leaven one another by our coldness and deadness in religion. It

is hard to be fresh in salt waters, to live among offences and not be

offended.

Secondly, With respect to the object or matter of it. A scandal

may be given, dicto aut facto — (1.) In word ; (2.) In deed.

1. In word, by evil counsel or carnal suggestion: Ps. i. 1, ' Blessed

is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.' As

carnal friends and parents that relish not the word of life themselves,

out of prejudice against godliness and holy zeal, dissuade their

children and servants from attending on the exercises of religion, as

praying, hearing, meditation, lest they grow mopish and melancholy,

and lest a zealous minding God's interest should hinder their prefer-

ment, had rather see them lewd than holy ; but, Luke xiv. 26, ' If

any man come to me, and hate not father and mother/ &c. Or by

atheistical, or obscene and carnal discourse : 1 Cor. xv. 53, ' Evil com-

munications corrupt good manners ; ' Eph. v. 4, ' Neither filthiness,

nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient.'

2. In deed, and so three ways : —

[1.] When they do things that are simply unlawful, and so propa-

gate their sin to others by their example : Prow xx. 24, ' Make no

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friendship with an angry man, and with a furious man shalt thou

not go, lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul.' The

violences and furious passions of anger are so uncomely, that a man

would think they should rather affright then allure to imitation ; but

these things insensibly overcome us, and ere a man is aware, he is

tainted.

[2.] By the abuse of Christian liberty to the wrong and hindrance

of others in a way of godliness; as Horn. xiv. 13-15, ' Let no man

put a stumbling-block or an occasion to fall in his brother's way : I

know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus that there is nothing

unclean of itself; but to him that esteemeth anything to be unclean,

to him it is unclean : but if thy brother be grieved with thy meat,

now walkest thou not charitably : destroy not him with thy meat for

whom Christ died ; ' 1 Cor. viii. 10, ' But take heed, lest by any

means this liberty of yours become a stumbling-block to them that

are weak.' We must not commit a sin, or omit a duty to avoid

offence ; yet in indifferent things we may expect from others what is

lawful to do, and forbear it, as conduceth to edification ; for we must

have a care of offending little ones, and therefore must drive according

to their pace, using our liberty as they are able to bear.

[3.] By persecution enforce others against their duty : Mat. xviii. 6,

' But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe on me,

it were better a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he

were drowned in the sea ;' better he did suffer all extremity. Offend-

ing is persecuting, as receiving is countenancing, cherishing, treating

them kindly and tenderly. So Mat. xiii. 21, ' When persecution

ariseth by reason of the word, by and by they are offended;' Mat.

xxiv. 9, 10. This opposing, hating, vexing the people of God is one

way of offence, and very dangerous to those that practise it, however

it succeedeth ; for though they be little ones, little in their own eyes,

little in the esteem of the world, little in regard of outward interest,

and so lie open and liable to offences, little in regard of their spiritual

growth, and so apt to take offence, yet they are dear to the great God,

who is their patron, and will take their quarrel into his own hands ;

and it will be a thousand times better they had been the persecuted

ones than to be the persecutors.

Thirdly, With respect to the double faculty the devil seeketh to

work upon, which is our irascible or concupiscible faculty, our

eschewing or pursuing power ; the flesh with its Trddij ml e-widv^ilai,

Gal. v. 24, it is passions and lusts, what we render affections ; and

these are suited to the temptations that most men are usually over-

come by. Such are the terrors and allurements of the world : the

terrors of the world, that works upon our passions ; the allurements of

the world, that works upon our lusts.

1. The terrors of the world are apt to draw men to dislike God, and

distaste the way of godliness. Certainly by these the devil seeketh to

get us into his power and reach. Therefore it is said, 1 Peter v. 9,

' Whom resist, steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions

are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.' Satan's

temptations are conveyed to the godly through afflictions, hoping by

these to prevail with them to make them quit the truth and their duty

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to Christ, and grow weary of the ways of Grod ; and it doth the more

prevail when they think they are the only sufferers. This should not

be, for the drift of Christianity is to take us off from the hopes

and fears of the world, and a full third part of the scriptures serveth

to comfort us in tribulations and afflictions for the gospel's sake ;

and if we were not exposed to troubles, these would be as unsuit-

able and needless as bladders and arts of swimming were to a man

that standeth on dry land, and never meaneth to go into the deep

waters ; but yet they are a usual stumbling-block to those that have

not overcome the sensual inclination, and are not dead to a worldly

interest.

2. The allurements of the world, or the baits of sense. Present

things have a strange infatuation upon us : 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'And Demas

hath forsaken us, having loved the present world.' The troubles of the

world are not so dangerous as the snares of the world. Though many

be discouraged by troubles, yet many times others are gained by the

patience, courage, and constancy of God's servants in persecutions.

The offence may be more easily disproved as not justifiable ; for men

may have a secret liking of the truth, and a purpose to own it in better

times ; but by the baits of sense men are inveigled and tempted to

dislike religion itself, as contradicting their lusts, and nourish a base

opinion of it in their hearts. In troubles and persecutions there is not

a dislike of religion itself, but of the hard terms upon which it must

be received and cherished. And besides, the mischief is greater.

They that cast off the profession and practice of godliness upon some

great earthly hopes, involve themselves in a more heinous sin than

they that shrink from it out of some great fear ; for those things we

fear, as afflictions, torments, nnd death, they are in themselves de-

structive of our felicity, and therefore it cannot be said how much

nature abhorreth them. But those things which we hope for and desire

are such that nature may easily and without great inconveniency be

without them, as great riches, splendour of life, noble affinities and

marriages ; for these things are not absolutely necessary to the worldly

life, but only conduce to the greater conveniency and felicity thereof.

Not our worldly being, but our well-being is concerned in them. Our

being may be kept up and supported in a far meaner condition.

Thence it is that great dangers, when they are at hand, and difficulties

sustained, and the fear of them, doth often sway us against the con-

science of our duty ; but if we lose our great worldly hopes, or be cut

short in our condition and worldly expectations, it is no great matter.

Wise and gracious men may easily bear it with a quiet and well-com-

posed mind. The sin of those that stumble at great and worldly hopes

is questionless the greater transgression, for they are only enticed and

drawn away by their pleasures and lusts, which all good Christians are

obliged to deaden and mortify. But though to fall out of fear be not

so heinous a sin, yet a great and heinous sin it is, for grace should

govern fear as well as hope. If the coercion and bridling of it be

difficult, it doth not excuse a toto, but a tanto only ; and it is hard to

set a Christian in joint again that is fallen by fear. Witness those

terrors that do haunt men when once they are gotten into the snare.

As ' Peter went out and wept bitterly ; ' it cost him much sorrow at

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heart. Christ is fain to direct a special message to him by name,

Mark xvi. 7. Though it doth not exclude all hopes of repentance and

pardon, yet it needeth great mercy on God's part, and repentance on

ours. Indeed, the church is bound to consider men's weaknesses, and

to judge of the fault according to the violent shock and incursion of

the temptation ; because we know not our own strength, and how soon

we may be surprised in like kind, and need indulgence ourselves, Gal.

vi. 1. But God is not in our condition, nor obliged to recover all

that lapse in this kind, and therefore useth his mercy according to

his own pleasure. Sometimes he recovereth them and sometimes

not ; but for the other temptations, what excuse is it capable of ?

Heb. xii. 16, 17.

Secondly, Let us consider how a believer is preserved. Unsound

professors are turned by scandal from the ways of godliness, which

they seemed to walk in ; but for the sincere believer, there may be

many stumbling-blocks laid in his way, but he falleth not at them,

escapeth those heinous sins into which others fall, through his love

to God's commandments. Observe here three things : —

1. It is not light, but love that keepeth them from stumbling. The

light of saving knowledge is a great matter, for it showeth us a sure

rule to walk by, and sure promises to build upon ; but love must join

with it, to assist us, that we may escape those snares, for many fail

because they receive not the truth in the love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Till

iight be turned into love, it hath not such a powerful influence upon

us. Certainly a man is better held by the heart than by the head :

Born. viii. 39, ' Nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of

God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord/ The love of God is not prin-

cipally taken there in a passive sense, for the love wherewith we are

beloved of God ; but in an active sense, for the love wherewith we love

God. For affliction and persecution do expugn or assault God's love

to us, but not our love to God ; for this rnaketh us cleave to him,

whatever temptations we have to the contrary. Do but consider what

you are to love.

[1.] We are to love God ; there it beginneth. Love God once, and

then you will take nothing ill at his hands ; how smart soever his

chastenings be, they come from a God that loveth you, and whom your

souls love: Eev. iii. 19, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten.'

Now they will not stumble at God's dispensations, be they never so

cross to their expectations and desires. But then —

[2.] We must love the law of God, be satisfied with our duty what-

ever cometh of it. Next to a sincere love to God, there must be a

sincere love to his holy law, as the right way to eternal blessedness,

and then temptations will have but little force upon us, for they do not

love their duty for foreign reasons, but for its own sake ; so that whe-

ther it be befriended and countenanced in the world, or hated and

despised, it is all one ; they love the law upon its own evidence, as it is

recommended by God, and is a sure direction to true happiness : Job

xvii. 9, ' The righteous shall hold on his way, and he that hath clean

hands shall be stronger and stronger.' He meaneth notwithstanding

all the troubles and assaults which he endureth ; they are not scandal-

ised at God's dealings, or permitting them to be thus dealt with, but

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do persevere in a course of godliness ; this is the way wherein he

delighteth.

[3.] He loves the brethren : 1 John ii. 10, ' He that loveth his

brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling

in him.' They, together with us, uphold Christ's interest in the

world. The coals, by lying together, inkindle one another, and so are

the better kept from having their zeal quenched, or being ensnared by

the manifold temptations in the world.

[4.] By this love the love of the world and its prosperity is much

abated : 1 John ii. 15, ' Love not the world, nor the things which are

in the world ; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is

not in him.' This man cannot part with all when his duty calleth

for it. Till we despise worldly things we are still liable to take offence.

All our disquiet cometh from too great love of the world, and too little

love of the word of God. All this is spoken to show you that it is want

of love wherefore men are so easily taken off ; and this love beginneth

with the love of God, then goeth on to his word, and the obedience it

calleth for, and is strengthened by our love to the saints, and is a

higher love than that it can be controlled by the love of the world.

2. This blessed peace hath an influence upon it upon a twofold

account : —

[1.] This is an experience of the good of that way which the world

speaketh evil of. You cannot persuade a man against his experience,

that honey is bitter, when he has tasted the sweetness of it, 1 Peter ii.

3. They know the grace of God in truth, they have found much com-

fort and peace in these ways. Most men know religion and godliness

but by hearsay or looking on ; the testimony of Christ was never con-

firmed in them. But these have tried it, and know the good of reli-

gion by experience, therefore they cannot be so easily offended as others

are, who have only licked the glass, but never tasted the honey. The

pleasure they find in the duties and exercises of godliness will with

them infinitely outweigh all the transient delights and advantages

that are propounded, or offer themselves as the bait to any unlawful

practice.

[2.] The particular nature of this experience ; it is peace, which

doth guard heart and mind, Phil. iv. 7, that they are not disturbed or

distracted by anything that befalleth them, but enjoy a calm in their

souls, whatever storms overtake or befall them in the way of their

duty : Eph. vi. 15, ' Having our feet shod with the preparation of the

gospel of peace.' This is the gospel-shoe ; there is no going to heaven

without it ; and this is peace, that is, peace with God. When all is

quiet within, and the quarrel is taken up between God and us, we can

the better bear the frowns of the world. And he calleth it the gospel

of peace, because it mainly dependeth on the terms of grace revealed

to us in the gospel. The law discovereth the enmity and the breach,

but the gospel discovereth how peace may be had. He calleth it also

the preparation, eroLfiaala, because this peace breedeth a firm and

ready resolution to go through all difficulties, crosses, and hardships :

Acts xxi. 13, ' I am ready not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusa-

lem.' Well, then, this is the fruit of peace and friendship between

God and sinners. It breedeth a resolution to hold on our way to

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heaven, notwithstanding crosses and continual hardships, and allayeth

the bitterness of all worldly trouble.

3. There is God's providence and care over them, who is concerned

in the protection of all that love his law, and take care to love and

please him. On the one side, God sometimes threateneth the wicked,

that he will lay stumbling-blocks before them, Jer. vi. 21, that is,

bring those things npon them that shall be a means of ruin to them.

On the other side, Jer. xxxi. 9, that he will lead the penitent believer

in a straight way, that they shall not stumble. We must not omit God's

concurrence, for it is his promise that nothing shall offend them. His

people are very near and dear to him. Our Lord telleth us in his dis-

course against offending them, that ' their angels do always behold the

face of his Father which is in heaven,' Mat. xviii. 10 ; that is, though

the angels be appointed to be their guardians on earth, yet they have

their continual returns and recourse to God's glorious presence, to

make requests or complaints in their behalf, or to receive commands

concerning them ; for as God seeth fit they are employed in service for

the benefit of those little ones. I remember Solomon saith, Prov. xii.

21, ' There shall no evil happen to the just, but the wicked shall be

filled with mischief.' We can easily understand that the wicked shall

be overwhelmed with God's judgments ; but how shall no evil happen

to the righteous, since their troubles are many ? The meaning of the

place is, as Augustine well glosseth, non ut non eveniant, sed ut non

noceant — they do not stumble at afflictions, nor are they deserted by

God, as others are. God moderateth the evil, 1 Cor. x. 13, or removeth

it, Ps. cxxv. 3, or turneth it to good, Kom. viii. 28. Now, by this

gracious dealing of God, it cometh to pass that nothing doth offend

them. Those that depend on the favour of men, and the uncertainties

of a worldly condition, how many troubles are they exposed unto t

Therefore we should look to our confidence, whether it be faith or

security, whether we rest upon a carnal pillow, or the corner-stone

which God hath laid in Sion.

Use. It concerneth us all to look to this, whether we love the law

so as to have gotten peace of conscience and assurance of God's pro-

tection, because of the multitude of scandals, and the trials and exer-

cises we are put upon by God's correcting hand ; the prosperity of the

wicked ; the disgrace that is cast on the stricter ways of God ; the

world being so full of snares and temptations, that bring men to

sin and ruin. Omnia timeo, saith Bernard, ct quce placeant, et quce

tristentur — I am afraid of everything, of those things that please us,

and those that make us sad. What shall a poor Christian do that he

may not miscarry ?

1. Be sure that your resolutions for God and the world to come be

thoroughly fixed and settled ; for you will be distracted with every-

thing if you be not at a point, and have not chosen the better part,

and fully fixed your purpose. The apostle telleth us, Jame s i. 8,

' The double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A wavering

and inconstant Christian will not know which way to turn himself,

being disquieted upon all occasions.

2. They never rightly begin with God that do not sit down and

count what it may cost them to be holy Christians : Luke xiv. 26, ' If

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any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife

and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he

cannot be my disciple.' If you have not a preparation of mind to

suffer anything rather than part with Christ, you are not fit for his

turn ; like a man that sets on building, and hath not a stock to hold

out ; or designeth a war, and is not provideth with all necessaries to

go through with it. You must expect temptations and troubles, be-

cause they serve to try whether you will hold your integrity ; and if

God be not sufficient enough to be your portion, never serve him.

Never pretend to religion if you do not resolve to renounce all that is

precious to you in the world rather than forsake it.

3. Consider the necessity of standing to God's law, whatever perse-

cutions and sufferings you meet with. There is no other way to be

saved : John vi. 68, ' Lord, whither shall Ave go ? thou hast the words

of eternal life/ Such as have a mind to quit Christ have need to con-

sider where they shall find a better master. Change where they will,

they change for the worse. Obedience to the word of God is the only

way to eternal life ; and whatever law you make to yourselves, God

will judge you by his own law.

4. Be established in the peace of God, and never break this peace to

obtain your outward peace. What a wound will it be to thy soul ! and

how shiftless and helpless wilt thou be when, to make thy peace with

the world, thou hast broken thy peace with God ! Therefore rise up

against temptations, as the trees refused in Jotham's parable to be

ruler over the rest. Shall I lose my fatness ; another, my sweetness,

to rule over the trees ? Shall I, to please men, put my conscience to

a continual torment and anguish ? sell the birthright for one morsel

of meat ? The remembrance will come into your minds, when you

had joyful communion with God and his people, whose company you

have abandoned ; every day of solemn assembly will be a new torment

to you.

5. When troubles surprise you, consider how unbeseeming it is to

take offence at God's providence. It is an ill sign to be so apt to pick.

quarrels with God and godliness ; it argueth little love either to God

or his law ; for love thinketh no ill of those whom we love. They are

murmurers that said the ways of the Lord are not equal, or what

profit is there if we serve the Lord ? Mai. iii. 14.

6. Consider, the greatest hurt Satan intendeth you is not to hurt

your bodies but your souls, to bring you to be offended at the holy and

righteous ways of the Lord. He would let you enjoy the pleasures of

sin, to rob you of your delight in God and celestial pleasures ; let you

have all the world, if it were in his power, Mat. iv. 9.

7. Consider how short is the prosperity of the wicked, and those

that turn aside to the ways of sin, Ps. xvii. 14. They shall be cut off,

they are soon withered and dried up, and all their outward glory

perishes with them. It is a more prudent course to adhere closely to

God : Job v. 3, 'I have seen the foolish taking root, but suddenly I

cursed his habitation.' It is a prediction ; he foretold that there was a

curse at the root of all his prosperity.

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SERMON CLXXXI.

Lord, I have hoped for tliy salvation, and done thy commandments. —

Ver. 166.

TnE man of God had said, ver. 165, ' Great peace have they that love

thy law, and nothing shall offend them ;' now he particularly applieth

to himself what he had generally spoken before. It is sweet when

we can thus comfortably apply promises, and make out our own title

and interest. This is David's work in this and the following verses.

Here he niaketh profession of two things — his hope and obedience ;

which indeed are the two great things that belong to a Christian ;

graces much praised and little practised. Quarum multa sunt elogia,

pauca exampla. They are fitly coupled together in his plea, ' I have

hoped, I have done ;' for our confidence in God's mercy is no greater

than our fidelity in his precepts ; and they are both professed before

God, who searcheth the heart and trieth the reins : ' Lord, I have

hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.'

Doct. Sound hope of salvation is and must be joined with a care of

keeping God's commandments.

1. I shall speak of the several branches of this profession apart.

2. Then of their conjunction.

First, Separately ; and there —

First. Of the profession of his hope, ' Lord, I have hoped for thy

salvation.'

1. The object and thing hoped for is salvation. Salvation is tem-

poral or eternal, of the body or of the soul. Eabbi David Kimchi

understandeth it of the latter, but it seemeth rather to imply help

and deliverance out of dangers and distresses. Indeed, neither can be

well excluded ; not eternal salvation, for without that, temporal deli-

verance is but a reprieve for a time, not a total exemption from evil :

not temporal salvation, because before we come to look for our full

and final deliverance, God will try us by the way, and train us up in

the expectation of other things ; as men learn to swim in the rivers

and shallow waters, that afterwards they may swim in the ocean and

deep waters. So by expecting lesser things we learn to wait for

greater. Both must be hoped for, but with a difference ; eternal

salvation absolutely, but temporal with submission to God's will.

We have not temporal things always in specie, in kind, but sometimes

in value, for these things may be recompensed and made up another

way ; but no recompense can be given us for eternal life. The apostle

speaketh with submission as to his temporal case, but is peremptory

as to his eternal state : 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, ' Notwithstanding, the Lord

stood with me, and strengthened me, that by me the preaching might

be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might hear : and I was

delivered out of the mouth of the lion. And the Lord shall deliver

me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.'

Again, though we are not to neglect the meanest promise, yet our

hearts should run more upon the things of another world. A Christian

honoureth God by his faith about temporal things, when he will not

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cast away his hope in the deepest calamities ; but much more when

the concernments of the world to come are of the greatest force with

him, and his heart is wholly taken up about them : ' Looking for the

blessed hope,' Titus ii. 13 ; there is the character of a Christian.

Peace and freedom from trouble in the world is not the main thing

that we should look after, but perfect conformity to God, and full

fruition of him. God is the chief good, and the fruition of him as

promised is the utmost happiness of the creature. A true Christian

hath a greater indifferency to the things of this life ; all his business

is to get an assurance of a better : he can look through the troubles

of the world, and see sunshine behind the back of the storm : Ps. xlii.

11, ' Why art thou cast down, my soul? why art thou disquieted

within me ? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him, who is the

health of my countenance, and my God.' But chiefly his hope is laid

up for him in heaven, Col. i. 5 ; his portion is laid up for him, and

kept safe for his use in a sure place. Here he knoweth he must be

exercised with temptations and crosses. In short, temporal things are

desired for the sake of spiritual and eternal, but eternal for themselves ;

a traveller desireth a horse not for himself, as for the conveniency of

his journey ; so he expecteth temporal things as helps in his way and

passage to heaven. Well, then, salvation is the object of this hope,

temporal salvation in order to eternal, that we may have opportunities

to glorify God here, and may not faint and be overwhelmed with inci-

dent crosses. This sentence is borrowed from good old Jacob : Gen.

xlix. 18, ' I have waited for thy salvation, Lord.' It is notable

Jacob speaketh this when prophetically blessing his children ; and when

he cometh to Dan, the good old man seemed to be carried beside his

purpose, breaking out thus of a sudden, but in spirit foreseeing the

miseries and calamities with his posterity should fall into for their

idolatry ; for Dan was the first tribe that made defection, therefore he

opposeth his hopes to his fears. We are told in the general, Lam. iii.

26, 'It is good that a man should hope, and quietly wait for the

salvation of God ;' that is, for deliverance out of troubles. It will be

of great use to us in our troubles to look to the issue of them. The

Lord cloth not wholly cast off his people ; when he seemeth to break

down the hedge and fence of his providence, and leave them in their

enemies' hands, he hath salvation for a hoping people. But mark, it

is thy salvation ; it is good to come out of trouble upon God's terms,

in God's way, and in God's time ; others break prison : Ps. lxii. 1,

' My soul hopeth in God, from him cometh my salvation.' Expect it

from God, and him alone.

2. The act of grace, ' I have hoped.' Hope, in the general, is the

expectation of some future good ; as it is a grace, it is some good

thing promised by God : Ps. cxxx. 5, ' I wait for the Lord, my soul

doth wait, and in thy word do I hope.' ' I am judged for the hope of

the promise,' saith Paul, Acts xxvi. 6. So that hope is the expectation

of good things promised. Faith and hope do both work upon the

promise, but yet they are distinct graces ; they differ in their object.

The object of faith is larger ; the whole word of God is the object of

faith. We believe things past, present, and to come, but hope for

things to come only. Among things to come, we believe both promises

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and thrcatcnings, but the object of hope is only things desirable. We

believe the torments of hell, but do not hope for them. In the pro-

mises, faith believeth the promise, and hope looketh for the thing

promised. Faith looketh to the authority of the promiser, and hope

to the goodness of the thing promised. Faith begets hope, and then

hope strengthens faith. Faith holdeth the candle to the soul, whereby

we see things invisible and to come, and hope maketh this light com-

fortable and ravishing to us. We have comfort in believing, because

hopes of enjoying. To believe eternal life, if we had not hopes to

attain it, were a comfortless thing. Faith is before hope, and leadeth

us to the object, and hope followeth as faith leadeth. Faith assents

to and applieth the promise, and hope waiteth for the accomplishment.

There are several sorts of hope.

[1.] There is a vain and groundless hope, the dream of a waking

man ; as if a beggar should hope for the succession of a crown. So

there are some that dream of peace and safety, ' and sudden destruc-

tion cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child/ 1 Thcs.

v. 3. This is an irrational thing.

[2.] There is rational and probable hope, but yet not so firm and

certain ; it is likely it will be so, but we have no absolute certainty :

2 Cor. ix. 10, ' He that plougheth, plougheth in hope ; and he that

thresheth, is partaker of his hope.' This is necessary for the carrying

on of all human actions, that a man should have probable hope of

success, for without it there is no labour or rational attempt.

[3.] There is a firm and certain hope, when we have assurance of

the things hoped for. So in the commerce between us and God, he

giveth us assurance in his promises by his word and oath, that our

consolation might be the more strong, when we fly for refuge to the

hope that is set before us, Heb. vi. 17, 18. There is a blessed and

glorious estate reserved to be enjoyed in the heavens ; this is set before

us, propounded as a prize in the view of the world. Now when we

take hold of this, gain a right and title to it, God would have our

consolation the more strong, by the assurance he hath given us in the

covenant made with us in Christ. Well, then, Christian hope is not

a conjecture or probability, but an assurance. Many times all kind of

probability is contrary to God's assurance : Rom. iv. 18, ' Abraham

believed in hope, against hope/ Credidit in spe gratice, contra spem

naturae. God's assurance prevailed above natural difficulties ; there

rational and human hope and divine hope are opposed.

[4.] This assurance admits of degrees, for it may be full or not full :

Heb. vi. 11, ' And we desire that every one of you do show the same

diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end.' The full assur-

ance is that which removeth all doubts and fears ; and this it may do

at some time, and not at another; it may be interrupted, or continue

to the end. Now we must give all diligence that it may do so. By

slothfulness and negligence it will be lost. Presumption and carnal

hope costs a man nothing to keep it, it groweth upon us we know

not how ; but this certain hope is not kept lively and upon the wing

without great zeal and diligence in the spiritual life. Oh ! but it con-

cerneth us much so to do. This hope is necessary for us —

(1.) To quicken and enliven our duties. Hope of reward is one of

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the bands of a man, the weight that inclinethus to all actions ; much

more doth this great reward which the Christian faith propounds :

Acts xxvi. 6, 7, ' And now I stand, and am judged for the hope of the

promise made of God unto our fathers : unto which promise our

twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come ; for

which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews ; ' and

Acts xxiv. 15, 16, ' And have hope towards God, which they them-

selves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both

of the just and unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to have

always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.'

I run not as one that is uncertain, 1 Cor. ix. 26, not by guess, but sure

grounds : Phil. iii. 14, ' I press towards the mark for the prize of the

high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' It is great and sure ; here is

excellency and certaint}'. A man that hopeth for anything will be

engaged in the thorough pursuit of it.

(2.) It sharpeneth our affections after heavenly things ; when we

look for them, we will also long for them : Kom. viii. 23, ' And not

only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit,

even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to

wit, the redemption of our bodies.' Hope stirreth up serious thoughts

of heaven and blessedness to come, and hearty groans after it, and so

hits both mind and heart a-work. It sets the mind a-work. A man

cannot hope for a thing, but he will be thinking of it ; as the scripture

speaketh of the labourer, that he lifts up his soul to the hire which he

expects. Thoughts will be sent as spies into the land of promise,

to bring us tidings thence. And it sets the heart a-longing and groan-

ing that we were at home : Rom. viii. 19, ' For the earnest expectation

of the creature,' cnrofcapaSoKia KTiaeeo?, stretcheth out the head, to see

if it can sp} 7 it a-coming ; as when Sisera's mother expected him, she

looked through the lattice. There will be strong desires as well as

serious thoughts ; not glances and hasty wishes, such as worldly per-

sons may have in their serious moods and sober fits ; these vanish and

leave the heart never the better ; but earnest longings, such as settle

into a heavenly frame ; that taste which they have already maketh

them groan for what is behind.

(3.) It sets the heart at rest, and allayeth our disquiets, and fears,

and cares, and sorrows, that so we may go on cheerfully in God's ser-

vice. It is the pleasure of God that the heirs of promise should for a

while shine as lights in a corrupt world, and be exercised with all

kind of temptations, that his power may be manifested in their weak-

ness. Now, that we may ride out the storm, he gave us hope ; not

only veniam sperandi, leave to hope for his mercy, but virtutem sper-

andi, the grace of hope, strength so to do. And what is the use of it,

but to calm the heart under all distempers ? Therefore it is compared

to a helmet and an anchor. To a helmet : 1 Thes. v. 8, ' Take to

you the helmet of salvation, which is hope.' A helmet is to cover

the head ; this maketh a believer hold up head in all his straits and

troubles. The policy of the devil is to weaken or darken the hopes of

eternal life, and then he knoweth he shall the sooner overcome us ;

therefore the life of a Christian should be to keep on his helmet, to

keep his hopes of heaven lively and fresh, and then he will not be de-

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jected. Again, it is compared to an anchor : Heb. vi. 19, ' Which

liope we have, as an anchor, both sure and steadfast, which entereth

into that which is within the veil.' As the anchor holdeth the ship in

a tempest, so doth hope keep the mind in a constant temper in the

midst of the stormy gusts of temptation, that we dash not against the

rocks that would break our confidence and profession : it strengthens

and quiets the floating heart of man. Things will end well at last,

how blustering and stormy soever the weather be at the present. The

floods of temptation and the tribulations of this present life are per-

mitted to invade us, but that God hath given us an anchor, that they

.shall not drive us from the haven of eternal happiness. Whatever

our cross be, immoderate grief for the death of near and dear rela-

tions : 1 Thes. iv. 13, ' Mourn not as those without hope.' Cur enim

doleas, si periisse own credis f Cur impatienter ferres subductum,

quern iterum credis reversurum esse? profesto est quam putas mortem,

saith Tertullian De Patientia. If for loss of goods and estate : Heb.

x. 34, ' And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in your-

selves that in heaven ye have a better and enduring substance.' If a

poor man that had all his wealth about him should fall into the hands

of thieves and robbers, and be rifled by them, he must needs cry and

take on pitifully ; for alas ! he is altogether undone, and hath nothing

left him wherewithal to succour himself and his family. But a rich

man, that hath store of money at home, and sure locked up in his

chest, will never complain and be much disquieted when he hath

twenty or forty shillings taken from him. For worldlings to rage and

take on when they must lose their estates, it is no marvel ; those whose

portion is in this life, and know no better ; alas ! for when these things

are gone, they have nothing left, and are quite undone. But those

that are heirs according to the hope of eternal life, they know they

have a better and a more enduring substance ; they consider what they

are born to, what they shall enjoy when they come home to God,

therefore their hearts are calmed and quieted. So if it be the oppres-

sion of wicked men, and hard sufferings and persecutions for the

gospel : 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18, ' For our light affliction, which is but for a

moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of

glory ; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the

things which are not seen ; for the things which are seen are temporal,

but the things which are not seen are eternal.' He that hopeth for

nothing from God will soon fall off from him, and yield to fainting

discouragements ; their hearts are turned off and perverted ; but when

we hope, we do with patience submit to the cross. What troubles

will not they undergo that expect undoubtedly their speedy ending in

everlasting and endless bliss and happiness ? If God hideth his face,

that raiseth a storm : Ps. xliii. 5, ' Why art thou so disquieted, my

soul ? still hope in God.' Casting anchor upon the rock, as the crying

child falls asleep with the teat in his mouth ; or when God delayeth

the performance of what is promised : Prov. xiii. 12, ' Hope deferred

maketh the heart sick.' Expectation is a tedious thing, as smoke to

the eyes, and vinegar to the teeth, an ordinary messenger sent on a

trifling errand. Now, Eom. viii. 15, 'If we hope for that we see not, then

do we with patience wait for it ; ' 1 Thes. i. 3, ' And patience of hope

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in our Lord Jesus Christ.' Is a title nothing before possession ? It

is not a matter of debt. Or is it the fear of approaching death, which

is the king of terrors ? Prov. xiv. 32, ' The wicked shall be driven

away in his wickedness, but the righteous hath hope in his death.'

The wicked, being arrested by death, is hurried away into hell ; but

the righteous dismisseth his soul into his Kedeerner's hands. Never

more cheerful than when our confidence in God's mercy is most put

to trial.

Secondly, Here is the profession of his obedience, ' I have done thy

commandments.' Here is —

1. The object, iky commandments.

2. The act of duty, done.

1. The object, ' Thy commandments,' quia tua; therefore kept them,

because they are thine ; things thou hast given in charge. Men were

ready to persuade or threaten him out of his duty.

2. The act of duty, ' Done thy commandments : ' the act of duty,

to do, noteth the substance of the act or omission ; the doing things

commanded by eschewing things forbidden.

3. The manner of doing, out of knowledge of God's command, and

conscience of obeying it, to his glory and our salvation. Now, saith

David, ' I have done it ; ' implying, I have not only care and con-

science, but strength and ability, in some measure to do thy will.

But is not this plea a proud word for a creature to say, ' I have

done thy commandments ' ? Who can thus say, and aver it to the face

of God?

Ans. There is a twofold keeping or doing of the commandments — ■

legal and evangelical.

1. Legal, when we do them so exactly as is answerable to the rigour

of the law, and the rule of strict justice doth require, which exactness

is when our obedience is universal in every point, when everything

commanded by God is done by us without failing in one point : Gal.

iii. 10, ' Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written

in the book of the law to do them.'

[1.] In all things ; and that —

[2.J Continually, in respect of time ; from the first minute of our

birth till our dissolution ; one failing in thought at any time casteth off

our plea.

[3.] Full and complete in respect of the degrees and measure^ of

obedience, with the utmost intension and affection of the heart, which

the scripture expresseth by all the heart and all the soul. In this

sense, never man was able to keep the law, save only the first Adam

in innocency, and the second Adam Jesus Christ; and therefore,

according to this rigour, there is no hope for us ; one sin once com-

mitted would undo us for ever, as it did the apostate angels.

2. Evangelical, according to the eTrteUeia and moderation of the

gospel, that is, when we do the commandments according to those

terms of grace which God offereth to us in Christ ; that doth, as to

obedience, mitigate the rigour of the law in two things : —

[1.] It granteth a pardon of course to some kind of sins.

[2.] Accepteth of repentance after any the most heinous sin com-

mitted.

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[1.] It granteth a pardon of course to some kind of sins, as sins of

infirmity, either of ignorance, which if we had known we would not

have committed, or sins of sudden surreption, which escape without

our observing of them ; or sins of violent temptation, which by sudden

assault sway against the right rule before we have time to weigh both

it and ourselves, or in cool blood to think what we are a-doing ; such

as do not arise out of any evil purpose of the mind, but out of human

frailty, and from which we shall never be free as long as we live in this

body of corruption, Bom. vii. 24, — Paul groaneth under these relics ;

when what we have done is not out of deliberate consent, giving way

to the growth and reign of sin : Rom. vi. 14, ' For sin shall not have

dominion over you.' Non dixit, non sit, sed non regnet ; inest pecca-

ium cum perpetras, regnat cum consenseris, saith Austin. When

we give obedience to it, freely, willingly yield up ourselves to be ser-

vants of it, then sin reigns. Therefore he doth not say, Let not sin

be in you, or tempt you, or please you ; but, Let it not reign in you.

It is a misery to be tempted, a snare to be delighted, and a forfeiture

or renouncing the grace of the covenant to give up ourselves to the

full sway of it.

[2.] The gospel doth herein moderate the rigour of the law, because

it leaveth a sinner a way and means of recovery, namely, by repent-

ance and faith in Jesus Christ, and upon repentance giveth him a

pardon, Mat. ix. 13. Remission or forgiveness is a privilege of the new

covenant; the law knoweth no such matter: Ezek. xviii. 21, 22,

' But if the wicked shall turn from all his sins that he hath committed,

and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he

shall surely live, and not die : all his transgressions that he hath com-

mitted they shall not be mentioned unto him/ Well, then, this is to

be understood in the gospel sense ; it is the plea of a man justified freely

by God's grace, and one that is sincere and upright for the main ; one

that had received grace to be faithful, though not without his infirmi-

ties, and did not make a practice to live in any known sin against

conscience.

Secondly, We now come to show the connection between these two.

1. None can and do rightly hope for salvation but they that keep

the commandments.

2. None do and can keep the commandments but they that hope for

salvation.

1. None can and do rightly hope for salvation but they that keep

the commandments. That will appear to you —

[1.] Partly because God hath by a wise ordination conjoined means

and end, and offered the promises with a qualification : Bom. ii. 7,

' To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory,

honour, and immortality, eternal life.' God hath not simply promised

blessedness, but the promise requireth a qualification and a performance

of duty in the person to whom the promise is made ; and therefore,

before we can have a certainty of hope, we must not only look upon

the assurance on God's part, but make out our qualification. So Ps.

i. 1, 2, 'Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the

ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of

the scornful ; but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law

VER. 166.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 225

doth he meditate day and night.' So Ps. cxix. 1, 2, ' Blessed are the

undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord : blessed are

they that keep his testimonies, and seek him with the whole heart ; '

and many such places, which intimate that blessedness belongeth to

such as are of a holy heart, and entirely give up themselves to a holy

course ; that doing the commandments uprightly, and in a gospel

sense, is a necessary condition to qualify those persons which shall be

saved. And therefore they that live in any sin against conscience

may take notice how fearful their estate is for the present, and how

needful it is to begin a good course before they can have any hope

toward God.

[2.] And partly because true hope is operative, and hath an influence

this way. There are two parts in sanctification — mortification and

vivification, and true hope hath an influence upon both. Mortification :

1 John iii. 3, 'And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth

himself, as he is pure ; ' that when we see God, we shall be like him.

He that hopeth for such a pure and sinless estate, either to see God,

will he appear before him in his filthy rags ? Joseph washed himself

when he was to come before Pharaoh ; so when to appear before God.

What ! with this wanton, vain, unclean heart ? We are to be like

him ; is this to be like Christ, where there is such a disproportion

between head and members ? And if this hope be fixed in our hearts,

it will set us a-purifying more and more. So for vivification, it urgeth

and encourageth to obedience : Titus ii. 12, 13, ' For the grace of God,

that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men, teaching us that,

denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, right-

eously, and godly in the present world.' Look backward or forward, it

urgeth the heart to obedience. Why backward to the duties of holi-

ness ? Shall we be lazy in his work when we expect such a great

reward ?

[3.] Because there is no such thing to damp hope and weaken our

confidence as sin. We cannot trust him whom we have offended

freely and without restraint ; and therefore, while we please the flesh,

we break our confidence. Sin will breed shame and fear, and it is

impossible to hope in God unless we serve him in love, and seek to

please him. If we feel it not presently, we shall feel it. Sin, that now

weakeneth the faith which we have in the commandments, will in time

weaken the faith that we have in the promises. Every part of God's

revealed will cometh to be tried one time or another. Our confidence

in God's mercy is not earnestly and directly assaulted till the hour of

death, or the time of extraordinary trial. When the evil day cometh,

then the consciousness of my own sin, whereunto we have been indul-

gent, will be of like force to withdraw our assent from God's mercies,

as the delight and pleasure we took was to cause us to transgress his

commandments : 1 Cor. xv. 56, ! The sting of death is sin, and the

strength of sin is the law.'

[4.] Because our hope is increased by our diligence in the holy life.

This fosterethand augments it : Heb. vi. 11, ' And we desire that every

one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope

unto the end.' It must needs be so, for since there is a qualification,

the more clear our qualification is, the more full is our assurance of

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hope ; and so far as a man neglects his duty, and abateth in his quali-

fication, so far doth his assurance abate. To look on one side of the

covenant is a groundless presumption.

2. None do and can keep the commandments but they that hope

for salvation. This is plain from the order of the words in the text.

First I hoped for thy salvation, therefore done thy commandments ;

implying that thereby he kept the commandments. Without this

none can have a heart or hand to do anything for God. Peccator,

saith Bernard, nihil expectat, indeque peccator est; quod bonis pre-

sentibus non modo delectus, sed etiam contentus, nihil in faturum

expectat — he that looketh for nothing from God can never be dili-

gent in his service, nor faithful and true to him. Hope, it is our

strength : Lam. iii. 18, ' And I said, My strength and my hope is

perished from the Lord.' We first begin, continue, and go on with

God upon the hope he ofTereth to us.

Use 1. It reproveth those that hope well, but take no care to do

anything for God. Every one will say they must hope in God, but

none looketh after this lively and operative hope ; their hope is barren

and unfruitful. Who are they that can make application of the

promises ? 2 Tim. iv. 8.

Use 2. To persuade us to the coupling of these two. When this

conjunction is founded, then are we in a right frame. If we would

keep the commandments, we must hope for the salvation of God ; if

we would hope for the salvation of God, we must keep the command-

ments. This is most acceptable to the Lord: Ps. cxlvii. 11, 'The

Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, and hope in his mercy.'

Such as believe, and fear to offend him, they have acceptable commu-

nion with him. It is for your comfort, Acts ix. 31. It is for the

honour of religion on the one side to avoid the carnal confidence of

Papists, on the other the cold profession of Protestants, if you hope

for temporal deliverance. They that make no conscience of obeying

God cannot hope for deliverance from him, for his salvation must be

expected in the way of his precepts : Ps. xxxvii. 3, ' Trust in the Lord,

and do good ; so shalt thou dwell in the land.' So wait on the Lord,

and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land : when

the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it; then we may commend our-

selves and all our affairs to God's care and trust. It becometh them

that look for salvation, and to be helped out of their troubles, to be

more earnest than others in keeping his law. If you would enjoy the

comfortable assurance that you shall be saved at length, live so as you

may never mar your confidence : 1 Peter i. 13, ' Be sober, and hope

to the end.' Live answerable to your hope, 1 Thes. ii. 12. On the

other side hope, study promises : Rom. xv. 4, ' The God of hope fill

you with joy in believing.' He is not only the object, but the author

of it.

VER. 167.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 227

SERMON CLXXXIL

My sold hath kept thy testimonies, and I love them exceedingly. —

Ver. 167.

The man of God goeth on in his plea. In the former verse he had

spoken of the influence of his hope upon obedience ; now of the influ-

ence of his love, and so more expressly and directly maketh out this

qualification or title to the promise mentioned ver. 165.

Before we go on, let me answer a question or two.

First, How can a gracious heart speak so much of itself, and insist

so much upon the plea of obedience ? Is not this contrary to our

Saviour's doctrine, who, in the parable of the pharisee and publican

that went up to pray, Luke xviii., taught us to make use of the plea of

mercy, not of works ?

Ans. 1. As to that part of the scruple which concerneth irepuav-

roXoyia, that cannot be imagined to be faulty in David, who was a

prophet, and therefore, to instruct the world, propoundeth his own

instance, and setteth forth himself as a pattern of obtaining comfort in

the way of godliness.

2. As to the plea of works, they may be produced by way of evi-

dence, not by way of merit, as they prove our interest in the promises,

not as the ground of self-confidence. The pharisee, he came not to

beg an alms, but to receive a debt, and therefore went away without

any mark and testimony of the divine favour and approbation. But

holy men plead this to God as expecting mercy and favour at his

hands ; not in regard of any merit in themselves, or of reward de-

servedly for the same done to them, for they acknowledge all that

they do or can do to be but duty, and due debt ; but in regard of his

gracious promise freely made unto them ; in a humble and modest

manner they dare appeal to God himself for the sincerity and integrity

of their hearts, for serious care and sedulous endeavours to please him,

and approve themselves to him.

Secondly, But why is this plea reiterated for three verses together ?

Ans. 2. Too much care cannot be used in making out an interest in

so sweet a promise ; and teacheth us this lesson, that we had need

examine again and again before we can put in our claim. Jesus

Christ puts Peter to the question thrice : John xxi. 15-17, ' Peter,

lovest thou me ? ' So here, it was David's plea thrice repeated, for

the more assurance : ' I have done thy commandments, my soul hath

kept thy testimonies ;' and again, ' I have kept thy commandments

and thy precepts.' After a believer hath found marks of saving grace

in himself, it is wisdom for him to examine them over and over again,

that he may be sure they are in him in deed and in truth. The heart

is deceitful, our self-love is great, our infirmities many, and our graces

so weak, that we should not easily trust the search. Truly such a

holy jealousy doth well become the best of God's children, and doth

only weaken the security of the flesh, not their rejoicing in the Lord.

In the words you have the testimony of David's conscience concern-

ing the sincerity of his heart, evidenced by two notes : —

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1. The sincerity of his obedience, 'My soul hath kept thy testi-

monies.'

2. His exceeding love to the word, ' I love them exceedingly ;' or, if

you will, by the manner of his obedience, and the principle of it.

First, The spirituality of his obedience, 'My soul hath kept thy

testimonies.' Mark, the notion by which the act of duty is expressed

is varied in the former verse. It is ' I have done thy commandments ;'

here it is, ' I have kept thy testimonies.' Done more expressly noteth

his sedulity and diligence ; kept his constancy and diligence, persever-

ance notwithstanding temptations to the contrary. And how kept

them? Saith he, 'My soul hath kept them;' not with outward

observance only, but with inward and hearty respect. ' My soul,' that

is, myself; a part for the whole, and the better part, 'I, with my

soul/ and so it showeth his sincerity. It is a usual expression among

the Hebrews, when they would express their vehement affection to

anything, to say they do it with their souls ; as Ps. ciii. 1, ' Bless the

Lord, my soul ;' and Luke i. 45, 'My soul doth magnify the Lord ;'

as, on the contrary, vehemency of hatred : Isa, i. 14, ' Your new

moons and appointed feasts my soul hateth;' that is, I hate them

with my heart.

The note is —

Doct. God must be served with our souls as well as our bodies.

David saith, ' My soul hath kept thy testimonies.'

1. Because he hath a right to both, as he made both, and therefore

hath required that both should serve him. He that organised the

body, and framed it out of the dust of the ground, did also breathe

into us the breath of life, and framed the spirit of man within him ;

therefore since God may challenge all, it is fit he should have the

best : ' My son, give me thy heart,' Prov. xxiii. 26. Look upon it ;

whose image and superscription doth it bear ? ' Give unto Caesar the

things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.' He

hath redeemed both : 1 Cor. vi. 20, ' Ye are bought with a price ;

therefore glorify God both in your body and spirits, which are God's.'

Shall we rob God of his purchase so dearly bought ? We would not

rob a man of his goods, and will you rob God ? He challengeth a

peculiar right in souls : ' All souls are mine ;' and therefore they should

be used and exercised for his glory. If we use them for ourselves only,

and not according to his direction, we do as Keuben did, that went up

into his father's bed. To withhold the heart from God is robbery,

nay, sacrilege, which is the worst kind of robbery ; for God's right in

redemption is confirmed and owned by our personal dedication in bap-

tism. Once more, God hath right to the service of both body and soul,

because he offereth to glorify both, and reward both in the heavenly

inheritance. The body and the soul are sisters and co-heirs, as Ter-

tullian speaketh. If we expect wages for both, we must do work with

both. If God should make such a division at death as men do all their

life to him, can they be happy if any part of them be excluded heaven ?

If the body and lifeless trunk were taken into heaven, and the soul

left in torments, what were you the better ? But that cannot be ; God

will have all or no part ; therefore ' your whole spirit and soul and

body must be kept blameless unto the coming of the Lord Jesus

VER. 167.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 229

Christ,' 1 Thes. v. 23. Otherwise your souls cannot be joined to God

in heaven, if they be divided from him on earth.

2. Because this is service suitable to his nature, when we serve him

and obey him with our souls. God is an all-seeing spirit, and there-

fore will be worshipped in spirit and in truth, John iv. 23, 24. It is

agreeable to his spiritual nature, therefore shows and fashions have

little respect with him, but reality and substance ; for he searcheth

the heart and trieth the reins ; it is not the bowing the body, so much as

the humble affectionate reverence and submission of the soul. God hath

appointed service for the body, and so far as God hath appointed it we

must submit to it ; but chiefly for the soul, our worship must be chiefly

inward, flowing from grace engaging the heart in God's service. Bodily

exercise is of little profit ; that worship which is most agreeable to

God's nature is most pleasing to him : he ' hath not eyes of flesh, and

seeth not as man seeth,' Job x. 4. Therefore external duties, without

the inward exercise of the Spirit, is scarce worthy the name of worship

to God. He is not taken with the pomp of ceremonies and external

observances : 1 Sam. xvi. 7, ' For man looketh on the outward appear-

ance, but the Lord looketh on the heart/ Men are taken with external

pomp and formalities ; they suit with their fleshly natures ; but the

more spiritual the more suitable to God. That which you do, be it in

worship, it is not done unto God, but unto men, when the heart is

not in it : Col. iii. 23, ' And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the

Lord, and not unto men.' Without the heart, all that we do is but a

mocking of God, giving him the shell without the kernel.

3. Because the soul is the principal thing that swayeth the body,

and stirreth it up to all that it doth. It being of itself a senseless

block, it followeth the disposition and inclination of the heart. I shall

make it good in two considerations : — (1.) It is fons actionum ad

extra ; (2.) It is terminus actionum ad intra. It is the fountain of

all actions that go outward, from man towards God ; and the subduing

the heart to God's will is the end of all operations inward, from God

towards man.

[1.] Fons actionum ad extra, the fountain of all actions that go

outward from man towards God. All natural actions proceed from

the soul or heart. It is not the eye that seeth, nor the ear that heareth,

nor the hand that toucheth, nor the feet that walketh ; it is the soul

seeth by the eye, and heareth by the ears, and toucheth by the hands,

and walketh by the feet. So in all moral actions the heart is all : Prov.

iv. 23, ' Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues

of life.' All our actions proceed thence ; all the evil that we do

come th from the heart : Mat. xv. 19, ' Out of the heart proceed evil

thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blas-

phemies.'' All that we speak, and think, and do followeth the frame

of the heart. This is the burning furnace from whence the sparks fly.

The occasion of sin may be without, but the cause of it is ever from

the heart. It is the heart that filleth the eyes with wantonness, pride,

and fury, and the tongue with blasphemy, slander, and detraction, the

hands with blood. So for good actions, thoughts ; they come out of

the good treasury of the heart : Mat. xii. 35, ' A good man out of the

good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things.' The tap run-

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neth according to the liquor wherewith the vessel is filled ; that a man

hath laid up in his heart, that he layeth out in his thoughts, and

speeches, and actions. It is the heart that enliveneth all our duties,

and we act ever according to the constitution of our souls.

[2.] It is terminus actionum ad intra ; all actions inward, the aim

of it is to come to the heart. The senses report things to the phantasy,

the phantasy represents them to the mind, that counsels the heart ; so

in God's operations upon us, his business is to come at the soul.

Wherefore doth he speak, and reason, and plead, but that we may

hear ? And wherefore do we hear, but that truth may be lodged in the

heart or soul ? Prov. iv. 4, ' Let thy heart keep my precepts ; let thy

heart receive my words.' Ay ! then God's word hath its effect upon

us. We are never subdued to God till the heart be subdued. The

word for a while may stay in the memory, and it is good when the

memory is planted with the seeds of knowledge, as children receive the

principles of religion in catechisms ; but the end is not there ; at length

they exercise their understandings about them, when they begin to

conceive of what they learned by rote, and afterwards they begin to

have a judgment and a conscience. These truths begin to stir and

awaken them, but it must not rest there neither; it soaketh further,

and wisdom entereth upon the heart, Prov. ii. 10. Ay ! that was God's

aim, to bring the work thither, and then the cure is wrought with

man : Bom. vi. 17, ' Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doc-

trine which was delivered to you.' So this is the end of all the opera-

tions of grace, that the soul and heart may keep God's testimonies.

So where is it that Christ would dwell when he taketh up his abode

and residence in us ? The apostle will tell you : Eph. iii. 17, ' That

he may dwell in your hearts by faith.' Till he get possession of the

heart, all is as nothing. He will not dwell in the body only ; that is

the temple of the Holy Ghost at large ; there is a holy of holies, a

more inward place where he will dwell. He will not dwell in the

tongue, or in the brain, memories, or understandings, unless by com-

mon gifts. But the heart, the will, and affections of man are the chief

place of his residence ; there he dwelleth as in his strong citadel, and

from thence commandeth other faculties and members. So that the

heart is the beginning and ending of the whole work of religion, from

thence come all holy actions, and thither tend all holy gracious

operations.

4. It is thy hearty soul-service that will only bear weight in the

balance of the gospel. There may be many defects in the action, yet

if the heart be right, God will accept the will for the deed, and you

will find comfort in that another day, when you most need: Isa. xxxviii.

3, ' Remember now, Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before

thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' Hezekiah had his infirmities

and failings, but his heart was upright : Heb. xiii. 18, 'Willing in all

things to live honestly ; ' that is a gospel good conscience, and will yield

comfort to you. God accepts the will without the deed, but never the

deed without the will. Infirmities may overtake the action, but when

the heart is unfeignedly set to serve God, we shall be accepted. We

allow grains to true, but not to counterfeit gold. The church pleadeth,

Isa. xxvi. 8, ' The desire of our soul is to thy name, and to the remem-

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brance of thee. When we follow in rugged ways, though we often-

times stumble, yet if our soul be with him, we may have comfort.

Use 1. This is for the conviction of divers persons, that they do not

more serve God in their souls, do not keep his testimonies.

1. There are some that neither serve God with body nor soul, as all

loose persons, who do not so much as make a show of his service ; they

are all for their brutish pleasures, their souls to hunt them out, and

their bodies to pursue and follow them. Their soul is a cage of

unclean birds, and a stye of all filthiness, and their bodies only a strainer

for meats and drinks to pass through, or a channel for lust to run in,

so that they have nothing at all to spare for God : the soul is an ill

guide, suggesting all manner of evil, and the body a ready instrument

to accomplish it. These are those that yield up their members to

uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, Rom. vi. 19. Oh ! time

will come when God will tear them in pieces, and rend the guilty soul

from the embraces of the unwilling body. A sad time it will be for

these ; the soul will curse the body as an ill instrument, the body the

soul as a corrupt guide ; and curse the day of their first union, when

they cannot expect but to meet again in flames.

2. Some that give their bodies to God, but withhold their souls from

him. How may this be done?

Ans. 1. Generally, when men content themselves with a naked

profession of Christianity, and some external conformity thereunto.

It is a stupid religion that consists in outward actions. Judas was

externally a disciple, but Satan entered into his heart, Luke xxii. 3.

Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but Satan filled his

heart, Acts v. 3. Simon Magus was baptized, but his heart was not

right with God, Acts viii. 22. Many men may not only make pro-

fession, but perform many good actions, be as to external conformity

blameless ; yet till their hearts are subdued to God, they should not

be satisfied with their condition. Though you pray with the pharisee,

Luke xviii., pay thy vows with the harlot, Prov. vii., offer sacrifice with

Cain, fast with Jezebel, sell thine inheritance to give to the poor with

Ananias and Sapphira, it is all in vain without the heart. Many hypo-

crites are all ear to hear, all tongue to talk, all face to appear, but not

a heart to obey. Something must be done for religion for fashion sake

and shame of the world. Yea, though thou dost not dissemble, do

many things, yet if your hearts be not renewed and changed, all is

nothing ; you do not keep the testimonies of the Lord with your souls.

2. And more particularly when men make conscience of ceremonies

and outsides rather than sincere obedience. As the pharisees, Mat.

xxiii. 25, 26, ' They make clean the outside of the cup and platter, but

within are full of extortion and excess/ Pretend great purity in

eating their meat, but care not with how great iniquity they purchase

it. Papists think they have done enough if they mutter over a few

idle words, without spirit and life ; the most part of their service is

but that of the body without the soul ; they worship in a strange

language, not knowing what they do or say. And, nearer home, draw

nigh with their lips when their hearts are far from him, Mat. xv. 8.

These leave their hearts at home ; the devil fincleth them other work

that suffer their hearts to straggle and to be like the fool's eyes in the

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corners of the earth, when with their bodies they are engaged in the

serious and solemn duties of God's worship.

Use 2. To press you to serve God with your hearts and souls as

well as your bodies.

1. This is the character of true worshippers: Horn. i. 9, 'My God,

whom I serve in the spirit;' and 2 Tim. i. 3, 'God whom I serve

with a pure conscience.' This was not peculiar to Paul alone ; it is the

description of the spiritual circumcision : Phil. iii. 3, ' For we are the

circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ

Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.' These are such as are

true worshippers.

2. God will accept of no other, for he looketh for the heart, and

knoweth whether we give it him, yea or no. Men care not for

fawning and the obsequiousness of empty courtships, but look for

reality, if they could discern it : 2 Kings x. 15, ' Is thy heart right,

as my heart is with thy heart?' It was Jehu's question to Jonadab,

the son of Kechab. Dost thou as really affect me, as I do thee ?

And men do not look to the matter of the gift, but the mind of the

giver; and will God, think you, who can infallibly judge, and will one

day bring the hidden thoughts of the heart to light, 1 Cor. iv. 5, will

he be put off with shows and empty formalities? Well, then, see

that your souls be in it, otherwise he will not accept of rivers of oil

and thousands of rams. All your pomp and cost upon outside services

is lost. But it is not every soul that will keep God's testimonies.

When the people said, ' All that the Lord hath spoken, we will do it,'

Deut. v. 29, ' Oh, that they had such an heart ! ' It must be such an

heart, for man is naturally averse from God ; sin sets up its throne in

the heart, and thence diffuseth its venom into his actions, Gen. vi. 5.

It must be — (1.) A broken heart ; (2.) A renewed heart; (3.) A heart

purified by faith ; (4.) And acted by love.

[1.] A broken heart it must be, Ps. li. 11, for before that, all that

we do is forced and superficial. We are never serious till acquainted

with brokenness of heart, but serve God in a slight careless fashion.

That bruising is to cast into a new mould ; it is a preparative to the

new heart. Wheat is not bread till it be grinded, and a cracked

vessel cannot be renewed till it be melted in the furnace, nor we

formed anew till we be first melted, humbled, and broken for sin.

[2.] The heart must be renewed by grace, for it is a renewed soul

only that keepeth the commandments: Ezek. xxxvi. 20, 'A new heart

also will I give unto you, and a new spirit will I put into you ; and

then I will cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my

judgments to do them.' The hearts of the sons of men are fully set in

them to do evil, till God change them, and renew a right spirit within

them: Prov. x. 20, 'The heart of the wicked is nothing worth.' A

vain, sottish, sensual, careless heart will never do God any service ;

there must be life before there can be action, a supernatural principle

before there can be supernatural operation, for all things act according

to their form; all that we do else is but like adulterating coin, gild-

ing over copper or brass.

[3.] A heart purified by faith, Acts xv. 9. There are fleshly lusts

in us which must be mortified more and more, and deadened to the

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pleasures and profits and honours of this world, by remembering our

great obligations and expectations from Christ's death and eternal

life ; for while any fleshly or worldly lust prevaileth with us, and is

the chief principle in our hearts, we cannot heartily serve God.

[4.] A heart acted by love: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of

Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for

all, then were all dead : and that he died for all, that they which

live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which

died for them, and rose again.' This is the active principle which sets

us a-work with cheerfulness. Christ often intimateth that keeping

the commandments is the fruit of love, John xiv. 15. All the expres-

sion of our love to him is turned into that channel.

Secondly, I come now to the second evidence and testimony of his

sincerity, his love to the word, ' I have loved them exceedingly.'

Mark—

1. His affection, i" love thy testimonies.

2. The degree, in the word exceedingly.

First, From his affection. Note —

Boot, That it is not enough to keep the commandments, but we

must love them, and that obedience they require from us.

This love to the law is often spoken of in this psalm ; therefore

there needeth the less to be said now. Paul speaketh of this love as

well as David : Eom. vii. 22, ' I delight in the law of God after the

inward man.'

The reasons of the point.

1. We can never thoroughly and constantly keep the law with-

out love to it. It is no easy thing to keep the law of God ; there

needeth much labour and striving. Now where there is a sincere

love of the law of God planted in the heart, there will be this striving

and endeavouring to perform it. None so sensible of the weight of

sin, none so active for God's glory : there is nothing so difficult, but

love maketh easy : nihil amarum. In a word, labour and toil prove

a pleasure, and pain a matter of delight, where we love. The careful

mother bringeth forth the child with pain, and nurseth it up with

toil and trouble, is well enough pleased with her work, and cheerful

in it, because of the love she hath to the fruit of her womb, and her

child is dear to her. Jacob's seven years' labour seemed to be a few

days for the love he had to Eachel, Gen. xxix. 29. So God will

have us serve him out of love, because nothing is grievous to love,

1 John v. 3. It beareth all things, suffereth all things, poverty, naked-

ness, bonds, injuries, labours, never tireth or groweth weary, 1 Cor.

xiii. 7.

2. Except we obey because we love, our obedience is not sincere

and acceptable : 1 Cor. xiii. 1, 2, 'Though I speak with the tongue

of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding-

brass, or a tinkling cymbal : and though I have the gift of prophecy,

and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge, and though 1 have

all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I

am nothing,' ovBev el/xi. Many are flighted into a course of religion,

and go on from duty to duty, out of fear of being damned ; this is

not true obedience, that is done servilely and by constraint, these

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unwilling services which we perform to Christ, out of urging of

conscience and fear of wrath : Jer. ii. 27, ' Which have turned the

back unto me, and not their face : but in the time of their trouble

they will say, Arise and save us.' They come to God, not out of

delight and choice, but out of necessity, and only then, Hosea. v. 6.

They that did not care for God at other times will then come with their

flocks and their herds. The spirit of bondage is clamorous for duty,

as the spirit of adoption sweetly inclineth to it. Many obey God no

further than they are forced, as slaves, whom nothing but fear in-

duceth to perform their master's commands; and so do not love the

work, nor do it for the work's sake.

3. The next object to God, fit for our love, is God's law. It is

clear that God is primum amabile, the first thing that is to be loved ;

but what is the second ? Surely that which hath most of God in it ;

next after God, his word. There is vestigium in the creature, there

is imago in his testimonies: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'For we all with open

face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord/ The fairest

draught and print of God that can be taken. His people have his

image, but it is overshadowed with weakness ; it is but the a7ro0at-

vurfia, the off-set of his word. It is the word that maketh saints,

there is the liveliest stamp and print of God. His testimonies lead not

only to the knowledge of God, but also the fruition of him. What-

soever leadeth us to the fruition of God is incomparably better than

any other thing ; therefore, if we love God, we must love his precepts,

love them so as to keep them ; it is the greatest testification of that

love we can show to God.

Use 1. To show us the reason why so many miscarry in the pro-

fession of godliness. Many walk in the ways of God for a while, but

have no sound love to them ; either by-ends, or slavish fears forced

them into some profession ; but they did not love godliness as godli-

ness, and therefore cannot hold out with God. When a man is

biassed and poised by his heart to a thing, you cannot easily divert

and break his inclination, that is a rooted thing ; others were but

forced, and forced subjection will not always hold. Men are hoping

they shall shake off an unpleasing task, and where they obey from

constraint, and the iron yoke of terror, they will not long obey.

Use 2. To press us not only to keep God's testimonies, but to love

them.

Let me use some arguments.

1. From its excellency. To love is more than to do, as to love sin is a

greater evil than to commit it. Gravius est peccatum diligere, quam

facere. A man may commit sin out of infirmity, but he that loves it, sin

reigneth in him. Practice may be overruled ; a man may do evil that

hateth it, being overborne by the violence of a temptation ; as Paul

saith of himself, ' The evil that I hate, that I do.' So a man may do

good that hateth it, being influenced by by-ends ; but our love is our

own, the genuine offspring of the soul.

2. The necessity of it. Unless we love our work, we shall never

be the more earnest in the performance of it. Nature of itself is

unwilling, the heart hangeth off till it be poised by love : reasons

and motives will not do it : Rom. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity

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against God, for it is not subject to the law/ The commandments

of God cross our will, profit, and pleasure ; therefore we need not

only reasons with us, but a strong inclination of heart to hold us to

it, else we shall be off and on with God : Neh. iv. 6, ' The building

went on, because the people had a mind to the work.' Nothing else

will do it but this.

3. The utility. We shall have more comfort in the sincerity of

our affections than we can ever have in the perfection of our actions.

The people of God, that cannot plead the perfection of what they do,

plead the reality of their love : John xxi. 17, ' Lord, thou knowest

all things, and knowest that I love thee.'

4. Ex debito. We owe so much love to God, that everything that

he requireth should be welcome to us for God's sake : they are his

testimonies, therefore your souls should love them, and bind them

upon your hearts, and the rather because we are to do our duty not

as servants but as friends : John xv. 14, ' Ye are my friends, if ye

do whatsoever I command you.' Not, Ye are my servants. Between

friends there is a perfect harmony and agreement in mind and will.

To do a thing for love's sake to his friend, this is an act of friendship.

Not by servile constraint, but to keep them as they are his. We are

to do Avhat Christ commandeth because he commandeth it ; and that

is to do it in love ; otherwise we break the commands when we keep

them. Besides the outward act, there must be a ready inclination

and delight in our work. Carnal men, the good they do they would

not do. That obedience is not worthy the name of obedience that is

extorted from us. Men had rather live ungodly if they durst for

fear of punishment. It is but a slight kind of religion when fear

prevaileth more than love ; they do somewhat God willeth, but they

had rather leave it undone. A man is never firmly gained to God,

till he prefer service before liberty, and loveth holiness as holiness.

But how must we show this love ? By two things. By being

aweful and cheerful ; grieved when we offend him, glad when we

please him ; aweful in avoiding what he forbiddeth, and cheerful in

performing what he requireth.

[1.] Aweful ; you dare not break with God in any one point, but

are very chary and tender of the commandments ; keep them as the

apple of the eye, Prov. vii. 2, that is offended with the least dust ; or

keeping of jewels: Prov. vi. 21, 'Bind them continually upon thy

heart, tie them upon thy neck ' as jewels ; choice of them.

[2.] By being cheerful, ready, and forward to every good work : Ps.

ex. 3, ' A willing people.' You need not stand urging and pressing;

the inclination of their hearts swayeth them. A man is hardly kept

from that he loveth : 1 John ii. 5, ' He that ke'epeth my word, in him

is the love of God perfected.'

Secondly, The degree, ' I love them exceedingly.'

Doct. Our love to the law must be an exceeding love.

1. In the general, it noteth the height and intensiveness of our

love ; not a cold love, as children love things, but are soon put out

of the humour ; but a high strong love, that will not easily be broken

or diverted, such as doth deeply affect the heart : Ps. cxix. 97, ' Oh,

how I love thy law ! it is my meditation all the day.' We that are

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so coldly affected to spiritual things do not understand the force of

these expressions. A high and strong love will break forth into

meditation, operation ; make us sedulous and serious in obeying

God: Ps. cxix. 48, 'My hands will I lift up to thy commandments,

which I have loved ; ' 1 John ii. 5, ' He that keepeth my word, in

him is the love of God perfected.' Lift up our eyes to the receiving,

our ears to the hearing, our hands to the doing of thy commandments ;

this argueth love.

2. The prevalency ; not only high and strong, hut to a prevailing

degree.

[1.] Such as prevaileth over things without us. This is such a love

as is greater than our love to all other things, wealth, honour, credit,

estate ; yea, life itself : for if anything be loved above our duty to God,

it will soon prove a snare to us : Mat. xiii. 44, ' Sold all to buy the field

wherein the treasure was hid.' All for the pearl of price. A believer

seeth such a treasure in the word of God ; that he maketh no reckon-

ing of any worldly thing in comparison of it, but will part with what-

ever is pleasant and profitable to him to enjoy it, rather than be

deprived of his grace. If any fleshly sensitive good or interest lieth

closer to the heart than the word of God, it will in time prevail so as

to make God's will and glory stoop to it, rather than this interest

shall be renounced or contradicted. There is no talking of serving

God till you have this prevailing love, and hate all things in com-

parison of your duty to God : Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man hate not

father and mother.'

[2.] Such as doth prevail over carnal desires and evil affections

within us ; if it be not a love that doth eat up and devour our lusts

within us, if the bent of your hearts be not more for God than for sin.

See Baxter, pp. 273-279, in his directions about conversion. There

will be evil in the best, and some good in the worst. The critical

difference lieth in the prevalent bent of the heart. When your dislike

of sin is greater than your love, then you may say, Eom. vii. 20, ' It is

not I, but sin that dwelleth in me.' There must be a renewed self

that prevaileth above corrupt self.

Well, then, rest not in some general approbation of the ways of God,

or inclination to good, but this prevailing affection that jostleth sin

out of the soul.

SERMON OLXXXIII.

I have kept thy 'precepts and thy testimonies, for all my icays are

before thee. — Vek. 168.

David still goeth on in his plea. He had spoken of his faith and love,

and now of his fear. We must —

1. Labour for faith to believe the promises. The man of God

beginneth there, ' I have hoped for thy salvation.'

2. This faith must work by love ; that is his next step, ' My soul

loveth thy testimonies exceedingly.' And —

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3. Love must breed in us a reverent fear of God's majesty, and a

care to please him in all things. This is the third part of the plea

mentioned in the text, ' I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies/

&c. In which words —

1. His integrity is again asserted.

2. The reason and encouragement of it.

1. His integrity is asserted, ' I have kept thy precepts and thy testi-

monies.' Where it is notable the object of his duty is expressed by

two words, precepts and testimonies. Mandates adjungit tcstimonia,

saith Calvin, ut ostendat se non tantum agere de regula bene vivendi, sed

complecti toium salutis fcedus. He addeth the word ' testimonies ' to

that of ' precepts/ to comprise the whole covenant of salvation. Pre-

cepts signifieth the moral law, and testimonies doctrines of grace.

2. The moving cause or proper reason of this obedience, ' For all my

ways are before thee.' Whereby he understandeth either the provi-

dence of God apprehended by faith as always watching over him and

all his affairs for good, or a sense of God's omnisciency and omnipre-

sence. The interpretations are subordinate one to the other ; and in

both respects, all our ways may be said to be before the Lord, namely,

as he doth govern and dispose of them according to his will. So it is

said, Prov. iii. 6, ' In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall

direct thy paths.' Or that he doth know and see all : Job xxxiv. 21,

' His eyes are upon the ways of man, and he seeth all his goings.' And

in this double sense may a parallel place be expounded : Ps. xvi. 8, ' I

have set the Lord always before me.' In point of reverence and

dependence, as inspector, helper, observer, second. But why is it

mentioned here ? Three reasons interpreters give for it — either by

way of appeal, or as the reason of his obedience, or as evidence of his

sincerity.

[1.] By way of appeal, as calling God to witness for the truth of

what he had said. Lord, thou art conscious to all my ways, knowest

the truth of what I spake. ' Lord, thou knowest all things ;' thus Peter

useth it, John xxi. 17.

[2.] As a reason why he was so careful to keep all God's precepts.

All my thoughts, words, and deeds are known to thee ; and so I desire

to approve myself to thee in every part and point of my duty.

[3.] Or it is produced as an evidence of his sincerity, that he did all

things as in God's sight, and set him before his eyes as the judge of his

doings, and so would not offend God to please men ; for in this octo-

nary he speak eth as a man in trouble, and ready to miscarry by carnal

fear.

Doct. That walking as in the sight of God is a note of sincerity,

and a good means to make us keep his precepts.

1. In those few words which God spake to Abraham all godliness is

comprehended: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou upright;'

walk before me as in the sense of my eye and the confidence of my

all-sufficiency, behave thyself as in my sight and presence. Let me

give you a note or two concerning this walking as in the sight of

God.

[1.] All men are in God's sight, but few think of it ; they forget

God's eye that is upon them ; as Jacob saith in another case, Gen.

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xxvi. 16, ' Surely God is in this place, and I knew it not.' God is in

them, though they do not see God, and therefore act as if God did not

see them. The apostle telleth us plainly, Acts xvii. 27, ' He is not

far from every one of us.' Though God be not far from us, yet we

may be far from him, at a great distance in our minds and affections.

God is near us in the effects of his power and providence, but the

elongation and distance is on our parts. We do not consider his eye

that is upon us ; for many dare do that in the sight of God and

angels which they dare not do in the sight of a little child.

[2.] This walking as in the sight of God implieth a looking upon

God as witness and judge, as one that seeth for the present, and will

hereafter call you to an account ; and so it works upon those two great

articles of present providence and last judgment ; the one considera-

tion puts an edge upon the other, and maketh it more operative.

God is to be looked on as one sitting upon his throne ; and Solomon

telleth us, ' A king sitting upon the throne of judgment scattereth

away all evil with his eyes,' Prov. xx. 8. Would a subject break the

laws in his sovereign's sight ? So when God looketh on, shall we

affront him to his face, the great judge of all the earth? Job xi. 11, 'He

seeth wickedness also ; will he not then consider it ? ' As Ahasuerus

said, Esther vii. 8, ' Will he force the queen also before me ? ' The

greatest malefactors will carry it demurely in the presence of their

judge: Ps. x. 14, 'Thou hast seen it, thou beholdest mischief and

spite, to requite it with thine hand.'

[3.] We are not only to remember God's eye in the duties of piety

which we perform directly to God, but also in the duties of righteous-

ness which we owe to men : Luke i. 75, ' In holiness and righteous-

ness before him all the days of our lives.' Holiness hath relation to

God, and righteousness to men ; in both we must act as before him,

as in his eye and presence ; not only in praying and hearing ; then we

are before him, immediately speaking to him ; but before him as to

men ; all our respects there must be done as in and to the Lord, per-

forming duties we owe to men as in the sight and presence of the

Lord, as it is often said, so as to approve ourselves to God, who seeth

the heart ; do it unto the Lord heartily : Ps. xxv. 15, ' Mine eyes are

ever towards the Lord.'

[4.] God doth not only behold our actions, but our principles and

aims, and the secret motions of our hearts. He is neither ignorant of

man, nor anything in man. Men may judge of actions, but not of

principles, no further than they are discovered ; but God judges of

principles when the action is fair: 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 'And thou

Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy fathers, and serve him

with a perfect heart and willing mind ; for the Lord searcheth all

hearts, and understandeth all the imagination of the thoughts;' words

that imply an accurate search. God looketh to the bottom and spring

of actions, not only the matter, but the principle. A man that standeth

by a river in a low place can only see that part of the stream that

passeth by, but he that is aloof in the air in a higher place may see

the whole course, where it riseth and how it runneth ; so God at one

view seeth the beginning, rise, and ending of actions ; whatever we

think, speak, or do, he seeth it altogether. He knoweth our thoughts

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before we can think them : Ps. cxxxix. 2, ' Thou knowest my down-

sitting and my uprising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off;

before we can conclude anything. A gardener knoweth what roots are in

the ground long before they appear, and what fruits they will produce.

2. This is a good means to make us keep his precepts.

[1.] It maketh for the restraint of evil ; the sight of God is a bridle

to us : Gen. xxxix. 9, ' How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin

against God ? ' Shall we break God's laws before his face ? We take

heed what we say and do before informers, and should we not much

more before the judge himself ? If we be not thus affected, it is a sign

we never had a sight and sense of God's eye : 3 John 11, ' He that

doth evil hath not seen God.' God taught his people this by the type

of covering their excrements : Deut. xxiii. 13, 14, ' For the Lord walketh

in the midst of the camp, therefore let thy camp be holy, that he see

no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.' The flesh will

soon seduce us were it not for the awe of God's eye. Inferiors, when

they are in the sight and presence of their superiors, are very careful of

their behaviour. He were an unhappy son or a lewd servant that would

misdemean himself in the sight and presence of his father or master.

Children at school, all is whisht when the master cometh. She were a

lewd and impudent wife that in the sight and presence of her husband

would prostitute herself to another man. This is our case ; God is

father and lord, and we are always in his sight ; if we believe it, and

can remember it, would we be so shameless as to sin, he looking

upon us ? The wise heathens were sensible that such a thought would

be a curb to us, therefore admonished their disciples that they should

always set before them some Cato or Cselius, some grave and reverend

person, that they might behave themselves as in their presence ; for

saith Seneca, Magna pars 'peccatorum tollitur, si p>eccatoris testis ad-

fuit — a great part of sin would be prevented if, when we are about

to sin, some witness were present with us. They thought this fiction

would be a restraint, and the fiction of grave men. But we speak

now of the eyes of God, and that not as a fiction and supposition, but

as a certain and undoubted truth ; no less certain than that there is a

God, which, of all truths, is most certain. Therefore, should not the

eye of God restrain, who is with us always and in all places ?

[2.] For the encouragement to every good work, and so it is a spur

to us. God looketh on ; he that is thy judge and rewarder, he knoweth

how faithfully we keep his law. All the labours, miseries, slanders

which thou endurest for his sake are known to him : Kev. ii. 3, ' I

know thy works, and thy labour, and thy patience.' He taketh notice

of thy faithfulness. Do not think only that God doth spy out our

failings : Prov. xv. 3, ' The eyes of the Lord are in every place, be-

holding the evil and the good.' He taketh notice of both, both as

rewarder and avenger. Now cowards will adventure much in the

presence of their general, and idle servants will work while their

master looketh on ; and shall not we do the Lord's work, since he

taketh notice ? He knoweth our work and our discouragements, and

will help accordingly : Eev. ii. 13, ' I know thy works, and where

thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is : and thou holdest fast my

name.' See Basil, Regulis Brevioribus, qua?st. 34.

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More particularly.

1. It is a great means to make us serious in all our addresses to

God, that we may behave ourselves with that reverence and awefulness

that will become the divine majesty. What is the reason men are

so slight and customary in their prayers and other acts of religion ?

They do not see the invisible Groa, and think of him to whom they

speak. From practical atheism and unbelief we have little sense of

things unseen. In speaking to a man we behave ourselves with that

gravity and reverence that his quality deserveth ; but in speaking to

God, our thoughts wander, our hearts are dead and vain, because we

see not him with whom we have to do : ' Make us gods to go before

us,' Exod. xxxii. 1. Ay ! that we would have a visible God, whom

we may see and hear; but the true God being a spirit and an invisible

power, all the service we do him is a task performed more out of

custom than affection, in a slight perfunctory manner. Now, when we

believe God's eye, and are sensible of his presence, that maketh us

more serious. He telleth man his thought. Thoughts speak louder

in his ears than our words. Oh ! with what reverence should we

creep into his presence, before whom all things are naked and open!

It was a direction Seneca gave to his friend Lucilius, Epist. x. — Sic

vive cum hominibus, tanquam Deus videat ; sic loquere cum Deo,

tanquam homines videant — so live with men as if God saw; so speak

with God as if men saw. Shall such a speech come out of the mouth

of a heathen, and shall not Christians remember God, and set them-

selves as in his sight when they come before him ? We would be

ashamed if our hearts were turned in and out in any duty, and men

did know all our light, foolish, sinful thoughts that take up our minds;

and doth not God see and hate these things more than men. So that

it is a powerful consideration to make us come with humility and reve-

rence into God's presence.

2. It maketh us sincere in our whole course ; for this is sincerity, to

do all things in order to God: sincerity lieth in the universality of

obedience, and purity of intention.

[1.] For universality of obedience, we have an instance here in the

text. David, by keeping himself as in God's all-seeing presence, per-

formed a uniform acceptable obedience to him. So will all do that

habituate this thought, and make it familiar to them ; this is that that

maketh them obey in presence and absence, to perform secret duties,

Mat. vi. G. Therefore a Christian is as religious, if not more, alone

and in secret as before others. The hypocrite walketh before men,

who see the outward man only, seeketh chiefly to approve himself to

men, and therefore is more religious before others than alone; but it

is otherwise with a heart deeply possessed with a sense of God's omni-

sciency and omnipresence. So to avoid secret sins, which are only

liable to God's cognisance ; he that knoweth all the workings of his

heart lie open before God, maketh it his business to abstain from

fleshly lusts as from sinful practices, which would betray him to shame

before the world, and dareth not allow himself to sin anywhere, but

there where God cannot see, that is, nowhere. Yea, when God's

children forget themselves to be in their Father's presence, and corrup-

tion gets the start of grace, they afterwards come to be ashamed, and

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grieved for those sins for which the world cannot tax them : Ps. xix.

12, ' Who can understand his errors ? cleanse me, Lord, from secret

sins.' All our actions are seen by the Lord ; some of them may be

known to men, but others may escape their eye ; therefore, if we look

to men only, we are partial ; but if to God, universal in our obedience.

If this be all our aim, that men may not impeach us of any crime ; but if

this be our aim, to approve ourselves to God, it is a sign we are sincere.

[2.] As to purity of intention, the proper reason of that is, because

God seeth our aims as well as our actions, and knoweth all the deceits

and tricks of a false heart. Our business is not with men, but with

God, the searcher of hearts, who can distinguish between the motions

of the flesh, and those inspired by his Spirit. Certainly, if we make

him paymaster, we must intend his work: Rom. ii. 29, ' For he is not

a Jew who is one outwardly ; but he is a Jew which is one inwardly,

whose praise is not of men, but of God/ He that maketh God his

witness, approver, and judge, must chiefly mind what God looketh

after : Pro v. xvi. 2, ' All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight,

but the Lord weigheth the spirit.' That which he chiefly regardeth

are men's principles and ends.

[3.] It maketh us faithful in our relations, by considering he ap-

points them to us, and seeth how we improve them for his glory.

Magistrates, there is a special presence of God, not only to direct and

protect, but also to note and observe them : 2 Chron. xix. 6, ' The

Lord is with you in the judgment ; ' Ps. lxxxii. 1, ' God standeth in

the congregation of the mighty, and judgeth among the gods/ When

they are for the execution of his office, God is there, and therefore

they above all must be men fearing God, have a reverent regard to his

eye and presence. Diodorus Siculus telleth us of some heathens that

had several empty chairs advanced aloof 1 near the tribunals, as for their

gods, to show they were present, and had an inspection over all acts of

judicature. So for ministers, they must not only give an account at

last, but are observed for the present. God hath a watchful eye over

them, as they have and should have over the flock. He observeth

how we discharge our trust, and what are our aims, whether to pro-

mote our own interest or his: 2 Cor. ii. 17, 'But as of God, in the

sight of God, speak we in Christ.' Our doctrines must not only be

sound, but our aims and principles. It is not enough to speak of God,

in his name, his truth, but sincerely approve our hearts to him in the

faithful discharge of our duty. So 1 Thes. ii. 4, ' We speak not as

pleasing men, but God, which trieth our hearts ; ' in all singleness and

sincerity of heart discharging our trust. So masters of families are

to walk in their houses with a perfect heart, Ps. ci. 2 ; though they

are shut up in their families from the observation of others, yet at

home as well as abroad they must be careful to walk with God in their

domestical converse, where men are wont most to discover themselves,

and should behave themselves prudently, and holily, and faithfully there.

The apostle mindeth masters of their Master in heaven, Eph. vi. 9 ;

one who noteth and observeth your dealings, and will call you to

an account for all your carriage : your sins and graces are not hid from

him. So for servants : Col. iii. 21-23, ' Servants, obey in all things

1 Qu. ' aloft ' ?— Ed.

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your masters according to the flesh ; not with eye-service, as men-

pleasers ; but in singleness of heart, fearing God : and whatsoever ye

do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men.' Still the con-

sideration of God's eye is suggested to them ; they must be careful of

their master's concernments, whether their master be present or absent,

or whether the tilings they do will come to his knowledge, yea or no ;

for though the eye of man will not find them out, yet the eye of God

must be regarded ; therefore, with respect to God, they must be care-

ful and faithful. So again, Eph. vi. 5, 6, ' Servants, be obedient to

them which are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and

trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ ; with good will

doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men.' They should be cheer-

ful, laborious, painful, showing all faithfulness in things committed to

their trust, even to a pin or the smallest matter, not saucy, stubborn,

and malapert ; because the Lord looketh upon them, and if they so do,

will own them and bless them. Thus you see we should have better

magistrates, better ministers, better masters, better servants, better

fathers, better children, if this principle were once deeply imprinted

upon their hearts, that all their ways are before the Lord, and he still

observeth what they do in all their actions.

Use. To press us to walk as in the sight of God, and to foresee him

before j'ou in all your ways. To press you hereunto, consider these

things: —

1. You are in the sight of God, whether you think so or no. We

can no more be removed from the presence of God than from our own

beings, for he is in everything that subsists, and it subsists by him.

The apostle telleth us, Eph. iv. 6, ' There is one God and Father of

all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.' The sun is

some representation of God's eye ; nothing is hid from its sight : if the

sun were an eye, it would see all things that it shineth upon. So doth

God ; only with this difference, the sun cannot pierce through dark

and thick bodies, but God is over all, and through all, and in all,

upholding and overruling all by his powerful providence. Therefore

you cannot lie hid from God ; only this sight is not comfortable and

profitable to you, unless you see him as he seeth you. They say of the

panther, when it hideth the head it thinketh it is not seen because it

seeth not, and so is taken by the hunters. This an emblem of wretched

sinners ; they see not God, and therefore think they are not seen by

him, and so go on doing evil till their iniquities find them out.

2. What a noble thing it is always to live in the sight of God ; for

by this exercise, in some measure, and as this mortal state will permit,

you enjoy the happiness of the blessed angels, for this is the privilege

of the blessed angels: Mat. xviii. 10, 'That they always behold the

face of our Father which is in heaven.' So when you live in the

thought of God in some measure, you are doing their work, and your

minds become as it were another heaven ; for heaven is where God

is, and there God is in that heart that thinketh of him ; not only

there by the powerful effects of his providence, and the impressions of

his grace, but there by the workings of our hearts.

3. The profit is exceeding great. By conversing with God often ye

become like him. As musing of vanity maketh us vain, heavenly and

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holy thoughts produce a heavenly mind, and frequent remembrance

is one means to introduce the divine nature. Moses, in that extra-

ordinary converse with God, his face shone, he carried away some

strictures and rays of the divine majesty in his countenance. We

cannot look for that effect upon our bodies, but serious and ponderous

thoughts leave some change upon the soul ; there is the lustre of grace,

and the beauty of the divine nature, which is a greater thing left upon

us. The apostle saith, 2 Cor. iii. 19, ' For we all with open face,

beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the

same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord.' By

seeing him in the word, considering him as always present with us ;

the heart is coloured and dyed by the object it often thinketh upon.

Oh ! therefore be persuaded to set the Lord before you.

For means.

1. To see God aright we need faith, for God is invisible, and in-

visible things are only seen by faith, Heb. xi. 1 ; and the instance is in

Moses, ver. 27, ' By faith he saw him that was invisible/ Many have

an opinion that God knoweth all things, but they have not a sound

belief of it ; it is what is owned by the tongue rather than the heart.

Cold and dead opinions are easily taken up, but a lively faith is God's

gift ; this is a sight not easily gotten.

2. We must often revive this thought, for the oftener we think of it,

the more deeply it is impressed upon the soul : Ps. ix. 17, ' The wicked

shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.' It' is

not said, that deny him, but forget him. On the other side, there is a

book of remembrance for those that thought upon his name, Mai. iii.

16. God takes it kindly when our minds are set a-work upon him

and upon his attributes. We have every moment life and breath, and

all things from him ; he thinketh of us, and therefore out of a neces-

sary gratitude we should oftener think of God. Nazianzen saith twice,

Naz. Orat. deCuraPauperum, Orat. 10, and Orat. de Theol., Orat. 11 :

We should as often think of God as breathe, for we cannot breathe

without him, and without his continual providential influence we fall

into nothing, as sunbeams vanish when the sun is gone. Therefore

the apostle telleth the Ephesians they were in their natural estate,

aOeoi, Eph. ii. 12. There are two sorts of atheists — they that deny

God, and they that wholly forget God. The latter are more common,

and they are described, Ps. x. 4, ' God is not in all their thoughts/

Oh ! what misery is this, that we have thoughts more than we can tell

what to do withal, and yet we will not afford God the least share in

them ! He were a cruel man that would cast his provisions and super-

fluities into the street, and deny them to the poor, that should let his

drink run into the kennel rather than that they should taste a drop of

it. Such are we to God. AVe know not what to employ our thoughts

upon, and yet w 7 e will not think of his name. We go musing of

vanity all the day long, and be grinding of chaff, rather than take in

good corn into the mill.

3. There are certain seasons when we are bound not only habitually

but actually to think of God.

[1.] In a time of temptation, when the flesh, being enticed by profit

or pleasure, or scared by fears, tempts us to do anything contrary to the

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will of God. Thus did Joseph, when lie might have sinned securely

and with advantage, Gen. xxxix. 9 ; the thoughts of God's eye and

presence dashed the temptation. We forget him that seeth in secret,

and therefore take the liberty to indulge our lusts. Can I consider

that God looketh on, and do thus unworthily ? It is a daring him

to his face to go on with these thoughts; therefore God seeth what I

will now do ; it is a seasonable relief to the soul.

[2.] We should actually revive this thought in solemn duties, when

we come to act the part of angels, and to look God in the face. Surely

God is greatly to be had in fear of all that are round about him. It

would prevent a great deal of carelessness in worship to remember who

is the party with whom we have to do, who is speaking to us in

the word, and to whom we speak in prayer : Heb. iv. 13, ' All things

are naked and open unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.'

He knoweth how we hear, what thoughts and affections are stirring in

our hearts : ' We are all here present before the Lord, to hear all

things that are commanded thee of God.' We come not hither to see

and be seen of men, but to see God ; we are here before God, as if God

himself were speaking to us. God is everywhere with us, but we are not

always everywhere with God, but when we lift up our hearts and set him

before our eyes. So in prayer, when we speak to God, we should think

of him who is an eternal being, to whom belongeth kingdom, power,

ami glory, Prayer is called a coming to God. We beg his eyes be

open, Neh. i. 6, to behold us as well as hear us. Now what an awing

thought is this in prayer, that our preparations, motions, affections,

dispositions, aims are all naked and open to his eyes !

[3.] When God findeth us out in our secret sins by his word, Spirit,

and providence, or the Wrings and pinches of our own consciences. By

his word : 1 Cor. xiv. 25, ' And thus are the secrets of his heart made

manifest ; and so, falling down upon his face, will worship God, and

report that God is in you of a truth.' And Heb. iv. 12, 13, ' 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. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his

sight, for all things are naked and open unto the eyes of him with

whom we have to do.' So by his Spirit setting conscience a-work :

Job xiii. 26, ' Thou makest me possess the sins of my youth.' Old

forgotten sins come to remembrance. Own God and his oinni-

sciency in the dispensation when God sets our sins in order before us

as if anew committed. So providence: Gen. xlii. 21, ' We are verily

guilty concerning our brother/ &c. Affliction openeth the eyes ; it is

his rack to extort confessions from us.

[4.] Consider upon what good reason God's knowing all things is

built; his creation and providence. If he made all things, and sus-

taineth all things, surely he knoweth all things in particular, for every

wise man knoweth what he doth. A father cannot forget how many

children he hath. He that leadeth us by the hand wherever we go,

knoweth where and how we go. Christ knew when virtue passed from

him in a crowd; he said, 'Somebody toucheth me, for I perceive that

virtue is passed out from me,' Luke viii. 45, 46. Certainly God

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knoweth there is such a creature as thou art, such a man or woman of

the world, knoweth thy uprising and down-lying : Ps. cxxxix. 2, ' Thou

understandest my thoughts afar off.' He knoweth whether we are

laughing, mourning, or praying. He that will judge thee knoweth

thee, or else he were an incompetent judge.

[5.] Humble thyself for walking so unanswerably. It would trouble

us to have our thoughts, counsels, actions, all we think and speak,

divulged and published. All is naked and open to God. If we did

not think God's eye a fancy and fond conceit, we would at least walk

more humbly. It would trouble us exceedingly if men had a window

into our hearts in a time of prayer. Why not because God seeth ?

How watchful are we not to incur the penalty of man's law, but offences

against God are lightly passed over. With what copiousness and

Sowings of language will men enlarge themselves in prayer when in

company, and how slight and overly in closet duties, if not wholly

neglective of them ; which is in effect to say, .Our heavenly father

seeth not in secret.

SERMON CLXXXIV.

My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. —

Ver. 171.

In the two former verses he had prayed — (1.) For an increase of saving

knowledge, ver. 169. (2.) For deliverance out of his troubles, ver.

170. He reinforceth his request by a promise of thankfulness, if he

could get a gracious answer to that, ' My lips shall utter praise,' &c.

In the words we have—

1. A resolution of praise, my lips shall utter praise.

2. The reason and occasion of it, when thou hast taught me thy

statutes.

First, A resolution of praise.

The Avord for ' uttereth praise,' signifieth that praise should break

from him as water boileth and bubbleth up out of a fountain. Indeed

words cometh from the abundance of the heart, Mat. xii. 34 ; either

from the plenty of spiritual knowledge, John iv. 38 — as a fountain

yieldeth water, so his knowledge breaketh out into praises — or from the

plenty of spiritual affection ; rather from the great esteem of the benefit,

or fulness of joy at the thought of it. It is a great privilege to be

delivered from blindness and ignorance : ' To you it is given to know

the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' Mat. xiii. 11. Now they that

have a spiritual gust and taste are so affected with it that they cannot

be enough thankful for it ; and it is notable that this thankfulness is

promised upon granting the first request.

Doct. Divine illumination is so great a gift, that all who are made

partakers of it are especially obliged to praise and thanksgiving.

This will appear by these considerations : —

1. That upon the receipt of every mercy we should praise God.

There is an equity in it, for this is God's pact and agreement with us :

246 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Seb. CLXXXIV.

Ps. 1. 15, ' Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee,

and thou shalt glorify me.' We are forward in supplications, but

backward in gratulations ; all the lepers could beg health, but one

returned to give glory to God, Luke xvii. 18. Self-love puts us upon

prayers, but the love of God upon praises. Now we should be as

much affected, or rather more, in the receiving mercies, as we were in

asking mercies ; because before we knew it only by guess and imagi-

nation, but then by actual feeling and experience of the comfort of it.

Therefore to seek, and not to praise, is to be loving to ourselves.

2. Those that have received most from God are most bound to

honour him and praise him, for the return must carry some propor-

tion with the receipt : 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, ' Hezekiah rendered not

according to the benefit done unto him ;' not according to the kind,

only good, and not evil for good, but according to the degree. Great

mercies require great acknowledgments: she loved much to whom

much was forgiven, and she x loved little to whom little, Luke vii. 47.

More sins pardoned, more mercies received, God expecteth more love,

more praise, more thanksgiving. And Luke xii. 48, ' For unto whom-

soever much is given, of him much shall be required ; and to whom

men commit much, of him will they ask the more.' Christ pleadeth

the equity from the practice of men. The more helps, the more work

and service we expect. He should come sooner who rideth on horse-

back than he that cometh on foot ; so the more light and knowledge

God vouchsafeth, the more honour and glory he expecteth from us.

3. That we should praise God especially for spiritual benefits.

Usually those are overlooked, but they deserve the greatest acknow-

ledgment ; these are discriminating, and come from special love. Corn,

wine, and oil are bestowed upon the world, but knowledge and grace

upon his saints ; these are the favour of his peculiar people : Ps. cvi.

4, ' Eemember me, Lord, with the favour that thou bearest to thy

people ; visit me with thy salvation.' To have the favourite's mercy

is more than to have a common mercy. Protection is the benefit of

every subject, but intimate and near admission is the privilege of

special favourites. Love and hatred cannot be known by the things

before us, Eccles. ix. 1-3. Christ gave his Spirit to the good disciples,

the keeping of the purse to Judas.

[1.] Partly because these concern the better part, the inward man,

2 Cor. iv. 16. He doth us more favour that healeth a wound in the

body than he that seweth up a rent in the garment. Is not the body

more than raiment, the soul more than the body ? and the soul as

furnished with grace more than the soul only as furnished with natural

gifts and endowments ?

[2.] Partly because these are brought about with more ado than

temporal favours. God, as a creator and merciful upholder of all his

creatures, doth bestow temporal blessings upon the ungodly world,

even upon heathens, who never heard of Christ ; yet saving grace he

bestoweth only as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Eph.

i. 3, with respect to the merit of Christ, who was to purchase these

blessings before he could obtain them.

[3.] Partly because they are pledges of eternal blessings, and the

1 Qu. 'he'?— Ed.

VER. 171.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 247

beginning of our eternal well-being, John vi. 27. These and eternal

blessedness are so linked together than they cannot be separated :

Eorn. viii. 29, 30, ' For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate

to be conformable to the image of his Son : that he might be the first-

fruits among many brethren. Moreover, whom he did predestinate,

them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and

whom he justified, them he also glorified;' and Phil. i. 6, 'Being

confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work

in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

[4.] Partly because these incline and fit the heart for praise and

thanksgiving ; the one giveth occasion to praise God, the other a heart

to praise God. Outward mercies give the occasion to praise God,

these the disposition ; other mercies the motives, these the prepara-

tions ; these dispose the heart to it : Ps. cxix. 7, ' I will praise thee

with uprightness of heart, when I have learned thy righteous judg-

ments/ Here they dispose the lip and open the mouth : Ps. li. 15,

' Lord, open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth thy

praise.' The work of grace doth set our lips wide open in the magni-

fying and praising of God. Grace is the matter of God's praise, and

also giveth a ready will to praise God, yea, the very deed of praising

him.

[5.] Partly because temporal favours may be given in anger, but

the graces of the Spirit are never given in anger. God may give an

estate in judgment, and indulge large pastures to beasts fitted for

destruction ; but he giveth not an enlightened mind and a renewed

heart in anger; it is a token of his special love : ' To you it is given

to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God,' Mat. xiii. 11. Well,

then, for all these things should we praise God. We have a quick

sense in bodily mercies, but in soul concernments we are not alike

affected.

4. That among spiritual blessings divine illumination is a very

great gift, and accordingly should be acknowledged by us. To make

this evident, I shall —

[1.] Open the nature of this divine illumination.

[2.] Show you the worth of it, and how much it should be valued

by us.

[1.] For the nature of it. There is a twofold wisdom and know-

ledge of divine mysteries : —

(1.) One which is only a gift : 1 Cor. viii. 1, ' We know that we all

have knowledge: knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.' This

is an excellent gift, but yet it floweth from the common influence of

the Spirit, and puffeth up the party, because it is apprehended only by

such an excellency as conduceth to the interests of the flesh, and to

attain esteem in the world ; and because he hath not thereby a deep

and piercing knowledge of his misery, but is cold and weak, and doth

not warm the heart with love to the thing known. Therefore we

should see to it what kind of knowledge we have, whether it be a gift

or a grace, whether we use it to exalt God or ourselves. The bare

gift puffeth us up with a lofty conceit of ourselves and a disdain of

others, but grace keepeth us humble ; for the more we know that way,

the more we see our defects, and what little reason we have to glory

248 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Ser. CLXXXIV.

in our knowledge, or any other grace; and besides, by it we are

suitably affected to what we know.

(2.) There is a special knowledge of divine mysteries wrought in

us by the special and sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost ; this is

' the wisdom which comethfrom above,' which ' is first pure, and then

peaceable,' James iii. 17, which humbleth the man that hath it, for

the more he knoweth of (rod, the more his own opinion and estima-

tion of himself is lessened : Job xlii. 5, 6, ' I have heard of thee by

the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee ; therefore I abhor

myself and repent in dust and ashes.' I have spoken unadvisedly of

God. This knowledge also maketh him serious, and is operative upon

the heart, and worketh love to the thing known : John iv. 10, ' If thou

knewest the gift,' &c. ; and maketh us to know God in Christ, so as to

acknowledge him, and give him due honour, respect, and reverence.

It is a knowledge joined with oblectation and affection. This know-

ledge is considerable as to its beginning and increase.

(1st.) Its beginning, the first removing of the natural blindness and

darkness of our understandings, so that we have a clear discerning of

the things of God when the scales fall from our eyes. Naturally we

were ignorant of God and the way to heaven, but now, brought to the

saving knowledge of God in Christ, we are acquainted with both. The

first creature which God made was light ; so in the new creation, the

new creatine is illuminated with a heavenly light, and cured of its

former blindness, that we see things in another manner than ever we

saw them before : 1 Peter ii. 9, ' Called out of darkness into his mar-

vellous light ;' as a man brought out of a dark dungeon into an open

light. And Acts xxvi. 18, ' To open their eyes, and turn them from

darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.' So Eph. v.

8, ' Ye were sometimes darkness, but now light in the Lord.' To be

seeing is better than to be blind, to be in light than to be in darkness.

This is God's first work, and it is marvellous in our eyes ; it is double,

when we first begin to have a clear knowledge of our own misery,

Rev. iii. 18. Whereas before we lived in gross ignorance of our own

condition ; so when we begin to see the remedy, as well as our misery ;

2 Cor. iv. 6, ' God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness,

hath shined in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the

glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.' The first thing that God

convinceth us of is our own sin, guilt, and misery. So that those

things that either we knew not, or did swim loose in the brain, we

begin now to be affected with them. We talked before of sin as a

thing of course, and were wont to marvel why men kept such a deal

ado about sin ; but now the case is altered. God hath opened his eyes,

and therefore he complaineth of it as the greatest burden, and fain

would be rid of it at any rate. He beginneth to seek after Christ as

his only remedy, and nothing will satisfy him but Christ; and all

things are but dung and dross in comparison of the excellency of

Christ, and that he may be found in him. He lamenteth his case,

and can trust himself nowhere but in Christ's hands. A natural man

slippeth into a heedless credulity, and either doth not look upon the

gospel as a real truth, or else is not affected with it so as to venture

his salvation in that bottom.

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(2d.) As to the increase and progress, and so those that are taught

of God need to be taught of God again, and to seek a further increase

of spiritual wisdom, or a further degree of the saving knowledge of

divine mysteries; as the apostle prayeth for the Ephesians, towards

whom he acknowledged God had abounded in all wisdom and

prudence, yet prayeth that God would give them the spirit of wisdom

and revelation, that the eyes of their understandings might be opened,

Eph. i. 17, 18, with the 8th verse. We are yet ignorant in many

things, for we know but in part, not fully rooted in the knowledge of

these things which we know. They need to be refreshed with new

illumination from God, that our knowledge may be active and livety,

and stand out against new and daily temptations, and that oblivion

and forgetfulness, which is a kind of ignorance, and is apt ever and

anon to creep upon us, may be prevented, and truths may be ready at

hand for our use, James i. 5. And this is that which David beggeth

an increase of knowledge for ; he, being a holy man and a prophet,

needed not the first illumination : and every degree is a great favour,

to be acknowledged with praise.

[2.] Let me speak of the worth of this divine illumination in itself.

The worth of it appeareth in four things : —

(1.) Its author. God, by his efficacious teaching, doth cure the

blindness of our minds, and doth open and incline our hearts towards

spiritual and heavenly things : John vi. 45, ' They shall all be taught

of God ;' 1 Thes. iv. 10, ' Ye yourselves are taught of God to love

one another ;' 1 John ii. 27, ' The anointing teacheth you all things.'

As the heathen Cato would have none to teach his son but himself,

for he said that instruction was such a benefit, that he would not

have his son beholden to any for it but himself. Oh! it is a blessed

privilege to be taught of God, to be made wise to salvation, and not

only to get an ear to hear, but a heart to understand, and learn by

hearing, not only the power to believe, but the very act of faith

itself. God's teaching is always effectual, not only directive, but per-

suasive, enlightening the mind to know, and inclining the will and

affections to embrace what we know. He writeth the truth upon the

heart, and puts it into the mind, Heb. viii. 10. He sufficiently pro-

poundeth the object, and rectifieth the faculty, imprints the truth upon

the very soul. But how doth God teach ? In the very place where

Christ speaketh of our being taught of God, he presently addeth, John

vi. 46, ' Not that any man hath seen the Father.' God's teaching doth

not import that any man must see God, and immediately converse

with him, and talk with God, and so be taught by him. No ; God

teacheth externally by his word, and internally by the Spirit, but yet

so powerfully and effectually that the lesson is learned and deeply

imprinted upon our souls. This teaching is often expressed by see-

ing. Now, to a clear sight three things concur — an object conspicuous,

a perspicuous medium, and a well-disposed organ or clear eye. In

God's teaching there is all these. The object, to be seen plainly in

the scriptures, are the things of God, not fancies, but realities, and by

the light of the Spirit represented to us, and the eye of the mind

opened. A blind man cannot see at midday, nor the most clear-

sighted at midnight, when objects lie hidden under a veil of darkness.

250 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Ser. CLXXXIV.

The object must be revealed and brought nigh to us in a due light ;

and God secretly openeth the eye of the soul, that we see heavenly

things with life and affection. The author then showcth the mercy,

when God will not only teach us by men, but by his Spirit.

(2.) The objects known, the highest and most important matters in

the world, the gracious soul is savingly acquainted with. It is more

to have the knowledge of the profoundest sciences then of some poor

and low employment ; as Themistocles said, To know a little of true

philosophy is more than to know how to play upon a fiddle. But now,

to have the saving knowledge of God and of the life to come is more

than to have the most admired wisdom of the flesh, than all the com-

mon learning in the world. And therefore how much are we bound to

praise God if he will teach us his statutes ! More than if we knew how

to govern kingdoms and commonwealths, and do the greatest business

upon earth. Two things do commend the object of this knowledge : —

(1st.) It is conversant about the most high and excellent things.

(2d.) The most necessary and useful things.

(1st.) Things of so high a nature as to know God, who is the cause

of all things ; and Jesus Christ, who is the restorer of all things ; and

the Spirit, who cherisheth and preserveth all things ; especially to

know his heavenly operations, and the nature and acting of his several

graces : Jer. ix. 24, ' Let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he

knoweth me, saith the Lord.' There is the excellency of a man to

know God, to conceive aright of his nature, attributes, and works ; so

as to love, trust, reverence, and serve him. Alas ! all other know-

ledge is a poor low thing to this. God hath written a book to us of

himself, as Cassar wrote his own Commentaries, and by histories and

prophecies hath set forth himself to us to be the creature's creator,

preserver, deliverer, and glorifier. This is the knowledge we should

seek after ; common crafts teach us how to get bread, but this book

teacheth us how to get the kingdom of heaven, to get the bread of

life, the meat that perisheth not. Law preserveth the estates and

testaments of men, but this the testament of God, the charter of our

eternal inheritance. Physic cureth the diseases of the body ; this,

afflicted minds and distempered hearts. Natural philosophy raiseth

up men to the contemplation of nature ; this, of the maker of all

things and author of nature. History, the rise and ruin of kingdoms,

states, and cities ; this, the creation and consummation of the world.

Rhetoric, to stir the affection ; this, to enkindle divine love. Poetry

moveth natural delight; here psalms, that we may delight in God.

These are the only true and sublime things. As light is pleasant to

the eye, so is knowledge to the mind. But where have you the know-

ledge of such high things ? What are the mysteries of nature to the

mysteries of godliness ! To know the almighty living God, and to

behold his wisdom, goodness, and power, in all his works, surely this

is a sweet and pleasant thing to a gracious soul ; but especially to

know him in Christ, to know the mystery of the incarnation, person,

natures, and mediation of Christ : 1 Tim. iii. 16, ' Great is the mystery

of godliness.' This is a mystery without controversy great, to know

the law and covenant of God : Deut. iv. 6, ' This is your wisdom and

understanding in the sight of the nations who shall hear these statutes.'

VEE. 171.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 251

And the sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost, by which we are wrought

and prepared for everlasting life.

(2d.) So necessary and useful to know the way of salvation, the

disease and remedy of our souls, our danger and the cure, our work

and our wages, the business of life and our end, what is to be believed

and practised, what we are to enjoy and do ; these are the things which

concern us, all other knowledge is but curious and speculative, and

hath more of pleasure than of profit. To know our own affairs, our

greatest and most necessary affairs, these are the things we should

busy ourselves about. '£^09 XP e ' iCi > ' One thing is necessary,' Luke

x. 42. Other things we may well spare. Now what is necessary but

to know our misery that we may prevent it ; our remedy, that we may

look after it in time ; our work and business, that we may perform it ;

our end, that we intend it, and be encouraged by it ; what course we

must take that we may be everlastingly happy ? Well, then, if God

will show us what is good, Micah vi. 8, and teach us what is good, that

we may know whither we are a-going, and which way we must go ; if

he will give us counsel in our reins, to choose him for our portion, Ps.

xvi. 5, we ought to bless his name. So the 11th verse, ' Thou wilt

show me the path of life.' Though ignorant of other things, we are

highly obliged for this discovery. It is the work of God to give us

counsel, and should be matter of perpetual thanksgiving to us.

(3.) The use for which this knowledge serveth.

(1st.) To entertain communion with God for the present, for by

knowing him, we come to enjoy him : Ps. xvii. 15, ' As for me I will

behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake

with thy likeness ; ' that is more than to have a portion in this world.

And 1 John i. 3, ' That which we have seen and heard declare we

unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us ; and truly our

fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.' By com-

munion or fellowship is not meant a society of equals, but the dutiful

yet cheerful attendance of an inferior on his superior, the creature on

his creator ; but yet so as that there is a holy intimacy and familiarity

in it, because we both love and are beloved of God. In every ordin-

ance they draw nearer to God than others do ; for 1 John i. 7, ' If we

walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with

another.' All our duties are the converse of a sanctified creature

with a holy God, and a humble creature dealing with the blessed

God for a supply of all their wants. They pour out their souls to

him, and he openeth his ear and bosom unto them ; he teacheth them

his way, and they walk in his paths, Isa. ii. 3. They walk in the fear

of his name and the comforts of his Spirit, Acts ix. 31. They seek

his glory as their great end, and live in the sense of his dearest love.

(2d.) To enjoy him for ever : ' This is life eternal, that they may

know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent,'

John xvii. 3. Alas ! what is the knowing how to get riches and plea-

sures, and the vain glory of the world to this ? Surely you that are

taught of God, your business is above other men's. While they drive

on no greater trade than providing for the flesh, or feathering a nest

that will quickly be pulled down, they are providing for everlasting

glory and happiness. They aim at nothing beyond this life ; all

252 sermons uroN psalm cxix. [Ser. CLXXXIV.

their cares are confined within the narrow bounds of time and the

compass of this world ; but these look higher, and begin a life which

shall be perfected in heaven ; they are laying up treasure in heaven.

(4.) The manner of knowing things, when taught of God. They

see things with greater clearness, certainty, efficacy, and power.

(1st.) With greater clearness. Others know words, but they know

things, and therefore know as they ought to know them. They know

the grace of God in truth, Col. i. 6. They have the spiritual dis-

cerning, and that is a quite different thing from a literal discerning,

1 Cor. ii. 14. He hath an experimental and sweeter knowledge than

learned men that are ungodly. He hath tasted that the Lord is

gracious, the sweetness of his love, and the riches of his grace in

Christ. The theory of divine knowledge, though never so exact,

giveth us not this. They have more of the words and notions, but

less of the thing itself, they have the sign, the other the thing signified;

they break the shell, and the other eats the kernel ; they dress the

meat, but the others feed upon and digest it ; dig in the mines of

knowledge as negroes, but others have the gold. A rotten post may

support a living tree.

(2d.) With more certainty. There is a great deal of difference

between taking up religion out of inspiration, and out of opinion or

tradition. Faith is the gift of God, but credulity is received by the

report of men. Men may guess at the truth by their own wit, they

may talk of it by rote, and according to what they read and hear from

others ; but divine knowledge is the fruit of the Spirit : Mat. xvi. 17,

' Flesh and blood hath not revealed these things unto thee, but my

Father which is in heaven;' John iv. 42, ' Now we believe, not because

of thy saying, but we have heard him ourselves, and know indeed that

this is the Christ, the Saviour of the world ; ' and 1 Thes. i. 5, 'For

our gospel came to you, not in word only, but in power and the Holy

Ghost, and in much assurance.' We never apprehend the truth with

any certainty, nor can we discern God's impress on the word, but in the

light of the Spirit. God's illumination maketh our knowledge of things

certain and infallible : ' Know acr<£a\.ok, assuredly,' Acts ii. 36 ; John

xvii. 8, uXrjdai^. It is not a may be, a bare possibility, or likely to

be, a probability ; but it is sure to be, and will be so, a certainty that

belongeth to faith.

(3d.) For efficacy and power : 1 Thes. i. 5, ' For our gospel came

to you not in word only, but in power and in the Holy Ghost ; '

' Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Ghost/ Acts vi. 5.

We are affected with the truths we know, yea, transformed and

changed by them, 2 Cor. iii. 18 ; changed into a divine nature, 1

Peter i. 4. Our hearts are moulded and fitted for God, and for every

good work ; so that this is a benefit should be much acknowledged.

Use 1. To inform us how the saints do and should esteem this

benefit of divine illumination. In this psalm they esteem it more

than if God should bestow a great deal of wealth upon them. See

Ps. cxix. 14, ' I rejoice in the way of thy testimonies more than in

all riches ; ; and ver. 72, ' More than thousands of gold and silver.'

Once more, they think themselves well paid if they get it by sharp

afflictions, though by loss of health or wealth : ver. 71, ' It is good

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for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes.' The

reason is, because they value it as a mercy, for which they can never

enough be thankful : Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things

to be loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord,

for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but

dung, that I may win Christ.' The people of God have no reason to

envy others that live in the ponip of the world and the splendour of

outward accommodations, if he give them the saving knowledge of

himself : Prov. iii. 31, 32, ' Envy not the oppressor, and choose none

of his ways ; for the froward is an abomination to the Lord, but his

secret is with the righteous.' If God will teach us his statutes, though

he keepeth us low, it is more to be one of God's disci|)les, to be owned

by him in an ordinance, than to live a life of pomp and ease.

Secondly, None are fit to praise God but those whom God hath

taught: Ps. 1. 10, ' What hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or

that thou shouldest take my covenant into thy mouth ? ' The new

song and the old heart do ill agree together ; but when God hath framed

our hearts to obedience, then is praise comely in our mouths.

Use 2. To direct us —

1. How to pray for spiritual grace if we would obtain it. The glory

of God is the end of all grace vouchsafed to us ; with this end, we must

pray to God for it. The end of our petitions and requests to God

should be, that we may be enabled to praise God ; then we seek God

for God, much more when we ask spiritual grace. To ask temporal

benefits to consume upon our lusts is very bad, and the ready way to

bespeak ourselves a denial : James iv. 3, ' Ye ask, and receive not,

because you ask amiss, that you may consume it upon your lusts.'

Much more to ask spiritual gifts for our lusts' sake ; to beg God to

open our mouths, to show forth our own praises rather than his; or

knowledge to advance ourselves : as it is a greater indignity to void

our excrements in a cup of gold for a prince's own drinking, than in a

common utensil. Besides, it showeth our value of the benefit to think

of praise before we have obtained it : Eph. i. 6", ' To the praise of his

glorious grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the Beloved.'

2. It must be used and improved to that end ; when we have

obtained, we must not be proud of any spiritual gift, but lay our

crown at God's feet : 1 Cor. iv. 7, ' Who made thee to differ ? and

what hast thou that thou hast not received?' We pervert the end of

the end when we are puffed up, and give shrewd suspicion that it is a

common gift, not saving grace, when we are puffed up with it.

Use 3. Exhortation to press you to glorify God and praise him, if he

hath given you any knowledge of himself and of the way of salvation.

1. This is God's end in bestowing his grace, that in word and deed

we should be to the praise of his glorious grace : 1 Peter ii. 9, ' That

ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of

darkness into his marvellous light.'

2. You were as indocile and unteachable as others, only God made

the difference : Job ii. 12, ' For vain man would be wise, though man

be born like the wild ass's colt;' Jer. xxxi. 18, 'Like a bullock

unaccustomed to the yoke ;' and therefore the glory must entirely

redound to him. You might have perished as a witless fool, and

gone to hell as others do, but that God gave you counsel.

954 sermons upon rsALM cxix. [Ser. CLXXXV.

3. It is the way to increase it : Col. ii. 7, ' Hooted and built up in

him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding

therein with thanksgiving.' Thanksgiving for what we have received

is an effectual means to make us constant, grow and abound in every

orace : ' Let the people praise thee, God, yea, let all the people praise

thee,' Ps. lxvii. 3. Look, as the vapours go up, so the showers come

down. Experiences of former mercies thankfully acknowledged draweth

down more mercy.

4. Prayer necessarily inferreth praise : Phil. iv. 6, ' In everything

by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be

made known to God.' Blessing God for favours already received is

necessary to be joined with prayer ; it is disingenuous to be always

craving, and never give thanks. Be thankful and depend for more ;

not always pore upon wants, but take a survey of your mercies, and

that will not only enlarge your hearts in thankfulness, but even

invite God to bestow further mercies.

SEBMON CLXXXV.

My tongue shall speak of thy icord : for all thy commandments are

righteousness. — Ver. 172.

The man of God had spoken in the former verse how his lips should

praise God ; here is his second promise that he maketh, of holy

conference with others.

In the words we have : —

1. David's resolution, my tongue shall speak of thy word.

2. The reason; because it contained matter that deserved to be

spoken of, for all thy commandments are righteousness.

[1.] He speaketh of the whole word of God, all thy commandments.

[2.] In the abstract, are righteousness ; altogether righteous and

faithful.

First, From the first branch, David's resolution, 'My tongue shall

speak of thy word/ observe—

Doct. The subject of a believer's ordinary discourse should be the

word, and those spiritual and heavenly matters contained therein.

1. Not that they are always talking of these things ; there is a time

for all things ; the business of our calling will sometimes take us up,

and sometimes our recreations ; but yet there should be generally a

difference between us and others. The people of God should be

observantly different as to their words and discourse from other

people : Cant. iv. 11, ' Thy lips, my spouse, drop as the honeycomb.'

The lips of Christ's spouse should flow with matter savoury and useful.

So Prov. x. 20, 21, ' The tongue of the just is as choice silver, but

the heart of the wicked is little worth ; the lips of the righteous

feed many, but fools die for want of wisdom ; ' where the speech of

the righteous is compared to silver ; of the wicked, to dross ; for

because their heart is little worth, their discourse will be accordingly :

and then the good man is compared to one that keepeth open house,

that feedeth all those that resort to him ; but fools do not only not

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feed others, but perish themselves by their own folly. So Prov. xv. 7,

' The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, but the heart of the foolish

doth not so.' Men usually discourse as their hearts are. A man of

a frothy spirit will bring forth nothing but vain and frothy discourse,

but a gracious man will utter holy and gracious things ; for the tap

runneth according to the liquor with which the vessel is filled. One

place more : Ps. xxxvii. 30, 31, ' The mouth of the righteous speaketh

wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment ; the law of God is in

his heart, none of his steps shall slide.' All men's discourses are

vented according as their hearts are busied and affected. A man

that hath the word of God rooted in his heart, and maketh it his

work to suit his actions thereunto, will also suit his words thereunto,

and will edify those that he speaketh unto. Thoughts, words, and

actions are the genuine products and issue of the heart. Grace in

the heart discovereth itself uniformly in all holy thoughts, holy words,

and holy actions ; otherwise their conversation is not all of a piece.

All these places show that a Christian's discourse will differ from other

men's ; but, alas ! our conference is little different from ordinary men's.

2. More particularly I shall show you that we are not left to run

at random in our ordinary discourse, as if our tongues were our own,

to speak what we please. This I shall show — (1.) Negatively ; (2.)

Positively.

First, Negatively ; no profane, no idle discourse.

1. No profane discourse : Eph. iv. 29, ' Let no corrupt communica-

tion proceed out of your mouth.' Christians are accountable for their

words as well as actions.

Quest. But what is corrupt communication ?

Ans. (1.) Obscene scurrilous discourse. When the heart is filled

with such corrupt stuff, the mouth will be apt to vent it. So Col. iii.

8, ' Put away filthy communication out of your mouth.' Sins of the

tongue and outward man must be abstained from, as well as sins out

of the heart. That al<rxpo\oyiav, that filthy speaking, rotten speech,

is one of the great sins of the tongue. When we speak of those things

which belong to uncleanness, this is quite unbeseeming the purity and

cleanness of Christians ; the heart of man being as powder to the fire,

easily taken with such temptations.

(2.) Calumnious and censorious discourses, when we cannot meet

together but we must be speaking of others, suggesting evil against

them, blemishing their graces, or carping at their weaknesses, or

aggravating their sins, or divulging their secret miscarriages beyond

what Christianity requireth. This sin the scripture brandeth as

mischievous to ourselves and others. Ourselves : James i. 26, ' If

any man seemeth to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this

man's religion is in vain.' Censuring is a pleasing sin, very suitable

with corrupt nature, but yet it is a bad sign. It is made to be the

hypocrites' sin, who, being acquainted with the guile of their own

spirits, are apt to suspect others, and deprave their best actions, and

upon the ruin of other men's credit build their own reputation for

religion. And it is mischievous to others, and against that justice

and charity which we owe to them : Prov. xx. 22, ' The words of a tale-

bearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the

belly.' They wound men's reputation unperceivably, and secretly strike

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them a blow that smarts not for the present, but destroyeth their

service, at least to such as receive these privy defamations and whisper-

ings; and it is more craftily carried when they wound while they

pretend to kiss, and make their praise but a preface to their reproach,

as an archer draweth back his hand that the arrow may fly with the

more force. They say, He is this and that ; but, &c.

(3.) Proud and arrogant speaking, when all our discourse is a self-

boasting. The pride of the heart sometimes shooteth out by the eyes,

and therefore we read of haughty eyes and a proud look ; but usually

it is displayed in our speech, in a proud ostentation of our own worth

and excellency : 1 Sam. ii. 3, ' Talk no more so exceeding proudly :

let not arrogancy come out of your mouth.' When i" cometh in at

every sentence, irepiavTo\oyia, wanteth not its vanity : Prov. xxv. 27,

' For men to search their own glory is not glory.' All their discourses

is to set off themselves, and to usher in something of themselves ; and

if religion be talked of, it is to commend their own knowledge, and

their own notions, or their own endeavours for Christ, or to blemish

others, that they may shine alone.

(4.) When anger sets us a-discoursing ; therefore the apostle saith,

Eph. iv. 31, ' Let bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and evil-speaking

be put away from you, with all malice/ Where there is bitterness,

or a secret smothered displeasure, or alienation of affection, it soon

breaketh out into rage ; which if an impetuous rage, or passionate

commotion, that produceth anger, or a desire of revenge. Anger

produceth clamour, or boisterous words, loud menaces, and brawlings,

or inordinate speeches, which are the black smoke whereby anger and

wrath within doth first manifest itself ; then clamour produceth evil-

speaking, which are disgraceful and contumelious speeches ; therewith

the party incensed doth stain the reputation of him with whom he is

angry ; and then malice is rooted anger and continued wrath. Now

all these should be put away. Christians should have nothing to do

with them. But that we have in hand is disgraceful and contumelious

speaking, as it is the result of anger, wrath, and malice, either by open

railing, or derision, and jeering at their sins and infirmities to shame

them, or by imprecation and cursing, and wishing evil to them ; all

which is contrary to that meekness and love which should prevail in

the hearts of Christians. As Saul in his anger called Jonathan, 1

Sam. xx. 3, ' Thou son of the perverse and rebellious woman ; ' in his

raging fit he blemisheth his own wife, of whom we hear elsewhere no

such imputation. Thou art more likely to be a bastard than my own

son. Frantic words, all interpreters think them to be.

This is a taste of that profane discourse which is forbidden to

Christians. Now the reasons of it are these : —

(1.) ljecau.se this allowed and habituated, argueth a rotten and un-

renewed heart : Mat, xii. 34, ' Out of the abundance of the heart the

mouth speaketh.' Words much discover the temper of the heart,

there being a quick intercourse between the heart and the tongue.

(2.) Because it is noisome and offensive to honest ears; it is not a

speech that hath any grace or comeliness in it : Col. iv. 6, ' Let your

speech be always with grace.'

3. It is contagious and infectious to ordinary hearers ; especially to

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children and weak ones : 1 Cor. xv. 33, ' Evil words corrupt good man-

ners.' We convey our taint.

(4.) Sinful, vain, and frothy discourse doth make the heart more

vain, perverse, and wicked, while the corruption that is in it doth

strengthen itself by getting vent. When the sparks fly abroad of the

fire kindled in our bosoms, a man waxeth worse and worse ; his rever-

ence of God is lessened and weakened as he hath dared to give vent

to his sin and folly, and is more emboldened to sin again : Mat. xv.

19, 20, 'For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adul-

teries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies ; these are the

things which defile the man.' Evil-speaking is one thing mentioned,

and it layeth men open to Satan. Therefore, as the heart should be

kept from framing such conceptions, so the tongue from uttering

them ; for so they prove more dishonourable to God, hurtful to our-

selves, and offensive to others.

(5.) I will venture at one reason more against profane discourse ; it

grieveth the Spirit, Eph. v. 29, 30. Many by their obscene, putrid,

and carnal discourse intend no further than to make themselves merry,

jovial, and glad: Hosea vii. 3, ' They make the king glad with their

wickedness, and the princes with their lies,' saith the prophet ; yet,

alas ! it is but a poor sport, and will prove so in the end, for it draweth

God to be against them ; the Holy Ghost is displeased and grieved

with it, these things being against his light, motions, and directions,

and so an offence to him, which a tender conscience is soon sensible of.

2. Not idle discourse, which tendeth not to the glory of God and

the edification of our neighbour. We should have an eye to the good

of those with whom we speak, so as to edify them with our speech ;

for Christ telleth us that we must give an account to God, not only for

words, but even for idle words : Mat. xii. 36, ' I say unto you, that for

every idle word that men speak, they shall give an account thereof in

the judgment.' Men esteem little of their words, yet when they are

put into God's balance they may weigh heavy ; not only wicked words,

but even idle words, such as serve for no good purpose, or for no lawful

end ; and in your account they will come in as so many sins, and sit

heavy upon you ; if you have not received pardon before, it is a strict

sentence. But what is this idle discourse? Such as wanteth the

solidity and substance of truth ; such as tend to no use and benefit.

Be jure God may condemn you for these, though de facto upon re-

pentance he pardoneth greater sins. Or possibly such are idle words

as come from a vain idle frame of heart ; for he had spoken before in

the 35th verse that a good man out of the good treasure of his heart

bringeth forth good things, and an evil man evil things. Now such

idle words are a note of the wickedness of the man, of the evil treasure

that is in his heart; for these he is responsible at the day of judgment,

as for a vain conversation and the unfruitful works of darkness.

However, we must not open a gap to licentiousness; as when the

apostle forbiddeth profane discourse, he enjoineth profitable discourse

as the only remedy : Eph. iv. 29, ' Let no corrupt communication

come out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying,

that it may minister grace to the hearers.' As much as may be, holy

conference should be mixed with all our discourses and converses, other-

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wise they are accountable to God. And it is very notable the apostle

forbiddeth ficopoXoyla >) evrpairekia, foolish jesting : Eph. v. 4, ' Nei-

ther filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which is not convenient,

but rather giving of thanks.' As he condemneth filthiness, or words

contrary to Christian gravity, decency, or modesty, so he condemneth

foolish talking, which is impertinent, superfluous, and vain discourse.

And then jesting ; not all honest mirth or use of wit, but an intem-

perate use; when men give up themselves to a frothy vanity, that they

cannot be serious ; or to tart reflections upon the personal imper-

fections of others; or to impious jests, by wresting the scripture, to

express the conceptions of a vain and wanton wit. In the general,

there must be a great guard on all jesting, lest it degenerate ; and

that we entertain one another with thanksgiving, and discourses of the

love of God, and his manifold mercies to us ; for it is not an easy

matter to keep within bounds of cheerful and allowed mirth. Hearts

that are kept sensible of God's goodness are desirous to express it to

others whenever occasion offereth, and vain and idle communication

is nothing so pleasing to them.

Secondly, Positively ; we are to edify one another, as David pro-

fesseth here that his tongue should speak of God's word ; his confer-

ences and discourses should be filled up of no other matter.

1. Because our tongue is our glory : Ps. x. 9, ' My heart is glad, and

my glory rejoiceth.' Compare Acts ii. 26, 'My heart rejoiceth, and

my tongue was glad.' Now, why is our tongue our glory ? Not only

as it was given us for the use of tasting meat and drink (so the tongues

of the brute beasts serve them), but because thereby we must express

the conceptions of our minds. So speech is the excellency of man

above the beasts ; but Christianity giveth us a higher reason, because

thereby we may express the conceptions of our minds to the glory of

God, and the good of others : James iii. 9, ' Therewith we bless God,

even the Father.' That is our glory, that we cannot only think of

God, but speak of God, his word and works.

2. Because conference and edifying discourse is one means of spiri-

tual growth and spiritual improvement to ourselves and others. (1.)

To ourselves : Prov. xvi. 21, ' The wise in heart shall be called pru-

dent, and the sweetness of his lips increaseth learning.' The more he

venteth what he knoweth, the wiser himself groweth, and learneth by

teaching others; for the more he draweth forth his knowledge, the

more it is impressed upon his own heart. It is a truth, he that

watereth shall be watered, and our gifts, as the loaves, are increased

in the breaking, or as the widow's giving oil to the prophet was

enriched by it; not only as we occasion others to draw forth their

knowledge, but as our own is confirmed and strengthened by using it, as

to him that hath shall be given, Mat. xxv. 29. As venting of sin and

folly increaseth sin and folly, so doth venting spiritual knowledge still

increase it. (2.) Others: it is a great benefit to them when we com-

municate our experiences to them : Luke xxii. 32, ' When thou art

converted, strengthen thy brethren.' When he was converted by

repentance, he should be more careful to convert and strengthen

others, that they fall not in like manner, or help them to recover out

of the mire of sin. And the apostle saith, 2 Cor. i. 4, ' That God

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comforteth us, that we may be able to comfort others in trouble, by

the comfort wherewith we are comforted of God.' The Lord comforts

one that another may be comforted ; as in the celestial bodies, what-

ever light and influence the moon and stars receive, they bestow it on

these inferior bodies : they have their light from the sun, and they

reflect it again on the creatures below. Or as the official part in the

body ; as the heart and liver receive, and convey, and derive the blood

and spirits to all the other parts, so a Christian, when he is strength-

ened in himself, ought to convey his comfort and strength to others.

It is mighty edifying, when we have found the usefulness of the word,

to speak of it to God's praise ; if we have gotten direction in doubtful

cases, or benefit by it in the mastery of our lusts, and the promises

have afforded any support and deliverance in our distresses, we are

debtors of the comfort and experiences we have, and are stewards to

dispense it to others. Many take a glory that they have cordials,

strong waters, and medicines in their closets and repositories, that

may be a relief to the bodies of others ; so should we delight to refresh

their souls with what has done us good. The humiliation and broken-

ness of heart which thou hast found may be powerful to persuade

others of the bitterness of sin. David, when he had smarted for sin,

saith, Ps. li. 13, 'I will teach transgressors thy ways, and sinners

shall be converted unto thee.' He had found how bitter a thing it

was to provoke God by sin, and he could tell them such stories of it

as would make their hearts to wake, and cause them to hate it. The

faith and knowledge which God hath given thee may direct and pre-

serve others ; thy temptations may conduce to the succouring of

others who are tempted.

3. It is a mighty comfortable duty, that hath much sweetness in it,

to confer together of holy things : Eom. i. 12, ' That I may be

comforted by the mutual faith of you and me.' Holy discourse doth

refresh more than vain and foolish jesting ; it is a far sweeter thing

to talk of the word of God, and those spiritual and heavenly things

which are contained therein, than to spend the time in vain and

foolish jesting, or discoursing about mere worldly matters. Should

anything be more delightful to a Christian than Christ and heaven,

and the promises of the world to come, and the way that leadeth

thither ? and should it be burdensome to talk of these things, which

we profess to be our only hope and joy? Certainly our relish and

appetite is mightily depraved if we think so, judge ourselves in a

prison when we are in good company who remember God ; and when

they invite you to remember him with them, will you frown upon

the motion, because it is some check and interruption to your carnal

vanity ?

4. The well ordering of our words is a great point of Christianity,

and argueth a good degree of grace : ' He that bridleth his tongue is

a perfect man,' James iii. 2. Death and life are in the power of the

tongue, saith Solomon, Prov. xviii. 21 ; upon the good or ill use of it

a man's safety doth depend. Not only temporal safety, but eternal :

Mat. xii. 37, ' By thy words shalt thou be justified, and by thy words

shalt thou be condemned.' These evidences are brought into judg-

ment; therefore it concerneth us to see what our discourses are, as

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well as our actions. Solomon often describeth the righteous hy his

good tongue: Prov. x. 13, 'The mouth of the righteous bringeth

forth wisdom;' and Prov. xii. 18, 'The tongue of the wise is

health.'

Use 1. Keproof. It reproveth us for being so dumb and tongue-

tied in holy things. We can speak liberally of any subject, only we

are dumb in spiritual matters which concern our edification. We

show so little grace in our conferences, because we have so little grace

in our hearts. Alas! many that profess religion, their talk is little

different from other men's, as if they were ashamed to speak of God,

or had nothing to say of him and for him. I do not always bind you

to talk of religious things, but sometimes it bindeth. Now, when is

it your tongues speak of the word in a serious and affectionate

manner? Can you love God and never put in a word for him?

Can you see or hear God dishonoured, and suffer your mouths to be

sealed up with a sinful silence, that you should not have a word to

speak in the cause of God ?

Use 2. To exhort us to be frequent and serious in our discourses of

God, and spiritual heavenly things.

For means to help us.

1. Divine illumination ; to teach others the way of God requireth

that we ourselves should be taught of God ; then it cometh the

warmer and fresher when we speak not by hearsay only, but experi-

ence ; as heart answereth to heart, so the renewed heart in him that

heareth to the renewed heart in him that speaketh, and we show

others what God by his illuminating grace hath first showed us ; it

savoureth of that Spirit that worketh in both. He will easily kindle

others who is once on fire himself. The word passeth through others

as water through an empty trunk, without feeling; they may speak

very good things, but they do but personate and act a part. But

when we have been in the deep waters, and God hath bound up our

wounds, we can more feelingly speak to others.

2. A sight of the excellency of the word, and a value and esteem

thereof. The reason in the text, ' For all thy commandments are

righteousness.' We are apt to speak oftenest of those things which

we most affect. Did not your souls grow out of relish with these

holy, spiritual, and excellent things, your speeches about them would

be more frequent, lively, serious, and savoury ; fur we cannot conceal

our affections. Our coldness in speaking to others of these spiritual

and heavenly things cometh from want of this persuasion, that ' all

his commandments are righteousness;' for they who are persuaded of

the excellency of the word will be talking of the sweetness of its

promises continually.

3. A stock of spiritual knowledge : Mat. xii. 35, ' A good man out

of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things.' Every

man entertaineth his guests with such provisions as he hath. It is

the word which enableth us to edify ourselves and others with holy

conference. The more store, the more we have to bring forth upon

all occasions: Col. iii. 1G, 'Let the word of Christ dwell in you

richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another.' A

plentiful measure of gospel knowledge enableth us to direct and

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instruct others ; there all wisdom is made plain, things revealed

which cannot be found elsewhere ; that which may by long search be

found elsewhere is made ready to our hands, and brought down to the

meanest capacity. The heart is the fountain from whence the tongue

doth run and flow ; and when the heart is well furnished, the tongue

will be employed and exercised.

4. Zeal for the glory of God, and love to others' souls. We should

communicate to others what we have learned ourselves. David would

not reserve his knowledge to himself : ' Teach me, and my tongue

shall speak of thy word.' Fire turneth all about it into fire : mules

and all creatures of a bastard race do not procreate. David's Maschil,

Ps. xxxii. title, is to instruct others. True good is diffusive in

itself; our candle enlightened, should enlighten others. When Philip

was called, he inviteth Nathanael to come to Christ, John i. 45 ;

Andrew calleth Simon. True grace showeth itself in zeal to promote

the kingdom of Christ and the good of our neighbours' souls ; and the

new nature seeketh to multiply the kind, and such as are brought to

Christ will be careful to invite others.

5. Wisdom is necessary: Col. iv. 6, 'Let your speech be always

with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how to answer

every man ;' that is, seasoned with the salt of holy and divine wisdom,

that it may be savoury and acceptable to the hearers ; and both delight

and edify. Without this holy skill and wisdom, how often is confer-

ence turned into jangling or mere babbling !

G. Watchfulness and heed, otherwise corruption will break out in

pride, in a vain ostentation of parts, passion in some heat of words,

w T orldliness and sensuality in diverting from holy conference to that

which is carnal and worldly, discontent in some, unseemly expressions

of God's dealings with us, indiscretion and folly in a multitude of

impertinent talk : Ps. cxli. 3, ' Set a watch, Lord, before my mouth ;

keep the door of my lips.' The tongue must be watched as well as

the heart. All watching will be to little purpose unless God bridle

and direct our tongue, that nothing break out to his dishonour.

There must be a constant guard that nothing break from us that

is unseemly.

Secondly, We come to the reason, ' For all thy commandments are

righteousness.'

Boot. There is righteousness, nothing but righteousness, all right-

eousness to be found in the word of God.

1. There is a perfect uprightness in all God's promises. They are

sure principles of trust and dependence upon God : Ps. xviii. 30,

' The word of the Lord is tried ; he is a buckler to all those that trust

in him.' He is most just and faithful, and his promises without all

deceit or possibility of failing, and will certainly protect all those that

rely and depend upon him.

2. As to his precepts, nothing is approved in them, or recommended

to us, but what is holy, just, and good. There is no virtue which it

commendeth not, no duty which it commandeth not, no vice which is

not condemned therein, nor sin which is not forbidden.

I shall prove the doctrine by three things : —

1. By the sufficient provision that is made for man's duty. In a moraL

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consideration there are but three beings — God, neighbours, and self.

Paul's three adverbs are suited to these, Titus ii. 12, ' soberly, right-

eously, godly.'

[1.] For self-government, or living soberly in the present world,

nothing conduceth to that more than God's precepts. The whole

drift of his word is to check self-pleasing and sense-pleasing, and to

condemn all excess of meat, drink, or apparel, lest onr hearts be

besotted and overcharged, and, by indulging sensuality, diverted from

spiritual and heavenly things.

[2.] For carriage to our neighbour. What religion provideth so

amply as the word of God doth against all fraud and violence, requireth

us in all things to do as we would be done by ? Yea, it not only

enforceth justice, but charity, and to love our neighbour as ourselves,

and to account his welfare our own, and rejoice in his good, and mourn

for his evil, as for our own.

[3.] For the third, godliness. God is nowhere represented and

discovered so much as in his word ; nor a way of commerce between

him and us anywhere else so clearly established ; nor what kind of

worship we should give unto him, both for matter and manner. In

short, the scripture is written to teach us how to love him, and enter-

tain communion with him, and to serve him in holiness and righteous-

ness all our days ; and maketh our daily converse with God in holiness

our great work and business.

2. It appeareth by the connaturality and suitableness which they

have to the best and holiest : Ps. cxix. 140, ' Thy word is very pure,

therefore thy servant loveth it.' It is written in our hearts as well as

in God's book ; and there is something in the one akin to the other :

Heb. viii. 10, ' I will write my law in their hearts and minds.' On the

contrary, so far as a man is depraved, so far he hateth it, Rom. viii. 7 ;

yea, the more he feareth it : John iii. 20, 21, ' He that doeth evil,

hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be

reproved.'

3. The event showeth it ; for the more the word of God is preached,

the more is righteousness spread in the world, and men grow wiser

and better. Banish the word of God, or discourage the preachers of

it, and there followeth nothing but confusion of manners and corrup-

tion in religion. The word, then, is the only means of reforming the

world, and curing the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Where either the word hath not been received, as among the pagans,

or where it hath been restrained, as in Popery, scriptures locked up in

an unknown tongue, or where neglected or sleepily urged, as in

churches that have left their first love, there is a greater overflow of

wickedness ; their ignorance hath caused a great part of them to dege-

nerate into a more sensual, sottish sort of people.

Quest. But are not people very bad that have the scriptures ? Do

not we ourselves complain of a flood of wickedness ?

Ans. 1. Christianity must not be judged by the rabble of nominal,

literal Christians, no more than we will judge of the cleanness of a

street by the foulness of a sink or kennel, or of the sound grapes in

a bunch by the rotten ones, or of the fidelity of subjects by the rebel-

lion of traitors, or the honesty and justice of a nation by a crew of

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thieves and robbers, nor of the civility of a nation by the rusticity of

ploughmen or carters. Those who are serious in their religion are the

best men, and of the choicest and most excellent spirits in the world ;

the scandals and wickedness of others do not impeach their rule.

2. The strictly religious must not be judged by the revellings of the

carnal, who are their enemies ; ignorant and ungodly men will blast

them : 1 Peter iv. 4, 5, ' Wherein they think it strange that you run not

with them to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you ; who shall

account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.'

3. Neither is the state of religion to be judged by the complaints of

friends, hating the least evil, ashamed of men's unthankfulness.

Light maketh it odious ; as bad as we are, it is worse where the word

is not preached in a lively manner.

Use 1. Let us approve of those things which God hath bound us to

believe and practise ; they being all suitable to the nature of God and

man. The first ground of obedience is consent and approbation : ' I

consent to the law that it is good,' Eom. vii. 16. So to the gospel :

' It is a faithful saying, worthy of all acceptation,' 1 Tim. i. 15.

2. Let us answer this word, let the fruit of the Spirit be in us all,

righteousness, goodness, and truth. The stamp is answerable to the

seal ; this is the genuine result of the doctrine we profess.

SERMON CLXXXVI.

Let thine hand help me : for I have chosen thy precepts. — Ver. 173.

The two first verses show the drift of this portion. He begs two

benefits — instruction and deliverance. His first request, for instruction,

is enforced by a promise of praise, ver. 171, ' My lips shall utter praise,

when thou hast taught me thy statutes.' In ver. 172, of conference or

holy discourse, whereby others may be edified, ' My mouth shall speak

of thy word.' Now he comes to enforce the second request for deliver-

ance by an argument of his ready obedience, ' Let thine hand help me :

for I have chosen thy precepts.'

Observe here —

1. The petition, let thine hand help me.

2. The argument or reason to enforce it, for I have chosen thy

precepts.

First, For the petition, ' Let thine hand help me.' Hand is put for

power : Let thy power preserve me and defend me ; and help is

sometimes put for assistance and sometimes for deliverance. God may

be said to help us when he cloth assist us and support us in troubles, or

when he doth deliver us from troubles. This latter acceptation suits

with this place, and it is equivalent with what he said before, ver. 170,

' Let my supplication come before thee ; deliver me ; ' so, ' Let thine

hand help me,' ' deliver me according to thy word.' A good man may

be brought into great straits when his own hand cannot help and

stead him, but then he may fly to God, and say, ' Lord, let thine hand

help me.' His argument and motive which he urgeth is, that ' I

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have chosen thy precepts ; ' and from thence he infers his hope of

deliverance.

The points will he two : —

Doct. 1. That this is the character and description of a good man,

that he is good, and doth good out of choice. So David pleads it here,

' I have chosen thy precepts.'

Doct. 2. That a man which makes conscience of God's commands is

encouraged to seek help from him in all his straits ; for he prays, ' I

have chosen thy precepts,' therefore, ' Lord, let thine hand help me.'

Doct. 1. It is the plain character of a good man to he good and do

good out of choice.

It was not out of rashness and ignorance and inconsiderate zeal that

David with so much hazard hetook himself to God's service, and was

so exactly faithful with God ; hut upon due choice, trial, and exami-

nation : ' I have chosen thy precepts.'

The point may easily be proved out of scripture, Isa. lvi. 4. God's

people are described to be those that choose the things that please him,

and take hold of his covenant. Taking hold of his covenant relates

there to the privilege part of the covenant. As they seek their happi-

ness in the privileges of God's covenant, so as to the duty part, they

choose the things which please him. After serious and mature delibera-

tion, and judgment rightly informed, and affection thereon grounded,

they embrace the ways of God by a free election and choice. And so

you shall see it is the charge against wicked men, this is the disproof

of their confidence, Prov. i. 29, that they did not choose the fear of the

Lord. Mark the expression, that is, prefer it before the baits of sin.

So Deut. xxx. 19, ' 1 have set before you life and death, blessing and

cursing ; therefore choose life, that thou and thy seed may live.' We

shall never have life unless we have it by choice. He sets both before

them ; choose life, not as if it were indifferent in point of duty for to

do the one or the other, but to set an edge upon their affections ; I

have set both before you. God will have his service entered upon by

choice : Josh. xxiv. 15, ' Now if it seem evil for you to serve the Lord,

choose you this day whom you will serve, whether the gods whom your

fathers served, on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the

Amorites in whose land ye dwell ; but as for me,' &c. He leaves it

not arbitrarily to the Israelites whether they should serve God or no,

but this he saith that they might freely and without compulsion

declare what they were minded to do, and that they might be the more

firmly tied to serve the Lord, because they had voluntarily taken upon

themselves to do it. ' Now choose you whom you will serve; ' that is,

compare that which is best with that which is worst, life and death,

light and darkness, heaven and hell together ; and resolve accordingly;

because no man in his right wits would make any doubt after such a

representation which to choose. Joshua's speech is just such another

speech as that of Elijah, 1 Kings xviii. 21, 'If God be God, serve

him ; if Baal be God, follow him.' Not as if he made it any doubt,

or would have them make it any doubt, or as if it were uncertain, but

that they might choose more freely, and delight and persevere in their

choice. These places show we never rightly enter into God's service

until we enter upon it by choice.

VER. 173.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 265

Here I shall inquire —

1; What it is to choose God's precepts.

2. Give some reasons why they must be chosen, else they can never

be rightly kept, or why this is so necessary.

First, What is choosing God's precepts ? It implies five things —

(1.) Deliberation ; (2.) Esteem or preference ; (3.) A voluntary in-

clination ; (4.) A firm aud steadfast resolution, by which we are bound

all our days ; (5.) A complacency and contentment in what we have

chosen.

1. Deliberation, or a due consideration of what is chosen, its nature,

worth, and excellency ; for until we compare and weigh things, how

can we make a choice, but take them hand-over-head ; and therefore

there is a weighing the reasons on both sides. God's children are not

ignorant what it is to flow in worldly wealth, pleasures, and earthly

comforts, and to enjoy the favour of the world, and to sail here with a

full stream ; and on the other side, they are not ignorant what it will

cost them to be through with Christ, to be religious indeed. They do

not run hand-over-head to resolve upon such a course. No ; they sit

down, they count the charges, Luke xiv. 27. The business sticks with

many in this first work ; we cannot bring them to any serious con-

sideration ; they will not weigh things, but act as their brutish lusts

incline them. It is said, Isa. xlvi. 8, ' Remember this, and show your-

selves men ; bring it to mind, ye transgressors.' It is a disgrace to

our reason, when we will not consider well of things, and bring them

not back to our hearts, as the word signifies ; but we run on as chance

offereth objects or occasions. Consider what this and that will tend to,

weigh things in your souls. Even good itself, if we stumble upon it, it

is but a lucky hit or a happy mistake ; therefore the apostle adviseth

us to resolve upon trial : 1 Thes. v. 21, ' Prove all things, and hold

fast that which is good.' Men will not hold fast that which is good

unless they first prove and try. Indeed those things which usually

oppose themselves against the spiritual life are such poor paltry incon-

siderable vanities, that they are not worthy to be brought into com-

petition, or into any serious debate with them ; for it is no hard

question to resolve whether God or the flesh shall be pleased ? whether

the transitory pleasures of sin should be preferred before eternal glory

or the happiness of the saints ? But yet serious consideration will

discover this to us, and shame us out of our perverse and preposterous

choice ; whereas otherwise we should go on like men asleep, or like

men out of their wits, choose poor base things, delight in inconsider-

able trifles, before the things whereof we are so deeply concerned ;

therefore it requires deliberation in weighing.

2. Choice notes esteem or preference ; for election and choice is a

preferring of one thing before another. Though God and Christ be

good, and grace and heaven be good, yet there are other things that

come in competition with them, and when we set ourselves to seek after

God and Christ, these competitors are suing for our hearts, and rival

Christ in the soul. And therefore this choice implies a renunciation

of all other things, a trampling upon them, and a high esteem and

value of Christ and his ways. The scripture speaks of selling all for

the pearl of great price, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, of accounting things but dung

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and dross in comparison of Christ, Phil. iii. 8, 9. In choosing the

ways of God many things will be offered to ns that may hale us this

way and that way, many pleasures and contentments of this life. Now

we must trample upon them all, and renounce them as they are temp-

tations, that we may actually exalt, prefer, and esteem Christ and his

grace. There are two things which assault our resolution for God —

the terrors of sense, and the allurements of the flesh or the vanities of

the world. Now a soul resolved to serve God, must actually and posi-

tively prefer obedience before both of these, before temptations on the

right hand and on the left.

[1.] For the terrors of sense, we must be resolved rather to suffer

than to sin. In choosing the ways of God, the heart must come to a

firm resolution rather to suffer the greatest inconvenience than to com-

mit the least sin. This was Moses' choice, Heb. xi. 25. When once it

came to a case of sin, then he renounceth pleasures, treasures, honours.

Whatever it costs us, we must resolve to be faithful with God, and to

run the greatest hazard rather than to do the least thing that is con-

trary to his will.

[2.] We must prefer obedience before all the allurements of the

flesh and vanities of the world. David chose God's precepts, that is,

valued them more than all other things. See ver. 14 of this psalm,

' I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies more than in all riches.'

He explains the choice here mentioned. If we have grace to serve

God, and to keep the way of his testimonies, we count ourselves more

happy than if we had all the world. It is not enough to approve God's

ways simply, but we must approve them comparatively ; not only as

good in themselves, but as better than all other things ; and it should

be more to us to be taught our duty, and to know how to serve God,

than if we did enjoy the fulness of all earthly comforts.

3. Choosing the ways of God implies a voluntary inclination, that we

should of our own accord follow them ; for choice is free, and it is

opposed to force and constraint, and a man is said to choose those

things which he likes, which he loves, which his soul inclines to, when

he is carried to them not by the compulsion of an external principle,

but by his own propension and inclination. Look, as the wicked they

are described to be those ' who leave the paths of uprightness to walk

in the ways of darkness,' Prov. ii. 13, that is, have an inclination

to one rather than another ; for what is expressed that the wicked

leave the paths of uprightness, it is explained, John iii. 9, by ' loving

darkness rather than the light. And so it is said of Mary, she hath

chosen that good part ; of her own voluntary accord and free inclina-

tion she was moved to sit at Christ's feet, to attend upon the improve-

ment of her soul. The business of salvation is offered to our choice,

it is left to our own free inclination, though God gives the inclination

beforehand (as by and b}-). If you choose death, you willingly and

freely forsake your own mercies.

4. Choice implies a firm and immutable purpose, a resolved adhesion

to those things we choose. The mind is not anxious and doubtful,

and hanging between two contraries, when we choose, but fixed and

determined : ' I have chosen thy precepts ; ' that is, firmly resolved to

observe them. We never choose till we come to a full purpose, Acts xi.

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33. He exhorteth them with full purpose of heart to cleave to the

Lord. A wavering inclination infers no choice. There may be good

thoughts and meanings in the soul, but till we are resolved for God

we do not choose his precepts. Many are convinced of a better way,

but their hearts are not engaged to walk in it. We are fixedly

determined by our choice : Jer. xxx. 21, ' Who is this that engaged

his heart to approach unto me ? saith the Lord.' He hath sincerely

obliged and bound himself to live in a close way of communion with

God. The soul begins to pause and consider the vanity of earthly

things ; there is the first. Yea, and after this, they are brought on

that they say, Certainly it is much better to be a servant of the Lord

than to be a servant of sin ; and they see that the greatest inconven-

ience is a more tolerable thing than sin, and all the pleasures and

profits of the world will not countervail our duty to God. There is

an inclination to the way of God. Ay ! but this inclination, while it

is wavering, it may be taken off, till it come to a resolution. Here I

will stick ; I will seek my happiness and comfort in seeking God :

' It is good for me to draw nigh unto God,' Ps. lxxiii. 28 ; and there-

fore I am resolved to seek my happiness and contentment, whatever

I do.

5. Choice implies a contentment and complacency in that which we

have chosen ; and the act of the will is quickened by a suitable

affection that accompanieth it. Mark, election is properly an act of

the will. Ay ! but the affections they are but the vigorous motions of

the will. Where there is a remiss will, that is without affection ; but

where there is a strong bent in the will, that is always accompanied

with some suitable affection. As if I have a strong bent and nilling

of sin, there is an affection of hatred accompanying it ; if I have but a

remiss will for holiness, that will never save me ; that is made to be

one of the seven deadly sins which the schoolmen call listlessness ; but

where there is a serious will, such a willing as a choosing, certainly there

is an affection that accompanieth it. Look, as David, when he had

chosen God for his portion, presently he professed his complacency and

delight in his choice : Ps. xvi. 6, ' The lines are fallen unto me in

pleasant places ; j T ea, I have a goodly heritage.' Where there is a

choosing God for our portion and all-sufficient happiness, there is

presently a delight and satisfaction which results from this choice, and

the soul is affected with its own felicity in God, and finds a joy and

pleasure in choosing him. So it is in choosing the precepts of God :

' I have chosen thy precepts.' See the next verse, ' Thy law is my

delight/ Where there is choice there is delight. A man loves what

he chooseth, and is ready and forward to do it ; and it is a pleasing

thing to serve the Lord, for election in such a weighty case is accom-

panied with love. It is not an act of a remiss, but strong will ; and

where there is love, nothing will be grievous, 1 John v. 3.

Secondly, To give reasons why we must thus choose the precepts of

God. I shall reason — (1.) From the necessity ; (2.) From the con-

gruity and convenience ; (3.) From the utility and profit of it.

1. The necessity of it. It must needs be so that God's ways must be

taken up upon choice, because there are several competitors that bid

for the heart of man : where there is but one thing, there is no choice.

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There is the devil, by the world, through the flesh, seeks to get in, and.

reign in your hearts ; and there is God, Christ, and the Spirit. Now

there must be a casting out of one, and putting in the other. Look,

as in Prov. ix., the whole chapter; there wisdom and the foolish

woman are brought in pleading to draw in the heart of unwary man

to themselves. Wisdom is pleading, and the foolish woman is

pleading. In the beginning of the chapter, wisdom tells what comfort,

what peace they shall have, if they will take her institutions ; wisdom

offers solid benefits, but folly offers stolen waters and bread eaten in

secret, some carnal mirth when conscience is asleep. Ay ! and the

dead are there too. The intoxicating pleasures of this world bring

death along with them, when they can choke the sentiments of God

that are in his heart. ' Whoso is simple, let him turn in hither,' saith

wisdom ; and ' who is simple, let him turn in hither,' saith folly. As

the poets feign of their Hercules, that virtue and vice appeared to him,

and the one showed him a rough, the other a pleasant way. Certainly as

soon as we come to years of discretion, we come to make our choice,

either to go on in the ways of death, or to choose the ways of God ;

either to give up ourselves to the pleasures of sin, or else to seek after

the comforts of the Spirit. Now, since there are two competitors for the

heart of man, and his love cannot lie idle, it must be given to one

or another ; love and oblectation cannot remain idle in the soul, either

it must leak out to the world, or run out to God. There is a neces-

sity of a choice, of renouncing the bewitching vanities of the world, that

we may seriously betake ourselves to the service of God.

2. Consider the congruity and conveniency of it, both to the honour

of God and nature of man, that no man should ever be happy or

miserable but by his own choice.

[1.] It is not for the honour of God that a man should be happy or

have such great privileges settled upon him without his own choice ;

such great benefits as justification, sanctification, and eternal glory.

On the other side, that a man should be miserable without his know-

ledge, or against his will, or besides his purpose and consent, that God

should give eternal life whether men will or no. It is not agreeable to

the honour of God to inflict eternal death upon them without their

consent, unless they choose the ways of death ; man's heart else would

have a plea against God. Certainly the wise God will never make any

happy without their own consent, and never make any miserable but

their destruction is of themselves, Hosea xiii. 9.

[2.] Neither will it agree with the nature of man, who is a reason-

able rational creature, or any agent capable of election or choice.

The brutes are ruled with a rod of iron. God guides all things by his

providence; inanimate creatures by mere providence, brutes by their

own instinct, and man as a free agent, capable of knowing and prose-

cuting his chief end. Now every creature of God is governed accord-

ing to the nature which is put into it ; and therefore, since man is a

free agent, God expects, in submitting to his service, the creature's

consent and choice; and before we can submit to his service, before he

will admit us to the benefits, there must be a choice, and an actual will

on our parts : Rev. xxii. 17, ' Whosoever will, let him take the water of

life freely.' The business is brought home to us, and left with our

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will. If we miss of happiness, it is because we would not choose it,

and the way that leads to it. The Lord chargeth it still upon man's

will, John v. 40 ; Luke xix. 14 ; Mat. xxiii. 37 ; Ps. lxxxi. 11. Our

misery is from our own wilfulness ; but in all that are brought into

grace, there is a will it is true, but God prevents them and inclines

their will : Ps. ex. 3, ' Thy people shall be willing in the day of grace

and power.' You have a grant, and an offer of mercy from God, and

then he inclines and moves you to make a right choice. So that of

the good and bad it may be said they have their choice. If you

neglect and refuse holiness, you choose your own destruction, and

neglect life. Your hearts must tell you this : Thou wast the fault of

it ; as Plutarch brings in one Apollodorus, that dreamed one night

that he was boiling in a kettle of scalding lead, and that his heart

cried out to him, I have been the cause of all this. This heathen

improves it to show there is a vengeance that attends sinners.

I mention it only allusively. Now it was your own perverse choice

and will that made your hell ; thou hast but the fruit of thine own

choice. Indeed, as to what is good, if you have chosen the precepts of

God, there God must have the glory. You must say, Not I, but-

Christ ; as the apostle. Ay ! but there you come in ; there is an act

of your will, but as disposed and rightly inclined by God. You come

both to the duties and privileges of religion by a choice also, though

not of yourselves, but of God.

3. Let me reason from the utility and benefit. A man that takes

up the ways of God upon choice —

[1.] He is able to justify the ways of God, for he seeth a reason for

what he chooseth. When temptations come strong, there will be

many misgiving thoughts. Ay ! but then wisdom should be justified

of all her children, Mat. xi. 19. A blind accidental love is the fruit

of chance, but a love that is grounded upon knowledge and judgment,

that is choice. This is so grounded, therefore he seeth reason for what

he doth : Phil. i. 9, 10, ' I pray God that your love may abound in all

wisdom and understanding, that ye may approve things that are

excellent' They see a reason, for they took it upon choice. The

Lord hath showed them the worth and excellency of his ways, there-

fore they can better justify God against all their prejudices.

[2.] Such will be more firm and steadfast. The cause of all halting

in religion is the want of a choice, of a purpose resolutely set. A

wavering double-minded man, that is half off and half on, will be

unstable in all his ways, James i. 8, Styvxos a/cardo-Taro\*;, a two-

soul man, a man that seems to have a soul for God and a soul for

earthly things, and the heart hangs sometimes for one, and some-

times for another. A scoff or scorn, or a little inconvenience, a little

fear, a little enticement or stirring of the rebelling flesh within, will

make him turn out of the way ; and how can such a one hold out

with God, when his way to heaven is a continual warfare ? But on

the other side, a man that is a Christian, and a servant of God by

choice, his course is likely according to his choice, because he is fixed

upon evidence, he knows he is upon sure ground ; and depending upon

God, he will not miscarry. And therefore Joshua, when he would

engage the Israelites to continue faithful with God, he draws them on

270 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Ser. CLXXXVI.

to a choice, and then saith, Josh. xxiv. 22, ' Ye are witnesses against

yourselves, that ye have chosen the Lord to serve him, and they said,

We are witnesses.' It much strengthens the bond when a man binds

himself freely and willingly, and he makes himself the more culpable

and the more inexcusable if he do not observe it.

[3.] They will carry on the work of their heavenly calling with the

more ease and delight, because a choice is nothing else but the incli-

nation of the soul guided by reason, strengthened by a purpose, and

quickened and actuated by our love. This reason justifies our choice.

Purpose binds it, makes it firm ; but now here comes love, which

makes it easy and sweet to do what we have resolved upon. A reso-

lute traveller will go through his journey, and overcome the tedious-

ness of it ; his mind is set to finish it, let him have what way or

weather he will. So a Christian will overcome his difficulties when

his heart is inclined to this course ; it is his own choice, and he will

hold to it. It is a hard heart that makes the work hard, but when the

will is engaged, a firm resolution of the will is the life of our affections,

and to affection all is easy.

Use 1. To show that they act upon a wrong principle who are not

good, and yet do good out of chance. To this end I shall show you —

(1.) That a man may do good by chance, and not be good. (2.) A

man may do good by force, and yet not be good. (3.) That some do

good out of craft and design ; but to do good out of choice doth only

discover the truth and sincerity of religion.

1. Some do good by chance. As —

[1.] The man that taketh up religion by example barely, and tradi-

tion ; not out of any sound conviction of the truth and worth of it.

Thus many are Christians by the chance of their birth in those

countries where the name of Christ is professed and had in honour ;

and the main reason into which their religion is resolved is not any

excellence in itself, but the custom and tradition of their forefathers :

John iv. 20, ' Our fathers worshipped in this mountain ;' and 1 Peter

i. 18, ' Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with cor-

ruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation

received by tradition from your fathers.' It was hard to reclaim

them from their inveterate customs ; this is the religion in which they

have been born and bred. It is true that tradition from father to son

is a duty, and a means to bring us to the knowledge of the truth, and

that Christianity is such an institution as doth so clearly evidence

itself to be of God, and speaketh to us of such necessary and weighty

matters, that it cannot but a little rouse and affect the mind of him

that receiveth it, however he receiveth it. But most men do but

blindly and pertinaciously adhere to it as that religion wherein they

have been born and bred, without any distinct knowledge of the worth

of it ; so that if there be any goodness in their Christianity (as their

profession is good in itself), they are but good by chance ; for upon the

same reasons they are Christians, if they had been born elsewhere, they

would have been Mahometans or idolaters.

[2.] Not only these, but also those who stumble upon the profession

of religion they know not how, and those who in a pang and sudden

motion are all for God and for heavenly things, but this vanisheth into

VEB. 173.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 271

nothing ; as fire in straw, which is soon kindled and soon out. This

is a free-will pang, not a choice ; the heart is not habitually inclined

and devoted unto God : John vi. 34, ' Oh ! that I might die the death

of the righteous,' Num. xxiii. 10. Such kind of wishing of holiness, as

a necessary means, there may be, as well as happiness. These are acci-

dentally stirred up in us.

2. Some men do good by force. These also are of two sorts — such

as are forced by the fear of men, or of God.

[1.] Forced by the fear of men, because they dare not be bad with

credit and security ; as fear of parents, tutors, and governors : 2 Chron.

xxiv. 2, ' Joash did that which was right in the sight of the Lord all

the days of Jehoiada the priest.' He did that which was right as to

external acts, but after Jehoiada's death he revolted from the Lord,

2 Chron. xxiv. 17, 18. So fear of magistrates, as Josiah compelled

them to stand to the covenant : therefore, Jer. iii. 10, ' Yet for all this

her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto me with her whole

heart, but feignedly." Fear of the times when set for religion : Esther

viii. 12, ' Many of the people of the land became Jews, for the fear of

the Jews fell upon them.'

[2.] Forced by the fear of God. A little unwilling service may be

extorted from them by the force of a convinced conscience. There is

a slavish kind of religiousness, arising from a fear of punishment,

without any love and delight in God. Men may be against God and

his. ways, when fear only driveth them to them. They do something

good, but had rather leave it undone ; they avoid some sins, but had

rather practise them. By the spirit of\* bondage they are brought to

tender some unwilling service to Christ ; and their only motives are

fear of wrath, and hell, and a sight of the curse due to sin. The false-

ness of this principle appeareth —

(1.) Because it is most stirring in a time of eminent judgments,

when they are sick and like to die: Isa. xxvi. 9, ' When thy judg-

ments are abroad in the earth, the inhabitants of the world will learn

righteousness ;' Jer. ii. 26, 'In their affliction they will cry, Arise, and

save us/ Metal in the furnace is very soft, but take it out and it

returneth to its old hardness. See Ps. lxxviii. 34-37. The sense of

present devouring wrath, and the terrors of an angry God, may drive

men to some temporary acts of devotion. These proceed only from the

natural fear of death and love of self-preservation. This may put a

stand for a while to their former ways of provocation, and incline them

to seek God with some diligence in the outward forms of religion ; but

it produceth no steadfastness in the covenant. As if there had been

some weak effect upon them ; as if it brought them for awhile to some

temper of piety ; but it was not hearty and durable, but only formal

and temporary.

(2.) Because they take all occasions to enlarge themselves out of the

stocks of conscience, and as soon as their fear is worn off, away go all

then religious pangs, and thoughts of the other world, and care about

it. How often is this verified by daily experience ! Many that were

frightened into a course of religion went on from duty to duty out of

a fear of being damned, but their hearts were another way ; but after-

wards they cast off all, when they have sinned away these fears ; as

272 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Sek. CLXXXVI.

Herod feared John, and afterwards put him to death, Mark vi. 19, 20.

Yea, all the while they did good they had rather do otherwise if they

durst, and therefore did but watch the occasion to fly out.

(3.) Because men of this frame dispute away duties rather than

practise them, and are quarrelling at those things which the new nature

would sufficiently incline them unto, if they had it. In the New Tes-

tament, God much trusts love ; and the number and length of duties

is not stated so exactly, because where the love of God prevaileth in

the heart, men will take all occasions of glorifying God and edifying

themselves. But when men quarrel, How do you prove it to be my

duty to do so much and to give so much ? When the duty itself is

instituted, love will make God a reasonable allowance, and not stand

questioning, How do you prove it to be my duty to pray so often in my

family, or in secret, or hear so many sermons, which our constant

necessities do loudly call for ? Men that have a love to a thing will

take all occasions to enjoy it, or be conversant about it ; and a willing

heart is liberal and open to God, and is rather disputing the restraint

than the command : How do you prove it is not my duty ? and is loath

to be kept back from its delight.

3. Some do good out of craft and design, there is some by-end in

the cause ; as Jehu was not so much zealous for God as his own

interests, 2 Kings x. 16; and our Lord telleth us of some that make

long prayers to devour widows' houses, Mat. xxiii. 14 ; made piety a

colour and pretext to oppression, and, that they might be trusted, took

a show of great devotion ; and of this strain were those that followed

Christ for the loaves, John vf. 20, to be fed with a miracle and to live

a life of sloth and ease. God never set any good thing afoot but some

temporal interest grew upon it, with Avhich men were swayed more

than with what belongeth to God.

Use 2. To persuade you to choose God's precepts : ' I. have chosen

thy precepts,' said the man of God. To this end I shall give you both

motives and directions ; motives why you should choose them, and

then directions in what manner things are to be attended upon in

your choice.

First, For the motives.

1. Choose them because they are God's, to whom you are indebted

for life, being, and all things. Shall we not obey him that made us,

and in whom still we live, move, and have our being ? We are debtors

to him for all that we have, and truly we cannot have a better master.

He was angry with his people, that when the beasts would own their

benefactors, that his people would not own him from whom they had

all things, Isa. i. 3. The brute beasts, the dullest of them, the ox

and the ass, are willing to serve those that feed them, and pay a. kind

of gratitude ; and shall not we own God ? Every day your health,

.strength, and comforts come out of his hands, so every night's rest and

ease ; and after this can you sin against God that keeps you by night

and by day ?

2. These precepts are all holy, just, and good. What is it the Lord

requires of you, but to love him, and serve him, and fear him, and

forbear those things which hurt the soul ? Thus he speaks to Israel,

Deut. x. 12. Surely these commands are not unreasonable nor grievous.

VER. 173.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 273

You dare not say sin is better, that it is more profitable to please the

flesh, and to wallow in and seek after worldly things. Why then do

you not choose God's precepts before the work which Satan puts you

upon? for these precepts commend themselves by their own evidence.

3. In keeping them there is a great deal of benefit.

[1.] For the present, there is a deal of comfort and peace to be found

in the ways of God. If there were no reward of heaven, yet there is

such comfort and peace that attends holy living, even as heat from the

fire, that certainly this should draw our choice : ' All her ways are

ways of pleasantness,' Prov. iii. 17. And again, the prophet tells you,

' The fruit of righteousness is peace.' A man that doth evil hath a

sting in his conscience and a wound in his own soul. But every good

action is followed with a serenity of mind, and an approbation from the

heart of him that doeth it. Nay, you shall not only have peace, but

joy in the Holy Ghost ; for if you walk in the fear of God, you walk

in the comforts of his Spirit, Acts ix. 31 ; and the kingdom of God

stands in righteousness and peace. Ay ! and a distinct privilege,

joy in the Holy Ghost, Kom. xiv. 17. What is the difference between

peace and joy in the Holy Ghost ? Peace is a tranquillity of mind re-

sulting from the rectitude of our actions, but this joy is an impression

of the comforting Spirit. This joy hath God for its author, he puts

it into our hearts; therefore it will more affect us than the bare act of

our natural faculties. Peace is an acquittance from conscience, but

joy in the Holy Ghost is an acquittance from God, who is our supreme

judge, and is the beginning of that endless joy which he hath prepared

for them that love him in heaven.

[2.] For the future and final reward, that is great and glorious

indeed. Surely the glory of the everlasting kingdom should invite us

to choose God's precepts, whatever it may cost us to keep them ; for in

choosing holiness you choose life, and in choosing the ways of God you

choose the heavenly inheritance, which is the certain end and issue of

them. So Prov. viii. 35, 36, ' Whose fiudeth me, findeth life, and ob-

taineth favour of the Lord ; but he that sinneth against me, wrongeth

his own soul. All they that hate me, love death.' Christians, when

you are about choosing, these are the terms propounded to you, and

they should be seriously weighed by us — evil and death, good and life.

Will you choose sin and death, or holiness and life ? Is the pleasures

of the flesh for a few hours better than the endless joy of the saints ?

If you believe heaven and hell, as you profess to do, why should you

stand demurring ? Are you content to be thrust out from the presence

of the Lord, with the devil and his angels, into unquenchable flames,

for a little contentment here in the world, for a little ease and delight

here given to your carnal nature ? Is an earthly life, that you cannot

long hold, more valuable than an eternal heaven you shall enjoy forever?

No ; let us go to heaven, though we get thither with many pains and

sufferings. If you forsake all, not only in vow and purpose, but

actually and in deed, yet still you have something better ; you shall be

no loser in the end ; you shall so choose the blessed God, and live with

him for evermore, and be filled with his love as full as you can hold,

and be employed in his service ; and all this in an eternal perfection

and glorified estate.

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4. Motive. Choose, for you will never have cause to repent of your

choice. The Lord stands upon his justification, is very tender of giving

his people any cause to repent of his service : Micah vi. 3, ' my people !

what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee ? testify

against me.' Pray what hurt hath holiness done you ? Who was

ever the better for sinning, or who was the worse for holiness ? There

was none that ever made a carnal choice hut first or last they had cause

to repent of it. Either they repent of it in a kindly manner, while they

may mend the matter, or else they shall repent for ever in misery. Bat

who ever repented of his repentance, or cursed the day of his new birth?

To whom ever was it any grief of heart that they were acquainted with

God and Christ, or the way that leadeth unto life ? Who dieth the

sweeter death ? or who repents of their choice then, the serious or the

carnal ? Oh ! they that have chosen the world, they cry out how

the world hath deceived them ; but never any repented of choosing

God and the ways of God. Let these things persuade you to choose

his precepts.

Secondly, For directions.

1. In choosing, the object is to be regarded. God's precepts in-

definitely, all of them, not one excepted, the smallest as well as the

greatest, the troublesome as well as the easy, the most neglected

as well as the most observed. We must choose all God's precepts, not

abate anything, but especially the main or the essential precepts of

Christianity, or the funclamental points of the covenant. Now the ques-

tion is, what is the fundamental point of the covenant ? Truly that is

known by the form of baptism. Baptism is the solemn seal of entering

into covenant with God ; it is the seal of our initiation or first entrance

into covenant with God, Mat. xxviii. 19. Now what is to be baptized

in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost ? When you first

choose the ways of God, here you must begin ; you must close with

Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, heartily take them to be your God ;

that is, you must close with God the Father, as your all-sufficient

portion, or chiefest happiness, to be loved above all ; and also as your

highest Lord, that he may be served, pleased, and obeyed above all.

Well, and in the name of the Son, that is, Jesus Christ, he must be

taken as your saviour and redeemer, to bring you to God, and to re-

concile you to him. And to be baptized in the name of the Holy

Ghost is this, to take him as your sanctifier, guide, and comforter, to

make you a holy people to God, to cleanse your hearts from sin, to

write all God's laws upon your hearts, and put them into your minds,

and to guide you by the word and ordinances to everlasting life. This

is the main thing that is first to be minded, because it contains all,

and doth necessarily infer the rest ; for otherwise, to be resolute in

some by-point of religion, though it be right, this is but the obstinacy

of a faction, not the constancy of a Christian zeal.

2. As you must look to the object of this choice, so to the causes of

it ; and what are they ? An enlightened mind, a renewed heart, a love

to God, and then the Spirit of God enlightening and inclining our hearts.

[1.] An enlightened mind is a cause of choosing the ways of God,

when the Lord hath taught us his precepts. An enlightened mind

discovers a beauty and amiableness in the ways of God : Ps. cxix. 128,

VeR. 173.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 275

' I esteem all thy precepts to be right, and they are the rejoicing of

my soul.'

[2.] A renewed heart, wherein all the precepts of God are written

over, again. They were written upon our hearts in innocency, but

that is a blurred manuscript, therefore in regeneration they are written

over again. God writes his law in our hearts, and puts them in our

inward parts, Heb. viii. 10 ; and then the law within suits with the

law without, for the new creature is created after God in righteousness

and true holiness. In true holiness, which relates to the first table of

the law, and righteousness, which relates to the second table of the

law ; the renewed heart that hath this inclination and propension is

carried out to them.

[3.] Love to God, for that is implied in the choice : John xiv. 21,

' He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves

me ;' and he that loves me hath my commandments and keeps them.

It follows the other way ; where there is love to God, there will be

choosing of his ways.

[4.] God's Spirit, the Lord enlightening and inclining our hearts to

this choice. God enlightens, for he teacheth us the way that we shall

choose ; and when we see these things in the light of the Spirit, then

we see the beauty of them, Ps. xxv. 12. It holds good as to the path of

life, and in particular cases ; but chiefly in the main case God teacheth

him the way that he shall choose. And the Spirit of God inclines the

heart too, as well as enlightens the mind : 1 Peter i. 22, ' Ye have puri-

fied your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit.'

3. There are the effects of this choice. What are they ? Delight,

diligence, and patience.

[1.] Delight : Ps. xl. 8, ' I delight to do thy will, my God ; yea,

thy law is within my heart.' When the law is not only written in the

book but written in the heart, then there is a delight, a ready and

willing obedience. It is spoken first of Christ ; of David it was said

in type. It is true also of all believers, for they have the Spirit of

Christ ; and the same also is expressed of the people of God : Ps.

cxii. 1, ' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth

greatly in his commandments.' When a man hath chosen the precepts

of God, and bound himself in this way, then his heart is taken with a

delight.

[2.] Diligeace. God's precepts are the great business and employ-

ment of our lives, and then there is a constant study to please him :

Col. i. 9, 10, ' Filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and

spiritual understanding, that you may walk worthy of the Lord unto

all pleasing.' We must do God's will and precepts, that we may order

our practice accordingly. There must be a habitual aim and purpose

to please God.

[3.] Patience ; a resolute continuance till our service be over. This

is the way I have chosen, and here will I stick until the great reward

come in hand : Rom. ii. 7, ' To them who by patient continuance in

well-doing seek for honour, and glory, and immortality, eternal life.'

And Luke viii. 15, ' The good ground brought forth fruit with

patience.' That distinguished the good ground from all other grounds ;

they had some little liking of it, but never came to a serious choice.

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But the good ground, though there be several weathers between sow-

ing and reaping, it cherisheth the seed that it is ready at harvest

time ; so we pass through many weathers before we come to our har-

vest of happiness and rest.

Doct. 2. That man which makes conscience of God's commands is

encouraged to seek help from him in straits.

Such a one may be in great straits ; as David, his own hand could

not help him, therefore he flies to God. The Lord permits it that he

may be trusted alone in his own hands ; he will break our carnal

dependences ; and that his ways may be chosen for their own sakes,

and not for temporal reward, and that his love to his own people may

not be shown too sensibly, that the mysteriousness of providence may

leave a room and place for faith ; therefore doth God darken the glory

of the godly with afflictions, and put them into straits that their own

hand cannot help them.

Now in these straits, those that make conscience of God's precepts

they are encouraged to seek help from God's hand. Why ? Partly

because integrity breeds a confidence, so that a man which hath been

faithful with God can look him in the face. It breeds a confidence in

life, 2 Cor. i. 12, and in death, Isa. xxxviii. 3 ; when they are sick,

weak, and know not what to do, they can fly to God. And then

integrity also ; it entitles to God's protection all that heartily and sin-

cerely depend upon God : Prov. x. 9, ' He that walketh uprightly,

walketh surely.' An upright, plain-hearted man, that trusts himself

under the shadow and protection of God's providence, he hath no

shifts and tricks ; this man shall walk safely, God is engaged to defend

him. But the perverse, that fly to their shifts, God will disappoint

them and show them their folly: Gen. xvii. 1, ' I am God all-suffi-

cient ; walk before me, and be thou perfect.' Do you uprightly serve

God, and study to please him, and you need not seek elsewhere for a

patron, or for one to defend you and plead your cause. And partly,

too, because they are exposed to the greater difficulties, because they

are faithful with God, and trust themselves alone with his protection ;

for so the apostle, 1 Tim. iv. 10, ' For therefore we labour and suffer

reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Faith begets faithful-

ness ; their dependence is upon God, and their faithfulness costs them

dear, and so they suffer reproach because they did trust themselves in

God's ways by God's providence. As you stand in need of God's pro-

tection, you shall have it. God will not forsake us in our greatest

needs, as the world will ; but in our greatest extremities, when all

carnal dependences foil us, he will not ; then is the time for God to

show himself. He hath still a providence and a fatherly care over

thee, but his power is especially engaged at such a time. If you will

take care of your duty, he will take care of your safety, for he will

either keep you out of troubles, or sustain you under troubles.

VER. 174.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 277

SERMON CLXXXVII.

I have longed for thy salvation, Lord ; and thy law is my delight.

— Ver. 174.

In this verse you have a twofold assertion or protestation —

1. Of a vehement desire of the salvation promised, I have longed for

thy salvation.

2. A great love and complacency in the word of God, and thy law

is my delight.

This verse may he understood either of temporal salvation or eternal

salvation ; the words may be accommodated to either sense. The

context would seem to limit it to the former, and so an enforcing of

the second request of this portion : ver. 170, ' Deliver me according to

thy word.' Many interpreters, both Jewish and Christian, carry it for

the other. Jewish ; Rabbi David Kimchi expoundeth it thus, ' thy

salvation,' secido futuro ; and the last clause, ' thy law,' quia medium

est ad salutem. Christian ; Chrysostom, Theodoret, Calvin. And

because these senses are not contrary, but subordinate, I shall insist

upon both.

1. Let me handle the words as they may be understood of temporal

salvation ; and so the sense will be, ' I have long expected thy deliver-

ance, and yet do desire and wait for it.' The preterperfect tense, as

Vatablus noteth, includeth also the present : 'For a long time I have

expected thy deliverance, and do expect help from thee.' And the

other clause, ' Thy law is my delight ; ' though this help seemeth to be

delayed, yet thy counsel is my consolation and perpetual delight. The

words thus understood yield us two points : —

Doct, 1. That God's people do look to God for deliverance, and

longingly expect the accomplishment of it.

Doct. 2. We should delight in the promise before the salvation

cometh.

For the first point, that God's people do look to God for deliver-

ance, and longingly expect it, the point shall be discussed in these con-

siderations : —

1. What longing for God's salvation implieth.

2. The encouragements and reasons of it.

3. What singular thing there is in this longing expectation, since

it is natural to all to seek deliverance out of trouble.

First, What it implieth ?

1. A sense of our impotency, or insufficiency to save ourselves, and

help ourselves out of trouble, by any ways and means that we can find

out and use: Ps. iii. 8, ' Salvation belongeth to the Lord ;' Jonah ii.

9, ' Salvation is of the Lord.' Salvation and deliverance of all kinds

is God's prerogative royal, and God's proper work ; none can save

and give peace when he commandeth trouble ; and when he will save

his people, none can let. It is an evidence of men's neglecting a deity

when they would help and save themselves in all conditions, without

depending or employing a God ; Job xl. 9, 14, ' Hast thou an arm

like God ? then I will confess unto thee, that thine own right hand

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can save thee. Alas ! if we look elsewhere, how soon are we disap-

pointed ! Man is a mutable creature, his affections change, or his

power may be blasted ; an arm of flesh is soon dried up. Besides the

distraction and uncertainty that we have while we depend upon man

and look to man, we involve ourselves in greater miseries, and meet

with a shameful disappointment at last. Sometimes man will not if

he can, sometimes cannot if he would. If he will and can, yet he

shall not help us without God; for what can the instrument do

without the principal agent, the sword without the man that wieldeth

it ? That is one lesson God hath been teaching his people in all ages,

that salvation belongeth unto the Lord ; they must take their deliver-

ance out of his hands. He sits at the upper end of causes, and saveth

his people when he will, and how he will, and by what means he will;

and till he take their cause in hand, how sadly do the most hopeful

attempts and expectations miscarry ; for to give salvation is a divine

property, given to no creature, and must not be usurped by them:

looking to man is the readiest way to miscarry.

2. It implieth a dependence upon his fatherly care and powerful

providence, and a persuasion that he will guide us unto heaven in a

way that is most convenient for us. The great cause of God's anger

against his people in the wilderness was because they believed not in

God, and trusted not in his salvation, Ps. lxxviii. 22. He had under-

taken to bring them into Canaan, but they mistrusted his conduct,

either that he had not power enough, or enough fatherly love and care

to do it ; and therefore his wrath was kindled against Jacob, and his

anger was hot against Israel ; and so do they greatly dishonour and

provoke God by their distrust who do not believe that God will bring

them out of every strait, in a way most conducing to his own glory

and their welfare. Now God's children are so satisfied in his conduct,

that in their worst condition they can cheerfully depend upon God,

and look and long for salvation from him : Hab. iii. 18, ' 1 will joy

in the Lord ; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation ;' Luke i. 47,

'My spirit doth rejoice in God my Saviour.' They are satisfied in his

love and power : Ps. xiii. 5, ' But I have trusted in thy mercy; my

heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.'

3. Holy desires vented in prayer ; there we express and act our

longings. Words are but the body of prayer, but desires are the life

and soul of it. The children of God are described once and again

to be such as love his salvation, Ps. xl. 16. Now there are but

two acts of love — desire and delight ; the one concerneth the object as

future, the other as present, either to faith or to sense. They rejoice

in it as present to faith in the promise, as well as when they enjoy it.

But the desire we are now upon, this is vented in prayer, there they

express their vehement longings for his salvation : Ps. xxxv. 3, ' Say

unto my soul, I am thy salvation.' God's saying is doing. He

speaketh by his providence ; and this is that the saints long for, they

plead with him, Ps. cxix. 94, ' I am thine, save me, for I have

sought thy precepts.'

4. It expresseth waiting God's leisure and submission for the kind,

time, and means of deliverance : Lam. iii. 26, ' It is good to hope and

quietly wait for the salvation of God.' They continue looking and

VER. 174.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CXIX. 279

waiting: Isa. xxx. 18, ' Blessed are all they that wait for him.' We

must wait in the midst of manifold disappointments. When means

miscarry, it is in his power to rescue his people from the greatest

dangers ; and hath a prerogative to save and deliver those whom

reason and probability have condemned and given over for lost ; as

the Israelites, Exod. xiv. 13, ' Stand still, and see the salvation of

God.' They were enclosed, the mountains on each side, the Egyp-

tians behind, the sea before ; yet what cannot the salvation of God do?

There is a holy obstinacy in faith, trusting him in all dangers. Nay,

when God himself appeareth as an enemy, cutting off our hope, and

hewing and hacking at us, yet we must wait upon him. All strokes

come from the hand of God, and no wound given by himself is above

his own cure. Jacob when he fainted was forced to interrupt his

speech, and utter this ejaculation, Gen. xlix. 18, ' I have waited for

thy salvation, God.' In short, God hath ways of deliverance more

than his people know of, and can save his own when they count their

case desperate : Ps. lxviii. 20, ' He that is our God, is the God of

salvation, and the issues from death belong unto him ; ' the escapes

from death and imminent destruction.

Secondly, The reasons and encouragements of looking and longing

for God's salvation.

1. God hath bound himself by covenant as our God ; it is his

covenant style to be the God of our salvation, Ps. lxviii. 19, 20. In

the one verse he is called ' the God of our salvation ; ' in the other, it

is said, ' He that is our God is the God of salvation.' If he be the

God of salvation, he will be the God of our salvation ; for whatever

God is in himself, that in the covenant he will be to his people ; you

shall see the blessing of his people is inferred out of his title : Ps. iii.

8, ' Salvation belongeth to the Lord ; thy blessing is upon thy people.

Selah.' If God can save, and the salvation be a blessing to his people,

he will save them, and deliver them. It is true this title doth mainly

concern our eternal salvation, but the conduct of his providence by the

way is aimed at in the covenant, as well as our entrance into heaven

at the end of the journey. Promises relating to temporal things are

put into the believer's charter ; but the dispensing thereof is left in

the hands of their wise and tender Father. ' Now temporal deliverance

being a part of our charter, if it be not always performed, it is not for

want of power or truth, but out of wisdom and love. God doth what

is most convenient for us ; it is in a wise hand : if it be good for me,

I shall have it. Now this is a mighty encouragement to look and

long for God's salvation. He shall have the stating of it, for time,

means, and kind of deliverance, but we must look for it.

2. We must look to God for deliverance, because he is every way

able, and fitted and furnished to make good his covenant undertaking.

He hath power enough, wisdom enough, and love enough.

[1.] Power enough : 1 Sam. xiv. 6, ' There is no restraint in the Lord,

to save by many, or by few.' The same supported Asa, 2 Chron. xiv. 11.

The same supported the three children, Dan. iii. 17, ' Our God whom

we serve is able to deliver us out of the fiery furnace.' Now a desire is

mightily quickened by this confidence. God hath promised to do what

is good, and it is in the power of his hands to do this for us.

280 sermons upon psalm cxix. [Ser. CLXXXVII.

[2.] He hath wisdom enough to bring it about in such a way

as may be most for his glory: 2 Peter ii. 9, ' The Lord knoweth how

to deliver the godly out of temptation.' It is an art he is versed

in, how to distinguish between his people and their enemies ; to bring

it about so as may be most for his glory. What is the usual work of

providence, but to give salvation according to his covenant, in such a

way as the beauty of his providence may be seen, the patience and

faith of his people may be tried, and yet his enemies reckoned with.

[3.] He hath love enough. God doth concern himself in all our

affairs: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'We trust in the living God, who is the

saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.' A protector and

deliverer ; yea, it is said he saveth man and beast, Ps. xxxvi. 6.

The object of his providence is very large. All creatures have their

being and preservation from him, much more man, much more his

children. They are allowed to believe a special providence, and the

more they depend upon him, the more is his care assured to them :

1 Peter v. 7, ' Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for

you/ The Lord is free from all passions of care and sorrow, but we

shall find no less proof of his keeping off danger, or delivering us from

danger, than if we were solicitous for ourselves. Surely our Father is

not unmindful of us.

3. Because there is no difficulty that can fall out to check this

confidence, which is built upon God's undertaking, and sufficiency to

make it good.

[1.] Not any danger from men, though of never so dreadful an

appearance : 2 Cor. i. 10, ' Who hath delivered us from so great a

death, and doth deliver, in whom we trust that he will yet deliver

us.' The danger was trouble in Asia, a great danger, pressed above

measure and above strength. Great trouble was at Ephesus, where

the people in an uproar were ready to tear him in pieces, so that he

received the sentence of death in himself ; yet God found a way and

means to save, and he came off safe and sound.

[2.] Not any appearance of anger from God himself : Job xiii. 15,

' Though he slay me, yet I will put my trust in him.' Sometimes

trouble may represent God as the party dealing with us ; yet faith

can take him for a friend when he seemeth to deal like an enemy ;

and we must resolve to adhere to God and his ways, and trust his

power, with submission to his good-will and pleasure, and believe that

he hath more respect and care over us than is seen in the present

dispensation.

Thirdly, It is natural to all to seek deliverance out of troubles :

Isa. Ii. 14, ' The captive exile hasteth that he may be delivered, and

that he should not die in the pit.' How then is it any part of grace

to long for God's salvation ?

I answer — It is proper to the godly to love no deliverance but what

God sendeth by his own means, in his own time, and to wait for it

in God's way.

1. There is somewhat of grace in it, that they look for salvation

from God alone, as the author, and are resolved to take it out of his

hands, whencesoever it cometh. Men naturally would be avrapKos,

live upon himself, be sufficient to his own happiness ; and so they

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are vexed when they are left upon God, and put upon dependence and

submission and waiting upon him ; for they think it little worth to wait

upon God as long as any other shift will serve the turn. As Ahaz,

when troubled with the fear of Bezin and Pekah, and the prophet

assureth him of God's salvation, and biddeth him ask a sign : Isa. vii.

11-13, ' I will not tempt the Lord.' I will not trust the Lord, he

meaneth, though he useth that pretence ; his expectation was fixed on

the friendship of his confederates. If he had asked a sign of God, he

must wait for the issue in God's way. Now Ahaz could not endure

to trust God alone ; he depended on the Assyrian, and not on God's

salvation ; he believed nothing the prophet spake, but counted it vain

and frivolous, and was resolved to go another way to work.

2. God's salvation as to the means ; not by our shifts, that maketh

a breach upon our sincerity : Gen. xvii. 1 , 'I am God Almighty ;

walk before me, and be thou upright.' A man that doth not trust

God cannot be long true to him. You go off from God to the

creature by distrust and unbelief, Heb. iii. 12. This is making more

haste than good speed, Isa. xxviii. 10. It plungeth us in sin ; it is

the greatest hypocrisy that can be, to pretend respect to God, and

shift for ourselves ; it is to break prison, to get out of trouble before

God letteth us out.

3. In his own time, ' Thy salvation.' They resolve to wait till he

sendeth it. Carnal men, when other means and expectations fail, will

seek to God ; they are beaten to him. But if their expectation in

waiting upon God be delayed, they wax weary and faint ; as that

king put on sackcloth for a while, 2 Kings vi. 30, afterwards said,

' This evil is from the Lord ; why should I wait on the Lord any

longer ? ' They give it over as a hopeless service.

4. That in the height of trouble they still go to God, and will not

cast away their confidence and dependence, come what will come :

Isa. xxvi. 8, 'In the way of thy judgments we have waited for thee ;

our desires are to thee, and to the remembrance of thy name.' They

still look to him, and though often disappointed, will seek salvation

from no other : they still cleave to God's way : Ps. xliv. 17, ' All this

is come upon us, yet have we not forsaken thee, nor dealt falsely in

thy covenant.' They persevere in prayer : Ps. Ixxxviii. 13, 14, ' Unto

thee have I cried in the morning ; my prayer shall prevent thee,

Lord ! Why castest thou me off? why hidest thou thy face from me ?'

They will not give over, but show their vehement longings after God ;

whereas wicked and carnal men, when great troubles continue, are

driven to despair, and give over all hope.

Use. In times of trouble let us look to God, and continue looking

all the time that God will exercise our faith and patience, and

express our longings and desires of God's salvation in humble and

earnest prayer.

1. It is no time to look elsewhere ; for God will show us that vain

is the help of man by many disappointments : Isa. xlviii. 11, 'I, even

I, am the Lord, and besides me there is no saviour.' He will break

all confidences till we come to this. He shall be my salvation, as

Job resolved when God brake him with his tempests, and pursued

him with his waves, and was ready to slay him, as he thought. In all

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extremities this should be our fixed ground of faith, that salvation

and deliverance is to be expected from God only: Jer. iii. 23, 'Truly

in vain is salvation hoped for from the hills and the mountains ; truly

in the Lord our God is the salvation of Israel.' God will teach us

this lesson ere he hath done with us. Usually there is no serious

dealing with God till we find the vanity and inability of all other

dependences : looking to the hills and mountains, strength of situa-

tion, forces, all these will fail us.

2. It is no time to dally with God and his service any longer ; for

when troubles come close and near, the spirit of prayer should be

revived, and what was cursorily sought at other times should now be

sought with some vehemency and longings in prayer: Jer. xxix. 13,

14, ' When they shall seek me with their whole heart, they shall find

me, and I will give them an expected end.' We do not stir up

ourselves to take hold of him : Ps. xiv. 7, ' Qh ! that the salvation of

Israel were come out of Zion!' There should be a longing, we

should not content ourselves with a few dead and drowsy prayers.

3. Salvation may be comfortably expected from God ; for as neces-

sity enforceth these longings, so hope quickeneth them. Now it may

be expected, for he is mighty to save, Isa. lxiii. 1 ; he is willing to

save a distressed people : ver. 5, ' I looked, and there was none to

help, therefore mine own arm brought salvation to me.' God struck

in for the deliverance and help of his people when all human help

failed ; he did the work alone himself. Once more, when he meaneth

to save, he covereth himself with frowns and anger, as if he meant to

destroy : Isa. xlv. 15, ' Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O

God, the saviour.' He seemeth to hide and stand aloof from his

people in their afflictions, and carrieth himself so closely and covertly

in the passages of his providence, that his people know not what he

meaneth to do. What is our work, then, but to keep longing and

waiting and looking to God's hands, till he have mercy upon us ?

Doct. 2. That we should delight in the promise before the salvation

cometh.

So doth David say here, ' Thy law is my delight ; ' that is, whilst

he was longing for God's salvation; and by law is meant God's

word in the general ; the promise is included in it, as well as the

precept.

1. A believer should not be comfortless in his troubless : John xiv.

1, ' Let not your hearts be troubled ; ye believe in God, believe also

in me.' Immoderate sorrow for temporal evils will not become one

that hath an interest in God and Christ. Whatever falls out in the

world, God is the same still, and the covenant is the same ; and our

better part, and our happiness is above the reach of trouble ; there is

a long-suffering with joyfulness, Col. i. 4.

2. All our delight and solace must not arise from the delights of

sense, but out of the word of God. It is good to see what is our

solace and support in troubles, for the man is as his solace is : Ps.

xciv. 19, ' In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts

delight my soul.' How do we ease ourselves in our perplexities and

griefs ? Is it with God's comforts ? Now God's comforts are gospel

comforts ; the comforts we have from the word they will make us

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more love the word, and trust more upon God's word, and the more

confidently expect the performance of it.

3. The promises should support us upon a twofold account — partly

because they are good, and partly because they are sure.

[1.] They are good ; there is a fulness in God's allowance that

suiteth with all our cases : Ps. lxxxiv. 11, ' For the Lord God is a

sun and a shield ; he will give grace and glory, and no good thing

will he withhold from them that live uprightly.' So 1 Tim. iv. 8,

' Godliness hath the promises of the life which now is, and of that

which is to come/ Heaven and earth are laid at the feet of it. A

man cannot desire a greater cordial than necessary provisions for this

and the future life: Ps. cxix. Ill, ' Thy testimonies I have taken for

an heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my heart.' The pro-

mises of the world to come should swallow up all our present grief,

for there is more in heaven than can be taken from us in the creature :

2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For our light affliction, which is but for a moment,

worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,'

Heb. x. 34, ' And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods ; kno wing-

in yourselves that in heaven ye have a better and more enduring-

substance.' We have a treasure and a happiness elsewhere, which

cannot be infringed by the afflictions we endure in this world. We

do not lose much if we get eternal salvation in the issue, and so we

get to heaven, no matter how dark soever our passage be. Then for

the promises of this life, they suit with all our troubles, wants, clangers,

breaches, and distresses. But what confidence can we have of these

temporal deliverances or mercies? Ans. Either we shall have the

mercies themselves, or God will order providences so as it may be

good for us to want them, and have something better given in lieu of

them, Kom. viii. 28. We know he will not leave us wholly destitute,

Heb. xiii. 5, nor bring upon us insupportable difficulties, 1 Cor. x. 13 ;

and this should be enough for us to maintain us in life and comfort.

[2.] They are sure as well as good.

(1.) As promises. A promise is more than a purpose, for it is a

purpose not as conceived in the mind of a man, but declared to another

to invite hope. It is more than a doctrine. A doctrine giveth notice

of privileges, but a promise giveth us an interest in them. It is more

than a revelation or prophecy. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled

because of God's veracity ; but scripture promises not only because of

God's veracity, but also his fidelity and justice. There is a kind of

righteousness in making good promises, because we give another a

right and claim to the things promised by the promises we make to

him. A promissory lie is worse than an assertory lie. A promise gives

us a holdfast upon God, promillendo se fecit debitorem.

(2.) As the promises of God, who cannot lie and deceive the crea-

tures : Heb. vi. 18, ' That by two immutable things, in which it was

impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation.' And

therefore by acting faith on these declarations of his will, we may have

the accomplishment of them. None that ever depended on God's

word were disappointed : Ps. xviii. 30, ' The word of the Lord is a

tried word.' God was never yet found worse than his word ; he hath

been tender of the credit of his word : Ps. cxxxviii. % ' Thou hast

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magnified thy word above all thy name.' Heathens have acknow-

ledged that God hath never so much showed himself in the world, as

in these two things a\r)6eveiv kcu euepyerelv, in doing good and keeping

promise. Above all that is named and famed of God, this is most

conspicuous.

Use. To exhort us in all our straits, dangers, and troubles, to be

contented with his word, and to delight in the promise, as if it were

performed. I shall here show you how we are to carry ourselves

towards the promises.

1. You must rest confident of the truth of what God hath promised,

and be assured that in time the performance will come to pass, as if

you saw it with your eyes : Heb. xi. 13, ' They were persuaded of these

things.' This is the assurance of faith spoken of, Heb. x. 22. I know

I shall find this to be a truth. Men are conscionable and faithful in

keeping their word ; much more God, who can neither deceive nor be

deceived.

2. You are to delight in the promise, though the performance be not

yet, nor like to be for a good while ; neither performed, nor likely to

be performed. Heb. xi. 13, they saw them afar off, and yet being

persuaded of these things, they embraced them ; and John viii. 56,

' Abraham saw my day, and was glad.' You hold the blessing by the

root, where you have the promise, Heb. vi. 18.

3. You are to take the naked promise for a ground of your hope,

however it seem to be contradicted in the course of his providence. It

is his word you are to go by, and stand by, and according to which you

must interpret all his dispensations. It is said, Rom. iv. 18, that

' Abraham believed in hope against hope.' When faith dependeth

upon God's naked word, then it standeth upon its own basis and proper

legs. Everything is strongest in its props and pillars which God and

nature hath appointed for it. He hangeth the earth upon nothing, in

the midst of the air, but there is its place. So faith standeth fast upon

his word, who is able to perform what he saith.

4. This faith must conquer our fears, and cares, and troubles : Ps.

cxii. 7, ' He shall not be afraid of evil tidings ; his heart is fixed,

trusting in the Lord;' and Ps. lvi. 3, 4, ' In God I will praise his

word, in God have I put my trust ; I will not fear what man can do

unto me.' The force of faith is seen in calming our passions and sin-

ful fears; or else it is but a notion, and our reverence and respect to

God Avill be weakened by it.

5. When faith hath done its work in the quieting of our own hearts,

you must glorify God in your carriage before others : John iii. 33,

■ Put to his seal that God is true ; ' that is, when we confirm others in

the faith and belief of the promises, by our joy fulness in all conditions,

patience and contentedness under the cross, diligence in holiness, hope

and comfort in great straits. You shall see, Num. xx. 12, that God

was angry with Moses and Aaron because ' they believed not, to sanc-

tify him in the eyes of the children of Israel.' We are not only to

believe in God ourselves, but to sanctify him in the eyes of others ; as

the Thessalonians by receiving the word in much affliction, much

assurance, and joy in the Holy Ghost, were examples to all that believed

in Achaia, 1 Thes. i. 5-7. Thus we should do, but how few do thus

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believe ! Some count these vain words, and the comforts thence deduced

fanatical illusions or fantastical impressions ; nothing so ridiculous in

the world's eye as trust and dependence on unseen comforts : Ps. xxii.

8, ' He trusted on the Lord, that he should deliver him ; let him de-

liver him, seeing he delighted in him.' Ungodly wits make the life of

faith a sport or matter of laughter. Some have more modesty, but as

little faith ; they are all for the present world, 2 Tim. iv. 9. Pre-

sent delights please them, but present temptations altogether unsettle

them, Hel). xii. 11 ; cannot bear present smart, nor despise the present

world, Eom. viii. 19. Anything in hand is more than the greatest

promise, of better things to come. They do not deal equally with God

and man. If man promise, they reckon much of that ; but cannot

tarry upon God's security, count his promise little worth. They can

trade with a factor beyond sea, and trust all their estate in a man's hand

whom they have never seen ; and yet the word of the infallible God

is of little respect with them. The best build too weakly upon the

promise, as appeareth by the prevalency of our cares and fears, Heb.

xii. 4-6. If you did take God at his word, you would not be so soon

mated with every difficulty ; there would be more resolution in trials,

more hardiness against troubles. A man may boldly say, ' The Lord is

my helper ; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' If we had faith to

believe it, it would more effectually quiet our hearts and minds in all our

straits, necessities, and perplexities, it would calm our desires and fears :

we would not desire the best things of the world, nor fear the worst.

SERMON CLXXXVIII.

I have longed for thy salvation, Lord; and thy law is my delight.

— Ver. 174.

We now come to the second acceptation of the word salvation, as it

implieth eternal salvation ; and so the points are two : —

JDoct. 1. That we should vehemently long and earnestly wait for

eternal life.

Doct. 2. That we should not only long for salvation, but delight in

the way which leadeth us to it.

For the first point, that longing for salvation is the duty and property

of God's children —

The reasons are taken from — (1.) The object of these desires ; (2.)

The subject of these desires ; (3.) The use of these desires ; (4.) The

state and condition of the present world.

1. The object. The object of desire is good, considered as absent

and not yet obtained good. All desire that it should be well with

themselves. This desire is confused and general ; not the hundredth

part longeth after the true good : Ps. iv. 6, ' Who will show us any

good ?' Some are carried by ambition, others by covetousness, others

by sensuality: 1 John ii. 16, ' All that is in the world is either the

lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or pride of life ;' and Isa. liii. 6,

' All we like sheep have gone astray ; we have every one turned to his

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own way.' As the channel is cut, so corrupt nature finds a vent.

But now God's salvation is the true good, and ought to be desired,

and will be desired by all his children. It importeth a freedom from

all misery, and an enjoyment of all good. A freedom from all misery :

There sin and sorrow shall be no more, and all tears shall be wiped

from our eyes, Rev. xxi. 4. The blessed spirits above have none of

our cares, and fears, and sorrows. Here we are sighing, and they

are praising ; we sinning, and they pleasing God ; we full of infirmities,

and they are perfect and without blemish, and in the full enjoyment

of all good : Ps. xvi. 11, 'At thy right hand is fulness of joy, and in

thy presence pleasures for evermore ;' Ps. xvii. 15, ' As for me, I will

behold thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake

with thy likeness.' Alas ! the preparations to this estate in the world

are far above the vain delights of the flesh ; much more the pleasures

there ; these the soul longeth for ; though they are thankful for a

refreshment by the way, yet they long to be at home.

2. The second reason is taken from the subject of these desires ;

and there we have — (1.) The suitableness ; (2.) The experience ; (3.)

Our pressures.

[1.] The suitableness ; they are suited to this happiness, wrought

for this very thing, 2 Cor. v. 5. Everything hath a prepension to the

place for winch God framed it ; it is the wisdom of God to put all

things in their proper places, as every creature is placed in that element

which is suitable and answerable to its composition and frame, as

fishes in water, fowls in the air. God's children are framed for this

very thing, therefore have an inclination and a tendency thither. As

heaven is prepared for them, so in some measure they for it, Rom. ix.

24 ; aforehand prepared unto glory ; and Col. i. 12, ' Made meet to

be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' They grow more

dead every day to the interests and concernments of the animal life,

and have a greater agreeableness to this happiness.

[2.] Experience : Pom. viii. 23, ' We that have the first-fruits of

the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit,

the redemption of our body.' A Christian here is unsatisfied, and

longeth for a better and purer state of bliss and immortality, light,

life, peace, joy. One drachm of grace is more precious than all the

world, but yet it setteth them a-longing for more. The first-fruits

showeth us what the harvest will be, and a taste what the feast will

prove. Here we get a little knowledge of God, a sight of him in the

ordinances, a twilight discovery of Christ, a look through the lattice,

Cant. ii. 9, a little glance of his face, when neither doth he let the

believers in to him, nor doth he come out to them. This glance maketh

them long for more, so that in effect they send up the same message

to Christ which his mother and brethren did because of the press,

' Thy mother and thy brethren stand without desiring to see thee. 7

Tell him thou standest here without, but desirest to see him. So for

the communion we have with Christ, it is but a taste : 1 Peter ii. 3,

' If so be ye have tasted the Lord is gracious ;' but that taste is very

ravishing and delightful. Here we get a little from him in an ordi-

nance, but that little is as much as we can hold ; but there he is all

in all. Here our holiness is not perfect, the seed of God remaineth

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in us ; but there it groweth up to perfection, as every spark of fire

tendeth to the element of fire.

[3.] Our pressures and the miseries of the present life : 2 Cor. v. 4,

' Being burdened, we groan.' We are pressed under a heavy weight,

burdened both with sin and misery, and both set us a-groaning and

a-longing, as men in a tempest would fain be set ashore as soon as

they can.

(1.) Sin, to a waking conscience and a tender gracious heart, is one

of the greatest burdens than can be felt : Rom. vii. 24, ' wretched

man that I am ! who shall deliver me from this body of death ? ' If

any had cause to complain of afflictions, Paul much more ; he was

whipped, imprisoned, stoned, in perils by land and sea ; but afflictions

did not sit so close to him as sins : the body of death was his greatest

burden, and therefore did he long for deliverance. If others go away

silently under their load, the children of Clod cannot. As light and

love increaseth, so sin groweth a greater burden to us. They cannot

get rid of this cursed inmate, and therefore are longing for their final

estate, when sin shall gasp its last : they long for the parting day, when

by putting off the flesh, they shall put off sin, and dwell with God.

(2.) Miseries : the children of God have not divested themselves of

the feelings of nature, are not grown senseless, as stocks and stones.

The apostle telleth us, Rom. viii. 20-22, that the whole creation

groaneth, because it is under misery and vanity. It is a groaning

world, and God's children bear a part of the concert : they groan and

desire earnestly their full deliverance. ' Few and evil are the days of

the years of my pilgrimage,' said holy Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 9. Our clays

are evil, therefore it is well they are but few ; that in this shipwreck

of man's felicity, we can see banks and shores and a landing-place

where we may be safe ; here is our travail, but there is our repose.

We would sleep too much here, and take up our rest, if sometimes we

did not meet with thorns in our bed.

3. The end and use of this longing and desiring.

[1.] It is an earnest desire, it maketh us industrious, and stirreth up

and keepeth up our endeavours after another world : Phil. iii. 20, 21,

' But our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour,

the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be

fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby

he is able to subdue all things unto himself.' Where there is a lively

expectation, there men drive on a trade for another country. Desire

is the vigorous bent of the soul, and so beareth us out under all the

difficulties of obedience. If we do not desire, we will not labour, nor

seek it in the first place ; and if our desires be weak and feeble, they

are controlled by every lust, abated upon every difficulty : whatever

gets your hearts, that will command your endeavours ; for as a man's

desire is, so is he.

[2.] To make us constant, notwithstanding troubles, reproaches,

persecutions : Mat. xi. 12, ' The violent take it by force.' They will

have no nay ; they must have it, whatever it cost ; though ' sore

troubles and persecutions, yet if Ave may get heaven and glory at last,

it is enough. But where a thing is coldly and carelessly desired,

everything puts us out of the humour.

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4. The state and condition of the present world; it is called, Gal. i.

4, ' The present world.' The pleasures of it are mere dreams and

shadows, and the evils of it are many and real. God's children are

pilgrims here, and hardly get leave to pass through ; as Israel could

not get leave to pass through Edom. Sometimes they meet with such

bitter and grievous persecutions, which make them weary of their

lives ; as Elijah requested for himself that he might die, 1 Kings ix. 4,

or as the spirits of the Israelites were filled with anguish because of

their hard taskmasters. God will give his people rest hereafter, but

before the rest cometh they are sorely troubled : 1 Thes. i. 6, 7, ' And

ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word

in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost, so that ye were en-

samples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.' Nay, the

company that we go with to heaven are apt to fall out by the way,

and to deal perversely one with another, unministering, unchurching,

unchristianing one another, impaling, enclosing the common salvation,

and jostling one another out of the way to heaven ; so that the

church, which should be terrible like an army with banners, marching

to heaven in order in one whole body, is like an army in rout, and

most are forced to get home in straggling parties. Now every tender

soul should long for God's salvation, to get up to that council of souls

who with perfect harmony are lauding and praising God for evermore,

Heb. xii. 23.

Use 1. To reprove them that are loath to leave this woful life, and

do not long and prepare for a better. God driveth us out of the world,

as he did Lot out of Sodom, yet we are loath to depart ; as if it were

better to be miserable, apart from God and Christ, than happy with

them. Surely they are far from the spirit of true Christians who

would live always here, at home in the world, and cannot endure to

think of a remove. There are two causes of this — (1.) An unmor-

tified heart ; (2.) An unsettled conscience.

1. An unmortified heart ; they are not yet weaned from the world,

their hearts are set upon satisfying the vile lusts of the body ; carry it

as if their portion lay in this world, Ps. xvii. 14 ; sucking yet upon

the world's dug ; they have no longing nor desire for that happiness

and glory which God hath provided for them that love him ; they

desire no other portion than what they have in hand.

2. And the other cause is an unsettled conscience. Some fear the

state of the other world rather than desire it and long for it. There

are two degrees — not knowing for certain it shall go well with us,

and not knowing for certain but that it shall go ill with us ; both sup-

press this desire, especially the latter.

Use 2. To rouse up our languid and cold affections, that they may

more earnestly be carried out after heavenly things ; that we may seek

after them with more fervency, and constancy, and self-denial.

The motives to press us are these : —

1. God giveth heaven to none but to those that look and long for it.

Men may go to hell against their wills, but none go to heaven against

their wills. In a punishment there is a force offered to us, but not in

a reward. We suffer what we would not, as Christ saith to Peter,

' Another shall gird thee, and cany thee whither thou wouldst not,'

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John xxi. 18. But happiness must be embraced, pursued, and sought

after. Well, then, let the concernments of the other world more take

up our hearts and minds, and stand as at heaven's gate, expecting when

God will open the door and call you in : Christ will appear to them

that look for him, Heb. ix. 28.

2. The children of God long to see God in his ordinances: Ps.

xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after,

that I may dwell in the house of God all the days of my life, to behold

the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple;' and Ps. xlii. 2,

4 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God : when shall I come

and appear before God ? ' Ps. lxiii. 1, 2, '0 God, thou art my God ;

early will I seek thee : my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth

for thee, in a dry and thirsty land where no water is; to see thy power

and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.' Now if there

be so great and longing a desire to see the glory of the Lord in a glass,

wherein so little of his glory is seen, with any comfort and satisfaction,

how much more to see him immediately face to face ! If a glimpse

be so comfortable, what will the immediate vision of God then be ?

Surely if this be salvation, every one of us should long for this sal-

vation.

3. If it be not worth our desire, it is little worth ; the estate being

so excellent, such a complete redemption from all our troubles, so per-

fect, and so full a happiness in body and soul, will not you send a

groan, or a hearty act of volition after it ? It is great ingratitude,

that when Christ hath procured a great state of blessedness for us at

a very dear rate, we should value it no more. He procured it by a

life of labour and sorrow, and the pangs of a bitter cursed death ; and

when all is done, we little regard it. Surely if we choose it for our

happiness, there will be longing and looking for it. No man will fly

from his own happiness : a man's heart will be where his treasure

is, Mat. vi. 21. If you prize it, you will sigh and groan after it. The

apostle saith, Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with

Christ, which is far better,' ttoWw fiaXkbv. If you count it better to

be there than elsewhere, you will be desiring to be there, and longing

to be there ; for we are always longing for that which is better, chiefly

for that which is best of all. There is the best estate, the best work,

the best company, all is better ; if you count it so, it will be no diffi-

cult thing to bring you earnestly to desire it.

4. All the ordinances serve to stir up this longing after heaven,

and to awaken these desires in us. The word is our charter for

heaven, or God's testament wherein this rich legacy is bequeathed to

us, that every time we read it, or hear it, or meditate upon it, we may

get a step higher, and our hearts more drawn out after heavenly

things. In prayer, whether in company or alone, it is but to raise and

act these heavenly desires ; there we groan, and long for God's salva-

tion. In the Lord's supper, we come solemnly to put ourselves in

mind of the new wine we shall drink in our Father's kingdom, Mat.

xxvi. 29, to put a new heavenly relish upon our hearts.

5. The imperfection of our present estate. We are now imperfect,

and straitened like a fish in a pail or small vessel of water, which

cannot keep it alive ; it would fain be in the ocean, or swimming in

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the broad and large rivers. So we are pent up, cannot do what we

would ; there is a larger estate, when filled up with all the fulness of

God. That holiness we have now niaketh us look for it and long for

it ; and surely holiness was never designed for our torment.

6. We are hastening into the other world apace, and therefore we

more desire it. Natural motion is in principio tardioi; in fine velo-

cior — the nearer to fruition, the more impatient of the want of it.

When a man is drawing home after a long journey, every mile is as

tedious as two. We are drawing nigh to the other world, let us leave

this willingly, not by force ; let not trouble chase us out of it, but love

and desire draw us out of it. God doth loosen our roots by little and

little, that we may now be fit for a remove ; the pins of our taber-

nacle are taken down insensibly, and by leisurely degrees. Now as

fast as we are going out of this world, we should be going into another ;

the inner man renewed day by day, that is, as it grovveth more holy

and heavenly. From our first renovation we should be dying to this

world, and setting our affections on a better ; much more when God

beginneth to call us home, then draw home as fast as you can.

For means to this desire and longing, there is necessary —

1. A sound belief of this blessed estate, or a certain confidence of

the truth of it : 2 Cor. v. 1, 2, ' For we know that if our earthly house

of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house

not made with hands, eternal in the heavens : for in this we groan,

earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from

heaven.' Not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge. Surely

heaven is amiable, and the object of our desires, if we be persuaded of

the truth of it, we will long after it.

2. A serious preparation for it : 2 Cor. v. 3, ' If so be that, being

clothed, we shall not be found naked.' They have made up their

account between God and their souls, sued out their pardon, stand

with their loins girt and lamps burning ; then they long and wait

when God will draw aside the veil of flesh, and show them his glory.

A seafaring man desireth his port, especially if laden with rich com-

modities. Where there hath been diligent preparing, there will be

serious waiting and desirous expectation. While we make provision

for our fleshly appetites and wills, we dream of dwelling here ; we

take it for granted they have no thought of removing to another place

who make no provision before their coming thither. When a tenant

hath warning to be turned out of his old house, he will be providing

of another, and be preparing and making it ready before he enter

upon it.

We now come to the second clause, ' Thy law is my delight,'

Boot. 2. That we should not only long for salvation, but delight in

the way which leadeth to it.

Here I shall speak to two things : —

1. That we must take the way that leadeth to it.

2. That we must delight in the way.

First, That we must take the way that leadeth to it.

1. Partly because of the nature of God's covenant, which is con-

ditional. There is in it ratio dati et accepti, something required and

something promised : Isa. lvi. 4, ' For thus saifch the Lord unto the

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eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me,

and take hold of my covenant ; ' Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near with

a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled

from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water ; '

Exod. xxiv. 4, ' And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose

up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill, and

twelve pillars according to the twelve tribes of Israel : and he took the

book of the covenant and read it in the audience of the people, and

they said, All that the Lord hath said we will do, and be obedient.'

Surely in the covenant of grace God requireth conditions ; it is not

made up all of promises. Now a condition is this, when one promiseth

any good, or threateneth any ill, not simply, but upon covenant ;

if the thing required be performed, or the thing forbidden be com-

mitted ; the performance of the thing required is the condition of the

promise, the doing a thing forbidden the condition of the threatening :

1 Sam. xi. 1, 2, ' And all the men of Jabesh said unto Nahash, Make

a covenant with us, and we will serve thee : and Nahash the Am-

monite answered them, On this condition I will make a covenant with

you, that I may thrust out all your right eyes, and lay it for a reproach

upon all Israel ; ' and Luke xiv. 32, ' While the other is yet a great

way off, he sendeth an embassage, and desireth conditions of peace.'

Now these conditions are twofold — making covenant and keeping

covenant.

[1.] The conditions as to making the covenant arise from the law

of grace, or the lex remedians, faith and repentance. Faith performed

or omitted : John iii. 36, ' He that believeth on the Son hath everlast-

ing life, and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the

wrath of God abideth on him.' So repentance performed : Ezek.

xviii. 30, ' Kepent ye, and turn from your transgressions ; so iniquity

shall not be your ruin.' Omitted : Lukexiii. 5, 'Except ye repent, ye

shall all likewise perish.'

[2.] Then conditions of keeping covenant, which is conformity to the

law of God, or new obedience performed : Ps. lxxxiv. 11, ' No good

thing will be withhold from them that walk uprightly.' Omitted :

Heb. xii. 14, ' Without holiness no man shall see the'\_Lord.' Well,

then, upon the whole we thus judge, that it is not enough to desire

God's salvation, but we must also delight in his law ; that is to say, we

must repent and believe, and so begin our acquaintance with God in

Christ ; and we must also walk in the ways of God's precepts, if we

mean at length to be saved, and to enjoy the vision of the blessed God.

That which is propounded conditionally we must not presume of abso-

lutely, and so make reckoning to go to heaven as in some whirlwind,

or as passengers at sea are brought into the harbour sleeping, or to be

crowned without striving.

2. From the nature of this longing and desire, which must be

regular and according to the tenor of the covenant of holiness as well

as happiness ; and it must be strong, so as to overmaster contrary

difficulties, lusts, and desires. Let us instance in Balaam. He said,

Num. xxiii. 10, ' Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my

latter end be like his.' He saw that the state of a righteous man at

the end of it is a blessed estate, and this he longed for. But there was

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a double defect in his desire ; it was not regular. Balaam desired to

be saved, but he did not delight in God's law. He would be at the

journey's end, but was loath to take the way ; there was a complacency

and Avell-pleasedness in the end, but a refusing of the means. Again,

this desire was but a flash, a sudden motion, occasioned by con-

templation of the blessedness of God's people, but no operative trans-

forming desire ; a desire which the love of the wages of unrighteousness

prevailed over. All men will long for salvation, but all men will not

take a right course to obtain it ; and so it is a wish rather than a

desire, if we long for salvation but have not a heart to use the means

appointed thereunto. Where there is a true longing there will be a

using the means, and a using the means with delight. They that

will not submit to these conditions, or snuff at these conditions as

troublesome, they do not long for his salvation, nor delight in his law.

Secondly. That we must delight in the way that leadeth to glory ;

but this argument being handled in other verses of this psalm, it is

omitted here.

SERMON CLXXXIX.

Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee ; and let tlnj judgments

help me. — Ver. 175.

This verse containeth three things : —

1. David's petition for life, let my sold live.

2. His argument from the end, and it shall praise thee.

3. The ground of his hope and confidence, and Id thy judgments

help me.

1. David's petition for life, ' Let my soul live.' ' My soul,' that is,

myself: the soul is put for the whole man. The contrary, Judges

xvi. 30, ' Let me die with the Philistines,' said Samson : Heb. marg.,

' Let my soul die.' His life was sought after by the cruelty of his

enemies, and he desireth God to keep him alive.

2. His argument from the end, 'And it shall praise thee.' The

glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits is to

profit us and praise God. Now David professeth that all the days of

his life he should live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a

benefit.

3. The ground of his hope and confience, in the last clause, ' And

let thy judgments help me.' Our hopes of help are grounded on God's

judgment, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed

and judgments executed, doctrinal judgments and providential judg-

ments. That place intimateth the distinction : Eccles. viii. 11, ' Be-

cause sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore

the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. There is

sententia lata et dilata. Here God's judgments are put for the sen-

tence pronounced, and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of

grace. As also Ps. cxix. 43, ' I hope in thy judgments. Promises are

the objects of hope.

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The points are two : —

Boat. 1. That we may beg the continuation of life for the honouring

of God.

Doct. 2. That God's judgments are a great help and relief to his

people, who desire to praise him, even when they are in danger of their

lives.

For the first, that we may beg the continuation of life, for the

honouring of God. This point must be divided into two parts : —

1, That the principal end for which a man should live and desire

life is to praise and glorify God.

2. That we may desire life upon these ends.

First, That the principal end for which a man should live and

desire life is to praise and glorify God. This appeareth —

1. By direct scriptures: Rom. xiv. 7, 8, ' For none of us liveth to

himself, and no man dieth unto himself ; for whether we live, we live

unto the Lord ; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord : whether

we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's ;' and Phil. i. 20, 21,

' According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing

I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also,

Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death :

for to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.'

2. By the prayers of the saints ; as Ps. cxix. 17, ' Deal bountifully

with thy servant, that I may live,' &c. ; and Ps. cxviii. 17, ' I shall not

die, but live, and declare the works of the Lord.' This was David's

hope in the prolongation of life, that he should have farther oppor-

tunities to honour God. But of this more at large, ver. 17 of this

psalm.

3. By the arguments urged in prayer : Ps. vi. 5, ' For in death there

is no remembrance of thee ; in the grave who shall give thee thanks ?'

and Ps. xxx. 9, ' What profit is there in my blood, when I go down

to the pit ? shall the dust praise thee? shall it declare thy truth?'

Ps. lxxxviii. 11-13, 'Wilt thou show wonders to the dead? shall

the dead arise, and praise thee, Selah ? shall thy loving-kindness be

declared in the grave ? or thy faithfulness in destruction ? shall thy

wonders be known in the dark ? and thy righteousness in the land of

forgetfulness,' &c. ; and Isa. xxxviii. 18, 19, 'For the grave cannot

praise thee, death cannot celebrate thee : they that go down into the

pit cannot hope for thy truth : the living, the living, he shall praise

thee,' &c. A man may praise God in heaven, but from their bodies no

service is performed for a long while in the other world. There is no

such service there as here ; as reducing the stray, instructing the

ignorant, propagating godliness to others who want it, by our counsels

and example.

4. By reasons.

[1 .] Life is given us by God at first : Acts xvii. 25, ' He giveth to

all life and breath, and all things ;' and ver. 28, ' In him we live and

move, and have our being.' Now all things that come from God must

be used for him: Rom. xi. 36, ' For of him, and through him, and to

him, are all things,' &c, angels, men, beasts, inanimate creatures.

He expecteth more from men than from beasts, and from saints than

from men. Life was given for this end, and therefore not to be desired

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and loved but for this end, even God's glory. How grievous a thing

is it to go out of the world ere we know why we came into the world !

We live not barely to eat and drink, as brute beasts live ; we live not

to live as heathens. The end of our life is service and obedience to

God ; yea, and it is the life of our lives, the perfection of them. Well,

then, since we live by God, we must live to him.

[2.] It is preserved by him. It is God's prerogative to kill and

to make alive ; to wound and to heal, Dent, xxxii. 39. Our life

dependeth wholly on him. It is said, Job xii. 10, ' In whose hand is

the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind.' God

hath a dominion over all his creatures, over every living thing, and

man in especial, to dispose of them according to his pleasure ; not an

hair of our heads can fall to the ground without him, Mat. x. 29, 30.

Our life is wholly in his hands ; we cannot add one cubit to our

stature, make one hair white or black at our pleasure. Life cannot be

taken away without him, how casual soever the stroke is : Exod. xxi.

13, ' If a man lie not in wait for his brother, but God delivereth him

into his hand,' &c. Well, then, in all reason we should serve and

glorify him who by his providential influence continueth life to us

every moment : Deut. xxx. 20, ' Thou shalt love the Lord thy God,

and obey his voice, and cleave unto him ; for he is thy life, and the

length of thy days.' It is a charge against Belshazzar, Dan. v. 23,

' God, in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast

thou not glorified.' We must not look ivpon ourselves as made for

ourselves, but for God. He gave us life, and keepeth it, that we may

wholly be at his disposing. While we have it, we must have it for

God, that he may be glorified in the use of it ; and when he cometh

to take it away, he may be glorified by our submitting to his domi-

nion. It is a presumption and encroachment on God's right to seek

satisfaction to ourselves in any state, without a subordination and sub-

serviency to his glory. He that giveth and preserveth life may dispose

of it at his pleasure ; and our life so continually preserved by him

ought to be devoted to him.

[o.] When he preserveth it in any imminent danger, it is twice given.

I say, in such preservations our life is twice received from God — in

our birth, and as spared in the danger ; and therefore, in all justice it

ought to be dedicated to his service ; 2 Cor. i. 9, 10, ' But we had the

sentence of death in ourselves, that we should not trust in ourselves,

but in God which raiseth the dead ; who delivered us from so great a

death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust that he will yet deliver us.'

Manjr times there is but a step between us and death, as if God were

putting the old bond in suit, and executing the sentence of the law

upon us. Deliverance in such a case is called a pardon and remission ;

and even in the case of the wicked and impenitent : Ps. lxxviii. 38,

' He being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed

them not/ It was but properly a reprieve for the time, a forbearance

of the temporal judgment, not executing the sentence, or not destroy-

ing the sinner presently ; much more to a godly man : Isa. xxxviii. 17,

' Loved my soul from the grave.' To be loved out of a danger, and

loved out of a sickness, that is a blessed thing, a great obligation

upon us.

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[4.] We must surrender our life to him again ; and therefore, while

we have it, we must employ it for him, Luke xix. 23 ; into his hands

we must resign our spirits. Every one must give an account of himself

to God, what honour he hath by our lives.

[5.] We shall never glorify him in heaven unless we glorify God

on earth first, or carefully serve him : John xvii. 4, 5, 'I have glorified

thee on earth ; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do :

and now, Father, glorify me, with thine own self, with the glory

which I had with thee before the world was.' Here is our trial, our

present service. Saints above are e'|&>/3e\ei9 ; that is our reward, to

glorify God in heaven.

Secondly, That we may desire life upon these ends ; as Ps. xxxix.

12, ' spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence and

be no more.' A little time of relaxation, to serve and glorify thee ere

I die.

1. Long life is in itself a blessing, taken into the promises, though

more frequently in the Old Testament than in the New. Of this, see

more at large, ver. 17.

2. It is well sought when this is our scope, for then the request is

lawful both for matter and end : James iv. 3, ' Ye ask and receive not,

because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.' Life

should not be loved but for further glorifying of God, for all our

natural interests must be subordinate to our great end.

Well, then, we may lawfully pray for long life, with submission to

trie will of God, and that death may not come upon us suddenly, but

according to the ordinary course of nature.

But how will this stand with the desires of dissolution, and willing-

ness to depart and to be with Christ, which certainly all Christians

that believe eternity should cherish in their hearts ?

To this I answer — (1.) By concession ; (2.) By correction.

1. By concession. It is true we are to train up ourselves in an

expectation of our dissolution, &c. See ver. 17 more fully. But —

2. By correction. Though it be expedient to desire death, yet we

are not anxiously to long after it, till the time come. For —

[1.] They do not simply desire death for itself, but as a means to

enjoy those better things which follow after death : Phil. i. 23, ' For

I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with

Christ, which is far better.' It is not our duty to love death as death.

No ; so it is an evil which we must patiently bear, and may holily

deprecate it ; but because of the good beyond it, it is our duty to love

God, to long after communion with him, and to be perfected in holi-

ness. Had it not been an evil to be avoided and dreaded, Christ had

never prayed against it ; and 2 Cor. v. 4, ' For we that are in this

tabernacle do groan, being burdened : not for that we would be un-

clothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.'

It were an unnatural desire to desire death as death. A creature cannot

desire its own destruction. Jesus Christ, before he manifested his sub-

mission, did first manifest the innocent desires of nature : ' Father, let

the cup pass.' The separation of the soul from the body, and the

body remaining under corruption, is in itself evil, and the fruit of

sin : Kom. v. 12, ' And so death passed upon all men, for that all have

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sinned.' Grace is not given to reconcile us to corruption, or to make

death, as death, desirable, or to cross the inclinations of innocent nature.

But—

[2.] Upon these terms, death is sweetened to them, and they readily

submit to it. Though it be not to be desired as it is death, yet heaven

and eternal happiness beyond it is still matter of desire to us. Death

is God's threatening ; and we are not threatened with benefits, but

evils ; and evils of punishment are not to be desired, but cheerfully

submitted unto for a higher end. Nature abhorreth and feareth

death; but yet grace desireth glory. The soul is loath to part with

the body, but yet it is far bather to miss Christ, and be without him.

A man is loath to lose a leg or an arm, yet, to preserve the whole body,

he is contented to part with it. In short, the soul is bound to the

body with a double band — the one natural, the other voluntary, by love

and affection, desiring and seeking its welfare. The voluntary bond is

governed and ordered by religion till the natural bond be loosed, either

in the ordinary course of nature, or at the will of God.

[3.] There are certain circumstances in death which do invite us to

ask longer life in order to this end ; as —

(1.) God's children would not have the occasion of well-doing or

self-denying obedience taken from them too soon ; so great is their

love and desire of gratitude to God, that they would yet longer praise

God in this self-denying way. Death would shut their mouths.

(2.) They would not be taken away in a cloud, or before they see

the issue of some present trials on the church or them. They have no

will to die till the sense of wrath be removed : Ps. xxvii. 13, ' I had

fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the

land of the living.'

(3.) They may have some design a-foot for God, and therefore are

desirous of a little more time to attain this design ; therefore pray to

God to prolong their lives a while : Rom. xv. 31, 32, ' Now I beseech

you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the

Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me,

that I may be delivered from them that do not believe in Judea : and

that my service which I have done for Jerusalem may be accepted of

the saints, that I may come unto you with joy by the will of God, and

may with you be refreshed.'

(4.) To breed up their children in the nurture of the Lord, and that

they may be useful in their families, as Jacob desired to see Joseph.

(5.) We may beg it that we may not fall into the hands of men,

lose our life by murderers : Ps. xxxi. 15, ' My times are in thy hand ;

deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that per-

secute me.' The dispensation of all mercies, comforts, troubles, life,

death, are in God's hand, not in man's power ; therefore we pray that

it may rest there, that we may not be given up to the will of those

that hate us.

All these desires have a respect to the glory of God, and if conceived

with submission and trust, that God will do what is for the best, they

are all lawful.

Use of all. 1. Exhortation. It prcsseth you —

1. To consecrate vourselves to God : Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you

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therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies

a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable

service.' Under the law the bodies of beasts were to be slain ; yours

is a living sacrifice. Both were set apart for God, the one to die, the

other to live to God.

2. Having given up yourselves to God, use yourselves for God : there

will be an inquiry what share God hath in ) 7 our time : Acts xxvii. 23,

' The God whose I am, and whom I serve.'

3. Praise the Lord with heart, mouth, and life. A Christian's con-

versation is nothing but a hymn to God : 1 Peter ii. 9, ' But ye are a

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people,

that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of

darkness into his marvellous light.' The virtues of God, his attributes.

4. Whenever you pray for continuance of life in any clanger or dis-

tress, either for yourself or others, propound this as the end, not so much

your own satisfaction as the honour of God. A Christian is not con-

tent to have the use of the benefit to himself alone.

[1.] For self. Every man desireth life. The whole world would

all and every of them put this request to God, ' Let my soul live ;' but

very few consider why they should live. Some desire life only to please

the flesh, and that they may enjoy the delights of the present world, a

brutish wish. A heathen could say, he doth not deserve the name of

a man, qui unam diem velit esse in voluptate, &c, certainly not of a

Christian, that would desire life merely to enjoy the delights of the

flesh. These would not leave their hog's trough to go home to their

father. Some there are who desire life to see their children well

bestowed, or to free their estate from incumbrance, and are loath to

part from their natural relations, wife, children, friends. This is a

natural respect, and should be subordinate to a higher end. Though

this desire, keeping its place, may be lawful, yet, out of its place, sinful.

We use to profess, Ps. lxxiii. 25, ' Whom have I in heaven but thee ?

and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.'

In short, two motives I will urge why the glory of God should have

the chief respect in our affections : —

(1.) The benefit it giveth, hope of prolonging life, if this desire be

true and real ; and it giveth certain assurance of not perishing for ever.

The one it doth, for God doeth all things with respect to his glory,

Ps. cxix. 94. The other also, for he will glorify those that glorify him.

(2.) This is the temper of a sincere Christian. Surely to a believer

it is a piece of self-denial to be kept out of heaven longer ; therefore

it must be sweetened with some valuable compensation ; something-

there must be to calm the mind, and contentedly to spare the enjoy-

ment of it for a while. Now next to the good pleasure of God, which

is the reason of reasons, there is some benefit we pitch upon ; there is

nothing worthy to be compared but our service : if God may have

glory, if our lives may do good ; a gracious heart must be satisfied with

gracious reasons.

[2.] For others. If we make it our request, we must have the samr'

aims in this case, that the faith and grace of others may benefit them :

Mark ii. 5, ' When Jesus saw their faith, he said unto the sick of the

palsy, Thy sins be forgiven thee.' Now in such requests bare natural

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reasons should not move us, but that God may not lose an instrument

of his glory, and that his power and providence may be more seen in

the world in the recovery. It is good to beg of God for God : Ps.

cxv. 1, ' Not unto us, but unto thy name give glory.' It should be

accounted as a mercy unto us : Phil. ii. 27, ' For indeed he was sick

nigh unto death, but God had mercy on him; and not on him only,

but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.'

5. This end is known by the use in having and submission in asking.

[1.] The use in having, how we use a mercy when we have it, if we

do indeed live to the glory of God, and the rather for these experiences.

[2.] Submission in asking, whether we fight or are crowned, work

or receive our reward ; for God is the best judge of what is most for

his own glory.

Use 2. Direction ; but of this see ver. 17.

I come now to the second point.

Doct. 2. That God's judgments are a great help and relief to his

people, who desire to praise him, even when they are in danger of

their lives.

Here I shall show — (1.) What are God's judgments; (2.) How

they are a help.

First, What is the meaning of misplialim, judgments here ?

1. God governeth the world ; that is called judgment : Ps. ix. 7, 8,

' He hath prepared his throne for judgment, he shall judge the world

in righteousness ; he shall minister judgment in uprightness.' So

John v. 22. When the government is put into the hands of Christ,

it is said, Tor the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all

judgment unto the Son.'

2. God governeth the world according to this word ; there is his

judgment concerning things and persons, stating what is good and

evil ; the reward of the one, and punishment of the other : Ps. xix. 9,

' The judgments of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.' The

precept is the rule of our duty, the sanction of God's process. There-

fore in scripture the punishments of the wicked are sometimes called

judgments ; so also the rewards of the righteous, as ver. 43 of this

psalm. The word pronounceth concerning every man's condition.

His delivering of the righteous : Ps. lxxviii. 8, 9, ' Thou didst cause

judgment to be heard from heaven ; the Lord arose to judgment, to

save the people of the earth.' The moderation of their affliction : Jer.

x. 24, ' Correct me, but with judgment ; ' that is, his merciful judg-

ment, according to the new covenant dispensations. Punishment of

sins, that they are judgments we are sufficiently convinced of and

sensible of it. Well, then, he prayeth that that of the word may be

executed either — (1.) By breaking his enemies, and giving them the

merit of their doings ; or, (2.) That his promises may be accomplished

by sending him help and relief in his troubles.

3. This government La to be observed, for it confirmeth the word :

Heb. ii. 2. ' For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and even-

transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,

how .shall we escape if we neglect?' &c; and he punisheth them 'as the

congregation have heard.' Carnal men attribute all to chance, but

God's people observe his word.

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Secondly, Now these judgments must needs be for a help to God's

people, because the word of God speaketh more good to them than it

doth to others ; and if God juclgeth according to his word, they may

conclude that his children are never finally forsaken, nor will their

enemies escape unpunished. There will be an accomplishment of pro-

mises, and an execution of threatenings, which is a comfort to them

that walk uprightly.

1. In. the general case, it is a relief to us ; for God hath a provident

care over all those that desire to honour and glorify him ; their hopes

will not altogether be frustrate. Keep his commandments, and it will

turn to good. They shall have seasonable preservation according to

God's promised and wonted mercies.

2. In the particular case of contests and conflicts with the wicked,

he will punish enemies and reward the faithful. This is the tenor of

the word. And to this word of God he ascribed his deliverance. Not

this power, or this means, but thy judgments held me. God doth not

deceive us with vain promises ; when matters are strangely carried on

in the world, here is our comfort.

SERMON CXC.

i" have gone astray like a lost sheep : seek thy servant ; for I do not

forget thy commandments. — Ver. 176.

These words are the close of the whole psalm. In them observe —

1. A representation of his case, or, if you will, a confession of his sin,

I have gone astray like a lost sheep.

2. A petition for mercy, seek thy servant.

3. A protestation of obedience by way of argument, I do not forget

thy precepts.

The chiefest matter that needs to be opened is the representation of

his case, ' I have gone astray like a lost sheep.' Sheep are animalia

grcgalia, such kind of creatures as naturally gather together and unite

themselves into a flock. Many other creatures live single and apart ;

they may sometimes sort together, yet are oftener severed and kept

asunder : but the property of sheep, and their safety, is to come to-

gether in a flock. But now, when they are out of the flock, then they

are exposed to all manner of misery, and therefore a strayed sheep is

usually put in scripture for misery and sin, Isa. liii. 6 ; Mat. xv. 24.

Lost sheep are represented as those that are ready to perish. Now the

business is whether this similitude here mentioned be to be interpreted

of David's misery or his sin. Interpreters are divided, both ancient

and modern. The similitude itself is applicable to either, and accord-

ingly used in scripture. Sometimes it is put for sin : Isa. liii. 6, ' All

we like sheep have gone astray.' Sheep are creatures very subject to

stray and wander, especially if driven by wolves or dogs ; and sometimes

by a disease, a sort of madness incident to them, follow not the rest of

the flock : the Arabians call it tsunall — (Bochart). And so they would

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have it signify here liis going astray out of infirmity, from the way of

God's commandments. Or else sometimes the condition of strayed

sheep is put for misery ; as Hosea iv. 1G, ' The Lord will feed them as

a lamb in a large place.' A lamb that is out of the fold goes up and

down bleating to seek the fold again, and some company with which it

may join itself. It is spoken of them that affected liberty ; the Lord by

his prophet tells them they should have liberty enough, but little for

their profit and comfort ; leave to wander in the world, and should bleat

alone, bewailing their solitude and danger, and be exposed as a prey

to the next wolf. He would not feed them in the flock and body of

the Israelites together, but would scatter them by exile and banish-

ment, so that there should be Israelites amidst many Assyrians, like a

lamb bleating up and down that is gone out of the fold. Some think

David here represents his misery, when he was a banished exile from

the assemblies of the faithful ; not living like a prince in his palace,

but wandering from place to place to shift for his life, as a poor sheep

doth that is driven from the flock, exposed to beasts of prey ; and thus

it befell him in the case of Saul's and Absalom's persecution. If this

be the meaning, the following clauses must be suitably expounded :

\* I have gone astray like a lost sheep : seek thy servant ;' that is, con-

sider my affliction, and in thy good time relieve me and restore me ;

and the last clause, ' For I do not forget thy precepts : ' he did not for-

get his duty, whatever his condition was.

If we should follow this sense, it yields us these points : —

1. That a believer may be driven from place to place, in perpetual

hazards and distresses, wandering up and down like a strayed sheep,

driven by the wolf, and scattered from the fold : 1 Cor. iv. 11, ' We

have/ saith the apostle, 'no certain dwelling-place.'

2. In such a case we may with confidence go to God, the good

shepherd, who hears the bleating of the poor wandering sheep, takes

care of them, seeks them, and reduceth them into the fold.

3. That whatever befalls us, we should still go on in the way of

obedience : ' I have gone astray,' &c. ; driven up and down, and yet,

' I do not forget thy precepts.' When God seems to forget us, we

should not forget his precepts. These points might profitably be in-

sisted upon.

But because many ancient and modern, both Jewish and Christian

interpreters, understand it of sinful errors, and the words will com-

modiously enough bear this sense, and it being a similitude very fre-

quently used in scripture, to compare the faithful to sheep, and God to

a shepherd, I shall handle the words with respect to this interpreta-

tion : ' I have gone astray.' &c. We may all of us make this confes-

sion to God, we are too apt to straggle from our duty, and we all of us

need to make this petition to God, to beg his watchful providence and

shepherd-like care over us ; and we may do it with encouragement to

be heard of God, if our hearts are unfeignedly set to keep his law, that

God will hear us, and keep us from our wandering.

Doct. That a Christian that is obedient for the main, yet may run

into many failings and errors of life.

David was right for the main course of his life. He professeth here

he did not forget God's precepts, he did not cast off the yoke of his law ;

VER. 176.] SERMONS UPON PSALM CX1X. 301

but yet in particular acts lie acknowledged he did err and fail, and

went astray like a lost sheep. And so many who are God's own ser-

vants, that do not forget his precepts, may thus err and go astray.

First, In.our natural estate, man is of a straying nature, apt to turn

out of the way that leadeth to God and true happiness. The Holy

Ghost sets forth the degeneration of mankind by the similitude and

emblem of a strayed lost sheep : Luke xv. and Isa. liii. 6, ' All we like

sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way.'

Mark, he speaks of our estate by nature collectively and distributivcly.

Collectively and in common, ' All we like sheep have gone astray.' And

distributively, ' Every man to his own way.' We all agree in forsak-

ing the right way of pleasing and enjoying God, but we disagree, as

each one hath a bypath of his own. Some are running after this lust,

some after that, and so are not only divided from God, but divided

from one another, whilst every one makes his own will his law, quia-

quid velit, licet. As the channel is cut, so corrupt nature in every one

finds an issue and passage : Ps. xiv. 3, ' They are all gone aside ; they

are altogether become filthy ; there is none that doeth good, no not one.'

Some run this way, some that way ; some are enslaved by pleasures,

others are captivated by the honours of the present world, and some

are oppressed by the cares of this life. Every, man hath his way of

sinning and running away from God. But, however, the emblem and

similitude of the Holy Ghost is to be considered, that our departing

from God and his ways is like the straying of a sheep. What doth

that note ?

1. In general it implies this, that we are brutish in our sin and

defection from God, led by sense, fancy, and appetite ; and therefore

our condition could not be expressed but by a comparison fetched from

the beasts. Silly sheep are carried away by their fancy and appetite

from the flock : Ps. xlix. 12, ' Man being in honour, abideth not ; he is

like the beasts that perish;' that is, he abode not in the honour of his

creation. Some would render it ' for a night.' Adam ' abode not for

a night.' What we translate man, is Adam : the excellency and dig-

nity wherein God had set us ; he became like a beast. How is man

like a beast ? We are governed by our senses and lower appetites.

The senses are grown masterly and inordinate, so eagerly set upon their

objects, that they will not be reclaimed, and man's life just like that of

the brutes ; it is things of the same nature we value and adhere unto,

terrene and earthly things, the comforts of the animal life ; and as we

have the same objects, so the same ends, to enjoy our sensual pleasures,

and satisfy our fleshly minds as long as we may; now what is this but

to suffer the beast to ride the man ; to put reason and conscience in

vassallage, and subjection to sense and appetite ?

2. This similitude is used to show our pronencss to err. There is

no creature more prone to wander and lose its way without a shepherd

then the sheep. Sheep are creatures subject to straying if they be not

kept in the pasture ; so all men are obnoxious to erring and straying :

Jer. xiv. 10, ' They love to wander.' It is a delight to us to be

pleasing our flesh and gratifying our carnal senses. So Ps. xcv. 10,

' It is a people that do err in their hearts.' We do not only err in

our minds, but err in our hearts. To err in our mind is to err out of

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ignorance, but to err in our heart is to err out of sensual obstinacy ; so

are we carried away with the desires of the flesh, think ourselves

never better than when we run away from God. Ah ! the best of

us is soon out of the way. If God takes off his guidance, and leaves

us to ourselves, we are apt to transgress the bounds wherewith God

hath hedged up our way, and make it our business still to be running

away from the chief good, into the bushes and thickets of carnal

error, wherein we are entangled.

3. Our inability to return, and set ourselves into the right way

again ; for we stray like sheep, not like swine and dogs. Swine and

dogs, though they wander, they will find the way home again ; but

a sheep is irrecoverably lost without the shepherd's diligence and care :

Jer. 1. 6, ' My people have been lost ; they have gone from mountain

to mountain, they have forgotten their resting-place.' So should we

run, and keep running away from, and forget our resting-place. I

remember Austin in his meditations hath this passage, Domine errare

potui, redire non potui — Lord, I could go astray by myself, but I can-

not return of myself. The sheep easily straggle, but it is the shepherd

must bring home the lost sheep upon his own shoulders, Luke xv. 5.

And to this we may apply that of the prophet, Hosea xiii. 9, ' O

Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself, but in me is thy help.' We could

destroy and ruin ourselves, but we cannot recover and save ourselves.

The shiftless infant can defile himself, but it is the nurse must cleanse

it, and we ourselves can fall from God, but to recover us to God, that

is the shepherd's care.

4. It shows our readiness to follow evil example. A sheep is

animal sequax, a creature that runs after the drove, they run out of the

gap one after another, and one straggler draws away the whole flock.

When the apostle speaks of the sinful state of mankind, Eph. ii. 2, 3,

he reckons up example as one : ' Walking according to the course of

this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit

that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' In that place

there is the devil, the world, and the flesh. There is the prince of the

power of the air, and there is the course of this world (that I quote it

for now), there is Satan, corrupt example, and evil inclination, all

which are depravers of mankind, and all concur to our ruin and

destruction. We easily swim with the stream and the torrent of

common example, do as others do, and so mutually propagate and

receive taint from one another. Imitation is not the whole cause of

sin, but propagation and inclination of nature, yet imitation and

example doth much to the perverting of the world, and increasing

wickedness and fleshly-mindedness makes us addicted to worldly

vanities, and so we run with the fowl into the snare, walking accord-

ing to the course of this world, Eph. ii. 2 ; Isa. vi. 6, 'lama man of

polluted lips, and I dwell among a people of polluted lips.' We

have sin within, but it is mightily increased by example without ;

by dwelling among those that are polluted, we are more defiled ; we

catch sickness one of another, we do not get health one from another;

as in the law, by touching an unclean thing a man was made unclean,

but not on the contrary. We, being polluted ourselves, are more defiled

by others, by conversing with them. We live among them that are

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neglectful of God, and unmindful of heavenly things, and we come

also to grow more so ourselves.

5. To represent the danger of straying. Sheep when they are out

of the pasture, are in harm's way, exposed to a thousand dangers :

Jer. 1. 7, 'All that find them have devoured them.' So are we in

danger to become a prey to the roaring lion, who goes about seeking

whom he may devour, and to the dogs and wolves that are abroad.

In his sinful state man is a sheep, whom no man taketh up, out of

God's protection, and a ready prey for Satan, taken captive by him at

his pleasure, 2 Tim. ii. 26, till the Lord recover him by repentance.

Thus God forms, represents, and points out our condition before con-

version. Certainly before we were converted to God we were as sheep

wandering in our ignorance and sinful ways to our own destruction,

and in hazard to be preyed upon continually by the roaring lion.

Secondly, See if it be better with us after conversion. For here is

a man of God ; he saith, ' I have gone astray like a lost sheep.' Now,

after grace received, though our heart was set to walk with God for

the main, yet we often swerve from our rule through ignorance or

through inadvertency, and sometimes are blinded by worldly desires

and fleshly lusts, and so transgress our bounds and neglect our duty :

Ps. xix. 12, ' Who can understand his errors ? ' Our errors are so

many, who can bear them all in mind ? who can know and remember

them all ? I say, even the best, who are tender of displeasing and

dishonouring God by sin, they have their errors, yea, and sometimes

too their foul faults.

Let me a little show this.

1. There are some unavoidable infirmities and frailties which we

cannot get rid of though we fain would ; as Horn. vii. 15, ' What I

hate, that do I ;' and ver. 19, ' The good that I would, that I do not ;

and the evil that I would not, that do I ;' and Gal. v. 17, ' The flesh

lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh, so that ye

cannot do the things that ye would.' A true Christian would love

God more perfectly, delight in him more abundantly, and bring every

thought into subjection to his will. He would get rid of the fountain

of sin, of natural concupiscence, and of the stirrings of envy, lust,

pride, anger ; but alas ! the spirit that worketh in us lusteth to envy,

and bewrayeth itself in these carnal affections. These are aberrations

from the strict law, which God hath given to us, but such as men

are subject unto in this state of frailty. Though they be hated,

resisted, though they be restrained in a great measure, that they do

not break out into gross acts, yet a child of God cannot get rid of them ;

though this fire is not blown up but smothered, yet in some degree it

burns in our bosoms ; there is life in it still.

2. There are other things which they might get rid of if they would,

and yet they are not always so happy as to withstand it ; certain sins

that are avoidable by the ordinary assistances of grace which God

vouchsafes to his people, yet a believer may relapse into them many

times. Men are not always so watchful, nor is the bent of their

hearts so strongly fixed in them ; and there is very much security in

the saints, and they run into the snare till they be awakened either by

some powerful convictions or some smart affliction ; as David saith,

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Ps. cxix. 67, ' Before I was afflicted, I went astray.' The best of

God's children many times in their peace and prosperity they fall

asleep and forget themselves, and so let some infirmity still be upon

them, before God doth awaken them, and bring them to themselves

again. Hezekiah was no sooner settled in a peaceful estate, but

presently he forgets himself, and suffers pride to steal upon his heart,

till the Lord humbled him for the pride of his heart, 2 Chron. xxxii.

25, 26. When all things went happily with him, he was recovered out

of his sickness, and had congratulatory messages from the princes of the

nations round about him, and lived in great prosperity, then his heart

was lifted up. Some carnal distemper may grow upon us, or evil prac-

tice we may fall into. David, when he had gotten a carnal pillow

under his head, he lay down and slept, and dreamt of nothing but

prosperity, a perpetual uninterrupted temporal happiness, Ps. xxx. 6.

He was full of carnal complacency, until God made him look about

him. Thus by our carelessness do we often provoke God to use sharp

remedies. There are some are not avoidable, but left for humiliation ;

but those that are avoidable by such ordinary assistances of God's

grace to his people, yet many times, through our folly and inadvertency

and sleepiness of conscience, we run into them.

Having showed the kinds of these sins, let me now show the causes,

why many times those whose hearts are right with God, that do not

forget his precepts, yet they go astray like lost sheep.

1. The first cause is their present imperfection. Though grace

doth heal all the faculties, yet it doth not totally heal them, or wholly

overcome the weakness which is in them. God promiseth to put his

law into their hearts and minds, yet both the understanding and will,

and all the inferior faculties, they are but in part sanctified. You

know our soul is divided into two parts, into the ^i)\xovikov , and the

faculties which should command and direct, and into the faculties

which should be commanded and directed. The commanding facul-

ties are called spirit, and the faculties which should be commanded

are called soul. The reason, or the incitation, the affections, the dis-

positions, which incline us to things good for us, there is a weak-

ness in all these. Whence conies all the weaknesses and errors of the

saints ? There is a defect in the leading or commanding part of

the soul, which is the understanding and the will. In the under-

standing is the directive counsel, and in the will is the imperial power.

Now the understanding, which should direct and guide us, is blind

and sleepy, and not so vigilant and watchful as it should be ; and so

in many cases it proves but a dark and imperfect guide and director

to us, and so we err like lost sheep. We have not always so clear and

so deep a sense of our duty as we ought, and find not such lively,

powerful, and effectual thoughts of God and heavenly things, and so

clear a sense, so that the directive part fails us. Then for our wills,

winch should command us where the imperial power resides, they are

imperfect. There is, I confess, in the regenerate a sincere will to

please God in all things, but it is not a perfect will ; so that our will-

ing and nilling, our consent and dissent, is not so powerful as it ought

to be ; but the will being tainted by the neighbourhood of a distem-

pered sense, it yields a little, and bends to the flesh, and gives way to

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evil, and many times it opposeth that which is good ; at least we are

often overtaken in a fault, being inconsiderately and suddenly sur-

prised, as the apostle useth that expression, Gal. vi. 1, ' If a man be

overtaken in a fault.' Though a regenerate man hath a new light put

into his mind, he is renewed in the spirit of his mind, though he hath

a new bent and bias put upon his heart, yet the imperial and directive

power have flesh in them still, and the wisdom of the flesh is so in-

grained and kneaded into our natures, that it cannot be totally dispos-

sessed, no more than we can sever the leaven and the dough when once

they are mingled together. If there be a defect in the governing and

leading part of the soul, there will be disorders in the life and conver-

sation.

Come we now from the r^ifjuovLKov, the leading faculties, to the

faculties which should be commanded and directed. Alas ! they are

by sin grown obstinate and masterly, and are so eagerly set upon their

objects (carnal vanities) that they will not be reclaimed, but rebel

against the direction of conscience and inclinations of the renewed

will. The apostle speaks of a law of his members warring against the

law of his mind, Eom. vii. 23. In the lower, in the most sensitive

faculties, there is much headstrong opposition against the directions of

the will. We have but a slender feeble guide. The leading part of

the will is defective, and there is much of the wisdom of the flesh

there. It is a trouble to the flesh to be restrained from what it de-

sires and inclines us to, as a headstrong horse is loath to be governed ;

therefore we yield and suffer ourselves to be transported and led away

by our passions and carnal affections. Now, though the rebellious

and disobedient disposition of the appetite and senses is in a great

measure broken and subdued in us by the power of grace, yet the best

have somewhat of inordinate sensuality and weakness, and being im-

perfect, are tempted by the world and sense, as well as others. Well,

then, ever weigh in your mind for your direction these two grand

reasons of all the weakness that is in the saints, — there is the debility

and the weakness of the leading and commanding part, and the rebel-

ling of the inferior faculties, which should be ruled and commanded.

(1.) The debility and weakness of the leading and commanding part

of the soul. And thence is it that we are so inconsiderate, so dull of

apprehension, have such dark and ineffectual thoughts of God and

heavenly things ; and thence is it that the will doth not so potently

and rulingly command the directive faculties, but is apt to yield to,

that it doth not stand upon its authority as it was wont to do. (2.)

The other part is the rebellion of the inferior faculties, and stubborn-

ness of our sensual and carnal inclinations. Look, as in a kingdom

and commonwealth, where are rebellious subjects and a feeble empire,

things must needs run into disorder, so here the reins are managed very

weak ; there is a feeble empire in the soul, and here are strong rebellious

desires not easily controlled, and so draw the soul away. To make this

more evident a little, I shall show the order of all human operations, if

rightly constituted. Their actions are governed in this maimer : — The

understanding and the conscience, they are to guide and direct the will ;

the will, according to right reason and conscience, moves the affections ;

the affections, according to the counsel and command of the under-

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standing and will, move the bodily spirits ; the bodily spirits, they

move the senses and members of the body. But now by corruption

there is a manifest inversion and change, for bodily pleasure doth affect

the senses, the senses corrupt the phantasy, the phantasy moves the

bodily spirits, and by them the lighter part of the affections. The

affections by their violence and inclination captivate the will, and blind

the mind, and so the man is carried headlong to his own destruction.

Now, though this servitude be in a great measure broken in them that

are called unto the liberty of God's children, they are not slaves to their

lusts, and the vain pleasures of this life ; yet too too often the senses

are too masterly, and too too often transmit objects into the soul in

a rebellious way, against the command of sanctified reason and con-

science. Affections are stirred by thoughts, and thoughts by objects

thus represented. I am the larger in this, that you may more per-

fectly understand the reason of the weakness of the saints.

2. The violence of temptations. As sheep may be driven out of the

pasture by the wolf, so is a poor soul hurried into evil to commit known

sin, or omit known duty, by the incursion and shock of temptations,

though for the main he doth adhere to Christ by faith, love, and new

obedience. Thus Peter was drawn to deny Christ, and many are

drawn in the violence of a passion to do things which their hearts do

utterly condemn and disallow. In a storm it is hard for a skilful pilot

to steer aright ; and though it be dangerous to dash against the rocks,

yet Christians come off Avithout a total shipwreck, though they may be

sore bruised and battered. In such hurries God's children may go

astray, but God will not suffer them to be totally lost. David wandered

far as well as Saul, but God sought David again ; he would not lose

him so. A strong temptation may drive us out of the way, as sheep

when thieves come are driven out of the fold, whither else they would

not have gone.

3. The Lord may withdraw himself for just and wise reasons, and

then, when the shepherd is gone aside, we have neither wisdom to

direct ourselves nor strength to defend ourselves ; as when Moses went

away for a while, how soon did Israel corrupt their way ! So if God

be gone, we see how little we can keep ourselves. God left Hezekiah

to try him, 2 Chron. xxxii. 31. God will show us what is in our hearts,

and that our standing is not of ourselves. We represent ourselves to

ourselves in a feigned likeness, and therefore God will truly show

ourselves to ourselves. We do not know what pride and passion and

carnality lies hid in our hearts when he is present, warming, comforting,

quickening, guiding, directing the soul in the way to life. Now, God,

by withdrawing, will show us the folly of our wisdom, and the weakness

of our strength, and the pride of our humility, and the passionatcness

of our meekness. Divines distinguish of desertion ; they say that there

is desertio correctiva, and desertio erudativa — a desertion by way of

correction, and a desertion by way of instruction. Sometimes, by way

of correction, because of former sins, or some imkindness, or ungracious

dealing with God — God withdraws ; and there is a desertion by way

of instruction, to teach us to know the sovereignty of grace, and to

know our own weakness. Usually both go together in the same dispen-

sation. It is very hard almost to imagine that the same dispensation

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should not be both instructive and corrective. But the reason why

they distinguish thus is this, because some dispensations are more

clearly for correction, and others more clearly for instruction, but

usually they go together. We provoke the Lord by some slight or

unworthy dealing with him, and then the Lord corrects us, and corrects

us that he may instruct us, to see our all depends upon him, and how

he should be prized in these things.

4. The fourth reason is some special disease, it may be not yet

cured, in our going astray like a lost sheep, even though our hearts be

right in the main with God. It may be some corruption too that they

cherished, some carnal interest which is too near and dear to us ;

either worldly, ambitious, or sensual lusts. Though these reign in

the unconverted, yet they dwell too much in a heart that is gracious,

and so may prevail sometimes to turn us away from God ; something-

there is which we may call our iniquity, Ps. xviii. 23. Though in

the general we keep ourselves from it, as an upright heart will, yet it

may sometimes foil us.

Use 1. Let us stand upon our guard. Oh ! let us not leave the boat to

the stream, for there is an erring straying disposition in a great mea-

sure left in the people of God. Consider, Satan is subtle and assiduous

in tempting : 1 Peter v. 8, ' He goes about like a roaring lion ; ' he is

searching up and down after the prey, and an unwary and unmortified

soul soon falls into his snare. The flesh is ready to close with the

temptation as soon as it is presented ; and therefore the best of God's

children had need be circumspect and diligent : ' Watch and pray that

you enter not into temptation/ Mat. xxvi. 41, lest you be surprised

unawares by some sin or other. There is enough corruption in every

one of you to betray you to it, if you be not aware ; and your resisting

graces are very weak and imperfect in degree, and (which is one con-

sideration more) the danger of a fall is very great, for thereby God is

dishonoured, 2 Sam. xii. 14, and your own peace is mightily ruffled :

Ps. xxxii. 3, 4, ' My moisture was turned into the drought of summer,

and I was filled with roaring all the day long.' Yea, and a stumbling-

block is laid before others, and you may destroy those for whom Christ

died; and woe be to men by whom offences come, Mat. xviii. 7.

Under the law, the Lord ordered that if two men strove and hurt a

woman with child, that her fruit departed from her, he should surely

be punished. To hinder birth was counted murder, so to hinder those

that are coming on by any sins of yours in a way to life. If the

offence be foul, you may feel it long afterward, as an old bruise is felt

upon every change of weather ; and this sin may cost you dear, though

your salvation be secured. This should make us stand upon our

guard ; it shows that a Christian should live in constant vigilancy and

daily conflict with sin, and deny the desires of the flesh, that he may

love God, and live to him.

Use 2. It shows us the need of the new covenant, wherein the

pardon of sins is established. All the saints that ever lived have had

their failings, and what would become of them, even of God's own

children, if there were not a forgiving God, and a gracious covenant,

a way found out to remit their offences ? Ps. cxxx. 3, If the righteous

God should call us to a strict account, how could the best of his chil-

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dren stand before him ? So Ps. cxliii. 2. It would go ill with all the

world if strict justice of law were still in force. All are guilty, and all

must perish, the holy, humblest soul cannot abide the trial of that

court ; not only God's enemies, but his servants cannot. The good

they do, it cannot be laid in balance against the evil ; it would yield

no relief as to remission and pardon. Plainly, if the guilt of sins remain

upon us, our duties will not compensate with our sins. But such was

the Lord's mercy, that when we all like sheep had gone astray, the

Lord found a ransom for us, and laid upon Christ the iniquity of us

all, Isa. liii. 6, that there might be pardon for poor creatures.

Use 3. It teacheth us, again, the necessity of dependence upon

God's care and power for our spiritual preservation. Of all creatures

sheep need a shepherd, so do we a spiritual shepherd to keep us from

straying, to reduce us from our wanderings, to weaken our distemper,

to drive away the wolf. In short, these two considerations will enforce

the necessity of dependence, the indefatigable malice of Satan, and the

unknown weakness and imperfection of the saints.

1. The indefatigable malice of Satan, and his unwearied diligence

in tempting us to sin ; his hatred and envy against God and mankind

is such that he leaves no man untempted. He would not leave the

Lord Christ untempted. Especially in some regards above others he

labours to draw the children of God into sin, because he knows their

sins, by reason of their profession, will give great occasion of scandal

to the weak, and blasphemy to the profane and wicked. Now, as his

power is very great, so is his subtlety and diligence. That which

Hannibal said of Marcellus perfectly agrees with him ; whether he gives

or takes the foil, he ever renews and reinforceth the fight. AVhen Job

had carried it very innocently in his prosperity in a dangerous time, yet

try him in adversity, Job i. 12. Nay, when he had carried it off in a

very grievous trial, as the loss of his goods and children, Job ii., &c.

2. The weakness and imperfection of the saints. How easily, if we

take not more diligent heed and care, may we fall into sins, both with

respect to the weakness of our understandings and perverseness of our

affections !

[1.] Our understanding is so weak that we are ignorant of many

things necessary to be known ; for we know but in part, 1 Cor. xiii.

12 ; and if we know something in general, we do not know it as we

ought to know it, 1 Cor. viii. 2. How is that ? Either we fail in

particular application, as the heathens that knew there was a divine,

an eternal, and almighty power in general, yet were vain in their

imaginations, in their discourses, and practical inferences. Or if we

should know how to use these truths, if we know them habitually, yet

we do not actually consider. Here is a great part of man's misery,

being hurried by a multitude of business or violence of temptation,

that being laid asleep by the pleasures of the flesh many times fall off.

Though men have a perfect knowledge of their duty, and how to apply

it habitually, yet actually do not consider ; their sin carries them

away : ' They consider not that they do evil/ Eccles. v. 1. Thus for

the understanding.

[2.] Our affections are so apt to be led by sense and not by right

reason, that there is many times . great danger that in seeing we should

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not see, lest seeing, knowing, and approving that which is better, we

should 'embrace and follow that which is worse, act contrary to our

knowledge and conscience, Horn. ii. 18. Thou approvest the\_ things

that differ, yet doest thus and thus. Many have an approbation, yet

cannot bring forth grace to victory, cannot govern their hearts accord-

ing to their speculative approbation. Now if a man be such a Wind

indigent creature, it is his wisdom still to look out off himself, to lift up

his eyes to God ; that is, the God of our salvation and our guide, and

defence ; all our confidence must be in him.

Use 4. We learn hence the encouragement which one hath who is

right for the main, but hath run into some errors of life, to apply him-

self to God to remedy that evil, as the good shepherd who must seek

the lost sheep, and reduce him into the right way.

Here let me show two things : —

lc Who are those that are right for the main, and may look upon

their sins as particular errors and frailties.

2. What encouragement they have to apply themselves unto the

Lord.

First, Who are those that are right for the main, and whose sins are

infirmities, such as David's are represented to be here in this text ?

(for I will go no further than the text). To represent that in five

things: —

1. Such as have a conscience, an aweful sense of their duty : ' I do

not forget thy precepts.' He had transgressed some of God's com-

mandments, but still he had a sense of his duty ; that was kept alive

in his heart, that awakened him to return again to the Lord.

2. Such as have a habitual will to keep the commandment of God,

though there be failings ; as David, when he asks for his servant,

' Seek thy servant,' he acknowledged his duty still. God's children

may sometimes go astray, but not totally and finally ; they never fall

so but there remains something that maintains God's interest in the

soul : 1 John iii. 9, ' He that is born of God doth not commit sin,' he

cannot sin, &c. He doth not sin so as to lie in sin ; the seed of God

still remains, and so is more easily reclaimed than others. Look, as in

Nebuchadnezzar's vision there was represented a tree that was to be

cut down by the watchman, but yet the stump of the roots remained

in the earth, Dan. iv. 23, that is in his melancholy, when he crept on

all four, like beasts (I suppose there was not a transformation into a

beast), he did lodge in the forest among beasts, and ate their kind of

food ; yet there was a stump of this great tree that should bud and

scent again, there was a stock of human nature that should recover

and show itself again ; so here, though a child of God behave himself

like a brute beast, and be mastered by his sense, yet the root of the

matter is still in him ; there is something that will put forth itself

again. Or as a spinster leaves a lock of wool to draw on the next

thread, so there is something left ; they do not wholly cast off the fear

of God, nor the yoke. No ; their souls are habitually bent to please

God more than they are to sin : 'I am thy servant.'

3. As here is a conscience of his duty, and a habitual will to serve

God, so here is a broken-hearted confession of his error : ' I have gone

astray like a lost sheep ; ' and so a repentance of the sin committed.

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It is grievous to a child of God in the remembrance of it ; the sin is

thereby more mortified and subdued.

4. Here is an unfeigned desire to return to his duty, and grace

humbly sought that he may be set in joint again : ' Lord, seek thy

servant/ He would not remain in this condition still ; his desire was

to do the will of God, and to live in no neglect ; and therefore he

complains of his straying disposition, and would fain have it cured :

'Lord, seek thy servant.'

5. The conscience of his sincerity was not wholly lost. Mark, not

only the conscience of his duty, but of his sincerity; for he prays

still to be sought as a sheep belonging to the fold. I am thine,

though I am gone astray : John x. 3, ' The sheep hear his voice.'

Now this evidence was yet left, I am, Lord, thy servant, and I do

not forget thy precepts. He was willing to hear the voice of God.

In grievous falls it is otherwise. If a man fall grievously (this doth

not relate to any grievous fall), then all were to begin anew. That

robs all our peace ; as David, ' Lord, create in me a clean heart,' Ps.

li. 10. After his grievous fall he speaks as if all was lost. David here

professeth still his devotedness to God as his servant, his love and

respect to his law as his rule ; he could own such a thing in it ; it was

an evil that annoyed him, but it had not rifled his peace.

Secondly, To speak of the encouragement that we have to go to God

if this be our case, as the man of God here desires the Lord to seek

him out, and to bring him again into the right way. Those that have

gone astray, yet should not keep off, but run to their shepherd : ' Seek

thy servant.' Why ?

1. We have a shepherd that loves us, whereof he hath given full

proof and demonstration in that he died for us : John x. 11, ' I am the

good shepherd, that lay down my life for the sheep.' He is not only

the great shepherd, as called sometimes, but the good shepherd gave

his life in a way of ransom to expiate our sins. When he came to

seek and save that which was lost, his first work was to redeem them

by his blood. If he could find in his heart to redeem us by his blood,

and expiate all our faults, he will recover us.

2. It is one great part of his office to reduce his people from their

straggling: Ps. xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd.' What then?

Ver. 3, ' He restoreth my soul.' If the Lord be our shepherd, it is a

great part of his work to restore our souls. We fall into the disease

of sin, sometimes wander out of the path, in which we should perish,

if God did not reclaim us from our wandering. Now, it is his work

to restore our souls, that is, to keep us from going on still in our

bypaths ; therefore we may come and press it. He is inclined to

show favour to those who confess their errors, and for the glory of his

grace, and constant love, and sworn covenant, he will not be unmindful

of us.

3. He delights to guide us in our wanderings, Luke xv. 4, 5. The

good shepherd leaves the ninety-nine, and seeks out the strayed sheep

upon the hills and mountains, and brings it home upon his own

shoulders rejoicing. It is a pleasing thing to Christ to be reducing

strayed souls, Ezek. xxxiv. 4. He was angry with the under-shepherds,

and rebukes them because they discharged not their duty : 'The dis-

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eased have you not strengthened,' &c. ; and he promiseth his own care :

ver. 6, ' I will seek that which was lost.'

4. He will bear with our infirmities, and if humbly sought to, will

take care of us. We straggle sometimes out of weakness, and out of

vanity of spirit, and lose ourselves through our own folly ; therefore

Christ saith, ' I will seek that which was lost.' Sometimes we are

driven away by wolves. Christ will fetch us back again, that we may

not be meat for their mouth. If sin be as a breach upon conscience,

he will heal that wound and bind up the broken. If we be weak,

ready to straggle, he will confirm us, and strengthen us more and

more. Having such a shepherd, this should encourage us more to go

to him.

Use 5. Here is caution ; take heed not to run into infirmities, as if

it were matter of nothing. Why? They must be repented; and it

is part of wilfulness voluntarily and allowedly to do that which he

must undo again, and necessarily be repented of; as David confessetli

his error. Little sins allowed and customarily committed, on the pre-

sumption of a pardon, they are not infirmities, but are of a dangerous

nature. If you indulge iniquity, you lose your claim as those that are

devoted to God ; you will hazard this if you indulge your straying

humour. And consider, even infirmities may cost us dear, for though

they do not make void the eternal reward, yet usually God reduceth

us not by internal grace, but by some smart providence ; as David,

Ps. cxix. 67, ' Before I was afflicted I went astray.' God will teach

you your duty by briars and thorns, by sharp affliction. And where

the distemper is more rooted in us, if it be not an act only, but a kind

of rooted distemper, then the dispensation of God's providence may be

very sharp. As Paul's thorn in the flesh, when he was apt to be

lifted up in pride, he prays thrice : the Lord was terrible to him ;

possibly it was the stone, or gout, some racking pain, 2 Cor. xii.

Though he prays, God would not release him, but still keeps the pain

and trouble upon him. So our strayings will cost us clear. To be

sure they must cost us repentance, but they may cost us a great deal

of sorrow in the world. We should not incur the hazard of God's

temporal displeasure. Again, you have no assurance and command of

the time and measure of the Spirit's assistance ; and therefore, if you

give way to little failings, they may become grievous enormities in the

end, and when you grieve the Spirit, you do what lies in you to drive

him from you, and provoke him to suspend his assistance the longer ;

and therefore, ' Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are

sealed to the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30.

SEVERAL SERMONS

UPON THE

TWENTY-FIFTH CHAPTER OF

ST MATTHEW.

THE EPISTLE DEDICATORY.

To the Eight Hon. William, Earl of Bedford, Baron of Thornangh,

and Knight of the Most Noble Order of the Garter \*

My Lord, — If the sovereign disposer of all things had continued the

life of the author of the following sermons, he had expressed his thank-

fulness for your real and noble favours by the dedication of the best

fruits of his studies to your Lordship ; but since it hath pleased God

to remove him from the church on earth to the church in heaven, I

am desired by his most near surviving relation to comply with his

intention, by inscribing your highly honourable name in the frontis-

piece of this work.

Your Lordship's esteem of the author, and most free kindness, placed

him in an eminent station ; and how faithfully he discharged his

public ministry for those great and most worthy ends, the glory of

God, and the salvation of souls, as there is a full testimony given by

many sincere and understanding persons of all ranks, that were the

happy partakers of it, so it is evident to others by the several volumes

of most useful sermons printed since his decease. These had been

more exact, and worthy of your Lordship's perusal, if they had been

published by himself ; but such as they are, I doubt not but they will

be very acceptable for the heavenly matter contained in them.

I shall not record here the many excellent virtues that are conspi-

cuous in your Lordship, and truly adorn your honour ; but I cannot

forbear to mention the foundation of them, sincere and solid piety,

so clearly discovered in a most Christian deportment under your

heavy afflictions. Surely that reverence and meek submission to the

high and holy providence of God, that humble trust in his mercy,

which so admirably appeared in your deep distress, was from the

divine Spirit, whose glorious attribute is the Comforter. I shall

earnestly pray that God, who turneth the shadow of death into the

morning, will be pleased always to support you with his reviving

presence, that he will guide you by his counsel through this afflicting

world, and bring you to his glory. — I am, my Lord, your Lordship's

very humble and obedient servant, William Bates.

\* This dedication, and the Address to the Reader which follows it, refer to the second

volume of ' Manton's Works,' which contains twenty-seven sermons on Mat. xxv.,

forty-five on John xvii., twenty-four on Rom. vi., forty-five on Rom. viii., and forty on

2 Cor. v.— Ed.

TO THE READER.

Christian Header, — Our blessed Lord, calling the multitude to some

account of their so free and frequent motions in going to hear the first

gospel preacher, John the Baptist, doth it in these terms, Mat. xi.

7, 8, ' What went you out into the wilderness to see ? A reed shaken

with the wind ? But what went ye out for to see ? A man clothed

in soft raiment ? They that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

But what went ye out for to see ? A prophet ? yea, I say unto you,

and more than a prophet ;' ver. 11, ' Verily I say unto you, that

amongst them that are born of women, there hath not risen a greater

than John the Baptist : notwithstanding, he that is least in the king-

dom of God is greater than he ; ' — teaching us several things by that

speech, relating to the religious action of hearing the word, and to

a true gospel minister. With reference to the former — (1.) That he

that goeth out to hear ought in the first place to propound to him-

self a due end. (2.) That men may propose to themselves in such

motions very false and undue ends, such as going to see reeds shaken

with the wind, men clothed with soft raiment, &c. (3.) That the true

end men should propose to themselves should be, not to hear a philo-

sopher or an orator, but a prophet ; which term signifieth a person

revealing the will of God ; for the signification of that term is not to

be restrained to one only from God revealing things to come, but

publishing the divine will, whether relating to future things or things

before revealed ; which is evident not only from the application of it

to the Baptist, but to any that will consider that predictions of future

contingencies was the least part of any of the ancient prophets' work.

This is that true and more special end which every good man ought

to propound to himself when he goeth to hear as a religious action,

whose object is not a mere sound, which is the object of hearing con-

sidered as a natural act, but of the ' joyful sound.' Nor can there lie

any obligation upon any religiously to hear anything but the will of

God, which a discourse doth not cease to be by the addition of man's

words for the explanation or application of any part of the divine will,

by such as God hath betrusted with that employment, more than an

ambassador's message ceaseth to be his master's will because delivered

in his own words, though to the sense of his instructions. Which

thing well digested would not only teach ministers what and how to

preach, but the people also what and how to hear, according to the

direction of their Lord. If our end in hearing were to tickle our ears

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with a sound, our reason would guide us to hear such whose language

is ' as the voice of one that hath a lovely song, and can play well on

an instrument.' If our end were to promove ourselves in critical

learning, or improve our reason, the same reason would guide us to

choose to hear the hest philosophises or grammarians, such as best

understood the niceties of words and varieties of syntax. But if our

end be to hear a prophet, one that should reveal God's mind unto us,

and to make it more intelligible, that by it we may be more improved

in knowledge, faith, love, obedience, and other habits fitting us for the

kingdom of God and eternal salvation, the same reason will teach us

to hear the most substantial, scriptural, and practical sermons that we

can, as being most accommodate to the true end of our action, to which

every wise man proportioneth mediate actions. And indeed all other

discourses are abusively called preaching, and Athens were a more

proper place for them than a preacher's pulpit.

God hath seemed to have reserved it for a great blessing to the last

age of the world that, for aught appears to us from any books, it hath

been more fertile of such preaching than any since that of the apostles.

The ancient church had persons that did famously in their genera-

tions ; such were Chrysostom in the Greek, and Augustine in the

Latin church ; but besides that they were but very few, whoso reads

the one and the other must compliment antiquity at a great rate, if

himself hath any judgment, and doth not say that multitudes in the

last age have been as to preaching greater than they. In the former

are to be found many judicious explications of scripture, many honest

and spiritual discourses; in the latter, not these things only, but a

pleasantness of wit and fancy. But for plenty of matter, clearness of

judgment, orderliness of method, and many other things, they have

not been a little exceeded by men of this last age. Nor is it any dis-

paragement to them, more than it was to John the Baptist, that ' the

least in the kingdom of heaven' was to be ' greater than he ;' or to

Christ, that the apostles, John xiv. 12, were to do greater things than

he had done. In the middle ages of the church, preaching generally

was turned into trifling about scholastic niceties ; and to the very

dawning of the Reformation the priests' texts were out of Scotus or

Aquinas ; and we remember they were not ashamed when Luther,

Melancthon, &c, restored in some degree the true kind of preaching,

to petition magistrates for the suppression of it, and a liberty to trifle

still in that great work of God with discourses upon Scotus and

Aquinas. Though Luther, Zuinglius, and others in Germany, and

Mr Calvin, Farellus, and Viret, and Beza, in France, about a hundred

and fifty years since mended this matter in a great degree, yet we all

know how ill their examples were followed ; so as Mr Perkins, who

began to flourish about the year 1580, is generally judged to have been

the first who amongst us restored preaching to its true use, and taught

us the true manner of it, whose piety was followed by many ; but as

their number hath vastly increased since that time, especially in the

fifty or sixty years last past, so God hath seemed to pour out his Spirit

upon ministers, as to spiritual gifts, in a more plentiful measure, yet

in very different proportions, that he might have some to feed his

lambs, as well as others to feed his sheep. The generality of good

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preachers have made it their business to preach Christ, and the exceed-

ing riches of his grace, and to study matter rather than words, upon

Mr Perkins' old principle verba sequentur res. But all have not had

alike fertile invention, or solid judgment, or alike skill and learning

in languages and arts, &c. Some particular persons have been blessed

with them all, by which they have made stars of the first magnitude

in the church of God. Such, reader, we take the reverend author of

these sermons to have been, in all whose writings thou shalt find a

quick and fertile invention, governed with a grave and solid judgment,

and the issue of both expressed in a grave and decent style, so as it is

not easy to say what one would desire in a divine that was wanting in

him. He had a heart full of love and zeal for God and his glory, and

out of the abundance of his heart his mouth continually spake. So

frequent, yet so learned and solid preaching by the same person, was

little less than miraculous. But he was a scribe fully instructed in

the things of the kingdom of God, and, like a good householder, was

continually fetching out of the storehouse of his knowing and judicious

.soul things both old and new. He was no studier of words and

phrases, he abhorred such a pedantry, and debasing the authority of

gospel propositions ; but a grave and serious soul, fitted with his skill

in arts and languages ; neither ever did nor could want expressions

above the scorn of the most wanton word-dressers, though beneath

the expectations of such as can be pleased with the tuneableness of

yxiranomasias, or the rollings of six-footed words. He was a good

mid learned, a grave and judicious person, and his auditory never

failed (though he laboured more than the most preachers, his constant

course of preaching being for many years five times, and, till near his

end, three times a week) to hear from him a pious, learned, and most

judicious discourse. This those who never heard him may easily

believe by his printed commentaries and sermons, in which we never

met with any that complained for want of anything fit for a divine.

So that he is one of those authors upon the credit of whose name not

only the plainer and less intelligent sort of people, but even scholars,

may adventure to buy any book that was his, and be assured they

will see no cause to repent of the expense of their money. His late

large folio upon the 119th Psalm is a plentiful evidence of this ; and a

great part of our English world hath given their suffrage to this, by

making it so scarce in so short a time, as the price of it is enhanced

above a fifth part.

We here offer a second volume, of a greater bulk (though no greater

price), which contains his discourses upon the 25th of Matthew, the

17th chapter of John, the Gth and 8th chapters of Paul's Epistle to

the Ptomans, and the 5th chapter of his second Epistle to the Corin-

thians ; five chapters, than which possibly in the whole New Testament

there will not be found five others more full of gospel doctrine, in the

knowledge of which God's people are more concerned.

In the first, under the parable of the ten virgins (five of which were

wise, five foolish), our Lord represents to us the state of the members of

the church waiting for Christ's second coming to judgment ; amongst

whom some are sincere, some are hypocrites, the different actions and

issues of whom are excellently represented to us, and most worthy

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to be learned and considered. Secondly, Under the parable of the

talents we are instructed in God's different dispensation of his gifts to

men, their different use of them, and the account they are like to be

called to about them. To which is subjoined a hypotuposis of the

day of judgment, fit to be continually in our eyes and ears.

In the second, we have our Saviour's last prayer for his elect, as

well those that to the end of the world should believe, as those who at

that time did believe. It was our Lord's legacy ; what good Christian

desireth not a full understanding of it, that he may know what to

hope, and pray in faith for, as being first secured to him by the prayer

of him whom the Father heareth always ?

In the 6th and 8th of the Eomans are contained great treasuries of

gospel truth. Upon both (the latter especially) many learned men

have spent their labours to great advantage ; but the scripture is such

a book as we never know when we fully comprehend it, and (if he

may judge to whose share it fell to peruse some of those notes) the

reader will find some things here discovered which he will hardly

meet with elsewhere. His way of handling it is rather dogmatical and

practical than polemical; yet he now and then judiciously resolveth

a question. But all along in the handling of it he discovereth both

an excellent notion, and a most profound and solid judgment.

The last discourses, on 2 Cor. v., look like a cygnea cantio. Whether

they were some of his last discourses we cannot tell, nor can we judge

it from the subject, he being a person who was dying daily, and never

so in love with his earthly tabernacle, nor possessed of so weak a faith

as to the house in the heavens, as either to desire the former should

stand longer than should be for the glory of God, or himself kept from

the latter overlong. It pleased God not to surprise him with death,

but to let him see it at some distance, making its approaches to him

before it gave him the fatal word of arrest.

Thou wilt, reader, find some things once and again spoken to, as

the text led him, but in such a variety of phrase that they have much

new in them. Had this eminent person lived to have supravised his

own notes, he might possibly have added or altered something. We

have seen no reason to do it, but given thee his notes as they were

under his hand, only when, not able to read some words in his notes,

we were forced to add a word or two for clearing the sense.

Now, reader, what shall we say to thee, but only to quicken thee to

bless God for this milk from the bottle, when thou canst not have it

from the breasts, rod /j,aicapiTov. Thus Dr Manton, though dead, jet

speaketh. God give thee and us an hearing ear and an understanding

heart ! We have thus line upon line, and precept upon precept ; let

us not be barren and unfruitful. We commend these labours and thy

soul to God's blessing, subscribing ourselves,

Thine affectionate servants in the work of the gospel,

William Bates.

John Collinges.

John Howe.

August 1, 1GSL

SEVERAL SERMONS UPON THE

TWENTY-FIFTH OF ST MATTHEW.

SERMON I.

Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which

took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. And

five of them were wise, and five were foolish. — Mat. XXV. 1, 2.

It was Christ's manner to instruct by parables, partly for the greater

evidence and force, while heavenly things are represented to us in such

notions as we do best understand ; and partly to teach us the art of

holy chemistry, or extracting spiritual advantages out of obvious

occurrences and occasions. Now parables are of two sorts — argu-

mentative and representative.

First, The argumentative parables are such wherein some notable

reason is couched, or ground is laid for some excellent encouragement

in our converse with God, by showing what falleth out among men.

In these argumentative parables, the parts of the parable are not to

be strained, but the scope and parable itself is to be regarded. As in

the parable, Luke xviii., of the unjust judge, the scope is to be regarded,

but not the parts strained, as if God were to be compared to an unjust

judge. And that famous parable, Luke xi. 8, concerning success in

prayer, where there is argumentum a minori ad majus, an argument

from the less to the greater : ' Though he will not rise and give him

as he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give

him.' And those passages of giving good things to our children :

• If ye, being evil, know how to give good things to your children,

how much more shall your heavenly Father give good things to them

that ask him ? '

Secondly, The other sort of parables, which I call representative,

yields us a notable delineation of some heavenly matter, by laying the

scene of it among earthly affairs ; for God is fain to lisp to us in our

own dialect, and speak as we can understand. This and the next

parable are of this sort. The occasion of it was thus : Our Lord had

been discoursing of the dangerous state of the latter times, and there-

fore presseth to watchfulness and timely preparation. This he doth

by three parables : First, By the good man of the house watching

against the coming of the thief, Mat. xxiv. 42, 43 ; by the parable of

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the servant misbehaving himself in the absence of his Lord, Mat.

xxiv. 45, to the end ; and now, the third time, by this parable of the

virgins. Still, in the close of all, he repeateth his charge of watch-

fulness, not so much because of the difficulty of the matter, as because

of our dulness. We cannot often enough be put in mind of vigilancy

and diligence in preparing for the coming of the Lord ; so great is

our sloth and drowsiness, and non-attention to the great affairs of our

souls. Now these three parables, though they come to one effect, yet

have their special use. The first of these concerns all ; the second,

the officers of the church ; the third, the members. First, The good

man of the house watching against the coming of the thief speaketh

thus much : If men watch to avoid a temporal inconvenience, much

more should we watch to eschew eternal destruction. The diligence

of the men of the world in worldly things upbraideth and condemneth

our negligence in heavenly things. The parable of the unfaithful

servant, that put off the thoughts of his master's coming, and there-

fore eateth and drinketh with the drunken, and beats his fellow-

servants, is a notable warning to the officers of the church, that they

do not abuse the power of the keys, and inhaunt with the wicked, and

discourage the godly, and blast them with censures, and stir up the

displeasure of the magistrate against their faithful and painful brethren

in the ministry. A drunkard shall find more favour with them than

one that is mindful of his Lord's coming, and would keep punctual to

the orders and institutions he hath left before he went. Now, lest

the members of the church should want their admonition, besides a

warning to the officers in the second parable, here is a warning to the

members in this third parable, to watch and be ready, that they be

not surprised. In the wise virgins is represented the comfortable fruit

of watchfulness ; in the foolish, the sad effects of security : ' Then

shall the kingdom of heaven be likened/ &c.

In the words we have —

First, The thing compared, the kingdom of heaven.

ftecondly, The comparison itself, shall be likened to ten virgins.

"Who are —

1. Described by their quality or state, virgins.

2. By their number, ten.

3. By their rank or distribution, five ivise, and five foolish.

4. By their work or employment, they tuent forth to meet the bride-

groom.

5. Their preparation for that work, they took their hand-lamps.

Before I explain these circumstances, I must a little acquaint you

with the custom of the Jews to which allusion is here made. The

weddings of those times were kept by night, in which the bridegroom

and his company were by certain virgins fetched in, and conducted to

the bride, with lamps in their hands and songs in their mouths. As

for this custom, I shall give you some passages in scripture. That

the weddings were in the night-time, we read, Gen. xxix. 23, ' It came

to pass in the evening that Laban took Leah his daughter, and brought

her to Jacob.' That the bridegroom had his companions, we read,

Judges xiii. 11, Sampson had thirty companions brought to him.

That both had their companions, we read of ' the children of the bride-

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chamber,' Mat. ix. 15, the special guests invited to the marriage-feast,

who were by custom to fetch the bridegroom, and wait upon him :

these are called <j>[\<u vvfMJu'ov, ' the friends of the bridegroom,' John

iii. 29. That the bride had her companions, it is said in Ps.

xlv. 14, the spouse ' shall be brought to the king in a raiment of

needlework ; the virgins her companions that follow her shall be

brought unto thee.' And their fashion was to take hand-lamps, then

in use, and fit to carry abroad, for night-lights. The scripture fre-

quently alludes to that : Kev. xviii. 23, ' And the light of the candle

shall shine no more at all in thee ; and the voice of the bridegroom

and of the bride no more at all shall be heard in thee.' And thus

the bridegroom was met by virgins with lamps ; as he drew near the

bride's house, he was met by servants with candles returning to the

marriage. Therefore it is said, Luke xii. 35, 36, ' Let your loins be

girded about, and your lights burning, and ye yourselves like unto

men that wait for their lord, when he will return from the wedding.'

This was the custom, which I the rather observe, that you may see

how fitly our Lord layeth down things. Now those that accompanied

the bridegroom and the bride were children of the bride-chamber, and

admitted into the marriage-room and supper ; and those that came

after that, when once the door was shut, were surely kept out. Now

here is a fit representation of the spiritual mystery laid down by Christ ;

and therefore let us —

1. See the thing compared, ' The kingdom of heaven ; ' that is, the

state of the church wherein God reigneth in the person of the Messiah.

Of the kingdom of glory it cannot be meant, for there are no foolish

virgins, and in the internal kingdom of grace none ; but in the

external kingdom of Christ in this world. And this is not considered

simply and restrainedly to that point of time when Christ is coming

to judgment, but respects and should affect us all ; for such as we

depart out of the world now, such shall we be found to be at the day

of judgment. It concerneth all ages, not only those that shall be found

alive at that time, but every one in successive ages.

2. The comparison must be explained ; the bridegroom is Christ,

and the bride is the church ; the whole church is the spouse of Christ,

and each particular believer a virgin attending upon this spouse ; the

marriage is mutually promised ; the espousals are in this life : Hosea ii.

19, 20, ' I will betroth thee to me for ever ;' and to be solemnised and

completed at the coming of our Lord : Eev. xix. 7, ' Let us be glad

and rejoice, and give honour to him, for the marriage of the Lamb is

come, and his wife hath made herself ready/ Here is the betrothing

in the covenant of grace. A nobis accepit arrhabonem camis, &c,

saith Tertullian ; he took the token of our flesh and carried it to

heaven, to prepare heaven for us, and left with us the token of his

Spirit, to prepare us for heaven : he is not gone from us in discontent,

but will come again with all the angels of heaven with him, to receive

the bride unto himself.

[1.] The companions of the bride are here represented under the

name of ' virgins,' for so Christians are called for the purity of their

faith and worship, and also for their blameless conversations.

(1.) Virgins for the purity of their faith, that keep themselves free

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and untainted from the corrupt and rotten opinions of the world :

2 Cor. xi. 2, ' I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present

you as chaste virgins to Christ,' He meaneth it here in respect of

the purity of their faith, that they might not be corrupted by false

teachers.

(2.) Virgins for the purity of worship. Idolatry and corruption of

worship is often expressed by harlotry ; and therefore the prophet, to

figure out Israel's apostasy and corruption in worship, is bidden to

take a wife of whoredoms, Hosea iii. And those that followed the

Lamb are said to be virgins not defiled, Eev. xiv. 4 ; not polluted

with idolatry, which is spiritual fornication.

(3.) Virgins for purity and blamelessness of conversation The

apostle speaketh of some that ' had escaped the pollutions of the

world, through the knowledge of Jesus Christ, who might be again

entangled and overcome therein,' 2 Peter ii. 20. Well, then, these

were all virgins, even the foolish as well as the wise, not tainted with

error, nor defiled with false worship, nor profane, corrupt or scandalous

in their conversations ; they were such as had escaped the corruptions

of the world, and had as glorious a form of godliness as any others.

[2.] They are described by their number, ' ten.' This is mentioned

either because ten is a number of perfection, or because usually the

number of those companions of the bride never exceeded ten.

[3.] They are set forth by their distribution into two ranks — some

wise, some foolish ; five of the one sort, and five of the other. The

number is not exactly to be stood upon, as if the number of the saved

and damned were equal ; as in the parable of the marriage-feast one

had not a wedding-garment ; it is not to be understood as if only one

were damned of all that are invited to the profession of the gospel ;

it only signifieth that all the virgins are not alike careful to prepare

for the coming of the Lord. By the wise are meant provident and dili-

gent Christians ; by the foolish, the improvident and negligent. Among

those that bear the name and keep up the reputation of Christians,

some will be found not to fill up their profession with answerable duty,

not to make serious provision for the coming of Christ.

[4.] They are set forth by their work and employment, ' They went

forth to meet the bridegroom;' that is, they expected the coming of

Christ, and happiness by him. The foolish and the wise did both

agree in this ; indeed, this is the whole business of a Christian.

[5.] They are set forth by their preparation for this work, ' They took

their lamps ;' that is, made open profession of their hope : Mat. v. 16,

' Let your light so shine among men ;' for external shining profession

they were both alike. All are called Christians, all are baptized, and

all profess faith in Christ, and an expectation of his second coming,

with eternal life to ensue upon it ; all are virgins, all have lamps, all

are devoted to the bridegroom, go forth to meet him, and yet some were

wise, and some foolish ; some made preparation that whenever the

bridegroom should come they might be ready to go in with him, others

contented themselves with an outward profession, or loose waiting for

his coming, but did not with that serious diligence prepare themselves

for it, and so came short of the blessedness expected by them ; there

wanted a deep indication, and a constant perseverance, without which

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the blaze of profession, which lasted for a while, will soon be extin-

guished,

Doct. That in the visible church, among those that give up their

names to Christ, some will be found foolish when others are wise, and

come short of the blessedness expected by them. Or, in the visible

church all are not wise Christians, but some are wise, and really such

as they profess themselves to be ; others negligent, foolish, and impro-

vident.

The state of the visible church is here represented ; and observe —

1. This parable is not spoken of the corrupted members of degene-

rate churches, but speaketh what shall fall out in the churches not

defiled with whoredoms of the world. There are some churches that

have turned the government of Christ into a temporal domination,

and their worship into a mass of paganish or heathenish rites and

superstitions, and place all their glory, not in excellency of gifts and

graces, but pomp of living and external splendour, and make Chris-

tianity look like a temporal worldly thing, calculated only for this

life. Of those Christ speaketh not here ; something may be intimated

of them in the former parable, but here he speaks of a reformed

church ; not the church in her pollution and defection, but a church

in her right constitution. Papists will be counted Christians, who

may be rejected by Christ at his coming ; they have so corrupted his

worship, discipline, and doctrine. Nay, but Christ speaketh here of

those that live under the dispensations of purer Christianity ; some

will be found true believers, others common professors ; even among

the members of a reformed church, that make profession of the

purity of the gospel, all will not be found such as may abide the day

of Christ's appearing in judgment. In Abraham's family there was

an Ishmael as well as an Isaac ; in Christ's, a Judas ; and in the

apostles' time, some were enemies to the cross of Christ that yet took

the profession of Christ upon them, Phil. iii. 18.

2. Mark again, it is not meant the scandalous and faulty members of

a pure church. There are many Christians in name on]y, but indeed

deny it, Titus i. 16. But it is not meant of the scandalous, that live

as if their hopes were altogether in this world, that engulph them-

selves in all manner of sensuality, as if there were no heaven or hell,

nor no future account to be given of our actions ; but it is meant of such

as profess themselves to be devoted unto Jesus Christ the bridegroom,

such as are desirous to be admitted into the nuptial-feast, to have

communion with him in heaven, and possibly may attain to a blameless

conversation, and appear virgin-like, all waiting for the coming of the

Lord, in their own and others' estimation. Some that prophesied in

Christ's name, and ate and drank in his presence, are yet rejected by

Christ as workers of iniquity.

3. It is not meant only of those that have a show or a false and coun-

terfeit profession, that are taught to act over their part in religion as

a play, as in the best and purest churches there will be hypocrites.

No ; these had some real work, though not a saving but a common

work, as a man may have a light tincture of religion whose heart is

not yet sound with God, Ps. cxix. 80, therefore David prayeth, ' Let

my heart be sound in thy statutes.' There was not a universal

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renouncing of all corruptions, not that thorough care to please God,

nor a rooted affection to Christ, though they have some good motions,

hopeful inclinations that way, as these virgins seemed to be well

affected to Christ ; for the present they had their lamps, made some

slender preparation, they went forth to meet the bridegroom as others

did. Therefore it will be necessary to show that a common work may go

far, and yet come short of blessedness: I shall prove it by three reasons.

[1.] Because a common work may go far.

[2.] Though a common work may go far, yet it is not likely to

hold out.

[3.] If it should hold out a constant profession, yet it will not be

enough to qualify us for the kingdom of glory, or heavenly bliss and

happiness.

First Reason. A common work will go far. I take it for granted

that there is a real common work of grace, as well as also a real

special work. If you doubt it I will inform you from scripture :

Heb. vi. 4, compared with the 9th verse. We read there of some

that were 'enlightened,' some that 'tasted of the good word, and

of the heavenly gift ; ' and elsewhere of some ' that had escaped the

pollutions of the world through the knowledge of Jesus Christ/ 2

Peter ii. 20. All this is real, the tasting the good word real, the

enlightening real, the partaking of the heavenly gift real, the escaping

the pollutions of the world real ; but the apostle saith in the 9th verse,

' We expect better things of you, and things that do accompany

salvation;' or things that have necessarily salvation in them, things

that whosoever hath them shall certainly be saved. The graces

of temporaries are for substance true, but slightly rooted ; there

are the purlieus of grace, or the borders of the kingdom of heaven,

some flashes of light or dawnings of grace, but the daystar doth not

arise in their hearts ; many are enlightened, taste the good word, have

some delight in the promises, taste of the heavenly gift, apprehend it

sweet to have communion with God in Christ, and taste the powers of

the world to come, feel some transports of soul when they hear of the

hopes of eternal life, and may be brought to some partial reformation ;

but that which is wanting is a deep radication or a more firm inher-

ency of these graces in the soul, and a habitual predominancy of these

motions and affections over all other inclinations ; for till it be so,

we cannot do any great service for God, or endure any trial for his

sake. Sometimes true grace is described by its deep radication ;

James i. 21, it is called an ' ingrafted word ;' it is not something tied

on, but ingrafted ; the root of the matter is within ; and sometimes it

is described by its efficacy : Bom. vi. 17, 'Ye have obeyed from the

heart the form of doctrine delivered to you/

But more especially I shall show you that a common work may go

far with respect to the three theological graces, faith, hope, and

charity, mentioned by the apostle 1 Cor. xiii. 13, ' Now abideth faith,

hope, and love ;' and again, 1 Thes. v. 8, ' But let us who are of the

day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an

helmet the hope of salvation.' Now a common work may go very far

in all these graces of faith, hope, and love, as here the virgins seemed

to believe the coming of Christ, and went forth to meet him.

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First, Therefore I shall show you what they may do as to faith. I

shall show what the grace is, and how far they may go along with it.

The scripture speaketh so much of faith, that we need to know what

it is. Faith in its peculiar respect works towards Christ and heaven ;

but take it in its general latitude, it is a firm and cordial assent to all

such things that are revealed by God, as revealed by him. Let us

explain this. Hero is the object, things revealed by God as revealed

by hini ; then the act, it is an assent ; the adjuncts, it is a firm and

cordial assent. For the object in this description, I consider it

materially and formally, all things revealed by God whatsoever. All

things necessary to salvation, faith apprehends them distinctly, other

things implicitly, that is, knows them in their general principle. Few

Christians know all the doctrines contained in the Christian religion,

but they believe them in the general. But now things necessary

to salvation, I must distinctly know them, as those that are called

articles of the Creed, the Lord's prayer, the ten commandments.

Faith is an assent to, and built upon a divine testimony, without any

other reason, whether as to things past, present, or to come. Things

past, as the creation of the world : Heb. xi. 3, ' By faith we under-

stand the worlds were created by the word of God.' If a man should

hold the creation of the world upon some other reason that seemeth

cogent unto him, and not upon the discovery of it in the word, cer-

tainly it is not faith, whatever it be, for faith assents to whatsoever

is revealed by God. So for things present, that God sitteth in heaven,

and Christ at his right hand. Stephen saw it by vision and ecstasy,

but every believer seeth it by faith, which is the evidence of things not

seen, as if with bodily eyes. So for things to come, as Christ's coming

to judgment, John saw it in the light of prophecy : Rev. xx. 12, ' I

saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God ; ' and they see

it in the light of scripture and the promise. So that you see the

objects of faith are things revealed by God, because revealed by him.

If a man should believe the Christian religion upon tradition, or the

current opinion where he liveth, it is not faith, but human credulity.

Now the act of faith it is au assent, not knowledge but acknow-

ledgment : the understanding hath a double act, apprehension or

dijudication ; it judgeth of the truth of things apprehended, or appre-

hendeth the tenor of things, and then judgeth of the truth of them.

They are not enlightened in a way of faith that are only able to talk

of heavenly things, but such as are persuaded of the truth of them.

And then mark the adjuncts, it is a firm and cordial assent.

1. It is a firm assent, and that excludeth many things from faith,

as light credulity: Prov. xiv. 15, ' The simple believeth every word.'

He that believeth everything without search and serious advertency,

believeth nothing. And it excludeth bare non-contradiction. Many

are thought to believe the religion they live under, because they do

not question it. These can no more be said to believe than children

are said to believe the questions and answers of the Catechism they

have learned by rote. True faith knoweth the certainty of those

things wherein they have been instructed, Luke i. 4. And then it

excludeth conjecture to be faith, which is a lighter inclination of the

mind to a thing as probable ; it may be so, yet there is a suspicion to

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the contrary. Nay, it excludeth opinion, which goeth higher than

conjecture, but cometh short of faith.

Well, now, thus far many go ; there may be an owning of the true

orthodox religion, only out of custom, chance of birth, education,

tradition of ancestors ; they may talk much, as parrots repeat men's

words by rote only. There may be convictions and opinions about

them, they may be persuaded those things are true that are in the

word of God, and yet no firm assent.

2. But to come nearer yet, the next adjunct it is a cordial and

hearty assent, such as engageth the heart to Christ. We read in

scripture of ' believing with the heart,' Rom. x. 9, and ' believing

with all the heart,' Acts viii. 37. Truths are propounded to us in the

scripture not only as true, but good things, of great weight and

moment ; as well as certain. Believing is a hearty business ; now

this cordial and hearty assent excludeth historical faith, and tempo-

rary faith.

[1.] Historical faith, which rests on a naked speculation, or a simple

and naked assent to such things as are propounded in the word of

God. This consisteth in a mere speculation of the mind, without any

change of the bent of the will and affections. True faith ever over-

comes all contrary inclinations and motions, so that God's interest

may prevail above them : Heb. xi. 13, ' Being persuaded of them,

they embraced them.' Those who have a mere historical faith

are not excited to holy living ; are rendered more knowing, not

better : this is a real faith in its kind. Simon Magus did really

believe by the preaching of Philip, Acts viii. 13. It was not

counterfeit, for it is said he wondered. And those in John ii. 24,

that believed in the name of Christ, but Christ ' would not commit

himself to them, for he knew all men.' And no question the devils

do really believe, James ii., not only natural truths, but gospel truths :

' I know thou art the holy one of God.' What a confession is this out

of the devil's mouth ! Therefore it is wrong to say that unregene-

rate men do not believe. Because this being the main business in

hand, I will tell you why it is called historical faith. Not from

the object of it, as if they only believed the histories of the scripture.

No ; they believe promises, threatenings, doctrines, precepts, mys-

teries. But it is called historical faith from the manner wherewith

it is conversant about its object. As we read histories in which

we are no way concerned, only for contemplation and knowledge' sake,

not to make a party in their broils, or interpose in their quarrels ; so

they rest in idle speculations, which betters not the practice. Well,

now, this speculative assent they may have ; this faith doth not only

believe those things that are true, but doth heartily and truly believe

them.

[2.] There is besides this, temporary faith ; that is, such an assent

as is accompanied with a slight and insufficient touch upon the heart,

called a taste, Heb. vi. 4, so that they do not only believe the truths

of the gospel, but are tickled with some delight, and do in some

measure find their hearts drawn off from worldly lusts and practices ;

but the impression is not deep enough, nor the joy rooted enough to

counterbalance all temptations to the contrary. They seem to have

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their hearts loosened from the world, and to prefer Christ before the

creature, as long as no temptations do assault, or sensual objects stand

up in any considerable strength to entice them ; but then they bewray

their weakness. But that faith that is serious and hearty doth so

believe the promises of the gospel as to seek happiness in them,

to make it his business so to believe the mysteries of our redemption

as to build all his comfort and peace upon them, so believe the com-

mands of God as to frame his heart to observe them ; in short, to

improve everything to the use of holy living.

Secondly, The next theological grace is hope. Here was an expec-

tation of the bridegroom's coming, as well as a belief of it. All

Christians profess that they expect Christ to come to judgment, and

many desire and hope to be entertained at the nuptial feast as well as

others, and hope to go in with him into celestial joys. Now there may

be much of this in temporaries, not only a bare profession, but some

real motions this way. Oh, how often are they pressed to keep on this

joy and comfort ! Heb. iii. 6, ' Whose house are we, if we hold fast the

confidence and rejoicing of the hope firm to the end ;' and Heb. iii. 14,

' For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our

confidence steadfast to the end ; ' and to maintain it with all serious

diligence, Heb. vi. 11, that it may grow into more certainty. But to

evidence this to you, let us see what Christian hope is. It seems to be

described by the apostle, Kom. ii. 7, those that ' seek for life and

immortality by patient continuing in well-doing ; ' or a ' looking for

the mercy of God unto eternal life,' Jude 21. Or more formally, a

certain earnest or desirous expectation of blessedness promised, in

that way wherein it is promised. We believe there is such a blessed-

ness, therefore wait with earnestness and patience till it come to pass,

and exercise ourselves with all diligence for the obtaining it. True

hope ever quickeneth our diligence : Acts xxiv. 10, ' And herein do I

exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards

God, and towards men.' Most interpreters say, ' Hereupon do I exer-

cise myself/ He had spoken of the hope of Israel, so that it was upon

the account of his hope he did use that diligence. But more plainly,

Acts xxvi. 6, 7, ' Unto which hope our twelve tribes, serving God

diligently, hope to come.' A man that hopeth for anything will ear-

nestly pursue it in the way wherein it is to be obtained, and follow his

work close day and night. There is a hope that is but a devout sloth,

but the true Christian is lively and active : 1 John iii. 3, ' He that hath

this hope in him, purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' Ignorant people

say they hope well, that he that made them shall save them, but live

as if they fled from heaven and salvation ; but the true hope encour-

ageth us to hold on our course with diligence and cheerfulness, not-

withstanding the troubles and difficulties and temptations we meet

with in the way to it ; they make it their constant work and business.

Now they that are unrenewed may go far in hope, especially when they

are under the initial work of the Spirit ; they may have not only the

careless man's hope, which is a slight and superficial hope, which

groweth upon them they know not how, without any warrant or ground ;

nor a dead and cold hope, which is the fruit of opinion, a loose and

fond conjecture rather than a certain expectation ; but a hope that

hath some life in it ; nor the presumer's hope, which is a lazy loitering

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hope, that severeth the end from the means, but may have some lively

tastes, which for a while sets them a-work in the spiritual life ; but the

fault is, it is not so fixed as it should be, neither doth it beget in us

that constant assiduous labour, seriousness and self-denial, but enough

to keep up a blazing profession, but doth not make them so earnest for

the possession of what they hope for.

Thirdly, The third theological grace is love or charity ; love to God,

and love to our neighbour. There is somewhat of both here. They

were well affected to the bridegroom ; they went forth to meet and

carry lamps before him, for his honour as well as light ; and they went

in consort and company with their fellow- virgins. So some are so well

affected to the ways of God as to make profession of them to the people

of God, so as to walk with them. But let me speak of love to God.

Love to God is not a fellow-like familiarity, but ready subjection to his

laws : ' If ye love me, keep my commandments,' John xiv. 15, and

1 John v. 3, ' For this is love, that we keep his commandments.' Now

they may so far do this as to make profession of the ways of God, and

walk blameless in them as to men, yet strangers to heart-mortification

and a true preference of God in the soul. The knowledge of Christ

may make men cleanse their external conversations, but live in secret

love with some lusts, which they serve in a more cleanly manner.

They love happiness more than holiness ; they love Gofl, but do little

for him. Labour and love are often spoken of ; they have not that

active and serious diligence that is commanded in doing the things that

please God. Then, for love to the brethren, they may magnify the

people of God, Acts v. 13, join with them, and do many offices of

love for them ; but the heart needs to be purified before there can be

that ' unfeigned love to the brethren,' 1 Peter i. 22. And it is not

easy to hold on in the ways of God in all conditions. There are many

sins contrary to the grace of love ; pride, envy, self-seeking, self-love,

wrath. It must be such a love as floweth from holy principles, and

breaketh out in real performances; and this, to be carried out in a

Christian manner, will be found very hard to do.

Second Reason. Though a common work may go far, it is not likely

to hold out. Their lamps went out, and they had no vessels to supply

them. Notwithstanding the sudden pangs and fervours, and forward

profession of temporaries, yet usually they fail in the issue. They

believe for a while, Luke viii. 13, and hope for a while : Col. i.

23, ' If ye continue steadfast, and be not moved from the hope of the

gospel.' Love for a while : Mat. xxiv. 12, ' The love of many shall

wax cold ; ' and good reason ; partly because they have not the grace

to which the promise of perseverance is made. There is donum -per-

seveinntice, there is such a thing as the gift of perseverance, and it is

assured by promise to special saving grace. Now they that have not

this radicated state of grace, have not this promise ; for Christ saith,

John iv. 14, ' The water that I shall give him, shall be a well of water

springing up to eternal life.' A cruse may fail, a bucket emptied, a

pond dried up, but a fountain is ever flowing, and never dried up.

Therefore David prayeth, ' Let my heart be sound in thy statutes,

that I be not ashamed.' When the heart is not sound before God,

disorders break out before men, and many that make a fair show

for a while, afterwards shipwreck themselves, and all their credit

Vers. 1, 2.] sermons upon matthew xxv. 329

for godliness. And partly because where the heart is not thoroughly

converted to God, evermore some temporal good thing lieth too close

to the heart, and hath a deeper rooting there than grace can have.

And these base and carnal delights will in time prevail over the

interest God hath in the heart, Heb. xii. 13. That which is lame is

soon turned out of the way : ' Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced

the present world.' Men of an unsound heart have some temptation

or other that carrieth them quite off from God : as old Eli fell and

broke his neck, so they break the neck of their profession.

Third Reason why many that are virgins come short of the nuptial

feast. Because if they should hold out a constant profession, it will not

be enough to qualify them for heaven and everlasting happiness. It

is possible an unrenewed man may never fall from his profession, yet

he can bring nothing to perfection. Luke viii. 13, the stony ground

fell from their profession, but the thorny ground brought nothing to

perfection. All are not exposed to great trials. Oh ! nothing but a

real conversion will qualify us for the kingdom of heaven. The foolish

virgins' case was as fair and as good as the other, till the bridegroom

came : Mat. xviii. 3, ' Except ye be converted, and become as little

children, ye cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.' The sentence

is absolute and peremptory. So John iii. 3, ' Except a man be born

again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' Nothing less than renew-

ing grace will serve the turn. Be a man in appearance better or worse,

a gross sinner, or a painted pharisee, a hopeful beginner, or one of long-

standing, 'Except ye be born again, ye cannot see the kingdom of God.'

Use 1. To show how far from salvation some are, if those that have

some kind of faith, and hope, and love, may come short; as for instance —

(1.) All practical atheists and infidels, that scoff at Christ's coming :

2 Peter iii. 3, 4, ' In the last days there shall come scoffers, walking

after their own lusts, saying, Where is the promise of his coming ? '

Some, that they may sin the more securely, question the second coming

of Christ, or banish out of their hearts the thoughts of the day of judg-

ment. Many that went out to meet the bridegroom yet were foolish

virgins, and were shut out. (2.) Flagitious persons, or scandalous

sinners, that neither respect Christ nor his people, that make no show

nor preparation, are neither virgins, nor do they take their lamps ; if

they have a historical certainty, not a temporary faith. How much

then of the Christian world would be cut off before we come to an

accurate and exquisite trial ? 2 Peter iii. 11, 'What manner of persons

ought we to be ? ' and Gal. v. 24, ' They that are Christ's have crucified

the flesh with the affections and lusts thereof.' If this be a sure rule

to try by, what a multitude of Christians are there that do not belong

to Christ, that by a real profession have given up their names to him !

Use 2. Is caution to us all. Let us take heed we do not deceive

ourselves, or rest satisfied with the picture of godliness. An army

would be very cautious if they knew beforehand that one-half of them

should be destroyed. Now five of them were wise, and five were

foolish. Among the virgin professors that hold out an honourable

profession, many will be found foolish. Yea, when Christ had said,

' One of you shall betray me ; ' ' Lord, is it I, is it I ? ' said the disciples.

Now you are here told, not one, but many. Now go home, and say,

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Lord, is it I ? In the purest churches many may lie hid and not dis-

cerned. Oh ! therefore take not up with weak and groundless hopes.

1. Do not please yourselves by being of such a sect or such a pro-

fession. Men think the safest place to lie asleep in is Christ's own

lap. If they are of such a party, they think they are safe ; but con-

sider, lead may be cast into all forms, an angel or devil, but it is lead

still. Consider God is an exact and impartial judge : 1 Peter iii. 17,

' If you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth all

men ;' his people as well as others, if they build upon their profession.

Do not content yourselves with a form of godliness, though never so

strict ; nor a name of godliness, though never so renowned. These

were virgins, not defiled with error or idolatry, or the scandalous cus-

toms or fashions of the world ; yet some of them were foolish virgins.

2. Do not content yourselves that you do not take up a profession

and an intention of religion merely to serve the times and yourselves

of it, not knowing yourselves intentionally and industriously to coun-

terfeit ; as Judas, that followed Christ for the bag, being in his heart

a traitor and a thief from the beginning, John xiii. 6 ; or as Simon

Magus at first hoped to make as good market of his new faith as his

old sorcery, professed to believe in Christ out of design. Nay, a man

that, for anything he knoweth or perceiveth, may think that he is in

good earnest, yet he may be a temporary, though he is no temporiser.

Christ knew them that knew not themselves, John ii. 24. To speak

in a word, though you may know nothing of guile, yet do not content

yourselves with that merely.

3. Do not rest in this, that you find some real work, and go no

further. A man's heart may be softened, but not opened to the pur-

pose : he may have a love and liking of religion, and yet not come

under the power of it ; some flashes of comfort, yet seek his happiness

in worldly things; some desires and good inclinations, and yet be

slothful and negligent in the main, in mortifying lusts, or not perfect-

ing holiness, and fain would have some part in Christ, but yet make

but slender preparation, get oil in his lamp, but not in his vessel ; fain he

would have the blessings of grace and glory, if bare wishes and desires

would do it; fain would go to heaven, but would do nothing for it,

unless it be in a lazy, cold, and dull preparation ; doth not make it the

chief business of his life to know the will of God and do it.

Use 3. Is to exhort us to be very serious in our preparation for the

coming of the Lord ; or, as the apostle cautions the Ephesians, Eph.

v. 15, 16, ' See that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.'

To this end consider —

1. That our whole life is nothing else but a preparation for Christ's

coming. The common duty of all Christians is to go forth and meet

the bridegroom ; or, to make sure of life eternal is the necessary busi-

ness we have to do in the world. Our whole life was appointed for

this end, and all the time we spend here is worse than lost, if it be not

employed and used for this end. It is now preparation time ; these

are the months of our purification for our immortal souls ; therefore

our continual care should be to make ready.

2. We may defer this work too long, we cannot begin it too soon.

The foolish virgins would get oil in their vessels, but it was too late.

Vers. 3, 4.] sermons upon matthew xxv. 331

Never any complained of beginning with God too soon : many could

have wished they had known the ways of righteousness sooner, Rom.

xiii. 11 ; many have judged ' the time past more than enough/ 1

Peter iv. 3.

3. It is not so slight and easy a thing to get to heaven as the world

imagineth : Mat. vii. 14, ' Strive to enter in at the strait gate, for

many shall seek to enter and shall not be able.' Many deceive them-

selves ; it is not so broad as the opinions of some, as the practices of

more would make it, and the carnal hearts of all would have it.

Broader or narrower it cannot be than Christ hath left it. In the

general, a man may come much too short, none go over. Oh ! when

you do but consider that many are afar off, Eph. ii. 13, and some are

near, as Christ told the young man, ' Thou art not far from the

kingdom of heaven ;' and others are scarcely saved, and some enter

abundantly, it concerns us therefore to take heed to ourselves.

4. This is your wisdom. There is a great deal of do in the world

about wisdom : Job xi. 12, ' Vain man would be accounted wise.' A

man cannot endure to be counted a fool, will sooner own a vice in

morals than a weakness in intellectuals. Now wisdom lieth in provi-

dence, and folly in negligence, especially in weighty matters. These

wise virgins provided oil in their vessels, and the wise builder built

upon a rock. They are wise in God's account, whatever the world

thinketh of them, that are wise for heavenly things, and govern their

hearts and ways exactly, Eph. v. 14, 15 ; and they are fools that never

mind the good of their souls.

What would you have us do ? I will only press you to three

things : —

[1.] Let your belief be sound and firm to the great articles of

Christianity. It is faith enlivens all our notions of God : John vi. 69,

' We believe and are sure that thou art Jesus the Son of God.'

[2.] Let your resolutions for God be unbounded, Ps. cxix. 112.

You never knew a man fall off from God, but he loved some secret

lust, some corruption was left unmortified, though for the present it

did not appear to the party himself ; this in time will break out, and

cause some scandalous fall.

[3.] I would have you put it out of all question by the lively exercise

of your grace, and by your diligence in the spiritual life, Phil. ii. 12 ;

and in time it will grow up into an evidence, 2 Peter i. 5 ; Luke xiii. 3.

Nothing will yield you comfort but the exercising and increasing grace.

SERMON II.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. — Mat.

XXV. 3, 4.

Not only the openly wicked, those that eat and drink with the

drunken, are rejected, but those that have some show of godliness ;

yea, hopeful beginnings, but not improved, is the drift of this parable.

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We have considered wherein the ten virgins agree ; now, wherein they

differ : they had so much wisdom to take their lamps with them, but

so much folly as to take no oil in their vessels. These vessels were

annexed to their lamps, or that part of the lamp which was kindled

and lighted. By the lamps are meant outward profession, Mat. v. 16 ;

by the oil, the Spirit, called ' the anointing which abideth in us,' 1

John ii. 27. Now the foolish virgins are such inconsiderate Chris-

tians as content themselves with the name and blaze of outward

profession, neglecting the great work within ; namely, an inward

principle of grace, which should maintain their profession before men,

and their uprightness before God ; they had only some transient

motions of the Spirit, or inclinations to that which is good, enough

to keep up their present profession, bat not to hold out and suffice at

Christ's coming. But the wise virgins, that had oil in their vessels,

with their lamps, are sound and solid Christians, who, with the lamps

of external profession, are careful to be furnished inwardly with the

graces of the Holy Spirit.

Doct. 1. It is not enough to have oil in our lamps, but we must

have oil in our vessels also.

Doct, 2. This will be found to be our true wisdom, and the other to

be the greatest folly.

For the first point, that it is not enough to have oil in our lamps,

but we must have oil in our vessels also, let me explain this point in

these propositions : —

1. Profession must not be neglected : both the wise and the foolish

took their lamps with them. Burning profession is twofold — vocal

and real. Vocal : Kom. x. 9, ' If thou shalt confess with thy mouth,

and believe with thy heart.' Christ will be owned by those that are

his. Christ's followers need not be ashamed of avowing their master.

Faith should not, and love cannot be smothered and hidden ; therefore

profession is as necessary as believing in its kind. Again, there is a

real profession, not so much by word of mouth as by constant practice

and conversation ; so Christians are bidden to ' shine as lights,' Phil,

ii. 15. This is for the glory of God, Mat. v. 16, and the honour of

Christ that it should be so ; therefore the apostle prayeth, 2 Thes. i.

11, 12, 'Wherefore we pray always for you, that our God would count

you worthy of this calling, and fulfil all the good pleasure of his

goodness, and the work of faith with power, that the name of the

Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you.' It is not meant of the

illicit acts, but the fruit that it produceth ; and it is for the honour of

the truth. Suitable practice joined with profession puts a majesty and

splendour on the truth, and recommendeth it to the consciences of

beholders : Titus ii. 10, ' Adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour.' It

is not so much by good words and expressions that Christians do put

a loveliness and beauty upon the ways of God, as by ordering their

ways with all strictness and gravity; so that this fair profession is

of great use, especially the real part ; it is an evidence that all is right

within, for the breaking out of sin and folly in the life clearly

evidenceth the power and prevalency of unmortified lusts in the heart;

therefore we must keep our lamps burning ; the foolish and the wise

did both well in that.

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2. A profession of godliness, though never so glorious, should not

be rested in without a saving work of grace upon the heart to main-

tain it. There was the folly of one sort of virgins, that they were

contented with having oil in their lamps for their present use, without

looking further ; and the wisdom of the other, that their vessels were

furnished as well as their lamps. Grace must flow forth, but withal

it must have a bottom within. As a fountain or spring sending forth

streams to water the ground about it, or the heart sendeth forth life

and spirits to every faculty and member, so the graces of the Spirit in

believers flow forth in their carriage and behaviour, to make their

tongue drop that which is savoury, their actions orderly and even,

their carriage in all relations and affairs grave and serious. It is well

when all this hath a bottom, that there is a principle of life within, to

diffuse this virtue into every part of their conversations, and to keep

them mindful and respective to all the commands of God. Now this

is required — (1.) Partly because this glorious profession and practice

will not serve the turn for the present ; for God looks not to outward

appearance, but regards the frame of the heart ; it is internal holiness

that is lovely in his eyes, Ps. li. 6, and without which the external is

loathsome to him, Mat. xxiii. 17. A Christian hath more in the

vessel than in the lamp : Ps. xlv. 13, ' The king's daughter is all

glorious within.' That which is outwardly professed is inwardly

rooted and cherished by them who worship and serve God in spirit

and truth. Knowledge, faith, love, hope, zeal, courage, patience, these

adorn the heart, as well as the fruits of them appear in the life,

and this maketh us beautiful in the eyes of him that seeth in secret.

It would help us to discover our mistakes if we did make God our

witness, approver, and judge ; for the present studying to approve him

in the frame of our hearts, which is hidden from all others. And (2.)

Partly because the lamp will not long hold burning unless there be a

stock of oil to feed it ; so that if it could suffice for the present,

yet without grace in the heart, for the future, we shall miscarry when

the slender provision and store is spent. A Christian is to provide

for the time to come such grace as may endure and hold out in

all trials, and bear weight in the day of judgment. We are often

pressed to set ourselves in such a state, and put ourselves into such

a frame, as will endure the glory of Christ's presence ; and to think of

that time, and what we shall do, or how we shall be found when

he appeareth. He only believeth aright in Christ that will not be

ashamed at his appearance : Luke xxi. 36, ' That ye may stand before

the Son of man ;' and 1 John iv. 17, ' That we may have boldness at

the day of judgment ;' and 1 John ii. 29, ' When he shall appear we

may have confidence, and not be ashamed of him at his coming/

3. A saving work of grace is an inward principle of life, and that

in such a degree and measure, which the unsound, though the most

glorious professors of the gospel, do not attain unto. Some slight and

insufficient touches upon their hearts many professors may attain

unto that yet never had this rooted principle of grace, which may

properly be called oil in the vessel. It differeth in indication and

efficacy, as I showed before. They are enlightened, but the day-star

doth not arise in their hearts, 2 Peter i. li), and Eph. v. 8. A flash

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of light they may have, but are not light in the Lord. Are affected

with the truths of the gospel, but not changed or transformed by it,

2 Cor. iii. 18. Sin may be restrained or benumbed, but it is not

subdued and mortified, Gal. v. 24 ; we cannot say it is crucified.

They are half loosed, but are still in bonds ; make some show of

escape from Satan, but are surprised by him again ; worse hampered

than before, Mat. xii. 45 ; urged, excited to some good, but not

enabled and inclined to love God with all the heart, and seriously and

constantly to set about the things that please him, and to avoid the

contrary. They have not the grace the apostle prayeth for, Heb.

xiii. 12, that grace ' that may make you perfect in every good work,

to do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight

through Jesus Christ.' Have you this grace, to be always working

that which is pleasing in his sight ? Their fire is like a straw fire,

soon in and soon out; so that there is a difference. The common

grace that they have is real, but not of an abiding and everlasting

nature, not secured by God's covenant and promise ; there is not that

solid, rooted piety. Therefore, it is not enough for Christians to see

that the lamp burnetii, but to look what there is in the vessel, to feed

the flame. It is not sudden affections on our part, nor the transient

motions of the Spirit on God's part, that will amount to a constant

principle of life.

4. This constant, abiding state of grace or principle of life may be

known partly by the terms by which it is set forth in scripture, and

partly by the effects of it.

First, By the terms by which it is expressed in scripture.

1. It is expressed sometimes with respect to the original author,

pattern, and fountain of it, which is God; and so it is called the

divine nature, 2 Peter i. 4 ; whereby is not meant the infinite essence

of God, which can neither be divided, or communicated to any

creature, but of those holy and heavenly qualities and dispositions

whereby we resemble God. The heart of this Christian is so

stamped with God's own image and character, that he beginneth

to look like God for wisdom, holiness, purity, pity. So sometimes

it is called the life of God, Eph. iv. 18 : that spiritual life that

is begun in regeneration is so called ; not as God is the first

original author of life natural, but the pattern of it. From both

these places it appeareth we must first be partakers of such a

nature as God hath, before we can live such a life as God doth.

2. It is sometimes expressed with respect to the meritorious and

procuring cause, or the immediate head and fountain of it ; and

so Christ is said ' to live in us,' Gal. ii. 20 ; 'to dwell in us,'

Eph. iii. 17 ; 'to remain in us as the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27.

That Christians may live the life of grace, they must first be

united to Christ ; for he liveth in us as the head in the members,

or the root in the branches : we must be united to Christ, and

receive influence from him as branches from the root. Through

faith Christ is perpetually present in virtue, grace, and spirit. We

must first partake of Christ himself, being most strictly united

to him, as members to the head, from whence they receive sense

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and motion : he taketh up a fixed and immovable habitation in our

hearts, John xiv. 23, not for a visit and away ; but keepeth a perpetual

residence in the heart.

3. With respect to the immediate author and fountain, which is the

Spirit given to us, to dwell in us, by some special way of operation,

Rom. v. 5 ; and 1 Cor. ii. 12, ' Now we have not received the spirit of

world, but the Spirit of God, that we may know the things that are

freely given us of God ;' and Eom. viii. 11, 'If the Spirit of him that

raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you.' A believer's body and

soul is the Spirit's mansion-house ; and those that have the Spirit to

dwell in them, not to come upon them at times, are in an abiding

state of grace. The Spirit came upon Balaam at times, Num. xxiv.

34 ; but in his people he makes his abode. He doth act in others as

a spirit assisting, but not as a spirit inhabiting : he dwelleth in his

people. The Spirit is often promised to dwell in our hearts, not only

for a season, but for ever : John iv. 14, ' The water that I shall give

him shall be a well of water springing up to everlasting life.' Mark,

the Spirit doth not give a draught, but the spring ; not a dash of rain

that is soon dried up, but a well ; not a pond, that may be dried up at

length, but a fountain that ever keepeth flowing, so that we shall

never thirst more. It shall quench his thirst after worldly vanities

and delights : these things grow tasteless the more of the Spirit we

have. The Spirit of Christ, as the fountain, doth make this grace

enduring in itself and in its effects, a well of inexhaustible fulness

and refreshment. So John vii. 38, ' He that believeth in me, out of

his belly shall flow rivers of living water/ Not a petty refreshment

for a season, but his Spirit to dwell in us as a full fountain, to flow

forth for the refreshment of himself and others. Though the ocean

be in God, yet there is a river in the saints. In Christ there is

plenitude) fontis ; in us, plenitudo vasis. If we find any remission of

the comforts of this spring, it is through our own pride and unbelief

and idleness : John xiv. 16, 17, ' I will give you another comforter,

that he may abide with you for ever.' The Spirit will not change his

dwelling-place. This is such a degree of grace as the unregenerate

world cannot receive.

4. This inward principle is expressed with respect to the instru-

ment, which is the word of God ; so it is called \6yov eu^vrov,

James i. 21, ' The ingrafted word.' The root of the matter is within ;

it is not the word heard only, or the word obeyed only will save us,

but it must' be an ingrafted word. It is not bound on, but ingrafted ;

it is not enough to yield some present obedience to it, but it must be

rooted in us. So in that notable promise, Heb. viii. 10, ' I will put

my laws in their minds, and write them upon their hearts.' The

writing is the law of God, the tabWare the minds and hearts of men ;

that is the understanding and will and rational appetite ; and this is

written by the finger of God ; there where is the source and original

of all moral operations, of all thoughts and affections, and inward

motions, there is the law of God written; in those parts of the soul

where the directive counsel and the imperial commanding power of all

human actions resideth, there will God write his laws in lively and

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legible characters. And what is the effect ? A man becometh a law

to himself, he carrieth his rule about with him, and hath a ready and

willing mind to obey it : Ps. xxxvii. 31, ' The law of God is in his

heart ; none of his steps shall slide.' The truth is rooted in him, and

his heart is suited and inclined to it ; he unfeignedly loveth what is

commanded of God, and hateth what is forbidden by him.

5. The work itself is sometimes generally expressed by these

notions. It is called Katvrj fcrlais, ' The new creature,' 2 Cor. v. 17,

when a man is thoroughly framed anew in all his faculties ; and

1 John iii. 9, it is called airepfxa, ' The abiding seed;' not a vanishing

affection, but a remaining seed ; and it is called ' A good treasure,'

Mat. xii. 35. There is a stock that supplieth holy thoughts, words,

and actions. As a man that hath a bad treasure of corruption, the

more he spends, the more it is increased ; so a man that hath a good

stock, he bringeth forth holy thoughts, words, and actions. And it is

called ' A new heart, and a right spirit,' Ps. li. 10 ; Ezek. xxxvi. 26,

27 ; and it is called ' A sound heart,' Ps. cxix. 80. There is a slight

heart, and a sound heart, which is not only opposed to the shows of

hypocrites, but to the sudden pangs and half-dispositions of tempo-

raries, when grace beareth a universal sovereignty over us, inclining

the heart to love, and please, and serve God.

6. Sometimes the work is particularly expressed by the several

graces of the Spirit, all which are comprised in faith and repentance :

Acts xx. 21, ' Teaching them repentance towards God, and faith in our

Lord Jesus Christ.' Repentance towards God, because by it we

return to the duty we owe to our creator ; and faith, in the gospel

notion, doth principally respect our Redeemer, and his mediation for

us. By repentance we return to the duty enjoined by the law, from

whence we are fallen ; and by faith we apprehend the love of Christ,

and what he hath done for us. By repentance we are set in joint

again as to pur obedience to the lawgiver ; and by faith we close

with, and are united to our Redeemer, without which we cannot be

accepted with God. Both are the principles of all sincere obedience

and subjection to the gospel-law or covenant.

If you ask me, what is this oil in the vessel that we must have to

qualify us to meet the bridegroom at his coming ?

Ans. It is repentance, mortifying our inward lusts, and faith work-

ing by love.

(1.) Repentance, mortifying our inward lusts, that in newness of

life we may glorify God ; therefore called ' Repentance from dead

works,' Heb. vi. 1. By common grace men may cast off all outward

evils, escape the pollutions of the world, but are never really and

inwardly changed in their natures till the Spirit of Christ worketh this

grace in the heart ; they are but as a sow washed, 2 Peter ii. 22 ;

there is an inclination to wallow in the mire of carnal delights again.

It is possible a man may see such an excellency in Christ, and be

so affected at the hopes of his mercy, and melted at the thoughts of

his love, as to cast off outward gross evils which the world liveth in ;

but this is but the sow washed ; the heart is not changed. Lust for a

while may be benumbed, seem quenched, but it is not deadened, it is not

weakened: 'If ye through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body,'

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Horn. viii. 13; as appeareth by its breaking out again with the more

violence.

(2.) Faith working by love, that is the great principle of gospel-

obedience. True grace doth not lie hid in the soul in lazy habits, but

sets the soul a-work for God, upon the apprehension of his love in

Christ ; this constraineth us entirely to give up ourselves to God, 2 Cor.

v. 14, minding his interest, studying his will, seeking to please him in

all things. A man is not to be judged by present pangs, but by the

constant bent and bias of his soul ; it is set God-ward, to please him,

and enjoy him, notwithstanding the back-bias of corruption.

Secondly, We now come to the effects. The effects are two : —

1. A constant fitness, readiness, and propension to do and suffer

what God calleth us unto, or a habitual inclination of heart towards

that which is good.

2. A habitual aversation to that which is evil.

1. A habitual inclination of heart towards that which is good ; this

is called in scripture, ' the having the heart at the right hand,' Eccles.

x. 2. He speaketh not of the natural posture, but the leaning of the

heart towards duty ; he is ready fitted and prepared for duty. And

sometimes this is called, ' having our loins girt,' 1 Peter i. 13, as ready

to travel ; or it noteth the ready disposition that should be in us for

duties or conflicts. So 'we are his workmanship, created in Christ

Jesus unto good works,' Eph. ii. 10 ; that is, put into a fitness and

aptitude for them. As everything that is created hath a fitness and

aptitude for that use for which it serveth, the water to flow, the air

to be carried to and fro ; so a Christian hath a fitness for his work.

The opposite to this is that, Titus i. 16, 'To every good work repro-

bate ; ' unfit to be employed for this holy business. Briefly, as every

habit serveth for this use, Ut quis facile, jucunde et constanter agat ;

to perfect the operation of that faculty in which it is seated, so that a

man may act easily, pleasantly, constantly ; so doth habitual grace

serve for this use, to incline us, and fit us for the service of God.

There are three things that are found in those that have this work

wrought in them : —

[1.] There is an inclination and propensity to a godly life ; for as God

created all creatures with an inclination to their proper operations, so

the new creature hath a tendency to those actions which are proper to

its state ; as the sparks fly upward and the stone falleth downward

from an inclination of nature, so are their hearts bent to please God

and serve him, and what they do therein they do with a kind of

naturalness, because of this bent and inclination : ' The law is in

their hearts/ Ps. xl. 8. There is a purpose there, Acts xi. 23, an

inclination there, Ps. cxix. 112. We read in Exod. xxxv. 29, that

they gave to the sanctuary ' every one whose heart made him willing.'

I bring this expression to explain what I am speaking of ; so their

hearts being thus prepared and renewed by the Holy Ghost, make

them willing ; there is some weight and poise within their hearts to

carry them unto God, and the duties that concern his glory and

service. A man may act from a violent impression contrary to nature,

as a stone moveth upward, or a bowl thrown with great strength where

the bias is overruled ; so a wicked man may do a good action or two,

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as Saul forced himself ; but the bent and natural inclination is another

thing. It is good to attend to the principle of our motions, whether

it be natural or violent, whether our spirits make us willing, or some

accidental reason constrain us ; as when men are acted by something

foreign, as the force of holy example, whereby many a man is drawn

to do otherwise than he would, as Joash while Jehoiada lived, 2 Chron.

xxiv. A man may be acted by his company, follow good examples, and

may be provoked thereby : Heb. x. 24, ' Let us consider one another,

to provoke to love and good works.' It were well if one Christian

would more provoke another. Man is an imitating creature, loath to

be outdone ; but if this be all, we shall soon bewray our unsoundness.

He may be forced by envy, vainglory, and by-ends (Phil. i. 5) to

preach or pray, forced by natural conscience, Roni. ii. 14, 15, or set

a-work by a corrupt principle. The urgings of a natural conscience

are quite another thing than the bent of a renewed heart ; there is a

principle of life which breedeth an inclination. He may be forced by

a sense of his misery ; self sets him a-work to seek after God, because

he would use him for a turn, to help him out of his distress ; as those

in Ps. lxxviii. 34-37, ' When he slew them, then they sought him, and

they returned and inquired early after God ; and they remembered

that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer : never-

theless, they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied to him

with their tongues : for their heart was not right with him, neither

were they steadfast in his covenant.' Their affections were not sincerely

set for God, or towards God, or bent against sin ; the sense of a pre-

sent wrath, or the terror of an angry God, did drive them into a fit of

religiousness for the present, which can produce no steadfast purpose.

They that make self their utmost end can never endeavour constantly

to please and glorify God ; but wdiere true grace is, there is a pro-

pensity and disposition to every good work, which we should always

cherish in ourselves ; for as it abateth or increaseth, so we are diligent

or sluggish in God's service.

[2.] There is not only an inclination, but a readiness or preparedness,

which is a further effect of this solid and substantial grace, and often

spoken of in scripture ; as Titus iii. 1, ' Ready to every good work ;'

1 Tim. vi. 18, ' Ready to distribute ;' ' Ready to communicate,' Heb.

xiii. 16. So Paul, Acts xxi. 13, eTotfitos e'^w, ' I am ready not only to

be bound, but to die at Jerusalem.' Or take a general place, 2 Tim.

ii. 4, ' Prepared to every good work ;' and Luke xii. 47, ' That servant

that knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did accord-

ing to his will ;' so Eph. ii. 10, and many other places. This goeth

beyond inclination, as fire hath an inclination to ascend upward, but

something may violently keep it down that it cannot ascend actually.

A Christian may have a will to good, a strong and not a remiss will,

yet there are some impediments : Rom. vii. 18, ' For to will is present

with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not.' Incli-

nation implieth a remote power, but readiness the next or immediate

power. God's people, that have the seed of grace in them, yet how

unready are they to that which they desire to do ! Therefore a Chris-

tian ought always to keep himself in all readiness and fitness of dis-

position for his duty, whether it concern God, or ourselves, or others.

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This is opposite to dulness, sleepiness, listlessness, or wearisomeness in

our service, opposite to aicrjSia, which the schoolmen make to be one

of the seven deadly sins, a remiss, cold will, hanging off from God.

[3.] An earnest impulsion, which quickeneth us to all holy endea-

vours of obedience ; this is sometimes called the activity or working of

grace : ' Faith worketh by love,' Gal. v. G ; sometimes zeal, or an earnest

burning of affection towards God, or that holy ardour whereby we

repress those affections, unruly motions, and desires which are contrary

to his will, and do excite and stir up ourselves more and more to honour

him and please him : Titus ii. 14, ' Zealous of good works ;' sometimes

alacrity and cheerfulness, as we prevail in striving against sin, and our

love to God increaseth, 1 John v. 3, 4. All these are so many degrees.

First we can make conscience of doing our duty, but that is not

enough : a convinced man may have his conscience stirring and plead-

ing for God ; but a converted man, or a renewed heart, hath an incli-

nation, and not only an inclination but some fitness, and not only some

fitness but there is an impulsion, which discovereth itself either by

stirring or exciting to that which is good (though with difficulty),

which is the lowest degree. All grace is stirring, and would fain break

out into action ; for it is not a dead and sleepy habit, but seeketh to

break forth, and is called by the apostle, ' The lustings of the spirit,'

Gal v. 17. Another degree is zeal and love to the glory of God,

whom they honour and desire to exalt continually, which maketh them

complain of corruption, and to strive against it, and to shake off sloth-

fulness, and the weights of sin that hang upon us, when the Spirit gets

the upper hand, but the flesh is not easily subdued. Then we are

more at liberty to serve God, and so alacrity followeth, when a man

hath pleasure in good actions, and the flesh is so overcome and sub-

dued that it can make little or no opposition, and so we perform our

duty with more ease and delight, which is the highest degree.

SERMON III.

They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them :

but the xoise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. — Mat. XXV.

3,4.

I come now to the second effect.

Secondly, A habitual aversation to that which is evil : Ps. xcvii.

10, ' Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' It is as natural to grace to

hate evil as to love good. As love was made for God, and the things

which he hath commanded, and tends to the enjoyment of him, so

hatred was made for sin, and what is contrary to God. Man hath an

eschewing faculty as well as an embracing and choosing faculty, and

grace falleth upon both, and sanctifieth the one as well as the other :

Amos v. 15, ' Hate the evil, and love the good.' Love was given us

for good, and hatred for evil ; love was made for the chiefest good, and

all things that tend to it ; and hatred for that which is truly and pro-

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perly evil. Now concerning this effect of grace, I shall observe these

things.

1. Grace produceth a hatred of sin, not a bare abstinence from it.

Sin may be restrained by foreign reasons not proper to grace, as a clog

that hath a mind to the bait may abstain lor fear of the cudgel. So

men may abstain because of the penalty of laws, infamy, shame in

the world, or other reasons ; as Hainan refrained himself, that he

might the better take revenge upon the whole race of the Jews. Men

may refrain from sin, when there is not a rooted enmity against it ;

whereas in the saints there is a constant principle of resistance against

it, 1 John iii. 9, airep^xa pevov, ' The seed of God abideth in him.' The

grace of sanctiflcation doth change the nature of a man, and his heart

is set against that he loved before. Look, as the Lord will not respect

men's external practice of good, when it may be their hearts abhor and

loathe it, and are bent on other courses — he requireth chiefly that they

be rooted in the love of good and delight in it — so he will not accept

a simple not doing or forbearing evil, while it may be their hearts are

going a- whoring after it, but will have them really hate and detest it,

that there should be an abiding enmity in their hearts against it ; and

where it is so, that there is a habitual love of good and hatred of evil,

Christ will pass by many failings in practice ; as you may see, Roni.

vii. 22-25, that is the case there, ' The evil that I hate, that do I ; and

I delight in the law of God in the inward man.' Clear these two once,

and the remainders of sin will not be your ruin.

2. Grace produceth a hatred of sin as sin, out of a principle of love

to God, and as it is contrary to his law, and the new nature planted in

us: ' Ye that love the Lord, hate evil ;' and ' he that is born of God,

sinneth not ;' that is the principle, ' because the seed of God abideth

in you.' The schoolmen distinguish of two sorts and kinds of hatred

— odium abominationis, and odium inimiciticv. The first is defined

by Aquinas to be dissonantia qucedam appetitus ad id quod cvpprehen-

ditur ut repugnans et noxium — an aversation of the appetite to what

is apprehended repugnant and contrary to us. Such an hatred there

is in the regenerate, for they apprehend sin as repugnant and contrary

to their renewed will. To the unregenerate it is agreeable and suit-

able, as draff to the appetite of a swine, or grass and hay to a bullock

and horse. The other is a hatred of enmity, so called both for the

ground of it and the effect of it ; the ground as an evil, that which is

an enemy and hurtful to us, as sin is to our peace and happiness tem-

poral, spiritual, and eternal. But chiefly as to the effect of it, hatred

is a willing of evil and mischief to the thing or person hated. Both

these hatreds are in the children of God. They hate sin not only as

it may bring loss and detriment, horror of conscience and damnation,

but out of the pure love of God, as it is contrary to his image and

will ; and they hate it with a hostile hatred, so as to seek the destruc-

tion of it. Non cessai in Icesione peccati, sed in exlerminio. It doth

not scratch at the face of sin, but is seeking to mortify and subdue it ;

and therefore are always mourning, praying, watching, striving, famish-

ing it by cutting off its provisions and denying its satisfactions, and

still following the work close, till we get the mastery of it.

3. I observe that renewing grace doth so far obtain and produce

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this effect in the hearts of those that are under it, that their hatred to

sin is greater than their love to it, and sin is thereby more and more

weakened and subdued in the soul. We flatter ourselves with notions of

love and hatred, unless there be some answerable success and prevalence.

It cannot be imagined that sin should live in its full strength where

there is a fixed settled frame of heart against it ; that there should be

in the soul a working warring principle that shall rouse up a man

daily to take heed of it as the greatest evil, and yet sin should be as

powerful, and as frequently and freely break out as it doth in others.

No ; where there is such an enmity, hostility, and irreconcilableness,

or, to say in a word, such a habitual aversation, it cannot be : 1 John

iii. 9, ' He that is born of God doth not commit sin ; his seed remaineth

in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' He that hath

such a blessed change wrought in him by the operation of God's

Spirit as to be transformed in the spirit of his mind, it cannot be sup-

posed but that grace will have such energy and efficacy upon him as

to prevent the life and growth of sin, and restrain the practice of it;

that the habits of grace being cherished, this must needs be famished

and starved by degrees. A man that hath a fixed root of ungodliness

in him, he is at sin's beck, the devil's slave ; but a permanent habit of

grace doth produce a constant carefulness, that God be not dishonoured

or displeased. The apostle telleth us that 'Christ bore our sins in his

body upon the tree, that we, being dead unto sin, may be alive unto

righteousness/ 1 Peter ii. 24. Now certainly this effect is obtained in

those that have benefit by his death, or have assured it by faith.

Before they were alive to sin, being active, and delighting in the com-

mission of it, but dead to righteousness, impotent and indisposed for

any spiritual act ; but afterwards their love to sin is weakened, and

their hearts quickened to spiritual life. Once more, that there is a

decay of the evil principle appeareth by that of Gal. v. 16, 17, ' This

I say then, walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lusts of the

flesh ; for the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against

the flesh, and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do

the things that ye would.' This place showeth that the lusts of the

flesh, though they be not wholly abandoned, yet they shall not be

fulfilled. We take it otherwise ; but the meaning is, the unrenewed

part shall be kept under ; we cannot fully effectuate the evil we would.

The spirit always opposeth what we would do according to the direc-

tion of the flesh. There are two active principles never wholly dead.

The flesh doth not advance with a full gale, but meeteth with a con-

trary tide of resistance from the spirit.

Use 1. Is to reprove those that can afford a little religion, but

cannot afford enough. It may be good words without practice, or

practice without principle. Good words without practice : many talk

well, their notions are high and strict; but observe them narrowly,

and you will find them cold and careless ; like the carbuncle, at a

distance it seemeth all on fire, but touch it and it is key-cold. ' Be

warmed, be cloathed,' will not pass for charity, nor opinions for faith,

nor notions and elevated strains for godliness. You would laugh at him

that would think to pay his debts with the noise of money, and instead

of opening his purse, shake it. It is as ridiculous to think to satisfy

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God or discharge our duty by fine words or heavenly language, with-

out a heavenly heart of life, or afford practice without a principle, or

an inward disposition or inclination of heart to holy things. It is not

enough to do good, but we must get the habit of doing good ; to

believe, but we must get the habit of faith ; to do a virtuous action,

but we must have the habit of virtue ; to perform an act of obedience,

but we must get the root of obedience. The soul must be divested of

evil habits, and decked and adorned with habits of grace, and endowed

with new and spiritual qualities, before it can have a principle of life

in itself. But most men content themselves with a little good affec-

tion, that is soon spent : Hosea vi. 4, Ephraim's goodness is like the

morning dew, that wets the surface, but is soon dried up. Many have

some good things in them, but they want a firm root, which is a

habitual inclination towards God. Oh ! the difference that is between

a man that forceth himself to do good, and one whose heart is inclined

to do good ! He doth not go to it like a bear to the stake, but with a

native willingness : he is inclined to think of good, inclined to talk of

good and holy discourse ; inclined to pray, to exercise himself to god-

liness : the Lord hath put a new nature in him, and he feeleth an

internal mover, or an inward impression that moveth him : this is

life, but it is little regarded. Many have a show, but life cannot be

painted ; otherwise a handsome picture of godliness men may keep up.

But what are the reasons of this ?

1. Negligence. They are loath to be at the pains to get grace, to

be at the expense of brokenness of heart, and that humble waiting

and earnest praying that it will cost us. A form is easily gotten and

maintained : painted fire needs no fuel to keep it in ; vanishing affec-

tions are soon stirred. A little remorse in a prayer or delight in a

sermon they may have ; but it will cost us labour and diligence to have

the heart strongly bent towards God : Prov. xiii. 4, ' The soul of the

sluggard desireth, and hath nothing ; but the soul of the diligent shall

be made fat.' All excellent things have their incident difficulties, and

nothing is gotten without diligence, labour, and serious mindfulness,

That which is opposed to common grace is casting off slothfulness,

and a diligence to keep some ' full assurance of hope to the end,'

Heb. vi. 11, 12.

2. Inconsideration. They do not consider how they shall appear

before Christ at the day of judgment. Therefore are they called

' foolish virgins,' because they did not foresee all events to provide

against them ; as if the spouse should come later. They thought this

oil they had might suffice, or they should have opportunity to get

more. Christianity is a business of consideration. When Christ had

laid down the terms, he biddeth them ' sit down and count the charges,'

Luke xiv. 28. A builder doth but lay the foundation of his shame in

his cost, if he be not able to carry on the building ; a war were

better never be begun, if we have not means to maintain it. If you

mean to build for heaven, to bid defiance against the devil, world and

flesh, you must not rashly engage, but deliberately resolve. We must

consider the quality of Christ's laws, what visible oppositions there

are, that we may knowingly, all difficulties considered, put ourselves

into his hands. There is an anxious and serious deliberation neces-

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sary ; otherwise, to leap into profession slightly maketh way for apos-

tasy, or else for such a cheap religion which costs nothing, and there-

fore is worth nothing.

3. Some unmortified corruption or indulged lust, which hindereth

both the indication and prevalency of grace ; the heart divided, touched

partly with God and partly with the creature, neither loosed nor

unloosed, but between both, can never be sound and upright : James

i. 8, ' A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' A man must

purge himself from lusts before he be a vessel fit for God's use, 2 Tim.

ii. 20. There is some delight in lawful or unlawful things, that lieth

between us and Christ, and is so near and dear to us, as to draw away

the heart, at least in part, that the heavenly plantation cannot thrive

and prosper in our souls, Luke viii. 14. There is some unmortified

root of bitterness : Jer. iv. 3, 4, ' Sow not among thorns ; plough up

the fallow ground.' Till God be our scope, religion can never be our

work. If the pleasing, enjoying, or glorifying him were more sincerely

intended, other, things would come on with more ease and success ; as

the water floweth of its own accord if the pipe be not leaky. If the

honour of Christ, his glory, will, and command, lie nearest and closest

to the heart, then sin would be more loathed than any other thing, more

feared, more avoided, and we would follow our work more heartily.

We are enlivened in the means, by an unfeigned regarding of the end ;

our carelessness cometh from this, that God is only minded as a matter

by the by. The end and means always go together. If anything be

prized more than God, or equal with him, or apart from him, a little

grace and godliness will serve the turn. If God were entirely our end,

we would be mainly for him, and most industrious to approve ourselves

to him ; if it be not so, something there is that causeth that neglect,

that must be found out ; something that cloggeth thy heart, and de-

taineth thee from this effectual pursuit ; some lust, the gratifying of

which is the delight and pleasure which contents us, and therefore are

we cold and slight in religion.

4. Unbelief ; for faith doth enliven all our notions of God, and

Christ, and heaven, and the day of judgment, and inaketh them effec-

tual and powerful. The apostle telleth us, Heb. xi. 1, ' That faith is

the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.'

It puts a presence into things, and so affects us as if the things believed

were before our eyes ; otherwise, a man cannot see things at a dis-

tance, 2 Peter i. 9. Christ and eternity are afar off, hence to an

unbeliever they seem little, and therefore, it is not made a business of

the greatest weight or importance to seek after them. At the day of

judgment how will wicked men stamp and tear their hair, when

matters of faith become matters of sense, that they minded them no

more ! Oh ! if I had known this, I should never have dreamed out

my time as I have done, saith the convinced wretch, but made a more

serious business of my preparation. If the day of judgment be too far

off, let us lay the scene a little nearer. Suppose one of the damned

souls now in torments, that feeleth that which he would never believe,

thus crying out, Oh ! had I thought my lazy desires and good mean-

ings would have done me no more good, that my slothfulness would

have ended so sadly, I would rather have wept out my eyes, and have

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filled the world with sorrowful complaints ; I would have bereaved

myself of sleep by night, and refused my bread by day, rather than

to have wanted time to have thought of God, and the great affairs of

my soul. If our faith be so short-sighted that we cannot look as far

as the region of darkness, time may come in this world that we shall

wish we had done more for God and our precious and immortal souls.

First or last we bear witness to this truth, when the neglected soul

cometh to be separated from the pampered flesh or over-prized body.

If we would learn to shut the eye of sense, and open the eye of faith,

we might see it now.

Use 2. Is to press you to get oil in your vessels, to be rooted and

grounded in faith, settled in love, hope, zeal, temperance, and perfect

what is lacking to every grace. That you may be sensible what I

exhort you to, I shall give you the sum of it by degrees.

1. Do not merely affect the reputation of good people, and rest there.

As the Lord saith of the church of Sardis, Rev. iii. 1 , ' Thou hast a

name that thou livest, and art dead.' Do not rest in this, that you

have a name to live. God judgeth not as man judgeth. Man judge th

according to outward appearance, but God judgeth according to the

reality of the thing. Many have the name without the thing : Isa.

xlviii. 2, ' For they call themselves of the holy city, and stay them-

selves upon the God of Israel ; ' that is, they get themselves a name to

be his people, but they have not the thing itself. On the other side,

we read of some ' that are Israelites indeed,' John i. 47. Some are

only so in the show and outside, and some are ' disciples indeed,' John

viii. 31 ; so in reality ; others are so in pretence only. There is no

true ground of solid comfort but in this, in being real disciples. So

John viii. 37, we read of some that were ' free indeed.' The Jews had

the name of freemen, but were not ' free indeed ; ' stood upon their

liberty ; they were in bondage to no man. Some are religious indeed,

humble indeed, fear God indeed : when a man hath gotten the thing,

he may refer himself to God for the name.

2. Do not rest in a common work of grace. Look, as in the beasts

there is some little tincture of reason, so in temporaries there is some-

thing that looks like saving grace, but is not ; something that resem-

bles "it, and looketh most like it ; yet it is but the shadow of grace, not

true grace itself. Historical faith is the shadow of true saving faith.

There are some outward lineaments of repentance in Ahab's humili-

ation, and Judas his compunction ; of spiritual affection in Herod's

delight in John ; and ' the stony ground received the word with joy ; '

and some show of reformation there was in those that escaped the

pollutions of the world. Therefore if you rest here, without a power-

ful and inward affecting of the whole heart, you may come short of

glory. The grace of temporaries is good in its kind, but must not be

rested in. It is good in its kind, it is like priming the post, to make

it receptive of other colours ; it is an inchoate, imperfect thing. They

are affected almost with the same feeling the godly are, come very near.

How nice a point is that wherein the temporary and the real Christian

differ ! Both pray with sorrow, hear with joy, perform duties with

some enlargement and sweetness — Similifere sensu afficiuntur — yet, as

two hills may seem very near at the top, when their bottoms are tar

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distant one from another, so these operation may seem near together,

when in bottom and root they much differ. These motions argue

God's Spirit working on them, not dwelling in them. Actuated they

are with the Spirit of Christ assisting, but not reforming ; as an angel

sometimes appears in an assumed body. But it is dangerous to rest

in this ; it maketh our sin and judgment the greater if after a taste we

rest in a common work. Historical faith, if not growing into a saving

sound faith, it is a kind of mocking of God, and a hypocrite's portion.

As for instance, we profess to believe him omniscient, yet fear not to

sin in his presence ; omnipotent, yet cannot depend upon his all-suffi-

ciency ; to believe a day of judgment, yet make no preparation for our

account, Titus i. 16. Men's sins and judgments are aggravated

according to the sense they have had of religion, and so 'their latter

end may be worse than their beginning,' 2 Peter ii. 20. And sad it

will be for those that from hopeful beginnings fall off from God. I

will tell you, a man may live and die with a temporary faith and affec-

tions to God and holiness, without making any visible apostasy, and

yet have no sound faith of the right constitution. Yea, if you regard

what little rooting grace hath in men's hearts, how weak their pulse

beateth this way, how strong their affections are to the world and the

things thereof, how little they can vanquish the cares and fears of this

world, and the temptations that arise from voluptuous living, it is to be

feared the far greatest part of Christians are but temporaries.

3. Oh ! then, be sure to get this truth of grace into your hearts.

Let your hearts be effectually subdued to God ; let there be a principle

of life set up in them. Religion respects our principles as well as our

performances : 2 Tim i. 5, ' The end of the commandment is charity,

out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned/

There must be a renewed heart as the fountain, a well-informed

conscience as our guide, and faith unfeigned as our great encourage-

ment. And so all acts of charity to God and men are accepted with

God as a piece of obedience done to him. If we will not regard the

manner, God will not regard the matter. Oh ! then, get this renewed

heart, and a lively faith, and an awakened conscience : this is to get

oil into yoar vessels, and if once you get this, it will never fail, but

increase exceedingly, like the Sareptan's oil.

But how shall we get it ?

I answer — (1.) You have this oil from Christ. The unction is

from the Holy One, 1 John ii. 20. As the precious oil was first

poured on Aaron's head, and then came down to the skirts of his

garment, so Christ is first possessed of the Spirit, and then we have it

by our union with him : John i. 16, ' Of his fulness we receive grace

for grace.' We must go to the fountain every day to seek new supplies.

Christ was 'anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows.' Zech.

iv., Christ is represented by the bowl and the two olive-trees that

always poured forth golden oil. Christ as mediator is the storehouse

of the church, who is instructed with all gifts and graces for our benefit.

Oh ! bring your empty vessels to this golden olive-tree. The widow

only brought casks, the oil failed not till the vessels failed.

(2.) If you would have it from Christ, you must use the means of

grace, the word, prayer, sacraments, meditation. We need continual

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supplies, must use continual prayers, seek the grace of the Spirit to

keep in our lamps, Luke xi. 13. So the word; God droppeth in

something to the soul that waiteth on him : Mark iv. 24, ' Take heed

how you hear ; for with what measure ye mete it shall be measured

to you again.' If we he earnest and diligent in waiting upon God,

God will abound to us in blessing his word to us. So for meditation ;

Mat. xiii. 19, the highway ground did not bring the word to their

minds again ; doth not revolve it, mindeth it not, heedeth it not. So

for the Lord's supper ; it is a means to root us in the love of God when

we so often renew our oath of allegiance to him, to excite our faith in

Christ. All these are a price put into our hands to get oil in our

lamps, and prepare for his coming.

(3.) Keep your vessels clean. The Spirit dwelleth not but in a

clean heart : doves build not their habitations on dunghills. He

cometh as an efficient cause, as a Spirit assisting, before he comes as

a Spirit inhabiting, and purifieth our hearts by faith.

(4.) After you have gotten this oil, cherish it, that it may not

decay. Of its own nature it would do so ; witness that stock of original

righteousness which Adam had. God's promise by which it is secured

suppose th our endeavours to waste it : Luke viii. 18, ' Whosoever hath,

to him shall be given ; but whosoever hath not. from him shall be

taken even that which he seemeth to have.'

(5.) Do not only cherish, and keep it from decay, but see that you

increase it : 2 Peter i. 5, ' Add to your faith virtue, and to virtue

knowledge ;' 1 Thes. iii. 10, ' Perfect what is lacking ;' 1 Thes. iv. 1,

' That as you have received of us how you ought to walk, and please

God, so you should abound therein.' A little faith will be as no faith ;

not honourable to God, nor comfortable to you, nor useful to others.

All our doubts, perplexities, uncertainties, come from the smallness of

our graces. It will not make an evidence, therefore give diligence.

No endeavour, labour, pursuit after God, but hath its recompense ;

not an earnest thought, an earnest prayer, or time spent. What shall I

say ? They whose hearts are upon the ways thereof, go on ' from strength

to strength,' You are almost at home; nearer than when you first

believed ; then you thought all your pains too much, now all too little.

Let me apply all to the sacrament.

1. There we come to meet the bridegroom in a way of grace. The

marriage covenant between God incarnate and his espoused ones is

here celebrated and solemnised. The sacrament is a transfiguration

of the last marriage-supper, to ascertain us what entertainment we

shall have at the day of judgment, when the bride, the Lamb's wife,

shall be made ready, and clothed with fine linen, Eev. xix. 23, and

then be received into the nuptial feast : ' Blessed are they that are

called to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.' All is now prepared in

this duty.

2. In some respect there should be as serious preparation for the one

as for the other, as we would prepare to die, or prepare to meet Christ

the judge. Christ did not wash his disciples' feet when he took them

with him to Tabor, to his transfiguration, but when he took them with

him at his last supper, John xiii. 7. Surely, to rush upon the pre-

sence of the bridegroom with a perfunctory, careless, common frame

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of spirit, is a dangerous thing. When a people come hand-over-head,

prepare themselves slightly, pray slightly before they come, and live

carelessly and negligently, they slight the bridegroom, and wrong

themselves, strengthen themselves in sin, rather than against it.

Methinks it looks like going to the day of judgment. Here we

receive the pledges of our salvation or damnation.

3. We should come with oil in our vessels as well as in our lamps.

[1.] Our lamps should be kept burning bright. If you are sluggish

now, it is a sign you are slight in the whole. Surely, now the king

sitteth at his table, Cant. i. 2, our spikenard should send forth the

smell thereof ; a lively exercise of grace. Now we come for meat

which perisheth not ; now is our familiar converse with Christ, and

near communion with him ; now we come to our legal investiture ;

Christ and all his benefits are delivered by these signs which he hath

instituted. As if a man should say, Here is my house, when a deed

is delivered, and you give up the key, or give possession of land by a

tnrf : this is our solemn taking possession of him and all his benefits.

We receive Christ in the promises of the covenant, but here is a par-

ticular close application. In the word Christ is offered, and exposed

to all, as the brazen serpent, that whoever looked upon him might be

healed ; but this supper is like the blood sprinkled upon the door-

posts. In the work, Christ and immortality are brought to light.

Now Christ is slain before our eyes ; the bread is put into our hands

and mouths.

[2.] We should come with oil in our vessels. Would we have the

Spirit blow upon a dead coal ? He findeth nothing in us to work

upon. We are bidden to examine ; and what must we examine ? 1

Cor. xi. 28. The apostle will tell you : ' Whether you be in the faith

or no,' 2 Cor. xiii. 5. But to speak to this case : I confess, that in

foro ecclesice, in the court of the church, all are virgins that take their

lamps, that do profess to believe ; all these must be admitted ; but in

foro coeli, in the court of heaven, none but converted ones are admitted ;

but in foro conscientice, in the court of conscience, I dare not discou-

rage those that have the grace of the second or third ground. It is a

means to strengthen them in faith, hope, and love, and make them

more firm in the covenant of God ; and the difference is too nice

between temporary grace and saving grace for any to exclude them-

selves. I am bound to come with grace, but I am not bound to come

with assurance. Besides, in the kingdom of grace Christ will not shut

them out. They that have good affections should come, but with this

caution : I would press them to mind the renouncing and engaging-

part of the covenant, and earnestly to break the league between them-

selves and their own ways, and engage themselves more firmly to God

for time to come ; that you may not think as you have done, or speak

as you have done, nor behave yourselves in your relations as you have

done ; but throw sin out of doors. I would press you in the apostle's

words, Heb. x. 22, ' Let us draw near with a true heart, having our

hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with

clean water.' The one relateth to the duty part. ' Let us draw nigh

with a true heart ;' the other relateth to the promissory part. Though

your grace be common grace, it is this way moulded into special.

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Boci. 2. That this will be found to be true wisdom, and the other

foll y.

For wisdom, to begin with that. Wisdom is index sui et obliqui.

Wisdom lieth —

1. In proposing a right end.

2. In the choice of fit means.

3. In an earnest prosecution of the end by these means. This is

the property of wisdom in the general, and it holdeth true in godly

wisdom. The wise virgins did so. Their end was right; to be

admitted into the nuptial feast, or everlasting enjoyment of God.

And then they use right means, such as will bring them to the end.

We do not use to draw ships in the sea with horses, nor draw waggons

with the wind. We must not use contrary means, nor insufficient

means. We cannot go to the bottom of a well that is thirty foot deep

with a line that is but ten foot. We must use such as will certainly

do. The wisdom of God hath fixed means for us, and we are doubly

fools if we will not use them opportunely, carefully and constantly ;

else it is a ' price put into a fool's hand,' Prov. xvi. 17. The wise

virgins did all this ; sought oil in time both for their lamps and vessels,

Luke xiii. 24. On the contrary, he that contents himself with a pro-

fession of Christ, without a work of grace upon his heart, is a fool ;

he is not a profane fool that doth the contrary, but a professing fool ;

that sort of profession is better than profaneness, so far it is a degree

of wisdom ; but rested in it is folly, it faileth in all the points of wisdom

in the end. They do not esteem the Lord as the chief good, for they

think a little ease of the flesh, or a little sensual liberty, or a satisfaction

of a lust, to be better ; or honour, or pleasure, or gain ; this quiets them

in the neglect or want of God. They see some good in Christ, offer

fair for him, but take him not as the chiefest good ; they are willing

to part with something, but not with all for his sake.

SERMON IV.

Wli'de the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. —

Mat. XXV. 5.

We have seen wherein they differed, now we shall see again wherein

they agree. In the words observe —

1. What happened to the virgins, they cdl slumbered and slept.

2. The occasion of it (I do not say the cause), while the bridegroom,

tarried. The cause of sleeping was infirmitas humana ; the occasion

of it, mora sponsi. In the first of these —

[1.] Who? then all.

[2.] What ? slumbered and slept.

First, Who? they cdl. It is no wonder to hear it of the foolish

virgins, but that the wise should do it, there is the difficulty ; there-

fore some of the ancients understand it of death, which is called sleep

in scripture ; but that is improbable, and suiteth not with the frame

and drift of this parable. (Some would understand it distributively,

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not conjunctively ; that the wise slumbered, and the foolish slept ; but

it is not said slumbered or slept, but slumbered and slept. The mean-

ing is, all of them were not so diligent in their duty as they should

have been : even the good are in part negligent as well as the foolish,

though they always keep a good conscience, and a heart in some mea-

sure always prepared to meet Christ.

Secondly, What ? slumbered and slept ; wherein the degree of their

security is set forth. They did not only slumber, which is a less fail-

ing, but slept.

Thirdly, The order, first slumbered, and then slept.

Doct. That the foolish and wise both slumber and sleep.

I shall first inquire, What this slumbering and sleeping is.

Secondly, How far it may befall the children of God, or the wise

virgins.

Thirdly, The causes and reasons of it.

First, What this slumbering and sleeping is. It is twofold — that

of the body, and that of the mind. That of the body, when the senses

cease for a time to do their office ; that of the mind is a secure state of

soul, and that is twofold — moral and spiritual.

1. Moral. When reason and natural knowledge is as it were asleep

and useless to us, a man doth not act as a reasonable creature : Ps.

xciv. 8, '0 ye brutish among the people, when will ye be wise?'

and Ps. xxii. 27, ' All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn

to the Lord ;' Ps. cxix. 59, ' I thought on my ways, and turned my

feet unto thy testimonies.' If men did improve common principles,

show themselves men, they could not continue in that course of life

wherein they allow themselves. In part this sleep of reason may be-

fall the children of God : they do not consider nor turn their minds to

their affairs, nor act as men whose eyes are open.

2. Spiritual sleeping. Here I shall show the nature and effects

of it.

[1.] The nature of it ; when graces are not lively and kept in exer-

cise. I shall instance in those three theological graces, faith, hope, and

love ; a weak dead faith, a feeble sleepy love, a cold and careless hope.

(1.) A weak and dead faith, that consists more in a form of know-

ledge than a lively assent to the truths of godliness. A dead opinion-

ative belief may stand with a carnal life : James ii. 20, ' Faith without

works is dead.' The word of God is come to them in word only, not

in power ; it puts no life into what we do believe, 1 Thes. ii. 13 ; doth

•not work effectually. This will fit the slumbering and sleeping of the

foolish virgins. But alas ! the wise have their drowsy fits ; the truths

of the word concerning God, Christ, heaven, and hell, have not such a

lively influence upon them, by the blandishments of worldly prosperity.

Faith is fallen asleep, ready to give place to the flesh, and they are

governed more by fancy and appetite than by the heavenly mind ;

there is no consideration of the vanity of earthly things ; the heart is

kept strange to God and heaven, and the soul is taken up with carnal

projects more than it should be.

(2.) A feeble sleepy love, which doth not level and direct our actions

to the great end of them, which is the pleasing and glorifying of God,

so that they live too much to themselves. Love in vigour doth over-

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rule us to live unto God : 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ' For the love of Christ

constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then

were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they should not hence-

forth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them and rose

again.' And this keepeth us more sincere and uniform in our course,

always tending to the great end.

(3.) A cold and careless hope, when there is not that earnest and

desirous expectation of blessedness to come which doth fortify us

against the allurements of sense: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up for

yourselves treasure upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt,

and where thieves break through and steal ; but lay up for yourselves

treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and

where thieves do not break through and steal ; for where your treasure

is, there will your hearts be also/ They do not mind their true

treasure.

[2.] The effects of this sleepiness are seen in these things : —

(1.) In some intermission of their care and caution. Watching is

a diligent taking heed to ourselves and ways, so as we keep ourselves

from sin. We are in constant danger of sins that come on us by

insensible degrees : Ps. xxxix. 1, ' I said I would take heed to my

ways, that I sin not with my tongue.' The best are surprised, and

corruption often breaketh out. We may say of them, as Christ of the

damsel, They are not dead, but sleep. The children of God are some-

times overtaken by their inadvertency, Gal. vi. 1, or overborne by the

violence of temptations, James i. 14, inconsiderately and suddenly sur-

prised with sin. So subtle and assiduous is Satan in tempting, and so

ready is corruption to close with the temptation as soon as it is repre-

sented, that if a child of God doth but abate anything of his circum-

spection and diligence, he will be surprised by some one sin or other,

and thereby be brought to dishonour God, and so lay a stumbling-

block before others. Besides those sins of daily incursion and sudden

surreption, Satan lieth in wait to draw us to greater offences, that may

dishonour God and wound our peace, and scandalise the world against

our profession.

(2.) Some abatement of our zeal and fervency. We are not always

fervent in spirit, and do not keep up our life and seriousness in the

duties of holiness. Our graces are not actuated and kept in exercise,

but suffer some decay, though they be not quite dead. Faith is weak,

love is cold, Mat. xxiv. 12. There is not that lively hope, 1 Peter

i. 3. Christians should not only be living, but lively : 1 Peter ii. 5,

' Ye as living stones.' Nay, there may be so great a damp and

quenching upon us, that there is no outward visible difference between

a dead man and a dying Christian : all things in us may be ready to

die : Eev. iii. 2, ' Be watchful, and strengthen the things that remain,

that are ready to die.' Life is even quite gone in some cases, when sin

hath made fearful havoc in the conscience.

(3.) In forgetfulness or non-attendancy to the Lord's coming. When

we live merrily, quietly, in a careless and unprepared estate ; this is

necessarily to be taken in as the cause of the two former. In the

slumbering and sleeping of the foolish virgins the case is clear ; Christ's

absence or tarrying long is the occasion the world takes to grow secure

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and wicked. The scoffers walked after their own lusts, because they

said, ' Where is the promise of his coming ?' 2 Peter iii. 3, 4. And

in the degenerate church, the reason why they were given to sensu-

ality, carnal pomp, and persecution, is set down, Mat. xxiv. 49, ' My

Lord delayeth his coming.' Therefore the officers of the church smite

their fellow-servants, and eat and drink with the drunken, encourage

the wicked, and smite the godly with censures ; as it was with the

Israelites, there was no speech of making a calf when Moses first went

up to the mount, but when he tarried long, Exod. xxxii., ' And as for

this Moses, we wot not what is become of him ;' then nothing would

content them but making a calf. The ordinances and institutions of

Christ had never been so perverted in the Christian world, but that

they forgot Christ's coming to see how they have been observed :

1 Tim. vi. 14, ' That thou keep this commandment without spot,

unrebukable, until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.' But now

for the wise virgins. Alas ! there is not such a constant waiting for

the coming of the Lord ; for if we did not leave off to think of it,

surely we would walk more cautiously, and serve God with greater

ardency and alacrity of spirit ; but when we forget it, we let loose the

reins, and slacken our diligence, and yield to the importunity of the

flesh, and suffer ourselves to be distracted with worldly cares, or be-

numbed with fleshly delights, that we do not mind our duty of prepar-

ing for the Lord's coming.

Secondly, How far may this seize upon Christians ? The question

may be stated negatively and affirmatively ; how far it may, and how

far it may not.

1. Affirmatively.

[1.] It may seize upon them not only when they are young, but

when they are of long standing. When they are young : Many

a man newly converted, having had as yet no thorough experience of

the strength of sin, the danger of temptations, and his own weakness,

may bear a little too high upon the confidence of his own resolutions,

which, because they are sincere, he thinketh they will easily obtain

their effect. In this rank I put Peter, whilst as yet the Spirit was not

poured out, and was only under his Master's wing : I count him but a

novice then, in comparison of what he was afterwards. He was so

confident of his affection to Christ and resolution, that he had not a due

sense of his danger, Mat. xxvi. 33. But alas ! how soon were his

unpractised wings clipped, and he taken in the snare of the fowler !

Honest Peter would not believe such weakness in himself ; and so

inexperienced Christians can hardly believe themselves to be so weak

as a temptation showeth them to be ; the more sincere their purpose

is, the more confident they are in their own strength, even when near

a fearful fall. So a man of long standing, being assured of salvation,

may grow negligent ; and supposing he hath grace, and is possessed

of the love of God, presumes that he needeth not such diligence as when

he was doubtful of his state ; and if he go round in a course of duty,

and avoid grosser sins, he may think it is enough, as if he were now

past all danger, and so insensibly falleth asleep or into decay: Kev. iii.

18, ' Because thou sayest that 1 am rich, and increased with goods,

and have need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched,

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and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked : I counsel thee to buy

of me gold tried in the fire that thou mayest be rich, and white

raiment that thou mayest be clothed, that the shame of thy nakedness

do not appear, and eye-salve that thou mayest see.' It is not spoken

to the gross carnal, or to beginners, or persons unacquainted with

Christ, but to lukewarm professors, after the first labours of regenera-

tion, and the difficulties of reconciliation with God are passed over, and

the terrors of the law well vanquished, and some peace and confidence

gotten ; then we are in danger of security, by which means all may run

to waste in the soul, and sins break out and make our blindness and

nakedness appear. The wise virgins slept not until their main work

.was in some measure over : and therefore a strange security and

sleepiness is incident to us, and may befall not only the wicked, who

scarce ever think of the world to come, being blinded with present

things, but those that are good have their drowsy fits, by which they

remit of their zeal, and grow more dead, and are not so diligent

in seeking occasions to do good.

[2.] When we are in greatest danger, and matters most concerning

us are in hand, and God calleth most for our service, and so have most

need to watch, then are we usually most secure ; witness the disciples

upon Mount Olivet, after many warnings given them by Christ, Mat.

xxvi. 41-45. Until Christ telleth them, 'Sleep on now;' that is,

sleep if you can ; it will not be long ere you are thoroughly awakened ;

so often are the saints slumbering and sleeping when most need to be

awake, and misspend the time in sluggishness and carnal rest which

is granted them to prepare themselves for trial. So Jonah i. 5, when

a storm arises for his sake, though the winds blow, and the sea roar,

and the mariners at their wits' end, yet Jonah was fast asleep. Those

most guilty, and those whom the correction pointed at, are most

secure under it. And Samson is asleep when the Philistines are

ready to come upon him. Now, if ever, should men be awake. Now

we are awakened by God's providence, and the estate of the Christian

world round about us ; now we should exercise all the grace and skill

we can.

[3.] They may show their sleepiness in their public relations ; as

while the envious man sowed tares, the husbandmen were asleep,

Mat. xiii. 25. Many times magistrates are asleep when abuses creep

in and eat out the bowels of the commonwealth ; and ministers are

asleep while the kingdom of Christ is undermined; masters of families

asleep while disorders creep into their houses. Magistrates are watchers

as well as private Christians, Rom. xiii. 6, who sleep, and neglect the

care of souls. But especially ministers are to watch over their people's

souls, and should put forth their utmost care and diligence, Heb.

xiii. 17.

[4.] It may befall them after some solemn service, 2 Chron. xxxv.

20. After this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, then he falleth

into that rash engagement against Pharaoh Necho, which cost him his

life. Hezekiah after his reformation fell into pride and provocation of

God, 2 Chron. xxxii. Many times when we have performed some

good service to God, we take occasion to be more careless and secure.

We think we are privileged by our former diligence: 'If the righteous

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trust in his righteousness, and commit iniquity,' Ezek. xxxiii. 13; that

is, upon the presumption that he laid in a fore-merit. Our hearts

will be seeking some unlawful liberty, and we intermit our watch

upon such occasions.

2. Negatively. We must make the exceptions that are necessary.

[1.] Though the wise virgins may slumber and sleep, and there be an

intermission of the acts of grace, yet no intercision of the habits of grace,

or radical inclination to God. Gradics remittitur, actus intermittiiur,

habitus non amittitur. Some degrees may be remitted, acts intermitted,

but the habit not extinguished ; still the seed of God remaineth in them ;

love is the predominant habit. Sin doth not possess the heart instead

of God, 1 John ii. 15. The habitual bent of the soul is more for God

than for the flesh or the world. However he fail in some individual

actions, the scope and tenor of his life is for God and sincere obed-

ience. There is life and sap at the root, though in the winter the trees

be without leaves and blossoms : Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart

waketh.' There is faith, and hope, and love in their hearts all this

while; the Spirit of God abideth in them, and keepeth alive his work:

2 Tim. i. 14, ' That good thing which was committed unto thee, keep

by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.' The Spirit remaineth in

the saints, to maintain the habits of grace. Their choice of God for

their portion remaineth unshaken. They have chosen the better part,

adhere to it, and have a general purpose to please God in all things.

[2.] A universal slumber is not usually incident to the saints. It

is not the sleep of the whole man as to all goodness ; it is not in all

parts of the soul. If there be a remiss will, and dead affections, yet

not a sleepy conscience ; something that taketh God's part, as appear-

eth, because they are unsatisfied with this dull and drowsy estate.

[3.] They are more easily alarmed and roused up out of it than

others that sleep the sleep of death. Their faith and love is soon

awake again, and easily set a- work for God; there is somewhat to

work upon. A true Christian riseth by unfeigned repentance, when

his conscience hath but leisure, and helps to deliberate, and bethinks

what he hath done ; and so much the better resoiveth and bethinketh

himself against his sin for the time to come.

[4.] When they arise again, and repent, and do their first works,

they are more earnest and fervent than they were before : as it were

to make amends for their former languishing, and to redeem the time

they have lost, they double their diligence.

Thirdly, I come to the reasons of this sleepiness.

1. There are two principles in the children of God — the flesh in-

clining to sleep, and the spirit to wake : Mat xxvi. 41, ' The spirit

indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak ; ' and therefore the degree of

grace which the best attain unto in this life is mixed with imperfection.

The guiding and commanding faculties do but imperfectly direct, and

the inferior faculties imperfectly obey. It is the office of the under-

standing and the will to command, of the inferior faculties to obey.

There is weakness in all of them ; therefore it is said, James iii. 2, ' In

many things we offend all.' The understanding in many things is but

a blind guide ; the will is but in part rectified, and so cannot exercise

such a powerful command over our thoughts, passions, and senses.

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2. Variety of outward occurrences, working upon the diversity of

principles in us ; as sometimes we are in a prosperous estate, some-

times in deep troubles ; both may cause this deadness and drowsiness

in us. Sometimes deep troubles make us ' weary of well-doing,' 2 Thes.

iii. 13. So Heb. xii. 3, 'Consider him that endured such contradiction

of sinners, lest you be weary, and faint in your minds.' Now, as this

weariness and heaviness causeth sleep in the body, so it doth in the

soul. We are tired in God's service, and then our wheels are clogged.

A man may be secure in trouble, but usually he is so in time of peace.

Peace, wealth, and honour are often abused to spiritual drowsiness, and

secure neglect of God : ' Ease slayeth the fool,' Prov. i. 32. We had

need watch when Delilah spreads her lap for us, and the delights of

the world open their bosom to us. Surfeiting with the abundance of

worldly prosperity, we neglect the power of religion, and please our-

selves with the form. David, enjoying peace and plenty, slew Uriah

his friend, who in his adversity spared Saul his enemy ; yea, his heart

smote him but for the cutting off the lap of his garment. In the

abundance of outward comforts we sit loose from God ; therefore we

have those cautions, Deut. viii. from ver. 7 to ver. 14.

3. Conversing with spiritual sluggards, that count it a high piece

of wisdom not to be too forward. Irreligious company and example

is a great matter, and hath a mighty force upon us ; and though it

doth not begin sin in the soul, it doth increase it, Isa. vi. 6. Sin is

by propagation, not by imitation ; but yet the contagion of example is

a great advantage to corruption. To be among warm, heavenly,

mortified, self-denying Christians, is a great advantage in the spiritual

life. There is a notable provocation and excitement in their example.

Saul among the prophets had his raptures, 1 Sam. x. 10 ; Heb. x. 24,

' Let us provoke one another to love and good works.' This begets a

holy emulation who shall excel ; but carnal company is a deadening

thing. We are more susceptible of evil than good ; we catch a disease

from one another, but we do not get health one from another. By

touching the unclean they became unclean, but he that was unclean

was not purified by touching the clean. The conversations of the

wicked have more power to corrupt than the good to provoke and ex-

cite to virtue. A man that would keep himself awake unto God, and

mind the saving of his soul, must shake off evil company : Ps. cxix.

115, 'Depart from me, ye evil-doers, for I will keep the command-

ments of my God.' And by evil company I mean not only the pro-

fane, who bespeak their own hatred and detestation by their apparent

odiousness, but the loose and careless. As we are to take heed that

we be not allured to that which is evil, so that we be not deadened to

that which is good. Neglect of God will keep us out of heaven as

well as profaneness. We easily leaven one another with deadness and

formality ; frequent society with dead-hearted persons breedeth it,

such whose conference is empty and unsavoury, and altogether of

worldly things. Certainly our dulness and backwardness is such that

we need the most powerful helps.

4. Another cause is a dead worship : missa non mordei. Christ

compareth spiritual duties to new wine, Mat. ix., but the pharisaical

feasts to taplash, or old unsavoury stuff that hath no spirits. Old

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bottles will endure that well enough. Nothing lulleth the soul asleep

so much as a perfunctory worship, or sleepy devotions. Christ's ordin-

ances are simple, but full of virtue ; his institutions conscientiously

observed will keep us awake : Ps. cxix. 93, ' I will never forget thy

precepts, for with them thou hast quickened me.' Use them much in

faith and obedience, and graces will be preserved in us in a lively

manner, and constant exercise : 1 Thes. v. 19, 20, ' Quench not the

Spirit ; despise not prophesying.' If you would not quench the Spirit,

you must not carelessly use the means of grace : ' The words of the

wise are as goads to prick us forward ' (Eccles. xii. 10) in heaven's way.

To stir us up to our duty, the Spirit of God sharpeneth and pointeth

the word, that it may be as goads in our sides. When we are negli-

gent, here is quickening. A dull ministry as well as a dull minister

maketh us fall asleep.

5. Slumber is the cause of sleeping. Mark the order in the text :

they first slumbered, and afterwards slept. One degree of carelessness

makes way for another ; and usually there is a lesser degree at first.

Take heed of the beginnings of declinations. If we would avoid sleep,

we must avoid slumber. No man becometh stark naught at the first

step. One careless prayer maketh way for another. Give way to it

now, and it will settle into an utter deadness at last. Men fear not the

danger of little sins, and so are hardened under them, till they fall into

greater. Small sins harden as well as great sins; it is hard to say

which more. Indeed at first little sins seem to awaken compunction.

The prick of a pin maketh a man start, but a heavy blow stunneth him.

David, when he cut off the lap of Saul's garment, his heart smote him ;

but when he fell into adultery and blood, he was like one in a swoon.

This is true ; but then, on the other side, great sins are more apparent

and liable to the notice of conscience ; but we neglect small sins, and

so inveterate custom groweth upon us, and we are insensibly hardened

by a carelessness and constant neglect of those kind of sins ; yea, some-

times more than by gross falls. A surfeit or violent distemper maketh

us run to a physician ; but when a disease groweth upon us by degrees,

we have death in our bowels ere we know it. We take care to mend

a great breach, but a leak unespiecl drowneth the ship. We have need

always to stand upon our watch. Many great mischiefs would not

ensue, if we took notice of the beginnings of those distempers which

afterwards settle upon us.

6. The omission of holy duties, and the want of a constant serious

exercise, induces a secure careless temper of spirit. Solomon telleth

us, Prov. xix. 15, ' Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep, and the idle

soul shall suffer hunger.' Labour dispelleth the vapours, and scattereth

them, but sloth' and idleness maketh way for sleep. It is true in the

soul. The renewed part hath need of a great deal of spiritual exer-

cise to keep it awake ; much prayer, much hearing, much fasting.

The apostle saith, Piom. xii. 11, ' Not slothful in business, fervent in

spirit, serving the Lord.' The way to be fervent in duties is to be fre-

quent in them. Be much in action, and in the exercise of grace, that

you may be kept fresh and lively. Wells are the sweeter for draining;

so is the soul the more fresh and ready for every good work. In gifts,

we see, if they be not traded with, they rust and decay, and fail ; so in

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graces : ' To him that hath shall be given.' He that uses his gifts

well shall find them increased. The right arm is bigger and stronger

and fuller of spirits than the left, because more in use.

7. Grieving the Spirit causeth him to suspend his quickening in-

fluence, and then the soul is in a dead and drowsy estate. Though the

children of God dare not quench the Spirit, yet they may grieve the

Spirit, Eph. iv. 30. The conscience of a renewed man, after it is

wounded by gross sins, may be a dead and stupified conscience for a

long time : witness David and Jonah.

8. Immoderate liberty in worldly things, as worldly cares and fleshly

delights. Sobriety is necessary, or a sparing meddling with those

worldly comforts that do mightily indispose us for the Christian war-

fare, 1 Peter ii. 7 ; Luke xxi. 34, ' Take heed your hearts be not over-

charged with surfeiting and drunkenness.' Look, as the multitude of

gross vapours cast us into a sleep, so do these delights and cares stupify

the soul : Ps. cxix. 37, ' Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity,

and quicken thou me in thy way/ You will need quickening if you

give way to vanity.

Use. \*Oh ! take heed of this evil : Mark xiii. 26, ' Watch, lest the

Lord cometh suddenly, and he find you sleeping.' Would you have

Christ come and find you in this case ?

1. Some are wholly in a state of spiritual sleep. To them the Lord

speakcth, Eph. v. 14, ' Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from

the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.' And of such the apostle

speaks, 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4, ' Awake to righteousness, and sin not ; for some

have not the knowledge of God : I speak this to your shame.' It is

all reason, and more than time, that you should thoroughly rouse up

yourselves from the condition of sin wherein you have gone. It is a

shame such should be among Christians, such as snort still upon the

bed of security, when the light of the gospel shineth round about them.

Oh ! when God calleth, ' Awake, and rise from the dead ; ' if not, God

may punish you by your own sin. One of his heaviest judgments is a

' spirit of slumber, and deep sleep,' Ptom. xi. 8. And then what will

the end of it be ? You may sleep, but ' your damnation sleepeth not,'

2 Peter ii. 3. Certainly we should commiserate the case of such,

especially if they be related to us ; and seek to awaken them from the

sleep of sin, that they may be brought home to Christ. Oh ! poor

careless creatures ! they fear not God, nor think of his wrath, nor make

preparation to stand before the Son of man at his coming.

2. There are others apt to slumber now and then, though for the

main they have ' chosen the better part.' To these the apostle speaks,

1 Thes. v. 6, ' Therefore let us not sleep, as do others ; but let us

watch and be sober.' There is great need. Our adversary watcheth ;

the devil is observing all our motions and postures ; if we fall asleep,

we arc exposed as a prey to him. There are many that mind our

spiritual harm. If we had no enemy without, there is hostis domesti-

cus, a bosom enemy ; and we are prone as others to be hardened

through the deceitfulness of sin. Therefore you may not sleep as do

others. You have another spirit in you, and if you are God's children

you have other obligations : Kom. xiii. 11, ' It is high time to awake

out of sleep ; for your salvation is nearer than when you first believed.

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When you first gave your names to Christ, you thought no labour too

much, no pains too great. How vigilant and diligent then ! and will

you sleep now ? Your course beginneth to draw to an end, and you

are almost ready to set sail for the other world, that you may meet with

Christ. Oh ! now you have shaken off the sleep of sin, shake off the

sleep of sloth too. Shall we be drowsy and cold at last ?

First, I shall give you the signs of this sin.

Secondly, Motives against it.

Thirdly, Directions to avoid it.

First, The signs.

1. Senselessness, in not discerning and weighing the things that befall

us, good or evil. An instance of the one we have, Hosea vii. 8, ' For

she did not know that I gave her corn and wine and oil.' The Lord

is very liberal to us, yet little notice is taken of it. An instance of the

other we have, Isa. xlii. 25, ' Yet he laid it not to heart/ In mercies

we neither consider their author, nor their end, nor their caiise. Their

author : We are like swine, that eat the acorns, but never look up to

the oak from whence they fall. It is said of the church, ' She hath

•dove's eyes ;' they peck and look upward. We should see God in every

mercy. A drowsy inattentive soul heedeth it not, but is swallowed

up in present delights and enjoyments, and looketh no further. It is

our privilege above the beasts to know the first cause. Other creatures

live upon God, but are not capable of knowing God. Idolatry and

profaneness had never crept into the world if men had kept up the

sense of God's bounty. Some never regard the end of mercies, which

is to draw in our hearts to God ; therefore called the ' cords of a man,'

Hosea vi. 4, being so many bonds and ties upon us: What honour

hath been done to God for this and that mercy ? I allude to that in

Esther vi. 3. See how David reasoneth, 2 Sam. vii. 2, ' I dwell in a

house of cedar, but the ark of God within curtains.' When the heart

is urging to duty upon this score : God hath been good to me, given

me food and raiment, and plentiful provision for the comfort of this

life ; what have I done for God ? Not only the impenitent abuse

mercy, Kom. ii. 4, but David lost his awe of God, because he had not

a thankful sense of the mercies of God, 2 Sam. xii. 7, 8. So for cor-

rective providences. The body is a tender part with most men ; though

they are sensible of the smart of the lash, yet they do not consider the

hand that strikelh, nor the deserving procuring cause ; they do not

look upward nor inward; they do not see the hand of God in it:

Isa. xxvi. 11, 'When his hand is lifted up they will not see;' look

upon it as a chance, 1 Sam. vi. 4. Job had explicit thoughts of God :

Job i. 23, ' The Lord hath given, and the Lord hath taken.' Nor the

cause, Lam. iii. 39. ' Wherefore doth a living man complain? a man

for the punishment of his sins ? ' If sickness cometh, if a relation be

taken away, if an estate blasted, a waking conscience looketh to the

cause : ' For this cause many are sick, and many are fallen asleep/

1 Cor. xi. We should see the mind of God in his rod. When the

Israelites fled before the men of Ai, Joshua looketh out for the troubler.

So the children of God search for the sin that is the cause of their

trouble.

2. Stupid dulness and cold indifferency in heavenly things : their

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want of zeal and cheerfulness in holy duties; they go about them

heavily: dull of hearing, Mat. xiii. 5; cold in prayer, when they

should be fervent and effectual, James v. 6. In all things we show

forth a heartless formality. Grace is asleep in the soul, and thence

cometh a sleepy profession, a sleepy hearing, a sleepy praying, a sleepy

receiving. The word, that was wont to be as burning coals, leaveth

no impression, Luke xxiv. 32. Your whole converse with the living

God is cold and dead-hearted. In such a condition a man heareth as

if he heard not, and prayeth as if he prayed not, and receiveth as if he

received not, and mourns for sin as if he mourned not, and rejoiceth in

God as if he rejoiced not, looks after heaven and heavenly things as if

he sought them not ; and so brings little honour to God, and little

profit and comfort to his own soul.

3. Tedious irksomeness in God's service. They grow weary of the

ways of God : Mai. i. 13, ' Behold, what a weariness is it ! ' Amos

viii. 5, ' When will the new moons be over, and the sabbath past ? '

Shall God do so great things for us in Christ, and shall anything

which God hath commanded be grievous to us ? How unkind is

this ! Neither have we a hard master, nor hath he enjoined us

tedious work, but all our duties have a sweetness in them : Micah vi.

3, ' Do not my words do good ? ' You carry it so as if God did not

deal well with his people, or were not easy to be served. His com-

mands are not grievous, and his yoke is easy ; trials sent by him not

above measure, his corrections not above our deserving ; therefore win-

should we snuff at his service ? Weariness and repining at God's

service is an ill sign. God loveth and requireth a willing people.

This weariness, though it doth not make us wholly abandon God's

service, yet it makes us slight it, and mind it no more than how to

get it over any way. Oh ! take heed, then, of growing weary of

religion, and attending on the duties thereof ; to look upon these as

distractions, or matters by the by, or interruptions of the work we

would be upon. They are led much by sense and carnality that

esteem nothing but what yieldeth pleasure to the sense, or gratifieth

the outward man.

4. Forgetfulness of changes, and vain dreams of worldly happiness.

When we have a carnal pillow to rest upon, we fall asleep, Ps. xxx.

6, 7. A Christian should sit loose from all earthly things. There

was leaven in the thank-offering. We should be content to dwell in

booths as the Israelites : Ps. xxxix. 5, ' Surely every man in his best

estate is vanity/

5. Carnal complacency. The peace and pleasure which you live

upon is fetched more from the world than from God and heaven ; and

you live in quietness of mind, not so much from the belief of the love

of God in Christ, and the hope of heaven, as because you feel your-

selves well in your bodily estate, and live at ease and in prosperity in

the world, and have something grateful to the flesh, Luke xii. 19-21.

Oh ! that soul is in a dangerous condition, when the world is so pleas-

ing and lovely to it, that it can take contentment and delight in it

without God, or apart from God. To many worldly prosperity is so

sweet, that it can keep them quiet under the guilt of wilful sins.

When you have your heart's desire for a while, you can forget eternity,

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or bear those thoughts with security which otherwise would amaze

your souls.

Secondly, Motives.

1. Your enemy watcheth ; the devil is never asleep, 1 Peter v. 8 ;

he observeth you in all postures, and watcheth all possible advan-

tages against the children of God ; and will not you stand upon your

guard and look about you ?

2. If you sleep you hazard yourselves to the whip, or God's severe

correction, Hosea v. 15. God findeth out many times a very smart

rod to whip lazy drowsy saints to their duty. He will not suffer

grace to rust in his children. Your awakening will be sad. God

sent a tempest after Jonah. Some sharp cross or other will fall upon

us.

3. The eyes of many are upon us, and shall we be slumbering and

sleeping ? 1 Cor. iv. 9, ' We are made a spectacle to the world, angels,

and men.' Miscarriages will tend to God's dishonour.

4. When grace is asleep, sin breaketh loose. There is no sin but a

man is exposed to in a secure estate : therefore the devil laboureth as

much as he can to cast us into this temper. When David walked at

ease on the top of his house, little did he know the evil of his own

heart, and the danger of the temptation.

5. Every lesser indisposition, that hindereth any degree of com-

munion with God, should be grievous to the children of God. If

we do not take heed to the beginnings of sins, further mischief will

ensue, when temptations are near, importunate, and constant. Little

sticks set green ones on fire ; when the thatch once taketh fire, it is

hard to quench it ; therefore we should not rest in such a temper.

6. Consider, God's eye is ever upon us, and beholdeth all our ways :

Job xxxi. 4, ' Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps ? '

Shall we sleep when the great God looketh on us ? How dreadful is

his displeasure ! There is no dallying with him.

Thirdly, Means.

1. Pray to God for his quickening Spirit, that he would stir us up

to watchfulness. David is ever and anon crying out for quickening

grace.

2. We should stir up ourselves. Much of this temper cometh upon

us because of our own laziness, and ordinary indisposition : 2 Tim. i. 6,

1 Stir up the gift of God that is in thee;' Isa. lxiv. 6, ' There is none

that stirreth up himself to take hold of thee.'

3. We should maintain a lively sense of Christ's appearing, Luke

xii. 35. This looking, and longing, and waiting keepeth the soul

alive and awake : Heb. ix. 28, ' To them that look for him ;' Phil. iii.

20, ' Whence we look for a Saviour.' Many may talk of that day, but

do not look for it.

4. Keep these four fundamental radical graces lively and active in

the soul — faith, fear, hope, and love. Faith presents things to us as

they are, and puts them in being. Love constraineth us, 2 Cor. v. 14.

Fear maketh God everywhere present ; and hope worketh in us a de-

sirous expectation of blessedness to come, and this keeps the soul

awake.

5. Keep a sense of the love of God upon your hearts. When your

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drowsy fits are coming on you, say as they in Jcr. xxxv. G, I dare

not ; my Father hath commanded me the contrary. Hath not God

forbidden this ? how can I rest in such a temper of soul ?

6'. Improve tire death of Christ for the destroying this sleepy

temper. The great design of Satan is to lull us asleep ; now Christ

came to destroy the works of the devil, 1 John iii. 8. Now, shall we

tie those knots the faster that Christ came to unloose, and tear open

those wounds that Christ came to bind up and heal ? Therefore let

this evil frame of soul be far from you.

SERMON V.

While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. And ot

midnight there teas a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh ;

go ye out to meet him. — Mat. XXV. 5, 6.

There is one clause in the former verse that remaineth undiscussed,

' The bridegroom tarried,' which I shall speak to in this verse.

Where observe —

1. The time, at midnight.

2. The means of awakening the sleepy virgins, there zuas a cry

made.

3. The matter of the cry, the unexpected coming of the bridegroom,

behold, the bridegroom cometh.

4. An excitement to their duty, go ye out to meet him. Still the

allusion is carried on to the matter from whence this parable is taken.

There were virgins with the bridegroom, and virgins with the bride ;

and that the bridegroom might be received with esteem, and attended

with all respect, some of them were to go before and raise the cry in

season, to bring the virgins forth to meet him. So here, Christ sends

a cry before him to admonish and exhort the church to prepare and

meet him.

[1.] With respect to every particular soul, this cry is to be referred

to the voice and importunity of them that are the children of the

bride-chamber, or friends of the bridegroom, John iii. 29 ; who all

tell us that the Lord is at hand, 1 Peter iv. 7 ; that he will shortly

come, Heb. x. 37. And still the faithful ministers of the church do

cry aloud, and call upon us to meet the bridegroom.

[2.] With respect to the general meeting of the church in one

great rendezvous or congregation, it is meant of the trump of the arch-

angel, spoken of in many places, which I shall quote by and by, calling

us to come to judgment.

Voct. The bridegroom will certainly come, but at his own time ;

and then all shall be called upon to go forth to meet him.

I shall handle this point with respect to the circumstances of this

parable.

1. I shall prove the certainty of his coming.

2. Speak of the tarrying of the bridegroom, or the delay of his

cominsr.

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3. His coming at midnight, or the uncertainty of the time when he

will come.

4. The cry that is raised before his coming. Then I shall give

every circumstance mentioned its due weight.

First, Of the certainty of his coming : it is needful to premise that,

because the efficacy of the whole discourse dependeth upon it. Eeason

saith he may come, but faith saith he will come.

First, Eeason saith he may come : It argueth —

1. From the nature of God. There is a God, and this God is just :

it is agreeable to his general justice that it should be well with them

that do well, and ill with them that do evil ; these principles are out

of dispute, and supposed as the foundations of all religion. Now,

supposing these principles, there must be a day of reckoning, for in

the world the best go to the wall many times, and are exercised with

poverty, disgrace, and scorn, when the wicked are full of plenty, and

live at ease, Luke xvi. 25 ; 1 Cor. xv. 19. Sure it is that there is a

God, and sure it is that he taketh care of human affairs, and will

judge accordingly ; what is the reason then of this disproportion ?

The wicked are reserved to future punishment, and the godly to future

reward. Now the distinction that is put between men at death doth

not suffice, for that is private, and doth not vindicate the justice of

God in the eyes of the world, and that is but upon a part. We read

of the spirits of just men made perfect, and the spirits that are now in

prison ; but nothing of a reward for the body, or punishment fur the

body. The bodies of men, being servants of righteousness, or instru-

ments of sin, surely ought to partake of weal or woe, of the curse or

blessing that is due to the person ; for the body is, as Tertullian saith,

the soul's sister and co-heir, and is to share with it in its estate. But

at death the body is senseless, and mouldereth into dust, and till it be

raised up again and joined to the soul, it can neither partake of weal

or woe ; therefore there is a day when God will deal with the whole

man ; otherwise, how shall the goodness of God, who is a liberal re-

warder of virtue, appear, unless he render to the body a full recom-

pense of the service it hath done the soul, in yielding up all its natural

appetites, pleasures, interests, and satisfactions to the conduct of reason

and grace, for the practice of that which is good; or the justice of

God, which is the avenger of sin, which would be too narrow and de-

fective, unless it punish the body with the soul ? Usually the affections

of the body debauch the soul, and the pleasures of the senses blind and

misguide our reason. Certainly, the love of sin being rooted in bodily

pleasures, it is fit it should be punished with pain, and such pain as is

proportionable to the dignity of him against whom the offence is com-

mitted. Now God being of an infinite and unlimited dignity and

authority, how could the punishment of the body by death be propor-

tionable to the offence committed against an infinite God ? An out-

rage done to the supreme majesty of princes is punished more than an

offence against an inferior person ; therefore there must be a time when

the body shall be raised, to be capable of such a punishment. Besides,

how could the soul be completely happy, since it was made for a body,

if it should always remain a widow, and never meet with its old mate

ajrain ?

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2. It argue th from the providence of God. There are many judg-

ments that are pledges that God will at length judge the world for

sin ; as the drowning of the old world, the burning of Sodom, the

destruction of Jerusalem ; these are a document and proof what God

will do to the rest of ungodly ones, for they are set forth as an

ensample, Jude 7. The force of the argument lieth in this, that God

is the same, still in one mind, who can turn him ? He hateth the sin

of one as well as the other. In all his dispensations he is always con-

sonant and like himself, Gal. iii. 20. If he would not put up with the

sins of the old world, he will not put off the iniquities of the new ; if

he punished Sodom, he will punish others that sin in like manner ;

for he is not grown more indulgent to sin than he was before. There-

fore, if it be not now, there will be a time when he will call them to

an account and reckoning. When man first sinned, God did not im-

mediately execute the sentence against him, but gave him time of

repentance till he died ; and since he giveth every man time and space,

he would not have all the world be born at once, and die at once, but

to live in several successions of ages, from father to son in divers

generations, till he cometh to the period which providence hath fixed.

Now, as he reckoneth with every man particularly at death, so with

all the world at the end of time. Particular judgments show that

God is not asleep, nor unmindful of human affairs, but the general

judgment is deferred till then.

3. From the feelings of conscience. After sin committed men

tremble, though there be none to call them to an account, as when

the sin is secret, and the person powerful. Conscience is under a

dread of divine justice, and the solemn process and triumph which

one day it must have ; hence conscience is sensible : Rom. ii. 8,

Felix trembled when Paul reasoned of judgment to come, Acts xxiv.

25. There are hidden fears in the conscience, which is soon revived

and awakened by the thought of this day. Every guilty person is a

prisoner to divine justice, and being held in the invisible chains of

conscience, standeth in dread of a great and general assize.

4. The conveniency of such a day.

[1.] To vindicate truth and honesty from the false judgment of the

world. The best cause is often oppressed ; there needeth a review of

things by a higher court, that that which is good may be restored to

its public honour, and evil may receive its proper shame. Christ will

convince the world of his love to the saints, when he cometh ' to be

admired in them/ 2 Thes. i. 10, and when their faith is ' found to

praise and glory/ 1 Peter i. 7. Thus shall it be done to the men

whom Christ will honour, proclaim their pardon, adorn them with

grace, introduce them into their everlasting habitations, and this in

the eyes of the scorning wicked ; as that nobleman, ' Thine eyes shall

see it, but not taste of it.' Then for their everlasting confusion, their

crimes shall be repeated in the ears of all the world, and their false

appearances shall be refuted.

[2.] That the counsels and courses of God's manifold wisdom and

justice may be solemnly applauded. We now view providence by pieces ;

but then the whole context and coherence of it shall be set together,

and the full history of all the world produced before the saints.

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[3.] Such a coming is necessary, that God may fit us with all kind

of arguments against sin, and so a restraint will be put upon the

heart against it. Many times sin and wickedness is acted in secret :

Eccles. xii. 14, ' God will bring every work into the judgment, with

every secret thought, whether it be good or evil ; ' and 1 Cor. iv. 5,

' Christ will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and make

manifest the counsels of the heart. 5 Many make no conscience of

secret sins, and if they make conscience of acts, yet not of thoughts ;

yet according to Christ's theology, malice is heart-murder, lustful in-

clinations heart-adultery, mind-imaginations are heart-idolatry. There

may be a great deal of evil in a discontented thought against provi-

dence, Ps. lxxiii. 22. He that sinneth secretly is conscious to himself

that he doth evil, and therefore seeketh a veil and covering. Men are

unjust in secret, unclean in secret, envious in secret, declaim against

God's children in secret, neglect duty in secret, sensual in secret,

afraid that men should know it, yet not afraid of the great God. Man

cannot damn us, man cannot fill our consciences with everlasting

burnings. Now that we may be ashamed to commit those sins before

God, the day of judgment is appointed to set these sins in order before

us : Ps. 1. 22, ' I will reprove thee, and set thy sins in order before

thee/

Secondly, If it be doubtful to reason, it is sure to faith. Faith

showeth he will come. The light of faith is more certain and more

distinct. More certain, because it buildeth upon a divine testimony,

which is more infallible than the guesses of reason, and yields us a

more compendious way to confute atheism than our arguings, by

which we are often entangled. It is so, for God hath said it. And

it is more distinct. Nature could never find out the circumstances of

that day ; it only apprehendeth the coming of a judge ; but by whom

this judgment shall be managed, in what quality he shall come, as a

bridegroom, and lord, and husband of the church, it knoweth nothing.

In what manner he shall proceed, and with what company and attend-

ance, all this we have from special revelation. Faith argueth —

1. From Christ's merit and purchase. Would he buy us at so

dear a rate, and cast us off so lightly, as to come no more at us ?

Surely he that came to redeem us will come to save us ; if he came to

suffer, he will come to triumph. Faith seeing Christ upon the cross,

determineth, I shall see him in the clouds. Would he be at all this

cost and preparation for nothing, and purchase what he never meant

to possess? It cannot be. If he came from heaven upon the one

errand, will he not come upon the other ? Surely Christ will not lose

all this pains he hath taken to purchase to himself a people.

2. Faith argueth from Christ's affection to us, which is very great.

Christ is not gone in anger, but about business, to set all things at

rights for the great espousals. He that wooeth a virgin, if he went

away from her in anger, she might well suspect he would never see

her again. As bridegrooms use to fetch their brides, so will Christ ;

we should never come at him otherwise : his love will not let him rest

satisfied till we and he meet again to enjoy one another's company.

Certainly he who delighted among the sons of men before the world

was, Prov. viii. 31, who delighted to converse with his people in

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human shape before his incarnation, who took pleasure to spend his

time busily amongst them, and to ' dwell with them in the days of his

flesh,' John ix. 45 ; in short, he that had a mind of returning before

he went away, certainly he will once more leave heaven for their

sakes. When he hath done his work there, he will return, and bring

his people along with him to glory, and the full fruition of the pro-

mises. He will stay no longer than our affairs do require, John

xiv. 3.

3. The affections of his saints to him, which Christ will satisfy.

There are many that never saw him, and yet believed in him, and

loved him heartily : 1 Peter i. 8, ' In whom believing ye rejoice with

joy unspeakable and lull of glory;' and John xx. 29, ' Because thou

hast seen me, thou hast believed ; blessed are they that have not seen

me, and yet have believed.' Their faith is not misplaced, they shall

find him such a one as was to be believed, loved, and obeyed. Now, to

gratify their desires, Christ will appear and show himself : ' With

these eyes shall I see my redeemer.' The children of God cannot

look to heaven, but they remember they have a Saviour to come from

thence : Phil. iii. 20, ' For our conversation is in heaven ; from whence

also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' Paul speaketh

in his own name, and in the name of all those like himself. And Rev.

xxii. 17, ' The Spirit and the bride say, Come.' The Holy Ghost

breedeth the desire, and the church answereth the motion. Nature

saith not, Come, but, Stay still. If it might go by voices, whether

Christ should come or no, would carnal men give their votes this

way? The voice of corrupt nature is, Depart, Job xxii. 14. Carnal

men are of the mind of the devil : ' Art thou come to torment us

before our time ?' Mat. viii. But the Spirit in the bride raiseth these

desires. Now, would Christ disappoint these desires which he hath

raised in the hearts of his children, and set them a-longing, and a-

looking, and a-groaning for that which shall never be ? It cannot

be imagined.

4. From the constitution of the church. He hath dispensed gifts

and graces there, and left ordinances there ; and he will come, and

require an account of things during his absence, how we have im-

proved our talents, Mat. xxv. 31, how things have been managed in

his house : 1 Tim. vi. 14, ' Keep my commandments without rebuke,

till the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ.' Christ is now removed

from us, retired within the curtains of the heavens ; but he will come

again : 1 Cor. xvi. 22, ' If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ,

let him be Anathema maranatha;' that is, cursed till the Lord come.

5. From his promise. We have his word in pawn. It is an ancient

promise, made long ago: Jude 15, ' Behold the Lord cometh,' and

hath been received in all ages by the Lord's messengers ; Moses, and

David, and Solomon, and Daniel, and Job, and Zechariah, and

Malachi ; and revived by Christ at his departure, John xiv. 3 ; by the

angel, Acts i. 11. And the apostles everywhere put us in mind of

Christ's coming. Now we may reason thus : Fidelis Deus in omnibus,

in ultimo non deficiet. Cod hath ever stood to his word, many inter-

venient providences, yet promises still accomplished ; not one word

of God hath failed. Every one that hath had experience of God may

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make that acknowledgment that Joshua did : Josh, xxiii. 14, ' Behold,

this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your

hearts and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the

good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you.' As

unlikely things have come to pass, that have been foretold in the

word. Were the old believers deceived, that expected his coming in

the flesh ? Sorely God never meant to deceive us. He will come

again : 'If it were not so, I would have told you,' John xiv. 3. Christ's

deed and performance never gave his word the lie.

6. His promise is solemnly confirmed —

[1.] By an outward sign and memorial : 2 Cor. xi. 26, "' For as often

as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show forth the Lord's

death until he come.' God knew he had to do with distrustful crea-

tures, therefore left a monument to keep the promise a- foot in the

church, and to revive our hopes. Would Christ institute an ordinance

for the solemn remembrance of his appearing, if he meant no more to

come at us ?

[2.] By a real pledge, his Spirit dwelling in us. He is gone to

heaven, to prepare heaven for us, and hath left his Spirit with us to

prepare us for heaven. He hath left his Spirit in the church, and

doth give out frequent tokens of love, to show that he doth not forget

us. Christ and a believer are not strange. There is a constant inter-

course between them. We are absent from him in the body, but there

are frequent messages of love. We hear from him in the word, prayer,

supper, and will he not come again that is so mindful of us at every

turn ? He did not forget us in his exaltation, as the butler forgot

Joseph; when preferred at court, he did not remember Joseph in

prison. Now, in his Father's house, he is touched with the feeling of

our infirmities ; and will not always leave us liable to sinning and

suffering. Surely he that quickeneth us by the influences of his grace,

and refresh eth us with the tastes of his love, he will come again. In

short, what would our faith be worth if Christ would not come again?

Here we have but a slender enjoyment of Christ ; our full communion

is when he taketh us to himself.

Secondly, I shall now speak of the tarrying of the bridegroom,

' While the bridegroom tarried.' What ! is Christ more backward

than the church, that goeth forth to meet him ? They are ready with

their lamps, but he delayeth his coming.

Ans. 1. Some understand it of our opinion, not the reality of the

tiling. Though Christ come always with the soonest, yet to us he

seemeth to tarry. Why ? Because earnest desires crave a present

satisfaction, and ' hope deferred maketh the heart sick,' Prov. xiii. 12;

and Prov. x. 26, 'As vinegar to the teeth, and smoke to the eyes, so-

is the sluggard to them that send him.' Expectation is in itself

tedious, especially when accompanied with difficulties. Certainly

being accompanied with present troubles, it is more tedious. The

flesh groweth impatient after its own ease ; and in this sense the bride-

groom is not slack, but we are hasty. I do observe it the rather,

because the same happeneth when we expect Christ to help us in our

particular distresses. Because of the impatiency of the flesh, and the

levity of our minds, and the weariness of expectation, the time seemeth

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long. There is our lime, and Christ's time. Our time is always with

us, but his time is not come: Jer. xiv. 19, ' We looked for peace, and

there is no good ; for the time of healing, and behold trouble.' In

this sense Christ only seemeth to delay his coming. We are eager

upon enjoyment, we would have it now.

Ans. 2. Really. He doth tarry, and suspends his coming. There

is a great efflux of time between his ascension and second coming,

and that for wise reasons.

1. That all this while there may be space for the world to repent.

Mora sponsi poenitentice tempus est, saith Jerome : Eom. ii. 4,

' Despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-

suffering ; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to

repentance?' There is finis operis et operantis. Whatever God's

intentions be, his dealings, his forbearance and long-suffering should

lead us to repentance. God useth great patience to the wicked : Rom.

ix. 22, ' Eudureth with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted

to destruction.' So Rev. ii. 21, ' I gave her space to repent, and she

repented not/ God giveth leave to repent, visible means to repent

and space to repent, even there where he giveth not effectual grace.

Wicked men abuse his patience, take encouragement from thence

to run into all extravagancy ; but God's aim is to leave them with-

out excuse.

2. That all the elect may be gathered : 2 Peter iii. 9, ' The Lord

is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but

is long-suffering to us-ward ; not willing that any should perish, but

that all should come to repentance.' God would have the world filled

with mankind, and endure for many generations, till it come to that

period which his providence hath appointed. And what is that period?

Till all that belong to the election of his grace be brought in to him ;

for all things are for the elect's sake. Now when his number is full,

lie will come. These were not to be born all at once ; and it requireth

time and pains to work upon each elect soul after they are come into

the world : therefore ' he is not slack as men are slack.' Men's slow-

ness in performing their promises cometh from their unwillingness, or

backwardness to do the thing ; or from impotency and weakness, or

want of foresight of all possible difficulties ; or else from their forget-

fulness. None of these are in God : not forgetfulness ; for ' he is

mindful of his people,' Ps. cxi. 5. He will not stay longer than the

appointed time. Not backwardness ; for he waiteth, as well as you

wait, for the fittest time, Isa. xxx. 18. Not from weariness ; for he

can do whatever he will.

3. To exercise our patience to the full : Col. i. 24, ' Who now rejoice

in my sufferings for you ; that fill up that which is behind of the

afflictions of Christ in the flesh for his body's sake, which is his church.'

Not as if Christ's personal sufferings for the redemption of sinners

were imperfect, and so to be supplied by the sufferings of others : no;

it is meant of Christ mystical. So the sufferings are not perfect, or

filled up, till every member of his body endure their allotted portion

and share. This cup goeth by course, and round : Christ first, we

next. It goeth from hand to hand, while the world continueth : James

i. 4, ' Let patience have its perfect work/ That cannot be but under

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great and long troubles. And as it is for the exercise of our patience,

so to awaken our desires : 2 Peter iii. 12, ' Looking for and hastening

to the coming of the day of God.' Hasten it by your prayers, and

further the great works that are to be done before. God will not bestow

heaven upon us as we lay on gilding and fair colours on wood or stone,

that have no sense of it, nor desire of it ; but we must first groan,

Eom. viii. 23.

Thirdly, His coming at midnight. He tarried somewhat beyond

the season, to show that he would come unlooked for. Jerome saith

it was an ancient tradition that Christ should come at midnight ; and

therefore in the vigil, or watch before Easter, anciently they were not

wont to be sent away till midnight : ' But of that day and hour

knoweth no man.' It is put for an unexpected time ; as Zech. xiii. 9,

' At evening it shall be light.' Christ cometh when he is least ex-

pected, when the world groweth secure, and his own people weary with

looking. His coming is often compared in scripture to the coming of

a thief in the night : 1 Thes. v. 2, ' For ye yourselves know perfectly

that the day of the Lord cometh as a thief in the night ; ' by way of sur-

prise ; the thief doth not make appointment, nor forewarn the good man

of the house : Luke xii. 46, ' The Lord of those servants shall come in

a day that he looketh not for him.' Now God hideth this day from us.

1. To show his sovereignty : Prov. xxv. 2, ' The glory of God is to

conceal a thing.' There are arcana imperii : and the time and season

of his coming to judgment is one of God's secrets.

2. That we might always keep ready : Eev. iii. 3, ' Eemember

therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent.

If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief;

and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee ; ' and

Eev. xvi. 15, ' Behold I come as a thief; blessed is' he that watcheth.'

Caesar would never let his soldiers know his resolution for battle onset,

or the removal of his camp, ut paratum et intentum momentis omnibus

quo vellet statim edaceret, that they might be always in a ready posture.

So Christ's coming at the last clay will be by way of surprisal, that he

may have us always ready. Had it been expedient for us to know, he

would have told us of it. Men will say, if they knew just the hour

and the day, they would be found praying. But you should always

watch and be ready, because you ' know not the hour.' Would our

preparation be hastened, think you ? No ; we should say as they, Isa.

xxii. 13, ' And behold joy and gladness, slaying of oxen, and killing of

sheep, eating flesh, and drinking wine. Let us eat and drink, for to-

morrow we shall die;' and 1 Cor. xv. 32, ' Let us eat and drink, for

to-morrow we shall die.' Therefore Christ will choose his own time.

Fourthly, I come to speak of the cry made. The cry is the means

whereby God rouseth them up out of this slumber. Christ sendeth

his cry to awaken souls before his coming. This cry is twofold : —

1. The more remote cry ; which is for the rousing of particular

persons in all ages ; and that is the voice of the ministry of the word.

Thus Christ at his first coming had a crier went before him to alarm

the world, and prepare them for his reception ; and that was John the

Baptist : ' The voice of one crying in the wilderness/ So still before

his second coming he hath some to raise a cry. The cry of the word

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is ofteD spoken of in scripture : Prov. i. 24, ' I cried to them, and they

would not hear.' So Isa. lviii. 1, ' Cry aloud, lift up thy voice like a

trumpet.' And it is the great means to awaken us out of our security.

All God's faithful servants in all ages have been crying, ' The Lord is

at hand.' Our work is to rouse up the hearts of men, that they may

be prepared more and more for the joyful receiving of Christ at his

coming. We should not keep silence, nor deal sleepily. It is a con-

vincing powerful word that is a cry ; and it is your duty to be awak-

ened by the cry. If this word be not entertained, he hath his rod :

Ps. ii. 5, ' Then shall he speak to them in his wrath, and vex them in

his sore displeasure.' So Mi call vi. 9, ' The voice of the Lord crieth

unto the city ; and the man of wisdom shall see thy name. Hear ye the

rod, and him that hath appointed it.' We shall hear the voice of the

rough teacher. The word crieth ; and if the word be not heard, the

rod crieth. We need all kinds of excitations to rouse us out of our

careless walking, and heartless praying, and negligent sleepy thoughts ;

that we may think more seriously of the coming of the bridegroom.

2. There is a more immediate and general cry, for rousing and

raising up all at once ; and that is the trump of the archangel, spoken

of in many places : John v. 28, 29, ' The dead in their graves shall

hear his voice, and come forth, some to the resurrection of life, and

some to the resurrection of damnation.' The means employed in the

resurrection is the voice of Christ Jesus, who shall ' descend with

a shout,' 1 Thes. iv. 16, and with the ' sound of a trumpet ' sounded

by angels: Mat. xxiv. 31, ' He shall send his angels with a great sound

of a trumpet.' So 1 Cor. xv. 52, ' The trumpet shall sound, and the

dead shall be raised.' Christ, that had a forerunner at his first coming,

hath also at his second. This trumpet soundeth to summon all to

appear before Christ's tribunal to be judged. There was an audible

trumpet at the giving of the law, Exod. xix. 20. This sound shall be

heard all the world over.

Use 1. Let us improve this to the particular use of Christ's coming,

either in a way of mercy to his people, or in a way of judgment.

1. In a way of mercy. The Lord tarrieth sometimes when men

think he should come sooner : John xi. 6, Jesus loved Lazarus ; and

he abode still two days in the same place that he was when he heard

that he was sick. Let there be no misconstruction. It is not want of

love, nor want of power : he could raise him up when he was ready to

stink. He may delay our help till a fit time come, wherein his glory

may shine forth, and the mercy be more conspicuous. To come late

is many times the best time. God keepeth back his best blessings for

a while ; and detaineth them long in his own hands before they come

unto us. Therefore wait his leisure. Expectation is tedious, and

rockoneth every minute. Strong desires are importunate; and usually

we go by an ill count: not by eternity, but time. The timing of all

things is in God's hand ; not left to our foolish fancies, but his wise

ordering. The dial sometimes goeth before the sun ; so doth our time

before God's time. We would make short work for faith and patience ;

and so our graces would not be found to praise and honour. In all

such cases let us remember —

[1.] The Lord hath chosen the fittest time, Eccles. iii. 11; it will not

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come one jot too soon, or too late ; but the fittest time for him to give

and us to receive.

[2.] God is very precise in keeping his time: Exod. xii. 41, 42, '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 host of the Lord went out

from the land of Egypt. It is a night to be much observed unto the

Lord, for bringing them out from the land of Egypt: this is that

night of the Lord to be observed of all the children of Israel in their

generations.'

[3.] God stayeth for us, rather than we for him. Christ will come

before we are ready. The great let of mercy was, the people's hearts

were not prepared.

[4.] Every delay will bring some advantage. There is somewhat

more of ourselves, and somewhat more of God to be discovered : some

intervening experience that is worth the having, before full and final

deliverance conieth, Isa. xl. 31 ; Ps. cxxxviii. 39.

2. In a way of judgment. Sometimes Christ raiseth the cry, and

giveth notice of great changes. It concerneth us to take notice

of this voice, that we may not be taken unprovided : Amos iv. 12,

' Thus will I do unto thee ; prepare to meet thy God, Israel.' When

God threateneth, we had need make serious preparation how we shall

prevent or bear the stroke of an angry God. It is good counsel :

Luke xiv. 31, 32, ' When a king goeth to war against another king, he

sitteth down and considereth whether he be able with ten thousand

to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand. Or else,

while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador, and

desireth terms of peace.' There needs in such cases serious prepara-

tion. The work will be the more difficult when the storm is broken

out upon you.

Use 2. We may improve this as to his coming to us by death, or

rather our coming to him. The end of time and all things in it arc

near to every particular person. Christ and we are to meet shortly ; it

should be our care to meet him by true and serious repentance, that we

may meet him with joy. We are frail creatures, and within a very

little while death will summon us to appear before the Lord ; and when

you die, you are speedily to come to your trial. Now are all things

ready ?

1. Is Christ your bridegroom? Was there ever a solemn covenant

struck between you and him, as Hosea iii. 3, by renouncing all other

husbands, and giving up yourselves to do his will ?

2. Are your lamps burning, your graces kept in exercise, and shin-

ing forth to the Lord's glory ? Are you in a constant and continual

readiness to have immediate communion with Christ, or to set sail

into the world to come ? It should be a cheerful thing to you to

depart hence, Phil. i. 23.

3. Have you oil in your vessels ; such a deep and powerful work as

will keep up this affection ? Are these things in you, and ' abound in

you'? 2 Peter i. 8-11. What hast thou that others have not, that

shall never see God's face ? Can you say as Christ, John xvii. 4, ' I

have glorified thee upon earth ; I have finished the work thou hast

given me to do ' ? Have you been adding one grace to another, so

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that now you have nothing to do but to wait for the crowning of

all?

Use 3. We should improve it as to Christ's general coming-. If it

be so that the bridegroom will certainly come, but at his own time —

1. Then be not of the number of those scoffers and mockers that

either deny or doubt of his coming. The most part of men expect no

such matter ; the profane scoff at it, and would fain shake off this

bridle and restraint upon their lusts, 2 Peter iii. 3. Therefore take

heed of the whispers of atheism, which would tempt us to turn unto

the world and present things, and give over our hopes. Most men's

faith about the eternal recompenses is but pretended, at best but too

cold and speculative ; an opinion rather than a sound belief, as appear-

eth by the little fruit and effect it hath upon them ; for if we had such

a belief of them as we have of other things, we should be ' other man-

ner of persons, in all holy conversation and godliness.' Two things

are to be wondered at, viz., that any man should doubt of the Christian

faith that is acquainted with it; and that, having embraced it, should

live sinfully and carelessly. Therefore believe it as if you saw it :

Rev, xx. 12, ' I saw the dead,' &c.

2. Take heed of apprehending it as a thing afar off ; look upon it

as sure and near, to hasten your preparation. It cannot be long to the

end of time, if we compare the remainder with what is past, and the

whole with eternity : Ps. xc. 4, ' A thousand years in thy sight are

but as yesterday when it is past.' Alas ! it is nothing to the true

measure of things : ' He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.'

Therefore we should have more quick and lively thoughts and appre-

hensions about it, such as will awaken us out of our security.

3. Take heed of a cold and ineffectual thinking of it. There is a

certain time appointed, and when that appointed time is come, he will

certainly appear ; therefore look for it and long for it. The saints are

described by their looking for it: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the

blessed hope ; ' Phil. iii. 20, ' From whence we look for a Saviour ; '

and Heb. ix. 28. Actual expectation enliveneth all our actions.

Kebecca espied Isaac a great way off. Faith and .hope standeth ready

to embrace him. And also by their longing for it, 2 Tim. iv. 8;

Rev. xxii. 17, ' Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Long for it for

Christ's sake, and your own sakes. For Christ's sake : His interest is

concerned in it, that the glory of his person may be cleared. His first

coming was obscure ; but now he will come in great splendour, accom-

panied with his holy hosts, ten thousands of saints and angels : 1

Peter iv. 13, ' That when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad

with exceeding joy/ His justice will then be demonstrated : Acts

xvii. 31, 'He hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world

in righteousness ; ' and 2 Thcs. i. 6, 7, ' It is a righteous thing with

God to recompense tribulation to them that trouble you, and to you

that are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be

revealed with his mighty angels.' And long for it for your own sake ;

it is a day of the manifestation of the sons of God, Rom. viii. 19. Then

you shall receive your reward to the full : 1 Peter i. 13, ' Hope to the

end, for the grace that is to bo brought to you at the revelation of

Jesus Christ.' Then is the fullest manifestation of the love of God.

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Now we are pressed with the remainders of corruption within, and

temptations and persecutions without : wait for his coming. The

people tarried without for the high priest, till he came forth to bless

them : so must we look for his return when he will come to bless us.

SERMON VI.

Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. And the

foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil, for our lamps are

gone out— Mat. XXV. 7, 8.

The meaning of this part of the parable is, that the virgins being

roused by the cry made, went to trim their lamps and fit themselves

for their march ; while they were so doing, some of them had oil left ;

but others had spent all their store, and their lamps were going, or had

gone out. Three things are remarkable in these parabolical expres-

sions : —

1. That which is common to them all, ' All those virgins arose and

trimmed their lamps ; ' which must be differently interpreted of the

wise and the foolish. The arising and trimming their lamps noteth

in the wise their actual preparation for the Lord's coming ; in the

foolish, it noteth the strength of their confidence and self-conceit. The

foolish think they are as prepared and ready for Christ's coming as the

wise ; they arise and address themselves to meet the bridegroom.

2. On the part of the foolish, they found their oil spent.

3. That they go to the wise for a supply : ' Give us of your oil.'

First, The effect of the cry that is common to them all, ' They arose

and trimmed their lamps.' Which is first to be considered on the

wise virgins' part, and so it will teach us this note : —

Doct. That the faithful, as often as they think of the coming of the

Lord, should more rouse up themselves, and prepare themselves to

meet him with joy and comfort.

For the trimming of the lamps, on their part it noteth the rousing

up of themselves out of their negligence and security, and a serious

preparation for his coming. To evidence this to you, we shall con-

sider —

1. How the scripture presseth this upon us.

2. What reasons there are in the thing itself to awaken us to this

serious preparation.

First, How the scripture presseth this upon us. In the word of God

we have not only the doctrine of Christ's coming to judgment, but the

uses and inferences built thereupon. I shall instance in two places in

one chapter, 2 Peter iii. 11 and 14.

Ver. 11, ' What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conver-

sation and godliness ? ' Where observe —

1. That it is not enough to believe the doctrine of Christ's coming,

but we must improve it to the use of holy living. The improvement

is pressed in scripture, as well as the doctrine is revealed. In God's

account no faith will go for faith, but the working faith ; all else is

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but opinion and cold speculation ; whatever truths we believe, we

must bring forth to practice. Therefore if we believe steadfastly, we

must live accordingly ; live as men that look for such things. A bare

apprehension or assent to the truth is nothing worth, unless it be

accompanied with that care and diligence which belongeth to the

truth so apprehended. The Christian religion consisteth not in word,

but in deed ; and our belief of it is not tried by a speculative assent,

especially in the absence of temptations, but by a constant and diligent

practice of those duties whereunto this belief bindeth us. So that they

do not truly and savingly believe such things who are not seriously

and constantly diligent in the spiritual life. I cannot say that an

assent separate from practice is no faith, but it is no saving faith ; it

it is such a faith as the devils may have, who know there is a God,

and a Christ, and a world to come ; they believe it and fear it. So

may carnal men believe it so far as to stir up bondage and legal fears

in their hearts ; but while they improve it not, and prepare not for

their everlasting estate, their faith is ineffectual to salvation. True

faith is tried rather by living than by talking : 1 John ii. 4, ' He that

saith I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and

the truth is not in him.' There is a difference between an untruth

and a lie. Now where the actions do not correspond to the profession,

that profession is not only an untruth but a lie. There is a denying

in word as well as works, 1 Titus i. 16. Many profess and believe as

Christians, but live as atheists. It is not notions, but affections,

living rather than talking, that will demonstrate true faith. Now the

paucity of serious walkers showeth the paucity of true believers.

2. In this improvement there is an appeal to conscience ; for here is

a question put to our own hearts, let reason and conscience speak :

After the serious consideration of the glory and terror of Christ's

second coming, what holiness and preparation is necessary on our

part ! Surely the holiest upon earth, if they would put this question

to their own hearts, they would not be satisfied with that holiness

which they had, but would seek after more ; their desires w T ould be

strengthened, their endeavours quickened, their diligence doubled.

It is for want of self-communing that we are so dull and sluggish. If

men did oftener ask of themselves, reason would tell them that no

slight thing will serve the turn. But truths are not improved. First,

for want of a sound belief ; secondly, for want of a serious considera-

tion. Therefore in scripture, when any notable truth is propounded

and improved, there are these appeals to conscience : Heb. ii. 3, ' How

shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation ? ' and Eom. viii. 31,

' What shall we say to these things ? '

3. In this appeal the qualification of our persons is first regarded

and looked after. For pray mark the question : it is not, How holy

ought our conversations to be ? but, What manner of persons ? The

state of the person must be first regarded, and then the course of our

actions and conversations. There are some persons at whose hands

God will not accept a gift. God had respect first to Abel, and then to

his offering. The state of the person is to be judged of according to

the two great privileges of Christianity — justification and sanctification.

] Qu. ' works as well as word ' ? — Ed.

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[1.] That we be justified, and reconciled to God through Christ;

that we daily renew friendship by the exercise of a godly sorrow for

sin, and a lively faith in Christ: 1 John v. 1, 'Whosoever believeth

that Jesus is the Christ, is born of God ; ' and 1 John ii. 1, ' Little

children, these things I write unto you, that ye sin not : and if any

man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the right-

eous.' Others are not accepted with God.

[2.] That we be sanctified, or renewed by the Spirit, Titus iii. 5,

and so fitted and framed by this general holiness for the particular

duties we are called to. A bowl must be made round before it can run

round ; the instrument must be framed, and strung, and put in tune

before it can make any melody ; the tree must first be made good

before we can expect any good fruit from it, Mat. xii. 33. Actions are

holy by their rule ; a person is holy by his principle. Therefore, till

there be a principle of grace wrought in our hearts, we are not such

manner of persons as God will accept ; nor are we fitted to perform him

any service, or to meet him at his coming.

4. When our persons are in frame, we must look to the course of our

actions or walking ; for the tree is known by its fruit, and a man by

the course of his actions. We do but imagine we have holiness

within, unless we manifest it in our outward conversation ; and will

strive to show ourselves mindful and respectful of God's commands at

every turn: Ps. cxix. 1, 'Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who

walk in the law of the Lord ;' not only undefiled in the rule, but un-

defiled in the way. A sincere, constant, uniform obedience to God's

law, or a careful endeavour to approve ourselves to God in all our

ways, is the mark of true blessedness. A man is judged by the tenor

of his life, not by one action.

5. This holiness must be in all the parts of our conversation : ' In

all holy conversation.' In our outward carriage and secret practice,

common affairs and religious duties ; in the duties of God's immediate

worship and the duties of relations ; towards superiors, inferiors, and

equals, 1 Peter i. 5 ; in every creek and turning of our lives. There

is no part of a Christian conversation but should savour of holiness and

godliness : his common and civil actions, in adversity, prosperity, at

home and abroad. So Titus ii. 12, 13, 'The grace of God which bring-

eth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying

all ungodliness, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this

present world.' Soberly as to ourselves ; righteously as to our neigh-

bour ; godly as to God. To rest in a partial practice of holiness will

not become the expectation of Christ's coming, who will examine us

upon every point of duty.

6. Godliness is added to holiness to increase the sense and significa-

tion, There is some formal difference between these two. Holiness

signineth the purity of our actions, and godliness the respect they have

to God, that he be eyed and aimed at in all that we do; that all

things should be done in and to the Lord, or for his glory. This

should be the supreme end of all our ways and actions. If we consider

grace as it provideth for the rectitude of our actions, positively it is

called holiness ; if relatively, with respect to our dedication to God, it

is called godliness. Well, then, we should be such manner of persons,

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not only in all holy conversation, but godliness. We should stir up

ourselves to do more for Grod in the world, and love him, and fear him,

and honour him in all that we do.

7. In both we should endeavour the highest pitch that possibly we

can attain unto ; for it is in the original, ' All holy conversations and

godlinesses;' which doth not only imply the extension (as we render

it), ' in all holy conversation and godliness,' but the intension and de-

gree, as well as all the parts and points of godliness. Those that have

made most progress in godliness should still aspire after higher degrees :

the more will our comfort be now, and the more our glory when Christ

cometh. We cannot be over, it is easy to be short. The most serious

and the most painful do exceedingly lament their negligence when

they come to die ; but none ever begrudged their pains, or bewailed

their diligence. There should be holinesses and godlinesses. There-

fore we should not only keep what we have, but seek to get more.

This is the apostle's use of the resurrection of the dead, and so by con-

sequence of Christ's second coming. 1 Cor. xv. 18, 19. So Phil. iii. 11,

The next place is ver. 14, ' Wherefore, beloved, seeing ye look for

such things, be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace,

without spot, and blameless.' In which words observe —

1. The exhortation is generally propounded, ' Be diligent.'

2. Particularly, in what this diligence is to be exercised and laid

out.

[1.] With respect to the means, ' That ye may be without spot, and

blameless.'

[2.] With respect to the end, ' That ye may be found of him

in peace.' In the original the posture of the words is thus : ' That ye,

being without spot and blameless, may be found of him in peace.' All

these circumstances deserve to be considered by us.

1. The general exhortation, ' Be diligent/ Rouse up yourselves, set

speedily and earnestly about it. We are apt to delay, therefore make

haste : we are too slight and sluggish ; therefore be earnest, and zeal-

ous, and hard at work • every slight endeavour will not serve the turn.

The wife that looketh for her husband's coming home will put all

things in readiness : the servant that expects his master's coming will

ply his work. Therefore let us not be remiss and negligent, but make

serious preparation. A loitering profession will fail us in our greatest

need ; and when the bridegroom cometh, our lamps will be gone out.

The devil's bondslaves spare no cost to serve their lusts ; their faulty

self-denial may put Christians to shame : Isa. v. 17, ' They draw on

iniquity with cart-ropes.' The men of the world use all possible dili-

gence to obtain the good things of this life, Ps. cxxvii. 2, ' Rise early,

and go to bed late ;' and shall we put our hand in our bosom, and think

all will do well, though we mind our business only by the by ? No ;

if your scope be to meet Christ with joy, religion must be your work

and main employment.

2. Particularly, wherein you are to show your diligence ; for we

flatter ourselves with general notions.

[1.] With respect to the means, ' That ye be without spot and

blameless.' The one word relateth to the heart, ' That we may be

without spot,' and the other to our conversation, ' blameless.'

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(1.) The first thing wherein diligence is to be improved is the wash-

ing away of our sinful spots, or the washing away of sin in the guilt

and filth of it, or in a way of justification and sanctification, 1 Cor. vi.

11, suing out our pardon in the name of Christ, and by his Spirit using

all holy means for the cleansing of our polluted natures. This is a

work to be done not once, but often ; for we are all washed but in

part : Prov. xx. 7, ' Who can say his heart is clean ? ' And when we

have once washed, we are inclined to defile ourselves again : John xi.

13, 'He that is washed needeth not, save to wash his feet.' Every

day we contract defilement by living in the world. Our final consum-

mation is in Christ's day, when we shall be presented to God, ' not

having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,' Eph. v. 27. For the pre-

sent, still we are cleansing, and making use of the blood and Spirit of

Christ for that end and purpose.

(2.) Blameless ; that relateth to our carriage and conversation, as

it is said, Luke i. 6, that Zachariah and Elizabeth ' walked in all the

commandments of God blameless.' So should we take care that we

incur no just blame for all those things Christ hath left in trust with

us, as to the improvement of our talents, keeping his laws, observing

his ordinances, or carriage to his servants and all men.

[2.] As to the end, ' that we may be found of him in peace/ The

word found is often used with respect to Christ's second coming :

2 Cor. v. 3, ' If so be we shall not be found naked ; ' Phil. iii. 9, ' That

I may be found in him.' It is used, because the last day is a

day of exact search and trial, and because that day cometh upon the

greatest part of the world by way of surprisal. We do not look for it,

nor prepare for it, but it cometh, unthought of, unexpected by the

most. But the word found noteth either a state of reconciliation with

God, Kom. v. 1, or it noteth comfort and joy, 1 John iv. 17. The

wicked are then at their wits' end, Be v. xix. 18, call for the rocks and

mountains to fall upon them. But when you have made diligent pre-

paration, you may have boldness in that day, and ' lift up your heads,

because your redemption draweth near.' A peace that will hold

out when Christ cometh, is a peace indeed ; otherwise what a terror

will unpardoned guilt, and an unrenewed nature, a fruitless life, and a

blemished conversation breed in us ? Thus you see how the scripture

presses this.

Secondly, What reasons there are in the thing itself to awaken us to

this serious preparation —

1. Because of the person coming, our Kedeemer, the bridegroom,

the Lord himself, who is so great and holy. If we mean to do him

honour, we must prepare to meet him in the best manner we can, as

the bride would provide her ornaments against the nuptial day. Oh !

what cleansing of soul, what fruitfulness and exercise of grace should

there be, that we may not put our Bedeemer to shame when he cometh

to be glorified in his saints, and to show forth the fruits of his death in

us ! I say, this preparation should be not only for our own honour,

that the bridegroom may not refuse us his company and approbation,

1 Peter i. 7 ; but for the honour of Christ, that he may be glorified in

the faithfulness and obedience of his servants, when it shall be pro-

duced to the view of all the world, as the fruits of his purchase and

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Spirit, : Eph. v. 27, ' That he might present it to himself a glorious

church, nor having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it

should be holy and without blemish.' It is begun here, and consum-

mated there, Col. i. 22, and Jude 25.

2. Because of the manner of his coming, in power and great glory.

Every coming of Christ should be entertained with great reverence.

When our first parents heard but the voice of God walking in the

garden in the cool of the day, they hid themselves from his presence

among the trees of the garden. When he came to give the law, Heb.

xii., it was terrible, and made them quake and tremble; much more,

now he cometh to judge according to the law, when articles of faith

are to be made objects of sense, and God is no longer in a way of trial

with the world. Christ, in the days of his flesh, when he came not to

judge but to save, yet sometimes beamed out his majesty, as in the

iniracle of the great draught of fishes, Luke v. 3, but especially when

his enemies fell backward with a look or word from his mouth, John

xviii. 6 ; his whipping the buyers and sellers out of the temple, Mat.

xxi. 12 ; and at his transfiguration his disciples were afraid. Mat.

xvii. 6. If his voice was so terrible in the days of his flesh, what will

it be then ? He came at first in the form of a servant, Phil. ii. 6, 7 ;

now he cometh as Lord and heir of all things, Heb. i. 2. Then he

came in the similitude of sinful flesh, Rom. viii. 3 ; now without

sin, Heb. ix. 28. Then he had a forerunner, John the Baptist, ' the

voice of one crying in the wilderness,' Mat. iii. 3 ; now the archangel,

1 Thes. iv. 16. Then he had twelve companions, poor fishermen; now

with saints and angels, his holy ten thousands, Jude 7. Then he

raised some few to life ; now ' all shall hear the voice of the Son of

God and live,' John v. 28. Then he came riding upon an ass ; now he

shall come in the clouds of heaven, and the Judge shall sit in the

throne of majesty, summoning the world to appear before him. As

this will be comfortable to the godly, so terrible to the unprepared.

3. Because of his work when he cometh, which is to judge the

world, and to make a strict inquiry into the ways of men : Rev. xx. 12,

■ And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God ; and the books

were opened, and another book was opened which is the book of life,

and the dead were judged out of the things that were written in the

books, according to their works.' All actions are set in order, Ps. 1.

21, with such impartiality and strictness, that we should all tremble at

the thought of it. Surely if we did believe these things we would pre-

pare ourselves accordingly : Acts xvii. 31, ' He hath appointed a day

wherein he will judge the world in righteousness.' God governeth.

the world now in righteousness, but the justice of God hath not its

full scope and measure. God useth patience to the wicked, and doth

not give the godly their full reward. God is arbitrary in his gifts,

but not in his judgments : all are under a rule, either the law of works

or the gospel law : James ii. 12, 13, ' So speak and so do, as those that

are to be judged by the law of liberty.'

4. After judgment sentence is passed, never to be reversed again.

Here there is a possibility of retrieving it by repentance, for here it is

sententia ler/is, but there it is sententia judicis, there is no appeal from

this sentence. Here sentence may be repealed, Ezek. xviii. 12, ' If

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the wicked shall turn from his sins that he bath committed, and

keep my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall

surely live, he shall not die.' Therefore we have need to provide for

this day.

5. Prepared 'or unprepared, we must all go forth to meet the bride-

groom. Therefore we had need to consider with ourselves whether we

are in case to meet him or no. Others think we make too much ado

about it ; but this is the great thing that should take up our care and

thoughts, whether we are upon a sure bottom for eternity : Luke x. 42,

' This is the one thing necessary.' Alas ! that we should make no

greater matter of it, and set ourselves about it with no more care and

seriousness, Ps. xxvii. 4. It is necessity, and our own necessity, and a

necessity for so great an end ; not to live honourably and comfortably

in the world, but for ever with God. In reason necessary things

should be preferred before superfluous ; that which cannot be spared

should be first regarded.

Use 1. Is to quicken you to rouse up yourselves, and to trim your

lamps. God's messengers in all ages have raised the cry : Enoch long

ago : Jude 14, 15, ' Behold the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his

saints.' He speaks of it as a thing in being, and actually in view ; so

do we call upon men. If we had a deeper sense and more lively ap-

prehensions of that day, surely we would more bestir ourselves.

1. To rouse up ourselves. Shake off sloth and security : 2 Tim. i.

6, ' Stir up the gift that is in thee ; ' Isa. lxiv. 7, ' There is none that

stirreth up himself to take hold of thee/ There is need of awakening

ourselves yet more and more. Conscience is too sleepy, the will too re-

miss, the affections are dead and earthly, and are not so active and

powerful upon our hearts as they were wont to be. Oh ! do not rest in

a lukewarm drowsy profession, but seriously bestir yourselves.

2. Trim up your lamps ; that is, let your practice and profession

of godliness be more lively and powerful, and grace kept in constant

exercise : ' Having your loins girt, and your lamps burning,' Luke xii.

35. Oh ! it is a blessed thing to be found so doing. You will never

do so —

[1.] While you content yourselves with a little religiousness by the

by, and do not make godliness your main work and business : ' Work

out your salvation with fear and trembling.'

[2.] While you content yourselves with doubtful questionable grace,

and do not put it out of all doubt: 1 Peter i. 10, 11, ' Give all dili-

gence to make your calling and election sure, that so an abundant

entrance may be ministered unto you.'

[3.] You will never do so while you content yourselves with a little

general religion, without looking into every part and point of duty :

1 Peter i. 15, ' Be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' Wherein

you are to exercise your obedience to God : Acts xxvi. 7, 8, ' Unto

which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God night and day,

hope to come.'

[4.] You will never do so till your minds be taken off from the pre-

sent world, and more deeply fixed upon the world to come, Mat. vi. 21.

Till that be your treasure, Col. iii. 1, ' Set your affections upon things

above.' Our affections often cool, being scattered too much upon pre-

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sent tilings ; we have little or no thoughts of our spiritual journey :

1 Peter i. 13, ' Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to

the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of

Jesus Christ.' It is meant of the affections. It is the lively expecta-

tion of blessedness to come that kcepeth us in life and exercise.

Second!;/, We now come to the consideration of it as to the foolish

virgins, ' They all arose and trimmed their lamps.' The foolish virgins

made a fair nourish ; on their part it noteth their vain confidence, as if

they were as ready to meet the bridegroom as the wise, though the;

event showeth the contrary ; so that on their part it doth not note so

much their serious preparation as their foolish presumption.

Boot. 2. Many think they have grace enough to meet Christ at his

coming, when the event showeth no such matter ; or, many have great

confidence of the goodness of their condition, that will be found foolish

virgins at last. As in the text, the foolish virgins ; and in the 7th of

Matthew, the foolish builder.

There are four reasons of this : —

1. Self-love, which blindeth a man in judging of his state and

actions : Prov. xvi. % ' All the ways of a man are right in his own

eyes.' It is natural to a man to have a good conceit of his own ways ;

so Prov. xxx. 12. ' There is a generation of men pure in their own

eyes, yet not washed from their filthiness.' A man will favour himself,

be a parasite to himself. A self-suspecting heart is very rare, John

xiii. 23, 24, and 2 Sam. xii. 7.

2. An overly sense of their duty, and belief of the world to come.

Temporaries have but a taste of heavenly doctrine, Heb. vi. 4, a light

tincture. The act of their faith is not so intense and serious as to set

them a- work with all life and diligence, or to enable them to judge

impartially, whether they are able to bear the coming of Christ, yea or

no. Presumption is the child of ignorance and incogitancy ; they do

not consider of the strictness of the gospel law, or the impartiality of

the last day's account ; there is but a notional, slight, superficial,

ineffectual apprehension of these things. An ignorant person is fool-

hardy, he doth not weigh the danger. It is not the greatness of our

confidence, but the acuteness of our sense.

o. Want of searching or taking the course whereby we may be unde-

ceived : Jer. viii. 6, ' No man repented of his wickedness, saying, What

have I done?' Yea, when searched, and their natural face showed

them, James i. 23, 24 ; they will not search and try their ways. A

temporary is seldom discovered to himself till it be too late ; but you

may find him by these notes. Usually he is slothful ; he is not a

laborious Christian — sound exercise maketh us feel our condition; he

is not self-searching, he doth not look into himself, he smothereth

those misgivings of heart which he hath, and will not consider the

case, or return upon himself. If they do not search, they cannot know

themselves; if they should search, they do not like themselves; they

choose the latter.

4. Building upon false evidences, or upon sandy foundations. A

formal professor may go very far towards salvation. Temporaries

may have awakening grace, much trouble about their condition ; as

Ahab and Judas. So many are full of doubts and stinging fears, and

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make their case known, would fain be eased of their smart. They may

have enlightening grace, Heb. vi. 7, more than many true Christians

have ; Kom. ii. 18, have an ' approbation of the things that are excel-

lent, being instructed out of the law ;' 2 Tim. ii. 5, ' having a form of

godliness.' Grammatically and logically have a clearer understanding

of the sense of words, the contexture and dependence of truths, be able

to defend any sacred verity, and express their minds about it ; yea,

some sense of Christ and heaven and glory ; yea, they may have

affecting grace, be wonderfully taken with the glad tidings of the

gospel; may have some taste of the grapes of the good land, may

desire to die the ' death of the righteous,' Num. xxiii. 10 ; desire the

' bread of life,' John vi. 34 ; they may delight in holy things, Isa.

lviii. 2, as Herod heard the word which John preached gladly, Mark

vi. 20 ; the stony ground heard the word with joy. But they have not

renewing grace, heart- transforming grace, sin-mortifying grace, nor

world-conquering grace. Yet something like these they may have,

something like transforming grace ; a change wrought in them, though

not such as puts grace in sovereignty and dominion. As to sin-morti-

fying grace, there are some conflicts with sin, and they may sacrifice

some of their weaker lusts, yet the flesh is not crucified. As to world-

conquering grace, they may profess long, hold out against a persecu-

tion : 1 Cor. xiii. 1, ' If I should give my body to be burnt, and have

not charity, it profiteth not.' Compare Acts xix. 33 with 2 Tim. ii.

10, and 2 Tim. iv. 14. Yea, they may keep some profession till death,

have a good esteem among the people of God, and yet the heart never

be thoroughly subdued to God.

Use 1. Oh ! then, ' let us not be high-minded, but fear,' Kom. xi.

20 ; and let all this that hath been spoken tend to weaken the security

of the flesh, but not the joy of faith. Let it batter down all your false

confidence and carnal security, by which you are apt to deceive your

own souls, and make you build more surely for heaven. Consider —

1. God may see that which yourselves or men do not ; for he seeth

not as man seeth. Others look upon appearance, you yourselves may

be blinded with your own self-love, but God knoweth all things, seeth

all things ; therefore, though thou hast a name, yet perhaps art dead,

Eev. iii. 1 ; and though we ' know nothing by ourselves, yet we are not

thereby justified/ 2 Cor. iv. 4.

2. How dreadful it is to know our error by the event rather than by

a search ! The foolish virgins said to the wise, ' Give us of your oil,

for our lamps are gone out.' They began to see their defect when it

was too late. The foolish builder, that built his house upon the sand,

his building made as fair a show as any ; but it fell, ' and great was

the fall of it.' So is the hope of the hypocrite when God cometh to

take away his soul : then they will see and bewail their deceits of

heart, but have no time to remedy them. Many think they have god-

liness enough while they live, but when they come to die they will find

it little enough, and all their false hopes will leave them ashamed.

3. We have need again and again to bring the grounds of our con-

fidence into the sight and view of conscience, that we may be sure they

will hold weight : Ps. xliv. 18, ' Our heart is not turned back, neither

have our steps declined thy way ;' 2 Cor. i. 12, ' This is our rejoicing.

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the testimony of our conscience.' At least, when you suspect your-

selves, how do you make a shift to quiet your consciences ? Is it upon

solid grounds, and such as will bear weight in the day of Christ?

Many are strongly conceited of themselves, when there is little ground

for it : Luke xiii. 24, ' Many shall seek to enter, but shall not be able;'

Rev. iii. 17, ' Thou thoughtest that thou wert rich, and increased with

goods, when thou art poor, and wretched, and blind, and naked.' In

a poor case to meet the bridegroom, but they thought themselves in a

happy condition.

Use 2. To excite you to this duty, take these considerations : —

1. Your cure is not fully wrought, you are not yet brought home to

God : 1 Peter iii. 18, ' Christ also suffered for sin, the just for the

unjust, that he might bring us to God.'

2. To keep to your first beginnings, after a long time of growth, is

to be babes still : Heb. v. 12-14, ' When for the time ye ought to be

teachers, ye have need to be taught the first principles of the oracles

of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong

meat : for every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of right-

eousness, for he is a babe ; but strong meat belongeth unto them that

are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their sense exer-

cised to discern good and evil.' A child, if he should continue a child

and an infant still, is a monster.

3. The same reasons that invited you to begin with Christ should

invite you to go on with his service. If a little grace is desirable,

surely more is desirable, because it is the adorning of the soul. Excel-

lency in grace is a great means to convince and convert the world :

Mat. v. 1G, ' Let your light so shine before men, that others seeing

your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven ; ' and

John xv. G, ' Hereby is my Father glorified, that ye bring forth much

fruit.' Deprive not God of the honour you owe him, nor the world of

such a powerful help ; we put forth our utmost endeavours to get

excellent things here on earth, and shall eternal glory be only coldly

thought of, and carelessly sought after ?

4. The more serviceable you are for Christ here, the more glory you

shall receive in heaven. We believe there are degrees of glory ; we

read of being ruler of many cities, and sitting at Christ's right hand

and left, Mat. xx. 13. The mother of Zebedee's children, when she

asked Christ that her sons might sit one at his right hand and the

other at his left, Christ doth not deny the thing, that there were

degrees of glory, but it was to be given them for whom it was prepared

of his Father.

The next thing observable in the parable is the going out of their

lamps : Our lamps are going, or gone out. What is the meaning of

that ? Sometimes the phrase is used in scripture for the failing and

ceasing of the wicked's happiness, or the splendour and glory wherein

they lived in the world ; as Job xix. G, ' The light shall be dark in

his tabernacle, and his lamp shall be put out with him ;' and Job xxi.

17, 'How often is the candle of the wicked put out!' But here it

must be interpreted with respect to the scope of this parable, and so

by the lamps two things are intended : —

1. The glorious profession that they make of religion.

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2. The hope and comfort that is built thereupon.

Doct. 3. Their lamps will go out who have not a stock of grace to

feed and maintain them.

First, Let us explain this.

1. What is this going out of their lamps ?

2. When is this verified ?

First, What is this going out of their lamps ?

1. It may note an extinction of their profession, and so profession,

where it hath not a bottom of grace, will fail : Prov. xxvi. 26, ' His

wickedness shall be showed before all the congregation.' God loveth

to uncase hypocrites. In the course of his providence one occasion or

other falleth out to make them stumble and break the neck of all their

respects to the ways of God: John xv. 6, ' If a man abide not in me,

he is cast forth as a branch that is withered.' Christ drieth up their

gifts and seeming graces, their duties ; they are given up headlong to

their own apostate courses.

2. It may be meant of the extinction of their vain hopes and foolish

confidence and false peace, which is grounded upon their outward

profession and formal practice of external duties ; thus we read that

' the hope of the wicked shall be as the spider's web,' Job viii. 14,

curiously woven, but gone with the turn of the besom. So Job xi.

20, ' The hope of the wicked shall be as the giving up of the ghost.'

No more hope of them than of a man's life that is giving up the

ghost ; or with pains and gripes ; which is not only to be meant of the

hope, or the continuance of their prosperous condition in the world,

but of heavenly happiness ; there is a groundless expectation of that,

the apostle's expression intimateth it : Rom. v. 5, ' And hope that

maketh not ashamed.' The hope of temporaries will at length deceive

them in their greatest need, and leave them ashamed. As Absalom's

mule left his master hanging on an oak, so will their hopes fail them,

and their pretences vanish.

Secondly, When is this verified, and upon what occasions ?

1. Sometimes in life. They took offence at Christ, his doctrine,

or something that did accompany it : John vi. 66, 'At that time many

of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him ;' some one

prejudice or other took them off.

2. Sometimes at death, if their profession and hope thereupon tarry

so long: Job xxvii. 8, 'What hope hath the hypocrite, when God

cometh to take away his soul?' A man may live by a form, but he

cannot die by a form with comfort. Men are more serious in the con-

fines of eternity, when present enjoyments cease, and we have nothing

left to comfort us but the expectation of the world to come : then wo

shall repent that we have been no more provident for eternity ; if God

would spare them a little longer, they would get oil then. When

they come to die, oh ! that they could live over their life again. Men

that have neglected their time of present profiting then see their folly ;

then how serious, anxious, and solicitous are they !

3. It is possible men may go down with a careless profession, and a

blind confidence to the grave, but in God's judgment it will not hold

out ; for the day of revelation and manifestation is hereafter, and every

one is not in a safe condition that dieth in peace ; or without actual

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horror and trouble. Usually, indeed, 1 Cor. xv. 5(i, ' The sting of

death is sin ; ' but it is possible hypocrites may die with stupid and

benumbed consciences, and therefore Christ rnaketh their vain con-

ceits to be blown away in the day of accounts : Mat. vii. 22, ' Many

will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord ! ' that is, till the day of doom,

may think their plea sufficient.

lieasons why this profession is apt to fail, for there is a distinct con-

sideration of these things : —

1. Because they have a principle of apostasy in their hearts still.

The love of some created thing is predominant, as it is in all tem-

poraries ; either honour, riches, or pleasure, which when it eometh to

be touched or intrenched upon, religion must give way. Christ's first

lesson is self-denial. Till there be a universal sovereignty of grace

over all our desires and inclinations, so as they shall all give way to

the love of God, something is left that will tempt us to leave our pro-

fession of godliness, though unwillingly ; as the young man went away

sad, Mark x. 22 ; and that which is lame is soon turned out of the

way, Heb. xii. ; and therefore we can have no satisfaction and security

Avhile any one lust remaineth unmortified ; if you are not fallen, you

are falling.

2. Because they do not improve what they have received. The

great want of temporaries is the want of a constant, serious, lively

diligence ; now when men have made a good progress in religion, and

stop there, they lose what they have : Luke viii. 18, ' From him that

hath not shall be taken what he seemeth to have;' to him that

employeth his stock, more shall be given ; but the other is on the

losing hand.

Secondly, As to the hope and comfort that followeth this profession.

An inclination to that which is good : I suppose without that there

can be no true comfort, until we should submit to the conditions of

the gospel law, Mat. v. 28-30. There temporaries are defective, all

therefore see it and know it when they are serious and considerative.

and their mistakes and misconceits are blown away by death and

judgment. Now the conditions are believing, repenting, and gospel

walking. Now their faith will not yield comfort : Gal. v. 6, ' Neither

circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith that

worketh by love.' Not their repenting, not a little sorrow for sin past,

until carnal distempers are mortified, 2 Cor. vii. 10. So for gospel-

walking ; not a loose owning of Christ, Mat. vii. 21 ; until there be a

full obedience to his law, putting it in practice with an upright heart,

which is not consistent with allowed failings. A man may profess

himself a Christian, yet if he do not his Father's will, he may come

short.

Use. Oh ! then, let us take heed we be not of the number of those

whose lamps are gone out. The lamps of the sanctuary were never

to go out, but to burn always, Exod. xvii. 20. To this end —

1. Apply yourselves to Christ in the use of his appointed means,

for the renewing your natures, that his Spirit may give you a new

understanding and a new heart : God hath made the offer, Ezek.

xxxvi. 26, and it is only made good to those that diligently attend

upon the appointed means.

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2. Improve what you receive in that way : 1 Thes. v. 14, ' Quench

not the Spirit.' Fire may be quenched by pouring on water, or with-

drawing the fuel : quench not the Spirit by fleshly delights, nor by a

careless conversation.

3. They ask the wise, ' Give us of your oil' First, This demand

was unseasonable ; to be getting oil when they should use it, to have

their oil to buy when their lamps should have been burning. There

is a time of getting, if we lose that, our opportunity is gone, Luke xiv.

32 ; Isa. Iv. 2 ; John ix. 4. While ' you have the day work, for the

night cometh in which no man can work.' Secondly, it was extorted

by mere necessity. In a time of straits and distresses men will call

upon the people of God to help them, as Pharaoh called for Moses and.

Aaron, when God's judgments were upon him.

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But the wise answered, saying, Not so ; lest there be not enough for us

and you : but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for your-

selves.- -Mat. XXV. 9.

In the words we have — (1.) A denial ; (2.) The reason of the denial;

(3.) Their advice and counsel to the foolish.

First, The denial, not so. It is not a churlish and envious denial,

but such an answer as the nature of the thing would bear. If they

should be so kind, they would deprive themselves, and not leave suffi-

cient for them both ; therefore they were better take the usual way of

supply. Three points are in this verse : — ■

Doct. 1. Every one must get oil into his own lamp, or get grace of

his own, or else in the day of his accounts the grace of others will do

him no good.

Secondly, From the reason, ' Lest there be not enough for us and

you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

Doct. 3. If we would get grace, we must have recourse to the ordi-

nances.

For the first point, that every man must get grace of his own.

1. I do not hereby exclude the righteousness of Christ, or his com-

municating his Spirit to us. There is a great deal of difference between

Christ and the saints in point of sufficiency, power, and authority.

[1.] They have not a sufficiency for themselves and us too. Christ

hath a fulness out of which you may receive enough : John i. 16, ' Of

his fulness we receive grace for grace. There is plenitudo fontis et

plenitudo vasis — the fulness of a fountain and the fulness of a vessel.

The fulness of a vessel is lessened and abated the more you take out of

it ; the creature is wasted by giving, but a fountain is ever flowing and

overflowing ; it keepeth its fulness still, though it affordeth to others.

God saith to Moses, Num. xi. 12, ' I will take of the spirit that is

upon thee, and put it upon them.' The words seem principally to

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intend as if his own gifts and abilities were given to them to help bear

a part in the burden of the government.

[2.] In point of power, they have no power to transfuse and put

over their righteousness to another; as a man cannot divide and part

his life between him and another. But Christ, who liveth in us, and

is spiritually united to us, he can impart his grace and righteousness :

2 Cor. v. 21, ' He was made sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might

be made the righteousness of God in him ;' Gal. ii. 20, ' The life that

I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.'

[3.] If they could do so, they have no authority and commission to

do it, as God hath given to Christ : John iii. 34, 35, ' For he whom

God hath sent speaketh the words of God ; for God giveth not the

•Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath

given all things into his hand ;' and John xvii. 2, ' As thou hast given

him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many

as thou hast given him.' Such a difference there is between the Lord

Jesus Christ and the saints. He can give us of his oil, and will do it,

will not deny those that seek it humbly and seasonably, and have

enough himself ; as the ' precious ointment upon Aaron's head and

beard ran down to the skirts of his garments,' Ps. exxxiii. 2, so doth

Christ the head communicate his gifts and graces to all his members.

2. I do not hereby exclude the benefit which we have by the ' com-

munion of the saints' in the mystical body of Christ here in this

world. The members are mutually useful to one another ; as it is

said, Col. ii. 19, ' From which all the body by joints and bands, having

nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase

of God.' It is from the head, but knit together by nerves, veins, and

arteries. The apostle saith, that 'every joint supplieth something,'

Eph. iv. 16. AVe communicate to one another that strength and

nourishment which all receive by the head. There is no member but

is of use ; we have benefit from one another's gifts and graces, or else

we could not be serviceable in the body. But the case in the text is

different ; these foolish virgins had their former advantages, which

they should have improved, to have supplied them in the clay of their

account. Now the wise could not help the foolish, nor the foolish the

wi.se ; but every man shall be judged according to what is within him.

3. As to the keeping off of temporal judgments, the very society

and neighbourhood of the godly may be a means to respite the wicked :

Jer. v. 1, ' Kim to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see

now and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if you can find a

man that executeth judgment, that seeketh truth, and I will pardon it.'

If they are not pardoned they may be respited for a time. So the

sentence against Sodom ; we read that if ten righteous persons had

been found therein, Gen. xviii. 32, God would have spared it. And

God gave Paul the lives of all them that sailed in the ship with him

for his sake. As to temporal things, God may stay the judgment

upon others for the godly's sake, though not always ; for it is said,

Ezek. xiv. 14, ' Though Noah, Daniel, and Job stood before me, they

should deliver but their own souls by their own righteousness.' When

the decree was irrevocably past, and their provocations grown to an

insufferable height. So it is said in the Jewish proverb, that two dry

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sticks may set a green one on fire : to which Christ is supposed to

allude when he saith, ' If this be done to the green tree, what shall be

done to the dry ?' Well, but bating these cases, we shall not be the

better for others' righteousness, and this is often pressed in scripture :

Hab. ii. 4, ' The just shall live by his faith ;' by his own, not by

another man's : Ezek. xviii. 20, ' The soul that sinneth it shall die :

the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, nor shall the father

bear the iniquity of the son : the righteousness of the righteous shall

be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him ;'

that is, as to eternal rewards and punishments, every one is to be con-

sidered according to their own personal estate. Every tub shall stand

upon its own bottom, and every soul shall be dealt with according to

its own capacity. So Rom. xiv. 12, ' Every one of us shall give an

account of himself to God.' We shall give an account of our own

thoughts, words, and actions ; not shuffled together by the lump, and

in gross, but every one severally. One shall not appear for another, as

here we may appear by proctor or attorney ; nor the whole party and

profession for single persons, but every one is to give an account of

himself apart, man by man. So Gal. vi. 4, 5, ' Let every man approve

his own work, and then shall he have rejoicing in himself alone, and

not in another, for every man shall bear his own burden.' We should

every one look to his own actions, and our own spiritual estate and

frame of heart : to fetch the grounds of our rejoicing from abroad

will not be so comfortable and safe to us. We are to look to our own

selves.

Use 1. Is to disprove the conceit of works of supererogation, or

doing more than is required of us, to increase the stock of good works

to be put into the treasury of the church, as if others should fare the

better for their over- godly ing it.

2. To disprove the vain and foolish confidence by which men please

themselves in the goodness of others about them, their relations, and

societies in which they live. They have friendship with such good

people, are in relation to such eminent and pious persons ; a godly

wife, or husband, or father : Mat. iii. 9, ' And think not to say within

yourselves, We have Abraham to our father.' No ; they cannot give

us of their oil. Men will catch at anything rather than a right ground

of confidence.

Use 2. Is to exhort us to ' work out our salvation with fear and

trembling,' Phil. ii. 12, or to be more careful of our own personal

qualification, if we would be saved in the day of the Lord.

1. It is not enough that Christ engaged for us as the public surety

of the church, Heb. vii. 22. He did some things for us, and in our

names, that we might take a bond upon ourselves, that we may enter

ourselves heirs to the benefits of his undertaking. You must give up

yourselves to the Lord, 2 Cor. viii. 5. All that are brought home to

God do personally covenant for themselves : Ezek. xx. 37, ' I will

cause you to pass under the rod, and I will bring you into the bond of

the covenant,' one by one. God would not trust the Jews with their own

choice, but would take the tenth that' came out of the fold by course.

God will not covenant with us in the lump or mass, but man by man.

2. It is not enough that the church as a visible political body, pro-

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fessing faith in Christ, doth engage for ns : Ezek. xvi. 7, ' I entered

into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine.' There is a visible

church covenanting which is made between God and whole societies,

as they do profess submission to Christ's gospel. Alas ! in these socie-

ties, there may be many persons whose souls have not particularly and

personally, each one for himself, entered into covenant with God,

therefore we cannot satisfy ourselves with this, but every one of us

must engage himself to the Lord.

3. It is not enough that our parents did engage for us, and dedicate

us to God in baptism, as they did in their own names, and in the

names of their little ones, Deut. xxix. 10-12, as we devote, and dedi-

cate, and engage our children to God in baptism; but this is a work

and business that no man can savingly transact for another. The

engaging of a soul to Christ is a thing that a man cannot do by proxy

or assignee ; we must personally enter into covenant with God for our-

selves, or else our parents' dedication will not profit us ; we shall be

children of Ethiopians to God, though children of the covenant. Amos

4. It is not enough that we belong to strict and reformed societies,

unless we come visibly to ratify the covenant in our own persons, by

that which the apostle calleth 'a professed subjection to the gospel of

Christ,' 2 Cor. xiii. 9. Unless there be a hearty and real subjection,

as well as a public professed subjection, our company will not save us,

nor our church save us. Many fall asleep in Christ's own lap that

shall awake in flames. He looketh to single persons, knoweth his

sheep by name, and whether they obey and follow him, yea or no.

He considereth the frame of their hearts, and how they stand affected

to him : ' My son, give me thy heart,' Prov. xxiii. 26. It is the heart

he seeketh for : Jer. xxx. 21, ' Who is he that hath engaged his heart

to approach unto me ? saith the Lord.'

Lastly, Consider the distinction Christ will make at the last day

between persons of the same vicinity, family, religion : the one is taken,

the other left.

Now, to excite you to get grace into your own hearts, consider —

1. None is more near to you than yourselves. God hath made

you guardians of your own souls. We read, Eph. v. 20, that ' no man

ever yet hated his own flesh, but nourisheth and cherisheth it.' Oh !

that we could say so in this case, that no man ever hated his own

soul ! It is no less monstrous and unnatural not to take care of our

souls, than not to take care of our bodies. The soul is the man, the

nobler and better part, that should be first cared for ; therefore, if you

love yourselves, you should look after your personal interest in Christ.

2. Your happiness is left merely as on your own consent. God

offereth his grace to you as well as to others: Isa. lv. 1, ' Ho, every

one that thirsteth, come to the waters and drink ;' Rev. xx. 22, ' Who-

soever will,' &c. If you refuse it, you wrong your own souls, Prov.

viii. 36, forsake your own mercies, Jonah ii. 8. And if you miss of

Christ, and be shut out of heaven, it is by your own default. You

have none to blame but yourselves, if you do not enter into covenant

with God, and so qualify yourselves for the great blessings and favours

thereof.

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3. Consider how much others Have done for you in a way of means,

though they can do nothing in a way of merit. You have received as

much benefit by others as can rationally be expected ; 3 r ou were born

of Christian parents, by them dedicated to God, and trained up in his

fear ; and now, after all this, when you come to stand upon your own

bottom, you wrest yourselves out of the arms of grace : your obstinate

refusing seriously and heartily to enter into personal covenant with

God will exclude you out of heaven ; you are not moved by the ex-

amples of the word, and self-denying Christians. If you never try to

bring your heart to consent to the Lord's terms, you will find your

oil to seek when you should use it, at the bridegroom's coming.

Secondly, I now come to the reason alleged, ' Lest there be not

enough for us and you.'

Doct. 2. They that have most grace have none to spare.

1. With respect to our great hopes, all our endeavours are little

enough for heaven ; we cannot be at more cost and pains than our

blessed hope is worth : Phil. ii. 12, ' Work out your own salvation with

fear and trembling.' Work, because it is for salvation : 2 Thes. ii. 12,

' Walk worthy of God, who hath called us to his kingdom and glory/

That is the worthiness of condecency ; walk suitable to your high and

holy calling, walk as those that expect such a kingdom and glory, walk

as those that are contented with a little here, Heb. xiii. 5. A little

here should serve our turn, but in heavenly things it is otherwise ;

there should be a holy covetousness, and an insatiableness of desiring

more, and a suitableness in our walking to that state of life which we

expect. But alas ! it is otherwise with most, for the comforts of this

life, which are but as a vapour, they are insatiable as the grave ; but

in grace, every little, yea, a bare nothing, is thought sufficient. Surely

these men have not a true sense of God's punishments and rewards,

nor what preparation is necessary for that heavenly happiness they

expect.

2. With respect to our great temptations, not a jot of grace can be

spared. We are told that ' the righteous are scarcely saved,' 1 Peter

iv. 18. There are so many trials by the way, and our folly and weak-

ness is so great, that it is no easy matter to get safe to heaven. If we

have strength to carry us through our present condition, yet we know

not what we may meet with before our service be over ; a day may

come when all the grace we have may be thought little enough, and

too little for the trials we may be put upon. Little grace is as no

grace when a temptation cometh : Luke viii. 25, ' Where is your

faith ?' But Mark iv. 4, ' How is it that ye have no faith ?' and Mat.

viii. 26, it is said, 'Why are ye fearful? ye of little faith !' Little

faith in some cases is as if they had no faith : faith in the habit they

had, but they could not put it into act, in that sudden and great

trial : Eph. vi. 10, ' Be ye strong in the Lord, and the power of his

might.'

3. With respect to our comfort, a large measure of grace is neces-

sary. We are bidden to give all diligence, that we may enter abun-

dantly, 2 Peter i. 11. Not only make a hard shift to get to heaven,

but to get thither with full sails of comfort ; now this will never be,

unless we have much grace, and that kept in lively action ; for other-

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wise it will not come into the view and notice of conscience, to make

up an evidence there.

[1.] I do suppose that conscience hath a vote in the matters of our

peace, Rom. viii. 16. In the matters of our sense, Rom. ix. 1, the

bosom witness is conscience ; the knowledge of our estate is not intui-

tive, but discursive.

[2.] That small things are inconspicuous, and not easily to be dis-

cerned, especially by weak eyes ; therefore it is a hard matter for con-

science to discern a little grace in a great heap of corruption. Man's

heart is not watchful, nor so tender, nor are things in such order there,

as that every lesser thing should be taken notice of ; though conscience

be a secret spy, yet small things escape its view and notice, both in a

way of sin and grace ; in a drowsy and inattentive soul, it cannot be

imagined : therefore there must be a great deal of grace before it can

be seen and distinguished from a common work ; for the heart of man

is deceitful: the woman was forced to light a candle, and search dili-

gently, before she could find her lost groat ; so hard will it be to dis-

cover that in the soul which is small and little.

[3.] The testimony of the Spirit is usually given in upon the greatest

exercise and abounding of grace ; for the oil of gladness followeth the

oil of grace, and comfort is dispensed according to the rate of obed-

ience : John xv. 10, ' If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in

my love ; ' and John xiv. 21, ' He that hath my commandments and

keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and is loved of my Father, and

I will love him, and manifest myself unto him.' Therefore out of all

this it followeth, that if we would maintain any comfortable and de-

lightful sense of our interest in Christ, and the glory of the world to

come, we should not be contented with a little grace.

4. With respect to the nature of grace, it is a sign we have no grace

when we think we have enough and to spare ; surely they that have

tasted that the Lord is gracious, 1 Peter iii. 2, they are not cloyed, but

will long for more ; that man that doth not desire to be better was

never good. As the little seed works through the hard and dry clods,

that it may grow up to stalk and flower, so is grace, it is working and

increasing to perfection : therefore it is an ill sign, to be satisfied with

small measures of grace, to say I have enough. Every degree of grace,

is as desirable as that we have attained to ; and those whose hearts

God hath touched, they earnestly desire more.

5. All is too little to stand before the Lord, and therefore none have

any surplusage of grace, or more than will serve their own turn ; as

in the gathering of manna, he that had much, had nothing over. If

we consider the glorious and holy presence of Christ, we have all little

enough: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant;'

Non (licit Cum hosdbus tuis, sed Cum servo tuo. He doth not say, O

Lord, enter not into judgment with thine enemies, but, Enter not into

judgment with thy servant.

6. Every one is to be considered according to his advantages,

and opportunities of growth and improvement. Less may be suffi-

cient to salvation, but not to them to whom more is given ; as

they distinguish of a fundamental in se and quoad nos. God may

accept of an implicit faith in some, but not in others ; so it is true of

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grace, that rule, Luke xii. 48, ' He that knew not and did things worthy

of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes.' God may accept that from

others which he will not from us, and we are to be answerable for our

means of growth ; we expect lie should come sooner that rideth on

horseback than he that travelleth on foot ; and therefore we must not

be contented with a bare competency, but labour for abundance.

7. The greatest graces have many times the greatest corruptions and

temptations to wrestle with. God doth not call every one to such a

trial as he called Abraham ; but as Jacob drove as the little ones were

able to bear, so doth God proportion temptations according to the

measure of grace and strength that every one hath ; and therefore he

that hath most grace, hath but enough for that condition of life

wherein God will exercise and try him.

8. You may easily have too little, you cannot have too much.

There are many come short, none over ; you never read of any that

had too much faith, too much of the love of God and the fear of God.

In the internals and essentials of religion, there is no nimium : a man

may spend too much time in praying and hearing, when it encroacheth

upon other duties ; but he cannot fear God too much with a filial fear,

or love God too much ; many love him too little, and therefore are kept

so doubtful all their days, that they cannot tell whether they love God

at all or no.

9. Because of that conformity that should be between us and Christ,

who is our glorious head ; and all the heirs of glory are destinated to

be conformed to the first-born, Rom. viii. 24, chiefly in grace, purity,

and holiness : indeed this cannot so full and exactly be till we see him

as he is, but the present sight that we have of him by grace should

make some change in us, 2 Cor. iii. 18. In heaven we shall be holy,

harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, as he, Heb. vii. 26; above the

reach of temptations, as he, John x. 30 ; our vile bodies shall be

changed, Phil. iii. 21, and both soul and body conformed to that glorious

estate, as he, Rom. vi. 9 ; but it must be begun here ; the very hopes of

it should put us upon purifying ourselves : 1 John iii. 3, ' He that hath

this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure : ' you are to do so,

that there may be some proportion between head and members.

10. Because a little grace is not so honourable to God : John xv. 8,

' Herein is my Father glorified, in that ye bring forth much fruit ; ' and

Phil. i. 11, ' Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by

Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God ; ' 2 Peter i. 8, ' If these

things be in you and abound, you shall not be barren or unfruitful in

the knowledge of Christ.' It is not a naked and empty profession, it

is not sleepy habits, or a little grace, but when grace hath a deep

power and sovereignty over our hearts and lives, that bringeth God

into request, and commendeth him to the consciences of men. The

knowledge of Christ is reproached as a low institution by carnal men;

but to the truly wise, no such excellent and noble spirits as they that

are bred up under him.

Use 1. Of reproof to those that think we make more ado than

needeth. When we press men to a constant watchfulness, and serious

diligence in the spiritual life, no wonder that every slight thing

seemeth enough ; so the foolish virgins, ' Give us of your oil ; ' the wise

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virgins are more cautious ; their saying is, ' Not so, lest there be not

enough for us and yon.' What thoughts have you of Christ, when

you think every slight preparation enough for him ? what sense of the

world to come, when you do so little in order to it ? what is it that

you call grace, that you do so easily come by it, and maintain it upon

such cheap terms ? Surely men have no sense of the end, or else mis-

take the way, that think so little will serve the turn. Indeed a little

in the world will serve the turn, if men had sober and moderate desires,

and did not increase their necessities by the largeness of their affec-

tions. A man may have estate enough for ten men, yea, twenty men,

and yet not be satisfied, but the best hath scarce grace enough for one ;

but alas! how soon are men satisfied (such is their indifferency) about

spiritual things ! instead of hungering and thirsting after righteouness,

a little or none contents them ; here only they are for sobriety and

moderation ; all is too much, and too easily passed over that seemeth

to awaken them to a lively sense of that religion they do profess.

Christ saith, ' Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of

the scribes and pharisees, you cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven,'

Mat. v. 20. What do ye more than they ? and Luke xi. 24, ' Strive

to enter in at the strait gate/ They cannot endure that Christ's

authority should be urged on the conscience ; can you hope to be saved

on easier terms without all this ado ? A little time will determine whose

word shall stand, God's or yours ; you cannot do too much as long as

you do but what God bids you. Certainly if you judge by that rule

which God hath given to try by, no man on earth is as good as he

should be, and he that is best is too bad, and he that doth most,

cometh unspeakably short of what he should do. All the holy ones

of God complain of their naughty hearts, that they cannot do the

things that they would ; they groan under the body of death, and cry

out, '0 wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this

body of death?' And will they then obtrude this sorry perfunctory

obedience upon God as a full satisfaction of his gospel law ?

2. It is to reprove those that think they have grace enough to bring

them to heaven. Now they may go rest, and trouble themselves no

further. Alas ! they know not what belongeth to the spiritual life ; for if

they had true grace, they would see a need to keep it lively and grow-

ing ; they would find they could not keep what they had unless they

did increase it ; the daily lapses make breaches upon it, and conscience

would tell them how easily they lose many degrees, and a sense of it,

and that every day they need serious humiliation ; and it is a naughty

heart that can satisfy itself with the minimum quod sit, a bare com-

petency, without seeking after greater measures. When men do things

against their will, they do not more than needs; but love hath an am-

plitude and largeness in it, it thinks it can never do enough.

Use 2. Is to excite us : Phil. ii. 1 3, 14, ' Forgetting those things

that are behind, and reaching to the things that are before, I press

towards the mark of the high prize of God in Christ Jesus.' You have

not answered your holy rule, nor done things worthy of your blessed

hope, nor answerable to the great obligations laid upon you, nor be-

coming the glorious salvation which you expect : if these things were

well thought of, you would see a need of making a speedy addition to

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your stock every day. Oh ! then, as to the internal habits of grace, we

beseech you let your love abound more and more, Phil. i. 9 ; and as to

the external acts of obedience : 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'As ye have received of

us how to walk, and how to please God, so you would abound more

and more.' Let your vessel be fuller, and your lamps burn brighter ;

you owe God a thousand times more than ever yet you have paid him ;

he hath both deserved and required more at your hand ; you cannot

make out your gospel qualification of sincerity, unless there be a lament-

ing of defects, and a striving after perfection.

Thirdly, We come to the advice and counsel, ' But go ye rather to

them that sell, and buy for yourselves.' Go to them that sell ; that is,

go where it may be had ; for selling and buying are put improperly

for getting into our hand. Emptum cedit in jus emptoris. Things are

said to be bought when they are made ours, as if we had paid a just

price for them, as Prov. xxiii. 23, ' Buy the truth, and sell it not ; '

that is, keep it, and do not part with it. So Isa. Iv. 1, ' Buy wine and

milk ; ' and Rev. iii. 18, ' I counsel thee to buy of me gold.' Calvin is

of opinion, non admonitio est, sed exprobratio ; and Austin before, non

consulentium, sed irridentium est ista responsio. It is a check and

rebuke to their negligence ; as if it were said, Go buy now if you can ;

heretofore you had a time of buying, which you neglected ; the shops

were open, but now the opportunity is lost : and so think it not a

counsel but a rebuke. You should have bought for yourselves. I rather

think it is an advice, directing them to the remedy, or the true course

that must be taken if we would get oil, as appeareth by the practice of

the foolish virgins in the next verse ; and if they used this remedy too

late, it was their own folly.

Doct 3. Those that would have grace must have recourse to the

ordinances.

1. Mark iv. 24, ' Take heed how you hear, for with what measure

ye mete it shall be measured to you again.' And you that attend upon

hearing, more shall be given to you. ' With what measure ye mete/

that is a proper rule for commerce between man and man, and our

Saviour urgeth it, Mat. vii. 12. But it is true also in commerce be-

tween God and man ; if you take heed how you hear, and do what

you hear, that is, seriously weigh that divine and heavenly doctrine in

your deep and ponderous thoughts ; if they would use such conscion-

able care to profit as was fit, the Lord would recompense their diligence

with an answerable blessing on the soul. Another place is 1 Thes. v.

19, 20, ' Quench not the Spirit ; despise not prophesying.' If you would

not quench the Spirit, his convictions, excitations, and counsels, you

must use the means ; they are instituted to this end, and God instituteth

nothing in vain ; they have a tendency to that end ; the formality of

the institution is a word of command and a word of promise.

2. Christ hath sanctified ordinances to this end, Eph. v. 26, 27 ; and

John xvii. 8, ' Sanctify them by thy truth ; thy word is truth.'

Use 3. If we would have the graces of the Spirit begotten, strength-

ened, and increased in us, let us use the means, Acts xvii. 11. Let us

use them more conscionably, and see l that by every converse with God

we may get some new blessing from him.

1 Qu. 'seek'?— Ed.

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SERMON VIII.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were

ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door ivas

shut— Mat. XXV. 10.

Three things are here remarkable: —

1. The coming of the bridegroom while they went to buy.

2. The entering in, or admission of those that were ready, into the

marriage-chamber.

3. The shutting of the door to exclude the rest.

For the first of these, their going to buy must be interpreted accord-

ing to the scope of the parable ; and so it signifieth their unreadiness

and unpreparedness for Christ's coming : they were to seek of grace

when they had most need to use it. In parables, things are said to be

done in the day of judgment which are done in order to or with respect

unto that day ; not that men do go and buy oil then, &c. I might

observe from hence —

1. The certainty of Christ's coming. We heard before of a great

expectation, of his tarrying, of the cry raised, now of his coming, he

really came at last ; but of that point before.

2. Of the suddenness of his coming, by way of surprise on the carnal

world. When the careless were little ready for him, he came ; when

they went to buy; but of that in verse the 13th.

3. I shall choose to speak now of the quality in which he cometh ;

he cometh as a bridegroom.

Doct. 1. That the Lord Jesus Christ shall come to his people as a

bridegroom at his second coming.

Rev. xix. 7, 9, ' Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him,

for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself

ready : and he saith unto me, write, Blessed are they that are called

to the marriage-supper of the Lamb.'

To evidence this unto you. consider these propositions : —

1. That between Christ and believers there is a mutual tie, consent,

and obligation each to other, which may be notably represented by the

marriage covenant, Ps. xlv., Isa. xlv. 5, and elsewhere. There is a

living relation between Christ and them, beyond what is between him

and others ; a relation not only notional and imaginary, but is really

transacted between them, as between two parties in the marriage

covenant. So Cant. ii. 16, ' My beloved is mine, and I am his.' Both

the parties are mutually, explicitly, and formally engaged and con-

tracted to one another ; Christ to us as head, we to him as members

of his mystical body. As it is real, so it is near ; they twain shall be

one flesh, we one spirit : 1 Cor. vi. 17, ' He that is joined to the Lord

is one spirit.' Whole Christ is ours, we are or should be altogether

his, as full of kindness and love, Eph. v. 25-27 ; Zeph. iii. 17. And

it is indissoluble ; the marriage-knot remaineth inviolable for ever :

' I will betroth thee to me for ever,' Hosea ii. 19.

2. This marriage may be considered in four respects : — (1.) With

respect to the ground and foundation of it ; (2.) With respect to our

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first entrance into this relation ; (3.) With respect to the state of it in

this world ; (4.) With respect to its perfect consummation.

[1.] With respect to the ground and foundation that was laid for it

in Christ's incarnation, or at his first coming. Marriage is between

parties of the same kind, as, in the first marriage, Adam called Eve

bone of his bone and flesh of his flesh, Gen. ii. 20. So Christ came to

fit himself for that relation of husband to his church, by taking our

nature upon him ; and therefore the apostle, when he speaketh of the

marriage between Christ and his church, useth the same name which

Adam had used : Eph. v. 30, ' For we are members of his body, of his

flesh, and of his bone.' When Christ was in the world, he made a

way for the marriage : he parted from us it is true, but there was an

interchange of tokens ; he took our flesh, and left with us his Spirit.

[2.] With respect to our first entrance into this relation, when

first converted to God, or upon our thankful, broken-hearted, willing

acceptance of Christ for Lord and husband. All marriage is entered

into by a consent : Christ giveth his consent in the promises, and we

by faith, which is' a broken-hearted, willing, and thankful acceptance

of the Lord Jesus Christ to the ends for which God offereth him.

Where note, that faith is an acceptance of Christ : John i. 12, ' To as

many as received him.' Next, for the mode and manner of this ac-

ceptance, it is broken-hearted, because we are undeserving and ill-de-

serving creatures, altogether unworthy to be taken into such a near

relation to Christ ; as Abigail, when David sent to her to make her his

wife, debased herself : 1 Sam. xxv. 40, 41, ' Let thine handmaid wash

the feet of thy servants.' Alas ! who are we ? A poor trembling

soul is afraid of being too bold, but God's offer encourageth it. And

as it is a broken-hearted, so it is a willing acceptance of Christ ;

for Christ will not draw us into this relation by force, or bestow the

privileges of it without or against our consent : Rev. xxii. 17, ' Who-

soever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' If the will be to

Christ, the great difficulty is over. Christianity is but a hearty consent

to accept of Christ and his benefits ; but the creature's will is not soon

gained : Mat. xxiii. 37, ' I would, but ye would not ;' he inviteth and

clucketh by the renewed messages of his grace, but we will not be

gathered : Isa. lxv. 2, ' I have spread out my hands all the day long to

a rebellious people.' The ungodly careless world knoweth not the

worth of God's greatest mercies, and therefore despise them, yea, take

them for intolerable injuries and troubles, because they are against

their fleshly appetites ; but when the will is once thoroughly gained to

God, the great work of conversion is drawing to a happy period ; the

consent of the will is the closing act, when we yield ourselves to the

Lord, resolving to become his, and to be disposed, ordered, and

governed by him at his own pleasure : ' I entered into covenant with

thee, and thou becamest mine,' Ezek. xvi. 8. And as it is a willing-

acceptance, so it is a thankful acceptance of Christ ; because it is a

great favour and honour done to us, considering the infinite distance

between the parties to be joined in the marriage-covenant, God over

all blessed for ever, and we poor wretched creatures. There may be

among us great distance between the persons that enter into the

marriage-covenant, but all that distance is but finite, for it is but such

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as can be between creature and creature, which are equal in their

being, notwithstanding the inequality of many extrinsical respects ; but

in this distance between Christ and his people, the distance is between

the Creator and the creature, the potter and the clay, the thing

formed, and him that formed it ; betwixt the most lovely person, and

the most loathsome ; between the heir of all things, and the children

of wrath ; the king immortal, and a poor vassal to sin and Satan. And

consider also the many benefits we enjoy by it ; we have the com-

munion of his righteousness, Spirit, and graces : 2 Cor. v. 21, ' He was

made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in

him.' There are two maxims in the civil law, Uxor fulget radiis

mariti — the wife participated in the honour of the husband ; so we

have the communion of Christ's righteousness ; and Uxori lis non

intenditur — the husband is answerable for the wife ; the pleas must be

brought against him. So Jesus Christ hath paid our debts, and re-

presenteth the merit of his sacrifice ; he is responsible for the debts

we owe to divine justice. Participation is another benefit : Eph. v. 26,

'Husbands love your wives, as Christ loved the church, and gave

himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it by the washing of

water.' Christ upon the cross had merit enough to purchase, and love

enough to intend, and wisdom enough to choose, the greatest benefit

for us ; and what did he purchase, intend, and choose, but to sanctify

and cleanse us by the washing of water through the word ? And

lastly, we must receive him to the ends for which God offereth him ;

that is, to be Lord and husband ; which importeth a forsaking all

others, and a devoting and giving up ourselves to Christ, to live in his

love and obedience.

(1.) Before there can be a receiving, there must be a renouncing of

all other loves. Christ will be entertained alone. The husband can-

not endure a co-rival and competitor. And the marriage consent im-

plieth an election and choice, which is a renouncing all others, and a

preferring him alone. So the marriage covenant runneth : Hosea iii.

3, ' Thou shalt not be for another, but shalt be for me.' So Ps.

xlv. 10, 11, 'Hearken, daughter, and consider; incline thine ear :

forget also thine own people, and thy father's house. So shall the

king greatly desire thy beauty : for he is thy Lord, and worship thou

him.' All that do consider what is offered in Christ's name, and con-

sent to the motion, they must forsake all their old ways, the old

corruptions, and old passions, and old affections; and seriously think

of leaving all their worldly pleasures and vanities ; they must not stick

at their choicest interests, most pleasing lusts, and dearest sins, though

it be a right hand, and a right eye, Mat. v. 29. If we consent to

take Christ, and retain our old loves still, we shall be little the better

for being Christians.

(2.) You must give yourselves up to him, to live in his love and

obedience. There are two grand duties we must resolve upon, if Ave

enter into this relation — conjugal love and conjugal obedience.

(1st.) Conjugal love. There is no want of love on Christ's part : Isa.

lxii. 5, ' As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God

rejoice over thee.' Now this love must be mutual ; as he in us, so we

in him. Now conjugal love is such a love as is greater to the yoke-

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fellow than to any other. So our love to Christ is a superlative love.

"We must not only love him not less than other things, nor equal

with other things, but above them, cleaving to him alone. Some

love Christ less than other things ; they love him a little, but love the

world better. Honour and greatness better : John xii. 42, ' How can

you believe that seek honour one of another ? ' Pleasure : 2 Tim. iii.

4, ' Lovers of pleasure, more than lovers of God.' Profit : 2 Tim. iv.

10, ' Demas hath forsaken us, and embraced the present world.' Some

love Christ, but love other things equal with him. They are divided ;

it is a nice case ; hard to say which hath the mastery : they make a

pother with religion, but never feel the true force of it. But the true

conjugal affection is superlative : Ps. lxxiii. 25, ' Whom have I in

heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth that I desire besides

thee ;' Phil. iii. 8-10, ' I count all things but dung and dross, for the

excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ my Lord.' They prefer

Jesus Christ before all things in the world. Besides, as an husband,

he must have this love.

(2d.) This is a Lord that must have conjugal obedience : Eph. iii.

23, 24, ' The husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of

the church, and the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is

subject to Christ, so let wives be to their own husbands in everything.'

I urge it, as wives are subject to their husbands in everything, so let

the church and each believing soul be to Christ. Surely, if you con-

sent to marry to Christ, you must reckon upon it, that you are no

longer your own to dispose of, and therefore henceforth you mnst no

more live to yourselves. Christ is accepted and received for Lord, Col.

ii. 6, and as such you must consent to serve and obey him : Ps. xlv.

12, ' He is thy Lord, worship thou him.' You must take him so as

never to be ashamed to own him ; take him for better, for worse; take

him and his cross, Mat. xvi. 24 ; take him and his yoke, Mat. xi. 29 ;

take him and his spiritual laws, John xiv. 21. You are to be obedient

to Christ in all things. You are no more to do what you will, but

what will please the Lord, 1 Cor. vii. 30. In short, you must obey

him, if you will have benefit by him, Heb. v. 9.

[3.] It is spoken of with respect to its present state in this world.

The relation is begun, but it is not publicly solemnised : 2 Cor. xi. 2,

' I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a

chaste virgin to Christ.' The church is sponsa, not uxor. Here by

the offers of the gospel we are espoused, and by faith engaged to him :

it is called a betrothing to him, Hosea ii. 19, 20, ' I will betroth thee

to me for ever ; yea, I will betroth thee to me in righteousness, and in

judgment, and in loving-kindness, and mercy : I will betroth thee to

me in faithfulness.' The word is not taken generally for marriage,

but strictly, and hath a special emphasis in that place ; and so noteth

either the goodness of God ; he would not receive Israel as an unchaste

prostitute, that had broken covenant with him, but as a virgin, as if

never any breach of contract before ; or rather noteth the present state

of the church: she is betrothed to Christ, but the marriage is not con-

summate. The day of espousals and public solemnities are deferred

till the resurrection, when Christ will come as a bridegroom to conduct

his spouse into his Father's house, for ever to remain with him.

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[4. J With respect to its consummation ; it is perfected at his second

coming ; and it is properly called a marriage. It was hut a wooing

or betrothing before then, when the queen is brought to the king, and

abides with him for ever : Ps. xlv. 15, ' With joy and gladness shall

she be brought ; they shall enter into the king's palace.'

Now there are many reasons why this second coming of Christ is

called a consummation of the marriage, and Christ may then be said

to come as a bridegroom.

1. Because there is a personal meeting and interview between his

spouse and himself. Now he employeth spokesmen : 2 Cor. v. 20,

1 Now we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you

by us : we pray you in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God.' As

Eliezer, Abraham's servant, went to get a match for his master's son,

so the ministers of the gospel : 2 Cor. xi. 2, ' I have espoused you to

one husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.' He

sends tokens and spiritual refreshings: John xiv. 21, 'He that hath

my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me, and

shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself

to him.' Then he cometh himself, we meet him in person. Here we

meet him in ordinances, Isa. lxiv. 5 : ' Present in spirit,' 2 Cor. v.

At death our souls meet him, Eccles. xii. 7, but then our whole man

shall meet him, Job xix. 26, with these arms embrace him. We are

indeed brought near to him by faith, and have some fellowship and

communion with him ; but we do not see him as he is, nor see him

face to face, as afterwards.

2. For the public solemnisation of the marriage, the bridegroom

and the bride do both deck and adorn themselves. The bridegroom

cometh in the glory of his Father, with great abundance of the holy

angels : Rev. xix. 7, ' Let us be glad, and give honour to him ; for the

marriage of the lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.'

Common garments are not for that wedding : we must be active in the

purifying ourselves, but the grace is given by God: ver. 8, 'And to

her was granted that she might be clothed in white linen ; the fine

linen is the righteousness of the saints.' As Esther was supplied out

of the king's wardrobe, these ornaments and garments of salvation are

purchased and bestowed freely upon us ; by Jesus Christ all is given.

We are here but renewed in part, and cleansed in part ; all our filthy

garments are not yet put off ; but then we shall not have the least

remainder of sin and misery. If we should meet Christ with our de-

formities, we should meet him with shame and discomfort ; it would

be a dishonour to our bridegroom to come into his presence with our

filthy rags ; therefore we come to present his bride with glory.

3. Then there is an open manifestation of his dearest love. Before

the last day the match is concluded between the parties ; there is love

expressed, but it is secret and hidden : ' Our life is hid with Christ in

God.' But then he will own believers man by man, Luke xii. 8,

invite them into his bosom in the sight of the world, Mat. xxv. 34,

pronounce their pardon on the throne, Acts iii. 19, set them at his

right hand, as judging the world together with himself, 2 Cor. vi. 2.

Alas ! now all is under a veil ; the world sees us not, 1 John iii. 1 ;

now we ourselves question whether he loves us or no, question it often:

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' If the Lord be with us, why are these things befallen us ? ' But

then all is open and clear ; when the clouds vanish about Christ's per-

son, so about us also. It is called ' the day of the manifestation of the

sons of God,' Rom. viii. 19.

4. Then we are brought home to his house, conducted in state to

heaven, John xiv. 3. Then the day is come when you shall have all

that you have hoped, desired, looked for. Oh ! what a happy day will

that be, when the great shepherd of the sheep shall lead his flock into

their everlasting fold, and the husband of the church carry her with

him into his father's house : John xvii. 24, ' Father, I will that those

whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold my glory.'

And his will and testament is made good. Now we are in the outer

court. If one day in the house of God be better than a thousand else-

where, oh ! what is it to be brought home to God ! In these blessed

mansions there we shall abide for ever, and never to part more.

5. Everlasting cohabitation and living with him : ' We shall be ever

with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17 ; not get a glimpse and away, but for

ever to enjoy his presence. Christ's presence for a time upon earth

was very sweet to his disciples ; it was bitter to them to think of his

going from them, though it were expedient for them ; but now remain

in an everlasting state of intimacy and familiarity with him. Now

we have a taste of Christ, but then our communion shall be without

intermission or interruption ; we shall be out of the crowd and press

of troubles and temptations and sins, and study divinity in the Lamb's

face, and he will communicate himself to us according to the vastest

extent of our capacity.

Use, Oh ! then, be espoused to Christ ; otherwise he will not come

as a bridegroom, but as a judge. For motives —

1. Consider your necessity. There is a deep necessity lieth upon

you; you are undone for ever if you are not married to Christ. The

apostle saith, 1 Cor. vii., if a woman can live without a husband, she

doth well if she marrieth not ; but now you are undone for ever if you

have him not ; you are liable to the wrath of the eternal God. The

apostle saith, Rom. vii. 4, that all those are dead to the law who are

married to Christ : that must be done necessarily. First, now, what is

it to be dead to the law, but to see ourselves miserable and undone for

ever, and impotent, and no way able to help ourselves? The law

which is written upon every man's conscience is there represented as a

hard and cruel husband, that requireth a hard task to do, but affordeth

no strength at all to do it ; therefore it bindeth us over to death and

the curse. The sense of the law, being inbred in the conscience and

natural to us, cannot be extinguished, but will return with the more

violence. Well, then, the law suggesteth what we should do, threat-

eneth us if we do it not ; and conscience telling us we have not done it,

this is a continual grief and vexation to us, and a man is kept under

fear of death and hell all his days.

2. Consider the excellency of Christ, who is altogether lovely as to

his person and offices, and every way suited to your necessities. As

to his person, he is God-man, able and willing to do you good ; for

what cannot God do ? and surely he will not be strange to his own

flesh. You are condemned by the law ; he is a priest to make atone-

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merit for you. You are ignorant of the way to true happiness ; he is

a prophet to teacli and guide you. You have many enemies and dif-

ficulties to overcome in that way ; he points it out to you ; and your

own flesh is weak, but he is a king to vanquish your enemies, and to

assist you with the powerful succours of his Spirit ; he will help you to

perform your duty in the midst of all temptations to the contrary ;

for we are to serve him iu newness of spirit, Rom. vii. 5, 6.

3. Consider the utility and profit of it: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23, 'All

things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' If you

could as heartily devote yourselves to the service of Christ, as Christ

as mediator did to the work of redemption, nothing would be wanting

to you to promote your present holiness and future happiness.

4. It is no presumption to aspire to this marriage, for God maketh

the first motion. God hath made love to you, and wooed you by all

manner of engaging expressions, that he may win your hearts, and

engage your consent. Oh ! do not refuse the Lord's kindness, or

neglect to bestow your hearts upon him, or to give up vourselves to

him. Christ hath employed spokesmen, sends his tokens as presents

of love : Mat. xxiii. 37, ' I would, but you would not.' All marriages

are brought about by earnest suit on the one side, and consent on the

other : so it is here. Oh ! therefore consider, and say, as Rebecca, ' I

can say no more nor no less ; the thing is the Lord's.'

5. Consider how ill Christ will take it to be refused : Prov. i. 29,

30, 'They would none of my counsel, and despised all my reproofs ;'

and Ps. lxxxi. 11, 'But my people would not hearken to my voice ;

Israel would none of me.' Despising of kindness is very provoking.

Oh ! then, give Christ a free and a full and firm consent, and all is

ended.

[1.] A free consent, not extorted. When men are a little frighted

into a good conscience, Christ seemeth to be welcome to them ; but as

their trouble weareth off, so doth their resolution to take Christ for their

Lord and Saviour : Ps. lxxviii. 34, 35, ' When he slew them, then they

sought him, and returned and inquired early after God ; and they re-

membered that God was their rock, and the Most High their redeemer.'

In such cases men put a force upon themselves, and their heart is not

inclined, but compelled, as those that marry against their wills. It is

only in a pang and fit of conscience that they like Christ, when some great

distress forceth them to resolve for him, and their fears drive them to

Christ, rather than his excellences draw them to him. That which is

forced is not sincere. Many own Christ in their sickness and dis-

tress, that never care for him when they are well at ease ; then they

forget all, live as they did before, when their turn is served. There is

a difference between a woman's coming to a physician for cure, and her

coming to a husband to dwell with him. True conversion doth begin

in fear, but it doth not end there ; it endeth in a change of heart, and

a settled love to God and holiness, and a hatred of sin. This is not only

seen in men when the fear of death affrights them, but in their whole

lives. Others, under some conviction, they would have Christ for their

consciences, and the world for their hearts.

[2.] It must be a full and unbounded consent to all the terms and

demands of the gospel, to be what he would have you to be, and to do

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what he would have you to do : Mat. xiii. 44, the man ' sold all to buy

the pearl of great price.' You must not stick at anything. Though

you are unwilling to let the match go, yet it is no full consent. Christ

will be taken for better for worse ; you must renounce your dearest

lusts, devote and resign your choicest interests, or else you are un-

worthy of him. The bargain is not made till all your interests be laid

at his feet, Luke xiv. 26-33. So for lusts, Mat. v. 29, 30. Here men

usually stick, and had rather undergo any cost and pains, than undergo

the mortification of sin, as you may see in Micah vi. 6, 7, 'Wherewith

shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the most high

God ? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, and calves of a

year old ? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with

ten thousands of rivers of oil ? Shall I give my first-born for my

transgression, and the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul ? ' Now,

before it comes to this, man hath many debates of soul. They are con-

vinced that sin is evil, contrary to God, and hurtful to themselves ; and

have some mind to let it go ; but, in fine, their hearts are more for it

than against it, and so do not come up to a saving consent to take

Christ for their Lord and husband. The pleasures of sin are so

bewitching, that they cannot come up roundly to Christ's terms, or to

the whole business of Christianity.

[3.] It must be a firm and habitual consent, and such as is not

retracted in our after conversation. Weak and wavering purposes soon

come to nothing ; but when this is your ordinary frame, and the new

nature, and the inclination of your souls is this way, when there is a

new bent put upon your spirits, then it will hold out : Ps. cxix. 112,

' I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always to the end.'

The second thing remarkable in the text is the entrance of those

that were ready in to the nuptial feast ; and —

1. Who are the persons ? They that are inwardly renewed, and

endowed with the saving graces of the Spirit.

2. What is their privilege ? They went into the marriage, to the

festivities of the marriage-chamber, or place of nuptial entertainment.

Marriage-feasts are often spoken of in scripture : Judges xiv. 10,

' And Sampson made a feast, for so used the young men to do ; ' and

Gen. xxix. 22, ' And Laban gathered all the young men of the place,

and made a feast/ This figureth the joys of eternal life, and that full

and sweet communion we shall have with Christ in heaven.

Doct. Those only who are ready and prepared for Christ shall enter

into eternal joys, when others are excluded.

Luke xii. 37, ' Blessed are those servants whom, when the Lord

cometh, he shall find watching.' So Mat. xxiv. 44, ' Therefore be ye

also ready.'

1. I shall inquire what it is to be ready.

2. Show you why they only shall have eternal and immediate com-

munion with Christ.

First, What it is to be ready ? There is a twofold readiness —

1. A habitual and constant readiness.

2. An actual readiness, when you specially compose yourselves to

meet with Christ.

1. Of the habitual and constant readiness, that concerneth the

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state of the person, the frame of the heart, and the course of our con-

versations, as represented by oil in the vessel, and the lamps kept

burning.

[1.] The state of the person. He must be one reconciled, and one

at peace with God. There are two expressions in scripture that speak

of the state that we must be found in when Christ Cometh ; 2 Peter

iii. 14, ' That we may be found of him in peace.' The other is, 2 Cor.

v. 3, ' That we may not be found naked.' And both do principally

relate to justification. Our peace depends upon our reconciliation with

God, Rom. v. 1 ; and till your pardon be sued out in a humble and

broken-hearted manner, how will you be able to stand before the

Lord ? till you be rectus in curia, and have a discharge of sin and

the curse, and be not found in a natural and unconverted estate?

The other expression is, ' That we may not be found naked.' It is sad

to appear before God with no other covering but our own skins. No;

there is no getting the blessing but in the garment of our elder brother.

Therefore we are so often bidden to ' put on the Lord Jesus,' Rom. xiii.

14, and Gal. iii. 27, and that you buy of Him ' white raiment to cover

your nakedness,' Rev. iii. 17, 18. These places are principally to be

interpreted of justification, though it will not exclude sanctification ;

for that is a garment of salvation to cover our loathsome nakedness

from the sight of the Lord.

[2.] As to the frame of the heart, that it may be renewed and sanc-

tified. Habitual grace is oil in the vessel, that there may be a spring

or fountain of grace in the heart, John vii. 38 ; but that I spake of

before. The graces of the Spirit are the bride's jewels, and ornaments

are the things which the bridegroom delights in : Isa. lxi. 10, ' I will

greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for he

hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me

with the robes of his righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself

with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with jewels,' &c. The

more these things are in us, and abound in us, the more lovely in

Christ's eyes.

[3.] Something as to the course of our conversation. It is not

enough to have oil in the vessel, but the lamp must be kept burning,

our graces in actual and continual exercise ; and we must always make

it our study to please the Lord. This is part of our preparation ; for

men are judged according to their works : ' Therefore what manner of

persons ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness?'

2 Peter iii. 10. The life of grace is seen in the fruits of it ; for that

end was it given us; not to lie idle in the heart, but to discover its

influence and efficacy in every part of our conversation : 2 Peter i. 8,

' If these things be in you and abound, they make you that you shall

neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus

Christ.' That will make a Christian busy and active in God's ser-

vice. Well, then, by this you know who are prepared and who

unprepared.

2. There is an actual preparation, which is like the trimming the

lamps when they heard the cry, and that noteth our actual fitting our-

selves for death and judgment. Besides our general habitual prepara-

tion, there needeth actual preparation. When Pharaoh sent for Joseph.

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he washed himself. It is no slight thing to appear before Christ.

Our general work should often be reviewed, that we may get promises

ready, evidences ready, experiences ready ; that we may have nothing

to do but to wait the good hour, and give welcome to the Lord Jesus

Christ, as old Simeon, Luke ii. 29, ' Lord, now lettest thou thy servant

depart in peace ; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' You should

be so settled in conscience, weaned in heart, purified in spirit, that you

do with comfort Avait for the salvation of God ; and not only wait for

it, but long for it, love his appearing ; especially after a long profession

of the name of Christ, so it should be.

Now this actual preparation should be made, either —

[1.] Daily, and when you are in the greatest health and strength :

we should think of our great change, Job xiv. 14, for death doth not

always give warning ; and to be provided doth no hurt. It enliveneth

our general preparation, and maketh us the more serious : it is like

poising our confidence, and weighing the strength and temper of it, to

see if it can encounter the thoughts of death and judgment to come.

A runaway cowardly faith, that cannot endure the serious thoughts

and supposition of these things, will do us no good : presumption is a

coward. Besides, it riddeth off the present work with more success

when we live every day as if it were our last, and do all things as if

presently to give an account to Christ of the doing of them. Once

more, to familiarise the thoughts of Christ's coming to us, it allayeth

so much of the dread and terror of it as belongeth to bondage, and

keepeth up so much as belongs to reverence, and serious and aweful

walking with God.

[2.] When God summons us by his providence to make up our

account: Luke xvi. 2, ' Give an account of thy stewardship, for thou

mayest be no longer steward.' Many are about to go into the other

world, but they do not think of making ready for it. The wrath of

God is even at the door, and they are stupid and careless. Surely

such a frame of heart should be far from the children of God. They

have a tender conscience, and a deep sense of the world to come ;

therefore in probability, when they have but a short time wherein to

prepare, their preparation should be the more serious. So when we

are to partake of the Lord's supper, a man would go aside and renew

his evidences for heaven, and awaken his spiritual desire ; so for hear-

ing the word, a man would compose his heart to receive the word with

meekness ; and should we not set our hearts in frame when we are to

meet with Christ, not only in the ordinances, but in person ?

Secondly, Why those only that are ready and prepared are to enter

into the nuptial chamber.

1. Those are only meet for heavenly happiness. It is most suitable

to them, as having that life begun in their hearts which shall be per-

fected there, Col. i. 12. What should poor sensual, sinful creatures do

with heaven ? Heaven is prepared for us, and we for heaven, Rom.

vi. 23. When we are put into a heavenly frame and temper, heaven's

gates stand open for us. It is the wisdom of God to put all things in

their proper place ; heavy and light bodies in their proper places. So

here the apostle saith, 2 Cor. v. 5, ' He that wrought us for this very

thing is God.' Excellent vessels are not thrown about the house, but

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put into a place suitable. The purging and purifying of our souls

is a kind of spiritualising of our bodies, and so we are fitted both in

body and soul.

2. These only have a lively sense of the coming of the Lord. Tem-

poraries are a sort of hypocrites ; their work is real, though but a

common work ; not because they purposely and intendedly dissemble,

but because they have not answerable impressions to the things which

they profess to believe, and their affections and preparations are not

answerable to what they know; and so it is a kind of mocking of God.

They profess and believe God omniscient, yet fear not to sin in his

presence ; to believe eternity, yet temporal things have the greatest

power and influence upon them : they look for the coming of Christ

in great majesty and glory, but do not make suitable provision. If we

had high thoughts of Christ, and a great respect to him, we would pre-

pare accordingly ; but surely we have lessening thoughts of Christ, and

his glorious coming, if we do not make ready for him, how high soever

our notions be about it.

Use. Are we ready ? I must direct the edge of this use to four sorts

of people : —

1. {Some care not whether they be ready or no ; they do but dally

with eternity and things of religion ; their hearts are not moved with

joy, or grief, or hope, or fear at the remembrance of this day. Surely

they have no faith, at least not a lively, but dead faith ; and therefore

are so dead-hearted ; and besides they care for none of these things,

' They mind earthly things.' If they can live comfortably here, be well

at ease here, they never take care to live eternally. Now to these I

shall only say, Live in no state or frame of heart but what you would

die in. Alas ! in your serious moods you cannot but say, I would not

die for all the world. But what if God should arrest thee before thou

thinkest of it ? What would become of thee ? On the other side

consider, when our work is done, and our ornaments put on, then it

will be pleasant to us to think of the coming of Christ : ' Now, Lord,

lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy

salvation,' Luke ii. 29.

2. Some think themselves ready when they are not : Kev. iii. 17,

'Thou thoughtest thou wast rich, and increased with goods; and

knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind,

and naked.' I trust in God's mercy, and hope I shall go to Christ :

it is easy to say this ; but do you know what it is to meet with Christ,

what honour he expecteth from you at the last day, and how little a

naked trust and a dead and empty faith will do to your acceptance

with him ? I confess we have all from Christ, and all the honour we

can do him results from his own grace ; but yet it is said, Eev. xix.

5, ( The bride hath made herself ready.' There is work required of us,

and such as may be answerable to the dignity of so great a Lord and

husband.

3. Others think a habitual readiness will serve the turn. They

mind present duties, but do not enliven them by the remembrance of

the coming of the Lord ; or they have not done their main work, and

therefore take more liberty about the world than others, and a greater

liberty in the delights of sense; and therefore we have that caution,

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Luke xxi. 24, ' Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts

be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this

life ; and so that day come upon you unawares/ That will make you

wither and contract ; deadness and drowsiness hinder your comfort and

peace, and that cheerful testimony you may give for God to others ; as

Peter's question, 'Lord, speakest thou to us, or to all? ' Luke xii. 41.

4. Many are ready, but think themselves unready. It concerneth

them to study gospel grounds of comfort and peace, if they can endure

the touchstone, though not the balance. Where there is a sincere bent

of heart to please him, there is a law of liberty, James ii. 12 ; a law of

liberty, not for the carnal, but the sincere ; not a law of trial, but of

gospel liberty.

We now come to the third thing in the text, ' And the door was

shut.' The shutting the door noteth the impossibility of getting our

condition altered when the day of grace and trial is once over. There

is a twofold door : — ■

1. Janua misericordicc ad ignoscendum — the door of Christ's pity

and mercy to returning sinners : Mat. vii. 7, • Ask, and it shall be given

you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.'

And John vi. 37, ' Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast off/

But then this door is shut.

2. Janua gratia\*, ad convertendum — there is the door of repentance

and conversion ; but there is no repentance when we are in termino.

They may have a sense of their misery, but their habitual hatred to

God remaineth : they that have wittingly and wilfully rejected his

counsel, remain so still. The fire of hell doth not soften, but harden

them ; their self-love may make them sensible of their pain.

Reason 1. His love to his people. Though Christ waiteth long for

the preparation of the wicked, yet he will not always delay the desire

of the godly.

Reason 2. His justice. It is fit that they that live so long in their

unbelief, and disobedience of the counsels and precepts of the gospel,

should at length find this dispensation continued, who grow unteachable

and hardened in their negligences : Ps. xcv. 7, 8, ' To-day, if you will

hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'

Use. Is to press us to begin with God betimes. You that are young,

take warning this day ; do not think there is time enough hereafter.

You that are old, do not think it is too late, nor be ashamed to begin

now. (1.) The present time is the only opportunity of salvation, or

embracing the offer of God's grace, Heb. iii. 7 ; Ps. xcv. 7. Oh ! do

not reject his counsel. (2.) Love is impatient of delay ; if we could

hope to prevail with you that way. (3.) When the angels sinned, the

Lord immediately shut the door against them ; to us he hath given

leave, Acts xi. 13, 14, and ' space to repent,' Kev. ii. 21 ; let us not

' receive the grace of God in vain,' 2 Cor. vi. 1.

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SERMON IX.

Afterwards came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to

us. But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know

you nob— Mat. XXV. 11, 12.

In these words we have two branches : —

1. The supplication of the foolish virgins, ver. 11.

2. The answer of the bridegroom, ver. 12.

In the first consider the time when it was. These foolish virgins

came afterwards, when the door was shut.

Secondly, The blandishment and compellation here used, Lord,

Lord.

First, For the time when it was. These virgins came afterwards,

when it was too late. They should have knocked and cried for mercy

before the door was shut : Isa. lv. 6, ' Seek the Lord while he may be

found ; call upon him while he is near.' Otherwise our cries are but

howlings, the fruit of our discontent rather than our own choice.

Heb. xi. 5, it is said of Enoch that he pleased God. If we would live

with God in a blessed estate hereafter, we must please God ere we

depart hence. This is the time of grace, or God's patience : Luke

ii. 14, \* Peace upon earth, good- will to men ;' and 2 Cor. vi. 1, 2.

This is the time of labour and service, Eccles. ix. 10. Judgment

findeth us as death leaveth us, Eccles. xi. 3. Then we are in termino.

When this life is ended, all opportunities of doing good end with it.

Com doth not grow in the barn, but in the field ; therefore we had

need to work now, seek grace now, be instant with God now : John

ix. 4, ' I must work the work of him that sent me while it is day ;

the night cometh, wherein no man can work.' And now, that is, not

only while life lasteth, but instantly.

Secondly, Here is the blandishment, and compellation used, Lord,

Lord ! So Mat. vii. 21, ' Not every one that saith unto me, Lord,

Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but he that doeth the-

will of my Father which is in heaven ;' and ver. 22, ' Many will say to

me in that day, Lord, Lord.'

1. Here is a title of honour given to Christ by hypocrites, and it is

ingeminated. The title of honour given to Christ is due to him :

John xiii. 13, ' Ye call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so

I am.' But the title must be verified by suitable practice. Men may

delight to be flattered with the title of Lord, Lord, by those that in-

wardly bear them no reverence ; but Christ, who knoweth the heart,

will not be pleased with those glorious titles, when your hearts give

your tongues the lie : Luke vi. 46, ' Why call you me Lord, Lord, and

do not the things that I say ?' As they cried, ' Hail king of the Jews,'

when the soldiers mocked him. Many often intitle Christ to their

party, take upon them to be his disciples in words ; but the 'kingdom

of God standeth not in word, but in power.' Bat these served their

master more with mouth than with heart ; therefore Christ doth not

accept of them, nor approve of them for his servants. They call Christ

Lord, but obey the devil, are led and governed by the flesh, disobedient

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to Christ's counsels and precepts. I hear ' Lord, Lord ;' but what

means the bleating of the sheep, and the lowing of the oxen ? There-

fore it is vain to use this honourable title to move pity in the judge.

2. They ingeminate it to show the ardency of their desires, and

earnestness to have Christ for their Lord. Now, first or last every

knee shall bow to Christ ; they are forced to fly to him now in their

extremity and pressures of misery. Though men will not come to

Christ for grace, yet they will come to him for glory, Now they can-

not come because, busied about something else, Luke xiv. 18-20 ; in-

deed, will not come : John v. 40, ' And ye will not come to me, that

ye may have life.' But then it is all ' Lord, Lord.' Oh ! how fain

would they own Christ, and be owned by him ! But alas ! their

repentance cometh too late, their desires too late, their tears too late ;

it is all forced by their extremity : Job xxvii. 9, ' Will God hear his

cry when trouble cometh upon him ? ' A hypocrite would not much

care if he were heard in the times of peace, and the affluence of out-

ward enjoyments ; but then, when he would fain flatter God into a

hearing, God rejecteth him. In extremity they prize mercy above a

thousand worlds ; but all will not do, the door is shut.

3. The matter of the petition, ' Open to us ;' that is, the door of the

nuptial chamber. None but desire happiness. This petition, as set

here, noteth two things : —

[1.] The innate desire of happiness that is in man. All desire to

enter, and to be saved at length, however they neglect the means for

the present, to get oil in their vessels, or to keep in their lamps.

[2.] How deeply leavened with self-confidence and self-conceit the

hearts of men are, so that they are not easily dispossessed of it. When

the door is shut, the foolish virgins make full account to enter. The

most sottish think they shall do well enough : Dent. xxix. 19, ' I shall

have peace, though I walk in the imagination of my own heart, and

add drunkenness to thirst.' Especially the temporary, who is the re-

fined hypocrite: ' Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have

prophesied in thy name,' &c. ; make full account to go to heaven, that

shall never come there. They trust to false evidences ; use negligent

endeavours, please themselves with uncertain and deceitful hopes ;

but all vain and false pretences shall then be confuted, and those

that have a high and false opinion of their interest in Christ shall

then be disapproved by him.

Secondly, I now come to the bridegroom's reply, Where note —

1. The vehemency and asseveration, ' Verily I say unto you.' To

cut off all further hope, his answer is peremptory and decisive.

2. The reply itself, ' I know you not.' There is a twofold know-

ledge — intuitive and approbative. (1.) By an intuitive knowledge :

' Known unto the Lord from the beginning are all his works,' Acts xv.

18. God had an idea of all things in himself before he gave them

actual being : he knoweth all whom he conserves by his providence.

Every wise man knoweth what he hath. Christ knew that virtue went

from him in the throng. (2.) But this knowledge is here meant of

the knowledge of approbation, as we find it often in scripture. Now

Christ's knowledge of his own people is threefold : —

[1.] As they fall under the purposes of his grace. So it is said, 2

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Tim. ii. 12, ' The Lord knoweth them that are his.' This is also in

scripture called his fore-knowledge : Rom. viii. 29, ' Whom he did

foreknow, them he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of

his Son ; ' 1 Peter i. 2, ' Elect according to the foreknowledge of God

the Father.' God the Father having all persons that ever should be in

the world under his all-seeing eye, he did out of his free love single

and choose out some to be the objects of his grace, designing them by

the redemption of Christ, and the sanctification of the Spirit to come

unto glory. He particularly treated with Christ about them, John xvii.

6, put them into his hands, to be justified, sanctified, and finally saved.

This is ' the foundation of the Lord that standeth sure.'

[2.] As they are under the care of his special providence, when they

are in actual being, to supply them with all things necessary and good

for them. So it is said, Ps. i. 6, ' The Lord knoweth the way of the

righteous, but the way of the wicked shall perish ; ' John x. 14, ' I am

the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.'

Christ knoweth them man by man, person by person ; and all their

safety cometh from his particular care over them : Gal. iv. 9, ' But

now after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God.' He

assigneth the work of conversion to God's preventing grace. Sinners

in an unconverted estate are such of whom God taketh no notice and

knowledge so as to be familiar with them, and to communicate his

special and saving blessings to them.

[3.] It is put for his rewarding grace ; and so he is said to know, or

not to know. To know his people : 1 Cor. viii. 3, ' If any man love

God, the same is known of him.' Those that choose God for their

portion, and cleave to him, and serve him faithfully, Christ will own

them or ' confess them before his Father in heaven,' Luke xii. 8 ; but

others he will not own. See Mat. vii. 21, 'And then will I profess

unto them, I never knew you.' He will not own them in judgment

that will not own and obey him now. So Luke xiii. 25-27, ' When

once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut the door ; and

ye begin to stand without, and knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord,

open to us ; and he shall answer and say unto you, I know you not,

whence you are : then shall ye begin to say, we have eaten and

drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught in our streets. But

he shall say, I tell ye, I know you not.' Here is no entertainment for

such as you, who have by your sloth, negligence, and improvidence

forfeited the advantages offered you. I never approved you for my

disciples and servants. MaXkov 8e t?}? <yeevr}<; tovto, &c, saith Chrys-

sostom ; these words are more cutting and grievous than hell itself,

' I know you not.' Well, these three sorts of knowing must be dis-

tinguished.

The first is this, that Christ hath a particular and exact know-

ledge of all the elect, and who they are that shall be saved, wherein

he will not be disappointed : John xiii. 18, ' I know whom I have

chosen/

The second is the ground of our present comfort and support. He

hath a special affection to them, taketh special notice and care of

them, and will bring them to know, love, and acknowledge him, as he

doth also them : he beareth a suitable impression thereto.

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The third is matter of our hope, and will be our honour at the last

day, that Christ will come to us, and own us, and reward us for

all that we have done or suffered for him here. When others have

the entertainment of strangers, and are rejected as no true believers

and professors of the gospel, then shall we be owned and admitted into

heaven by him.

Here is a large field of matter. I shall single out those things that

are most obvious and worthy of our remark and observation.

First, That they came afterwards ; I shall take occasion to show

the necessity of hastening our preparation for the day of our accounts.

Secondly, From their passionate desire to have the door opened to

them ; here is a strong insinuation, and vehement desire, ' Lord,

Lord ; ' that even in reprobates and castaways there may be a desire of

entering into the joys of everlasting life.

Thirdly, From Christ's reply, 1 shall show you the dreadful misery

and direful effect of being disowned by Christ at his coming.

For the first, since the foolish virgins came too late, we should all

take care to begin with God betimes ; the sooner the better.

1. Because you make a necessary work sure, and put it out of doubt

and hazard. The time of life is the time of grace, Luke ii. 14 ;

2 Cor. vi. 2. Now the time of life is uncertain : James iv. 14,

' Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what

is your life ? it is but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and

then vanisheth away.' And a work of necessity should not be left on

peradventures : therefore we ought to bestir ourselves without delay or

fore-slowing. We know not how soon opportunity will be over. It

cannot be done too soon, it may be done too late : and therefore it is

good to be on the surest side. Ludovicus Capellus telleth us, out of

Kabbi Jonah's book of the Mystery of Eepentance, that when a dis-

ciple came to his teacher to know what was the fittest time to repent

in, he answered, One day before his death, meaning presently ; for we

have not assurance of another day : Prov.xxvii. 1, ' Thou knowest not

what to-morrow may bring forth/ Our greatest works, and of most

absolute necessity, should be done first, and have the quickest despatch,

lest it be too late before we go about them. Oh ! woe to us if God

should call us off before we have minded coming to him, and walking

with him.

2. In point of obedience ; God presseth to now. God doth not only

command us to please him, but to do it presently : Heb. iii. 7, 8,

' Now, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.' Pompilius

the Pioman ambassador, when he made delays and excuses, the emperor

drew a circle on the ground, saying, Intra hunc — answer me before

thou stirrest from this place. God standeth upon his authority, and

will have a present answer : if he say, To-day, it is flat disobedience

for you to say, To-morrow. Now is the time of salvation, at this

instant, 2 Cor. vi. 2. You are charged in his name, as you will answer

the contrary. You say, No ; I will please the flesh a little longer. It

may be just with God, if you refuse him, never to call you more.

3. In point of ingenuity : we receive a plenteous recompense for a

small service. When a man thinketh what God hath provided for

them that love him and serve him, he should be ashamed that he

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receives so ranch and does so little ; and therefore he should redeem

all the time that he can, that he may answer his expectations from

God. Shall we adjourn and put off God to our decrepid time, when

he hath provided for us eternal happiness? Can a man that hath any

ingenuity in his breast be content to dishonour God longer, grieve his

Spirit longer, provided that at length he may be saved ? Those that

have any due sense of God's kindness, or their own duty, will think

God hath too long been kept out of his right, and that all the time

that remaineth is too little to express our love and thankfulness to him,

1 Peter iv. 3. Men that do delay, do in effect say, Let me despise thy

commands, and abuse thy mercy a little longer ; but then when my

lusts are satisfied, and youthful heats are spent, I will see what I can

do to be saved. What baseness of spirit is this !

4. It is our advantage to begin betimes, both here and hereafter.

[1.] Here. The sooner you begin to please God, the sooner you

have an evidence of your interest in his favour, more experience of his

love, more hopes of living with him in heaven. Oh ! these things are

not slight things ! When once you come to taste the comfort of them

you will be sorry that you had begun no sooner ; as Paul complaineth

that he was ' born out of due time,' 1 Cor. xv. 8, because he lost the

advantage of seeing Christ in the flesh, and so of many sweet confer-

ences, and many sweet visits of love and experiences of grace, that

otherwise might fall to his share : Kom. xvi. 7, f They were in Christ

before me.' An early acquaintance with Christ bringeth many benefits

with it, as peace, and comfort, and joy, and hope, which others that

set forth later want. The consolations of God should not be vile and

cheap with us : if you were acquainted with them you would leave

your husks for bread in your Father's house:

[2.] The sooner you begin with God the greater will your glory be

hereafter, for the more we improve our talents here, the greater will

our reward be in heaven : Luke xix. 16-19, 'And he said unto him,

Well done, thou good servant ; because thou hast been faithful in

a little, have thou authority over ten cities. And the second came, and

said, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds : and he said likewise

to him, Be thou also over five cities/ And when the mother of

Zebedee's children came to Christ, and desired that her two sons

might sit, one at his right hand, and the other at his left, Mat. xx. 23,

Christ doth not deny the thing, that there are degrees of glory, set

forth by sitting on the right hand, and on the left; but telleth her that

it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of his Father ; as in

hell there is a hotter and cooler judgment. Certainly then they that

have long pleased God, and made it the whole business of their lives,

shall have larger measures of happiness.

Use. Is to reprove those that adjourn and put off the work of

religion from time to time, till they have lost all time. It is Satan's

artifice to cheat men of the present opportunity, by promises of a

future obedience. Oh ! consider the work is much, and life is short.

If we did live as many years as days, all would be little enough ;

therefore let us begin betimes. There are three arguments to press

this. If this work must be once done, why not now? your hearts will

not be better, nor the terms less.

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1. Your hearts are not like to be better ; for the longer we continue

in sin, the heart is the more hardened. As the highway by continual

treading groweth the harder, and the anvil by continual smiting is

hardened the more, so long use in sin obdureth the heart, and

long resistance grieveth the Spirit, and carnal affections grow upon

us : Jer. xiii. 23, ' Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard

his spots ? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil.'

It is hard to transplant an old tree. The affections are now more

settled in a course of sin.

2. The terms of the gospel will not be more easy, and we better

able to obey them hereafter than now we are. The laws of Christianity

are always the same. The pleasures of sin must one day be renounced,

or we are for ever miserable ; and why not now ? Sin will be as

sweet hereafter as now it is ; and salvation dispensed upon the same

terms. You cannot be saved hereafter with less ado, or bring down

Christ or heaven to a lower rate. If this be a reason, it will ever be as

a reason against Christ and religion, because you are loath to part with

this or that pleasing lust ; and so it will never be.

3. The suspicion that is upon a late repentance. It is seldom sound,

and therefore always questionable. That is no true repentance which

ariseth merely from horror and the sense of hell. This sensible work

that men have upon them may be but the beginning of everlasting

despair. All men seek the Lord at length, but the wise seek him in

time. This was the great difference between the wise and foolish

virgins ; one sought him ' in time,' the other ' out of time.' They

would covet his favour at last. Upon a death-bed the most profane

would have God for their portion : when they can sin no more, and

enjoy the world no longer, then they cry and howl for mercy and com-

fort, and a little well-grounded hope of heaven or eternal life : but

who can tell whether this sensible work that is upon them be not

merely an act of self-love, and the fruit of those natural desires which

all the creatures have after their own happiness, or a mere retreat

others have when they can hold the world no longer. We cannot say

this repentance is true, nor affirm the contrary, that it is false ; but it

is doubtful. There is but that one instance of the thief on the cross,

that truly repented when he came to die. The scriptures contain

a" history of four thousand years, or thereabouts ; and yet all that while

we have but this one instance of a true repentance just at death ; and

in that instance there is an extraordinary conjunction of circumstances

which cannot reasonably be expected again. Christ was now at his

right hand, in the height of his love drawing sinners to God : never

such a season as then ; and it is more than probable he had never a call

before then. Well, then, let us put this necessary work of prepar-

ation for God out of doubt betimes ; yea, let the children of God, if

they have not yet prevailed against such a lust, or lived in the neglect

of such a duty, could not bring their hearts to it hitherto, make speed,

lest they be surprised, and this defect in their preparation make their

death uncomfortable. A good Christian is always converting, yet not

fully converted: the first work is often gone over, and he is still

getting nearer to God by a more affectionate compliance with his

whole will.

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Doct 2. That those that are finally refused by the Lord may yet

have a desire of the joys of heaven.

1. Consider them in this world, and in the world to come. These

two respects are different ; for though self-love be the common cause

of their desiring heaven both now and then, yet there is a difference :

it is more commendable to desire it now than to desire it then, though

neither be an argument of any gracious constitution of soul. It is more

commendable to desire it now, when it is a matter of faith to believe

the world to come, than when it is a matter of sense ; as when all

shadows are chased away, then it is no hard matter to convince men of

things that lie within the veil; that is, of the truth and worth of

heavenly things: and yet if they should be convinced of this, we cannot

say they are gracious, however they are better than mere infidels ; for

carnal men may desire a share in the state of the blessed, as Num.

xxiii. 10, ' Oh ! that I might die the death of the righteous ! ' Balaam

had his wishes. And those that did not like Christ's doctrine, but

departed from him, said, John vi. 34, ' Lord, evermore give us of this

bread of life.' They would fain be happy. When this happiness was

represented unto them, it may and doth stir up strange motions in the

hearts of those that are unrenewed and unchanged.

2. There is a difference in the end and use of this desire of happiness.

Now and then God leaveth these velleities and inclinations as a stock

upon which to graft grace ; as a spinster leaveth a lock of wool to

fasten the next thread ; as Nebuchadnezzar's shape remained when he

was turned a-grazing among the beasts ; and as Job's messengers, ' I

alone am escaped to tell thee.' There are these inclinations to happi-

ness that are escaped out of the ruins of the fall. God by our self-love

would draw us to love himself: man will not be dealt with else. It

leaveth men capable of heaven X the doctrine of life represented to them,

they are without excuse if they refuse it. This is the use of it

now ; but then when we are in termino, it hath another use. This

love of their own happiness, and desire to be saved, serveth for this very

use, to make them sensible of their loss, the grief of their condemna-

tion and lost estate is increased thereby. Now this is little thought of

by carnal men, because they have oblectamenta sensus, the entertain-

ments of sense to divert their minds ; but when separate and set apart

from all these, then, if they have no other punishment, this is enough.

Surely their understanding remaineth, having nothing to comfort them

and allay the bitter sense of their loss. But now let us see —

1. How far carnal and unregenerate men desire happiness.

2. Why this is so little improved, and they make so little use of it.

First, How far a carnal and unregenerate man may desire happi-

ness ?

1. They may desire good confuse, non indefinite,' 1 happiness in the

general ; but this desire cometh under no deliberation and choice.

The happiness that is offered by Christ, or that life and immortality

that he bringeth to light, cometh under another consideration. Good,

good, is the cry of the world. Certainly no man would be miserable,

but all would be happy, and live at ease. Christians, pagans, all

good men, bad men, they that seldom agree in anything, do all agree

1 Qu. ' having ' ?— Ed. 2 Qu. ' definite ' ?— Ed.

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in this, they would have good. To ask men whether they would be

happy or no, is to ask them whether they love themselves, yea or no.

2. They would not only have good in the general, but some eternal

good. And because this is not so evident by nature, they grope and

feel about for it, Acts xvii. 26. There is an unsatisfiedness l in present

things, and therefore they are scrambling and feeling about for some

better thing. As Solomon tried all experiments, so do men go about

seeking for good, Eccles. vii. 29. Since we lost the straight line of

God's direction, we seek it sometimes in one thing, sometimes in an-

other ; and Christ saith, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, that the ' kingdom of

heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls ; and when

he had found one pearl of good price, he went and sold all that he had,

and bought it.' Man would have something contentful, that may be

an everlasting ground of rejoicing to him.

3. As to true happiness and eternal good, when it is discovered to

us, our inclinations to it are but weak and ineffectual. Without grace

we discern it but weakly ; for there is a great mist upon eternity,

and the light of nature being dim, cannot pierce through it, 2 Peter

i. 9. As a spire at a distance, men see it so that they cannot know

whether they see it, yea or nay; or as the blind man, when his eyes

were first touched by Christ, he saw men walking like trees. Again

we consider it but weakly, the mind being diverted by other objects.

As when we see a man in a crowd, we can hardly take notice of him ;

so men seldom retire to consider what God offereth them in Christ.

When God promised Abraham the land of Canaan, he biddetli him

go and view the length and the breadth of it, Gen. xiii. 14-17. So

when he promiseth the kingdom of heaven, he doth in effect speak the

same to us ; for certainly no man shall enter into that land of pro-

mise but he that hath considered it, and well viewed it, and can lay

aside his earthly distractions sometimes, to take a turn in the land of

promise : but few do this ; few send their thoughts before them as

spies into that blessed land, and therefore it worketli so little upon

them. And we desire it but weakly ; the affections being prepossessed

and pre-engaged by things that come next to hand, we conceive only

a wish or a velleity for this happy estate, not a serious volition, or a

firm bent of heart ; and therefore we pursue it but weakly, as children

desire a thing passionately, but are soon put out of the humour : they

do not pursue it with that earnestness, exactness, and uniformity,

which is requisite : ' The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath

nothing/ Prov. xiii. 4, ' because his hands refuse to labour/ Prov. xxi.

25. So that this inclination to happiness is neither serious, nor con-

stant, nor laborious : these desires are but desires.

4. If they like the end, they dislike the means. Our souls are more

averse from the means than from the end. All agree in opinions and

wishes about a supreme and immortal happiness ; yet there is a great

discord in the way that leadeth to it, not so much in opinion as prac-

tice. Men like not God's terms : Esau would have the blessing, yet

sold the birthright, Heb. xii. 16, 17. Indeed in things natural we do

not expect the end without the means ; but in things supernatural we

do, and so by refusing the means, we do separate the end, Ps. cvi. 24.

1 Qu. ' unsatisfyingness ' ? — Ed.

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Heaven is a good place, but it is a hard matter to get thither ; so loath

are we to be at the cost and pains: we desire happiness, not holiness.

God doth promote those things we naturally desire ; but still that we

submit to those things we are naturally against. Whatsoever maketh

for ourselves we are naturally more willing of than what maketh for

the honour of God : now if we will not submit to the one, we shall

not have the other. We would .all be pardoned, and freed from the

curse of the law, and the damnation of hell ; but we are unwilling to

let go the profit and pleasure that we fancy in sin.

Secondly, Why this is no more improved, and why we make no

better use of it? There are four causes of it — (1.) Ignorance. To

many the object is not represented ; as to heathens and to sottish

Christians. (2.) Inconsideration. Spiritual objects must not only

be represented, but enforced upon the will by the efficacy and weight

of meditation, Ps. i. 3. (3.) Unbelief. They have not a sound

persuasion of these truths: Heb. xi. 13, 'They were persuaded of

them, and embraced them.' They had not a guess, but a sound

belief. (4.) Unsubjection of will : Rom. viii. 7, ' Because the carnal

mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God,

neither indeed can be.' It is easier to cure their errors than to mortify

their affections.

Use. Oh ! do not rest in desiring to be happy ; there is no great

matter in that ; the damned would have the door opened to them : but

desire grace, Ps. cxix. 5 ; Eom. vii. 23 ; desire it prevalently, so as not

to be put out of the humour ; as children would fain have something

when they are in pain, but are pleased with rattles or any toy. If

your vain delights abate not, this desire will do you no good. Desire

it so as to labour for it, yea, so as to make it your main business, Ps.

xxvii. 4 ; yea, to part with all for it, Mat. xiii. 46. This is the way to

be happy indeed.

Doct. 3. That it is a dreadful misery to be disowned by Christ at

his coming : ' I know you not.'

1. Consider who may be disowned. Many that profess respect to

Christ, and may be well esteemed of in the visible church ; many that

cry 'Lord, Lord;' many that have 'eat and drunk in his presence.'

There is a great deal of difference between the esteem of God and the

judgment of the world. Many whom we take to be forward professors,

yea, many that have great gifts and employments in the ministry, and

with great success, Mat. vii. 22. If only pagans, or only profane per-

sons were damned, or the opposite party to Christ, it were another

matter ; there were not such cause of fear : but those of Christ's faction,

many that profess to know him, but were never subdued by the power

of his grace, John xi. 52-54, Christ doth not know, because he doth

not love them.

2. The misery of being disowned. (1.) This disowning is the act

and sentence of a judge. If it were the frown of a bare friend in our

misery, it even cuts the heart in sunder ; but when a neglected Saviour

shall become an angryjudge, when his favour hath been slighted long,

then he will stir up all his wrath. When it is ' kindled but a little,

blessed are all they that put their trust in him/ Ps. ii. 12. (2.) It is

the disappointment of a hope. They supposed he meant to own them,

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and therefore put in their plea. There is a hope that will leave

ashamed, Rom. v. 5. (3.) It is the cause of all other misery. Poena

damni maketh way for pcena sensus. Here we care not for him, so

long as we can be well without him. It may be now you esteem it

nothing to have a frown from Christ in the day of his patience ; but

then, ' Depart, ye cursed.'

Use. Oh ! let this make you more serious for the time to come. Do

not grieve the Spirit any longer, Eph. iv. 30. Do you receive and

own Christ when others refuse him, and you will be owned by Christ :

Luke xii. 8, 9, ' And I say unto you, Whosoever shall confess me

before men, him shall the Son of man also confess before the angels of

God. But he that denieth me before men, shall be denied before the

angels of God.'

SERMON X.

Watch therefore; for ye know neither the day nor the hour ivherein

the Son of man cometh. — Mat. XXV. 13.

Here is the conclusion of the whole parable, as the illative particle

therefore showeth. Every passage in it will infer this conclusion.

First, The suddenness and unexpectedness of his coming, ivatch

therefore.

Secondly, Only those that are ready shall enter into the marriage-

chamber, watch therefore, that ye may be always ready.

Thirdly, The shutting the door, and exclusion of the unprepared,

watch therefore.

Fourthly, The door is shut, as never to be opened again. When

they beg entrance they are refused and disowned by Christ, as having

not his mark upon them, ivatch therefore ; for ye know not the day,

neither the hour, &c.

In the words we have — (1.) A duty ; (2.) The reason of it. The

one will explain the other.

1. For the duty; what is meant by watching? Because we are

pressed to it upon the account of the uncertain time of Christ's coming.

Here it meaneth a care to get and keep ourselves always ready, and in

a posture to receive him for our Lord, as himself explaineth it, Mat.

xxiv. 42, ' Watch therefore ; for ye know not what hour your Lord

doth come.'

2. The reason, ' For ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein

the Son of man cometh ; ' Mat. xxiv. 44, ' For in such an hour you

think not of, the Son of man cometh.'

Doct. The great duty that lieth upon them that believe and look for

Christ's coming is watching.

My business will be to show you what watching is in the general

notion of it. As it is taken spiritually and metaphorically, it implieth

a diligent care and heed to the great affairs of our souls ; for it is a

mixed thing, made up of prudence and diligence. It implieth a pru-

dent foresight of the soul's danger, with a diligent care to avoid it. It

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is pressed in scripture to a double end ; partly that we may maintain

the present state, and partly that we may prepare for the future : the

one quickeneth the other. And though the latter be of chief consi-

deration in this place, yet it will not be amiss to consider both ; for

there is no hope to stand before Christ at his coming;, unless we be

careful to get and keep grace for the present. And on the other side,

the argument to quicken us to present care and diligence is the

blessedness we shall have at Christ's coming, and the danger of being

disallowed at last.

1. Watching with respect to our present preservation is pressed :

Mat. xxvi. 41, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation;'

and 1 Cor. xvi. 13, ' Watch ye, stand fast in the faith/

2. Watching with respect to future acceptation. That is pressed in

other places : Mat. xxiv. 42, ' Watch ye, for ye know not in what hour

the Lord cometh.' The particular time of Christ's coming is kept

secret, that we may be moved at all times to prepare for it. The Lord

foresaw that we would be prone to negligence and carnal security, and

that the knowledge of the express time of his coming would be hurtful

to us ; therefore it is inter arcana imperii, among the secrets kept in

the Father's bosom, that we might be always ready. So Luke xxi. 36,

' Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted

worthy to stand before the Son of man.' The meaning is, that we

may escape the judgments then to be poured out upon the wicked and

the careless ; that we may not causa cadere ; that we may have a

sentence of approbation passed in our favour. These are the two sorts

of watching pressed upon us in scripture, the one to avoid the snares of

the devil, the other that we may be ready for the coming of the Lord.

First, Watching with respect to our present state and safety. This

again is twofold — a watching to avoid evil, and a watching for the

careful performance of that which is good. The scripture speaketh

of both ; and both are enforced by their own proper reasons.

1. For the avoiding of evil. There is in us all a sinful proneness

to evil, which we must seek to cure and prevent : Prov. iv. 23, ' Keep

thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life.' The

heart is terminus actionum ad intra, et fons actionum ad extra. It is

the heart that God aimeth at in all that he doth upon us, and it is the

heart that is the ground of all our actions. The fountain must be

kept pure from pollutions, that the streams may be the more limpid

and clear. Every man hath a little garrison to keep, and he himself

is the watchman of it ; his conscience is to sit porter at the door, and

to examine whatever cometh out and entereth in, as a watchman doth

at the gates of a city. All the thoughts, affections, words, actions, are

to be examined, what they are, whither they go, whence they come,

whither they tend, lest a temptation be let in, or a corruption be let

out ; otherwise the heart cannot be kept pure and loyal to God.

>Solomon telleth us, Prov. xxv. 28, ' He that hath no rule over his

own spirit, is like a city that is without walls. 5 A town without

walls lieth open to every comer : sin and danger, and all kind of evil

motions go to and fro, without any kind of check and control : things

will pass out which should be suppressed and kept in, and temptations

will enter which should be kept out. Now this caution is no more

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than needeth, if we consider the enemies of our salvation, the devil,

the world, and the flesh.

[1.] The malice of Satan. Our adversary is very watchful, and

getteth advantage by nothing so much as our security. Vigilat liosiis,

et dormis ? It was an old word : the devil is neither dead nor asleep,

and shall not we stand upon our guard ? 1 Peter v. 8, ' Be sober and

watchful, for your adversary the devil goeth about like a roaring lion,

seeking whom he may devour.' Satan is a restless adversary, full of

malice and craft ; his end is to destroy and to devour souls, and his

diligence is answerable to his malice. Night and day we are in danger

every one of us. There were but two Adams, and they were both

tempted, though the one was made after God's image, and the other

had the fulness of the Godhead dwelling in him bodily. Adam in

innocency and Christ in human nature were tempted, and can we hope

to escape ? Neglect your watch, and you become a ready prey to the

devil : ' When the servants slept, the enemy sowed tares,' Mat. xiii. 25.

He observeth all our drowsy fits, and is waiting for some advantage,

or at least some occasion. Sometimes we give him an advantage by

our folly and indiscretion : 2 Cor. ii. 11, ' Lest Satan should get an

advantage against us.' Or if not, he taketh occasion, as he tempted

Christ when he was an hungry, Mat. iv. 2 ; and 2 Cor. vii. 5, ' That

Satan tempt you not.' He can interpret the silent language of a blush,

a smile, a frown, a look, the glance of a lustful eye, the most secret dis-

covery of wrath and discontent, and suiteth his temptations to all the

postures of spirit we are in.

[2.] There is besides this, hostis domesticus, the bosom enemy, the

flesh, or the inbred corruption of our nature, that is ready to betray us

to the basest temptations, and to open the gates to the enemy without.

Man needeth no devil to tempt him, we have enough in our own

bosoms to prompt and urge us to sin : James i. 5, ' The spirit in us

lusteth to envy ; ' Gen. vi. 5, ' The thoughts and imaginations of our

hearts are evil continually.' It is easy to set tinder, gunpowder, or

flax on fire, and therefore they had need to be kept asunder. We

cannot be too careful, the best of us have a good self and a bad self ;

the one must watch over the other, or all will come to ruin, and grace

will be ready to die : Kev. ii. 2, ' Be watchful and strengthen the things

that remain, that are ready to die.' From whence cometh the vanity

of our minds, our proneness to break the bounds of due liberty in all

our comforts, our readiness to err in speech, our frequent miscarriages

in conversation, our frequent unfitness for holy duties, our unfruit-

fulness in our conversing with others, our unsettledness in our con-

sciences, our immoderate cares and fears ; whence, I say, cometh all

this, but from our want of watching against this inward enemy our

flesh ? Especially when temptations are near, importunate, and con-

stant. We proceed every step to heaven by conflict and contest, be-

cause sin is always at hand, ready to assault us and taint us ; so that

a serious Christian cannot but take himself to be still in danger.

[3.] The world. We walk in the midst of snares and temptations,

saith Austin ; and Bernard saith that our life is a continual tempta-

tion. We are in the midst of tempting objects, that are comfortable

to our senses, necessary to our uses, and present to our embraces, that

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we can hardly distinguish between what necessity craveth, and lust

desireth, and so we are strangely gained upon: 1 John ii. 16, ' For all

that is in the world is the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and

pride of life.' He doth not say, ' Whatsoever is in our corrupt hearts ;'

but ho describeth the objects by the lusts, because they are readily

excited by them : ' All that is in the world.' There are baits for every

temper ; honour for the ambitious, wealth for the covetous, pleasure

for the sensual. Now every distemper loveth the diet that feedeth it :

lust in the soul, or unmortified corruption maketh our abode in the

world dangerous : 2 Peter i. 4, that ' having escaped the corruption

that is in the world through lust.' Here one plungeth himself over-

head and ears in the world ; another is intemperate in the delights of

the flesh and the entertainments of sense ; another is aspiring after

honour, great places, and pomp of living, or esteem in the world ; or

at least we give ourselves too great a liberty and freedom in these

things. Therefore you see what need there is of watching, when

alluring objects lay such close siege to the appetite and senses.

2. There is a watching unto good, or for the performance of our

duties, that we go about them in a holy, serious, conscionable manner,

observing the best opportunities, and taking heed there be no secret

leaven of hypocrisy in them. Of all holy duties the scripture applieth

it to prayer, which of all other holy services is the commonest and the

chiefest ; and watching therein is a great help ; though by analogy it

hoi de th good in other duties, as we shall see in a few places : Col.

iv. 2, ' Continue in prayer, and watch in the same, with thanksgiving.'

So 1 Peter iv. 7, ' Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' So Eph. vi. 18,

' Watching therein with all perseverance.' Satan is a great enemy to

this duty, and our hearts are averse, and hardly brought and kept to

it. Unless it be well performed, our communion with God is inter-

rupted and at a stand. Out of all these places we may well collect

that there is— (1.) A watching unto prayer, or before prayer. (2.) A

watching in prayer, or in the duty. (3.) A watching after prayer, or

when the duty is over.

[1.] The watching unto prayer, or before the duty, is mainly to keep

up a praying frame, that we may be ready upon all occasions to call

upon God. The praying frame lieth partly in brokenness of heart, or

a clue sense of our necessities ; and partly in an earnest bent of heart

towards God, and holy and heavenly things ; and partly in a holy

liberty, and child-like confidence. If either of these be lost, how slack

and backward shall we be in God's worship, or slight in the perform-

ance of it, whether in closet, or family, or public assemblies ; and

slubber it over in any fashion. But when this frame of spirit is kept

up, the soul is mightily actuated and enlarged in the duty. As when

there is brokenness of heart, or a due sense of our necessities, which is

the occasion of prayer, or an earnest desire of grace, which is the soul

of prayer, or our liberty and confidence is not broken, which is the

great encouragement of prayer, then we are like light and airy bodies,

whose natural motion is upwards ; so are we carried out towards God,

and prayer is our element in which we live and breathe. Indeed the

whole spiritual life is but a ' watching unto prayer,' that we may have

always a readiness for communion with God, 1 Peter iii. 7.

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[2.] There is a watching in prayer, that the duty be performed with

that seriousness, attention, and affection that the nature of it doth

require. This watching is necessary because of the slipperiness of our

hearts, which easily go off from the work in hand. We often mingle

sulphur with our incense, interline our prayers with carnal distractions,

suffer our hearts to be stolen away from under Christ's own arm ;

therefore we had need to watch, Eccles. v. 1, 2.

[3.] There is a watching after prayer, partly that we may observe

God's dealing with us, whether our souls have been straitened, or

whether he hath given liberty, hidden his face, or showed himself

gracious. Here we may gather some matter of comfort to ourselves

and thanksgiving to God, Col. iv. 2. We must not throw away our

prayers, as children shoot away their arrows, and never look after them :

Hab. ii. 1, 'I will pray and look up,' to spy the blessing a-coming.

We should have many an argument against atheism, great helps to

faith, and encouragements to love God, and many a sure ground of

comfort in ourselves, if we did look after the answer of our prayers.

And partly that we lose not that affection which we have professed and

expressed before God. We seemed to express a great desire of glorify-

ing his name, and doing his will, and being sanctified, pardoned, and

strengthened against temptations. Now it is but the personating and

acting a part before God, if we be not such in some measure as we

professed ourselves to be in prayer ; if we be not careful to glorify his

name, zealous to promote his kingdom, ready to do his will, earnest

for pardoning grace, watchful against temptations. A Christian's life

is a comment upon his prayers, and his prayers do interpret his life ;

we understand the one by the other. Our endeavours and diligent use

of means do show what we really desire ; for what we pray to God for

we bind ourselves to seek after.

Secondly, There is a watching with respect to our future estate,

that we may be ready to meet Christ at his coming. Now this con-

sisteth —

1. In a deep and lively sense of Christ's appearing, and the whole

state of the world to come. We look for nothing but what we believe.

Faith is a realising sight of things not yet in being ; and maketh them

in some measure to work as if they were at hand and ready to be

enjoyed. Now the more lively sense we have of the concernments of

the other world, the more diligent and serious shall we be in our pre-

paration ; when we have a deep sense of these things, as if presently

to be arraigned, and walk as before the judge to whom we are to give

an account of all our actions. Most men live as if there were no day

of reckoning, no God to see and punish, no books to be opened : the

careless spending their time showeth they have no deep sense of these

things, no sound belief of them. But faith looketh upon these things

as great, sure, and near, and so keepeth the soul awake and alive. It

greateneth our apprehensions of these things ; for it is no slight matter

for the creature to meet with his creator, the sinner with his judge, from

whom he must now receive his final doom. Faith doth speak aloud

to a sluggish soul, Thou must be judged : Horn. xiv. 12, 'So then

every one of us must give an account of himself to God.' And as it

is sure, so it is near : ' The judge is at the door,' James v. i). You must

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hear of what you now speak and do another day : Mat. xii. 36, ' For

every idle word that a man shall speak, he shall give an account

of at the day of judgment.' It suppresseth sin, and quickeneth and

awakeneth to duty, 2 Peter iii. ]1, 12. Without faith we have no

sensible, awakening, practical knowledge of these things. The sight

of faith differeth from the sight of sense. Sense can discern little

more than we see, taste, smell, hear, and feel. We are affected with

these things ; so are the beasts, who only see things before their eyes by

the eye of sense. We see nothing but what dogs may see and beasts

may see ; that it is comfortable to eat well, and drink well, and sleep

well, and be well clothed, and walk up and down at pleasure, and

pursue the advantages of the animal life. There is a mist upon

eternity ; how acute soever men be in worldly things, they are blind

here : 2 Peter i. 9, ' He that lacketh these things is blind, and can-

not see afar off ;' sharp-sighted in things that concern the back and

belly, and this present world, but know nothing of the hazard of

perishing for ever, or the worth of salvation, their need of Christ, and

making serious preparation for their great account. Faith is a per-

spective, by which we look into the other world. None have such a

sharp sight as believers have ; for they can see beyond the limits of

time, the corruption and changes of all things that are in the world,

even to that blessedness which God hath reserved for them that love

him. And the light of faith differeth from reason. That can only

see things by guess, or see things in their causes, and that as probable ;

but faith can look through the mists and clouds of intervening ages :

Heb. xi. 13, ' Having seen them afar off, embraced them ; ; and with

certainty, and such a sure persuasion, as if the things we are persuaded

of were in hand and actually enjoyed. Reason corrects sense. A star

to the eye of sense looks no bigger than a spangle, but reason showeth

it must be of a vast bigness, because of its distance from us. But faith

is a higher light ; and compare it with the light of prophecy, Eev.

xx. 12 ; they agree in the common object, divine revelation ; they

agree in their common nature, that they are both for things future,

and things future to us ; but they differ, that faith depends upon the

common revelation which God hath made to all the saints, whereas

prophecy hath more of ecstasy and rapture in it, and the light is like

the lumen glorice, the beatifical vision in some measure and degree.

We do not see him face to face, but are desirous of this blessed estate,

and persuaded of it, and are affected with it as if we saw it. The

sight of faith is not a full enjoyment, but as sure, and so proportion-

ably affects the heart. Nay, this lumen jidei is somewhat like the

sight God hath of things. God seeth all things in his own design, and

faith seeth them so far as they are manifested in the promises of the

gospel. There is no hope to get rid of our dead-heartedness and

security till we have this realising light of faith.

2. This watching consisteth in preparation. If we expect a thing

to come, and do not prepare accordingly, we do not watch for it but

neglect it. Now this preparation must be speedy, thorough, and con-

stant.

[1.] Watching implieth a speedy preparation. That we may be in

a nt capacity to receive Christ at his coming, we must take the next

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advantage, lest we be surprised and called home before we are ready.

This is not a work to be put off to age or sickness. Why should we

provide a burden for that time when we are weakest and least able to

bear it ? And therefore now we should begin it. Every day brings

burden enough for itself. He is an unthrifty tenant that suffers the

rent of one year to run into another : how shall that crop discharge two

years' rent that cannot pay one ? If it be tedious now to turn to God,

it will be more tedious when thou art hardened in sin, and thy neglects

of God and Christ will provoke him to deny his grace. And what

assurance have we of another year ? We have this by the favour of pro-

vidence. Our life was forfeited and lost in law the first moment, and

therefore we have but a reprieve during pleasure. What warrant have

I to expect another day but my own hope and fancy ? He that is

security for himself to himself is no whit the better secured ; he doth

but take the word of a spendthrift. If we had a. lease of our lives, yet

what hope of grace ? when we have resisted the Spirit of God all our

lives, what hope that he should assist us at death ? We do but pro-

vide matter of despair to ourselves ; every day will prove worse and

worse. A traveller may easily pass over the head of a brook, but when

he goeth down, thinking to find it narrower, it is so broad that he can-

not pass at all. Every delay brings on a new degree of hardness of

heart on our part, and a new desertion on God's part. Now how wilt

thou untwist the former web which thou hast been so long a- weaving ?

That soul must needs be in perplexity at the hour of death that seeth

the day spent and the business appointed to him not yet begun, and a

disease disabling him for any serious reflections ; as if a traveller seeth

the sun setting when he is entering upon his journey ■ the evening of

the day and the morning of the task do not well agree together. All

the time that remaineth is too short to lament the lost time already

past. Therefore, if watching inferreth preparation, it inferreth speedy

preparation ; and a man is not in a good condition to live that is not

fit to die.

[2.] It must be a serious and thorough preparation, such as will

serve the turn, and be accepted by Christ at his coming. The whole

design of this parable is to caution us against the shallowness and

slightness of the work of grace upon our hearts. Heathens have a con-

science (as Felix trembled) ; much more Christians. Men may see

and have a taste of sin's bitterness, and have a longing mind after

Christ, but the life of grace is not begun in them ; they do not ' awake

to righteousness/ 1 Cor. xv. 34. We should often think what is

required in order to that day, and what the scripture maketh our

readiness to consist in. Eepentance and actual conversion to God,

this is pressed upon us, Acts iii. 19, ' Eepent, that your sins may be

blotted out, when the times of refreshment shall come from the pre-

sence of the Lord.' Eepentance is the soul's return to God in love.

And Acts xvii. 30, 31, ' Now he commandeth all men to repent,

because he hath appointed a day in which he will judge the world- in

righteousness.' That day is kept off that we might have time to

repent, 2 Peter iii. 9. So faith in Christ, that will unite us to him, or

a hearty taking him for our Lord and Saviour : Eom. viii. 1, ' There

is no condemnation to them that are in Christ ;' Phil. iii. 9, ' Pound

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in liim ;' 1 John ii. 28, ' And now, little children, abide in him ; that

when he shall appear you may have confidence, and not he ashamed

before him at his coming.' We must be in Christ, and abide in

Christ. To abide in Christ is to persevere in our adhering to him as

our Lord and Saviour, in the profession of his name, observation of

his precepts, recumbency on his merits, imitation of his graces, com-

munion with his person. Certainly he will not cast off those who are

members of his mystical body, and abide in him by faith, nor condemn

those whom he hath redeemed and washed in his blood, and sanctified

by his Spirit. This is our preparation ; yea, the scripture doth not

only look to our hearts, but to our lives, James ii. 1, 2.

[3.] It must be a constant and daily preparation. You must not

only get ready, but keep ready. Besides habitual preparation, there

must be actual preparation. We must every day be more in a readi-

ness. The sentinel is to watch all hours; it is death to be taken

sleeping, though he hath watched all the night before : ' We know

neither the day nor the hour/ it is in the text, implying there must

be no intermission of our care. What if my master should come and

find me idle ? said Calvin to his friends, that demanded of him why he

wasted his body in such constant labours. Few are like-minded that

put this question to their souls, Am I as I would meet with Christ ?

We should always stand with our lamps burning and our loins girt,

Luke xii. 35. A Christian should be always as a ship that hath taken

in its lading, and is prepared and furnished with all manner of

tackling, ready to set sail, only expecting the good wind to carry him

out of the haven. So should we be ready to set sail for eternity, stand

at heaven's gates, be in a perpetual exercise of faith and love, and be

fittingly prepared to meet our Saviour. Oh ! what a happiness is it to

live so that we care not when death cometh upon us ; and so live every-

day, as if we were presently to be summoned before the tribunal of

Christ ! The world thinketh this a foolish strictness, because many

days go over our heads, and it proveth not so. But let them mock on;

when they come to hell they will find this to be the greatest wisdom.

A Christian will count every day his last. Not only his own necessity,

but his love and earnest desire of Christ's coming maketh him look out.

3. The last thing in this watching is earnest expectation of Christ's

last appearance, and the grace he will bring along with him : 1 Peter

i. 15, ' Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the

end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of

Jesus Christ.' Our hearts and minds should be more taken up with

the thoughts of his coming, and the privileges we shall have by him.

It is expressed by looking, longing, waiting ; and Christians are often

described by these acts : Titus iii. 13, ' Looking for the blessed hope ;'

Phil. iii. 20, 21, ' From whence we look for a Saviour,' Heb. x. 27.

We should stir up our minds to look for his coming ; and not only stir

up our hopes, but our desires : 2 Tim. iv. 8, ' To them that love his

appearing;' it is a sign and token that he cometh with a blessing to

us: to them he cometh with a crown of righteousness. So for waiting:

1 Cor. i. 7, ' Ye come behind in no gift, waiting for the coming of our

Lord Jesus Christ.' We were converted for this end, to wait for his

coming from heaven, 1 Thes. i. 10.

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Now I come to show you the reasons why this watching is required

of us, or to move us to it.

1. Consider who it is that biddeth you watch. Christ himself, whom

you call Lord and Master, who knows the worth and danger of souls,

and hath a tender esteem and value for them. If we did impose so

strict a duty upon you, you might take or leave it as it shall be for

your convenieucy. In the 1st of Proverbs, Solomon bringeth in Wis-

dom lifting up her voice, and crying, Prov. i. 20. What to do ? To

accept of the grace offered. The most then will miss the season ; they

shall never receive advantage by the cry if they neglect it, ver. 26 ;

ver. 28, ' They shall call upon me, but I will not answer.' Many

clauses in these verses do fitly agree with the passages of the parable.

It agreeth with the foolish virgins, who lost their opportunity of getting

oil ; and with the wise, who in a time of plenty provided against a

famine, as Joseph advised the Egyptians : a greater than Joseph is

here. Now in the times of grace watch.

2. Consider whom it is he inviteth. Do not put it off to others :

Mark xiii. 37, ' What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' Some

persons are especially deputed to watch over others, as magistrates,

Bom. xiii. 6; ministers, Heb. xiii. 12; but every man is made a guardian

over his own soul ; rich and poor, they are both to watch. The meanest

people are then taken notice of, and that exactly : Mat. xxiv. 40, 41,

4 Two women grinding at the mill ; one shall be taken, and the other

left : two in the field, one taken, and the other left.' Those of the

meanest degree. All that live in all ages, in all times, to them he

said, Watch. Do not put it off to them that live in the age on which

the ends of the world are come. You will be found at that day as

death leaveth you. None of all degrees of grace are past this care.

If there be any difference between Christian and Christian, one is more

watchful than another ; if of never so long standing and experience,

yet if not watchful, soon surprised. God's best servants have been

surprised for want of watching. Noah was overtaken in drunkenness ;

Lot, that was chaste in Sodom, committed incest in the mountains,

where were none but his own family. And do but compare David

and Joseph ; you find David tempting, Joseph tempted. David was

a king, Joseph a slave ; David an old man of much experience, Joseph

a young man ; David a married man, and Joseph a single man. David

was fain to plot and contrive to make way for his sin, but Joseph had

the advantage of secrecy ; but the one stood, and the other fell ; David

left his senses at random, but Joseph kept himself in an aweful watch-

ful posture : Gen. xxxix. 9, ' How shall I do this great wickedness and

sin against God ? '

3. Consider when and how long we are to watch. The time is kept

from our knowledge for this very end, that we may always be watch-

ing: Mat. xxi. 36, 'Watch and pray always;' 2 Tim. iv. 5, 'But

watch thou in all things.' There must be a constant and continual

watch. When we are secure Ave lose our actual fitness, and our common

enemy breaks in upon us. There is a working, warring principle in

our hearts.

4. There is a blessing promised to those that watch : Kev. xvi. 15,

\* Blessed is he that watcheth ;' and Luke xii. 37, ' Blessed are those

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servants whom their Lord when he cometh shall find watching.'

"What do we lose by watching but a few trifling pleasures, which are

abundantly recompensed here and hereafter by solid rejoicing in

Christ? It is irksome to the flesh, but the reward sweeteneth it.

5. The hazard and danger of not watching. It is notably repre-

sented in this parable : only the ready enter. Take heed, therefore,

the like do not happen to you as to the foolish virgins : they are

excluded, and that irrevocably ; if they would never so fain enter,

Christ will not hearken unto them : Rev. iii. 3, ' If therefore thou shalt

not watch, I will come upon thee like a thief in the night;' 1 Thes.

v. 3. Woful is their condition that are secure and unprovided.

6. Consider what men would do to avoid temporal inconveniency :

Mat. xxiv. 43, ' If the good man of the house had known when the

thief would come, he would have watched ;' much more should Christ's

disciples to avoid eternal destruction. It is an advantage to put the

case in outward things, Mai. i. 8 ; it showeth the disproportion of our

respects to temporals and spirituals. If we are so careful in looking

to our bodies and goods, we are or should be more careful in watching

over our souls, where the danger is greater. The world's diligence

and double diligence in earthly things will condemn our neglect in

spiritual things.

Use 1. I may from hence take occasion to bewail the neglect of i\\\-,-

duty. Oh ! how much is watching laid aside ! Thence cometh our

decay of grace. The church of Sardis was even dead for want of it,

Eev. iii. 2. Thence comes our want of comfort, and of assurance of

God's love. Our peace of conscience is gotten by diligence, and kept

with watchfulness. Thence comes our loathness to die, and our cold-

ness to everlasting life. We do not ' gird up the loins of our minds,

and watch.' Thence come all our afflictions. God is fain to use

dreadful means to awaken his servants out of their drowsiness. We

are apt to be drowsy and sleepy ; God useth sharp discipline to awaken

us ; some smart cross or sickness to bring us to ourselves again. We

should bewail the neglect of watching in two things : —

1. Our not watching for the coming of the Lord. Some can live

merrily and quietly in a careless unprepared estate ; but do these men

consider what it is to meet with their Redeemer, before they have

gotten any benefit by his blood ? We cannot draw nigh to him with

any comfort till we feel the benefit of his death, Heb. x. 22. His

business is ' to present his people faultless to God/ Jude 24. These

men do not consider what it is to meet with the judge, 1 Peter iv. 5.

There is no plea but innocency and pardon in Christ, Rom. viii. 1 ;

1 John iii. 8. These do not consider how they shall look Christ in

the face, when so unlike him, 1 John iii. 1, 2, and 1 John iv. 17.

These do not consider what it is to meet the bridegroom when their

filthy garments are yet on.

2. Bewail the neglect of watching against present evils with care and

circumspection. What is the matter ? Is Satan less busy to tempt,

or is the heart of man and human nature grown better, and sin less

dangerous ? Is our weakness and inability so far strengthened and

cured, that we are out of danger of falling ? Were the servants of

God such weaklings, that prayed, as David, Ps. xxxix., ' I put a

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watch upon the door of my lips ;' and Job, that ' made a covenant

with his eyes'? Job xxxi. 1. But rather are not we more foolhardy

and negligent, do not mind our business, and consider not the incon-

veniency of not watching ?

Use 2. To press us to this duty ; there is a God that watcheth, and

enemies that watch, and conscience watcheth, and will do its office

first or last ; a day of judgment, when you are to answer for all that

you have done ; and will not you watch ? When you consider how

much you are in danger of sin, and in danger by sin, can you be

negligent and secure ? Oh ! watch your hearts, Prov. iv. 23 ; watch

your tongue, Ps. xxxix. 1 ; watch your senses, Job xxxi. 1 : gratify

them and you wound your hearts. Watch your ways, Prov. iv. 24 ;

but above all watch your state. Let us examine well our case, that

we may be found in Christ, and have the ' seal of his Spirit,' Eph. i.

13. That is your warrant.

For means to help us in this duty of watchfulness : —

1. Sobriety, or moderation in the use of all outward things : 1

Thes. v. 6, ' Therefore let us not sleep, as do others, but watch and be

sober,' 1 Peter i. 13, iv. 7.

2. Go to God in prayer. Watching and prayer are often joined

together. We are best kept when recommended into God's hand:

Ps. cxli. 3, ' Set a watch, Lord, before my mouth ; keep the door

of my lips.' I do observe there — (1.) That unadvised and passionate

speeches do easily drop from us in our troubles, especially in our per-

secution. (2.) That a godly conscientious man is very tender of these,

as of all evil. He that would live in communion with God for the

present, and hope to appear with comfort before him hereafter, is

sensible of the least thing that tends to God's displeasure and God's

dishonour. This is the true spirit of one that will be owned by Christ

at the last day. (3.) There is no way to prevent being provoked to

impatience and rashness of speech, or any evil, but by keeping a watch,

and renewing our obligations to God. (4.) Whoever would keep a

watch must call in the aid and assistance of God's grace : ' Lord, set

a watch upon the door of my lips.'

SEKMON XI.

For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country,

who called his own servants, and delivered to them his goods.

And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one;

to every one according to his several ability. — Mat. XXV. 14, 15.

The particle for showeth that this parable hath some connection with

the former. We have but two great affairs in the world — the one to

promote God's glory, the other to save our own souls ; or, in other

words, to be faithful to God and wise for ourselves. This latter was

taught us in the former parable ; the wise and provident virgins made

sufficient preparation for their reception into the nuptial feast. The

other, faithfulness to God, in employing our gifts, talents, and oppor-

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tunities for his glory, is taught in this parable. Therefore the drift

of it is, to set us all a-work in our places and callings for the glory of

God, that we may look Christ in the face at his coming, for the king-

dom of heaven, &c.

In which words we have —

First, The person trusting, a man ; who is here represented —

1. As a great lord and master, that hath servants of his own, and

several gifts to bestow upon them at his pleasure. In Luke it is, ' A

certain nobleman, who went into a far country, to receive for himself

a kingdom/ Luke xix. 12. In Mark, chap. xiii. 34, ' A great master

of a house,' who intrusts his servants with his goods till his return.

2. He is here considered as travelling into a far country. Christ's

ascending into heaven is thereby intended ; for gifts are the fruits of

his ascension.

Secondly, The persons intrusted ; he called his own servants, and

delivered to them. Not only ministers and officers of the church are

meant, though they especially ; but all Christians, who are Christ's

servants, employed by him in one state of life or other.

Thirdly, The things intrusted, his goods; they are bona, things

good in their nature; and they are dona, gifts freely given, and

delivered to us : and not merely given ; they are talenta, talents; not

things merely given as we give money to a beggar, but as we give to

a factor. As they are bona, they must not be despised ; as dona, gifts,

they call for thankfulness ; as talents, for faithfulness. The Jewish

talent was a hundred and eighty-one pounds ten shillings. Now these

talents are ordinances, opportunities, estates, gifts, graces, all that we

have received from God, either dona administrantia. or sanctificantia :

helps and means and opportunities to glorify him, which are the

occasions or the graces of the Spirit ; which are the dispositions to

make us so to do.

Fourthly, The variety observed in the distribution, to one five, to

another two, to another one ; which difference expresseth the divers

kinds of gifts, and the measure and the degree in which they are

bestowed. Though all have not equal measure, yet every one hath

some gift and some measure, something that is peculiar to himself,

whereby he may be useful.

Fifthly, The rule which is observed in the distribution, to every one

according to his ability. As in the parable the wise master knoweth

every servant, according to his prudence and skill, so in the explication

of the parable every man is gifted and employed by Christ according

to his natural receptivity. The eye hath its office as an eye, and the

hand as a hand, and the foot as a foot.

I shall not pursue every minute circumstance, but only touch upon

those things which are most remarkable.

First, Observe then —

Doct. 1. That Christ Jesus is the great Lord and owner.

He is so represented here with respect to persons and things. Per-

sons : those that receive the talents are called ' his own servants ; ' and

the several gifts and good things bestowed upon them are called ' his

goods ; ' and these dispensed according to his sovereign will and plea-

sure, to one more, to another less.

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Concerning Christ's being a lord and owner, let me give you these

observations : —

First, The power of Christ as an owner and free lord is to be dis-

tinguished from his power as a governor and ruler. As a free lord,

' he hath mercy on whom he will have mercy.' As a governor and

ruler, so he ' judge th the world in righteousness/ or according to the

law or stated rule which he hath given of his will. With respect to

the one, ' it is not in him that willeth, or in him that runneth, but in

God that showeth mercy/ But with respect to the other ' so run that

you may obtain.' Compare Kom. ix. 16, with 1 Cor. ix. 24 ; for God,

that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not arbitrary in his judgments, His

law and the precepts of it is the rule of our duty ; but in the sanction

of it it is the rule of God's process. But as an owner he discovereth

his sovereignty and dominion ; as a ruler or judge, his justice or right-

eousness. All acts and matters of free favour are dispensed by him as a

lord, but matters of right and wrong come before him as a judge. The

goodman of the house pleaded ill, ' I may do with my own as it pleaseth

me/ Mat. xx. 15 ; that belongeth to a supreme owner. Besides, his

being an owner goeth before his being a ruler, and is the foundation of

it ; for his absolute propriety in us giveth him a legislative power over

us, to dispose of us or command us according to his own will. He may

give his creatures what rules he pleaseth, and order them to what ends

he thinketh good, and bind them to observe his order upon what terms

lie will : ' I am the Lord/ Lev. xviii. 1-6. Therefore, before the course

of government established between him and the world, he is first con-

sidered as an owner.

Secondly, This power and ownership accrueth to Christ by a double

title — -jure creationis, et redemptionis.

1. By right of creation : Ezek. xviii. 4, ' Behold, all souls are mine/

He hath a right to dispose of man, and all the rest of his creatures, as

being all of them the works of his hands. He that gave them their

beings when they were not, and still supporteth them now they are,

hath an undoubted just right to order them according to his own will.

We have nothing but what we had from him ; and we have nothing

that we ourselves can keep a moment ; and we have it upon these terms,

to use it for his glory.

2. By right of redemption : Bom. xiv. 9, ' For to this end Christ

both died and rose again, that he might be Lord of dead and living ;'

and 1 Cor. vi. 20, ' Ye are bought with a price, therefore glorify God

in your bodies and souls, which are his.' This giveth him a new title

to us, though the former ceased not, but will continue.' Whilst man

receiveth his being from God by creation, and the continuance of his

being by preservation, it is a power commutative, not destructive ; it is

superadded to the former, and is more comfortable and beneficial to us,

as well as bindeth us more firmly to God, wholly to be disposed,

guided, and ordered by him at his will.

Thirdly, This power as owner is entire and absolute : Rom. xi. 3G,

' For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' We receiv-

ing our whole being from God, it is all at his dispose. All human

propriety is derived, limited, and respective, because we in being and

operation depend upon another ; and therefore man cannot be sui juris,

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at his own dispose, and lord of his own actions. He hath principhtm

etfinem, a principle upon which he dependeth, and an end to which lie

is appointed. Now it is no more lawful to abstain from respecting and

seeking his end, than it is possible not to depend upon his principle.

He hath a superior, to whom he must give an account, seeing he wholly

dependeth upon him, and is wholly subject to him. But this property

is originally and primarily in God as a fountain, not subordinate, or

dependent upon any higher. If this be not so intelligible, let me

speak more plainly. There is dominium jurisdictionis, et dominium

proprietatis ; such as a prince hath over his goods and lands. His

dominion is more absolute over his goods and lands than over his

subjects ; that is bounded by laws. God hath the most absolute

title over us, and all that we possess ; it is so great that it cannot be

greater.

Fourthly, God cannot be divested of this power and interest in us.

1. It is so absolutely inherent in him, that it cannot be communi-

cated to another ; that is, we cannot alienate and make void this right

by our sins. Though we sold ourselves for nought, Isa, lii. 3, it was

to our loss, not to God's. He hath a full right to command us to keep

his law, whether men be faulty or innocent. A drunken servant is a

servant, though he be disabled to do his master's work. No man's

right can be vacated without his consent. Creatures are creatures

still, obnoxious to the law of the Creator, or his punishment for the

breach, of it. In that interest we have in things, the default of

another doth not make void our right, especially if it be inferiors ; as

the rebellion of the subject doth not exempt him from the power of his

prince.

2. Neither doth God give it away by bestowing gifts upon the crea-

ture ; for he hath given us only dispensationem, the employment of

these things, not dominium, the sovereign power over them. Man hath

nothing that is his own. As to life, it is clear man is not dominus

vitce, but custos ; which is true not only of our life, but of our time,

wealth, strength, parts, yea, of all that we have. Still we are subject

to a higher lord, who hath an absolute uncontrollable right. All our

owning is but a stewardship, Luke xvi. 2. We have a right to pre-

vent the encroachment of our fellow-creatures. We have a right by

way of charge and trust, as a steward to things committed to him, or

as a workman hath a right to his tools or instruments to do his work,

or a factor in the estates committed to him ; but an absolute inde-

pendent right we have not. They are not ours to use as we think

meet. They were rebels that said, ' Our tongues are our own,' Ps. xii.

4. Well, then, when God dispersed his gifts, he did not dispossess

himself. As the husbandman doth not intend to throw away his seed

when he scattereth it in the furrows, but soweth it to receive it again

with increase, so God.

3. I will add this, that God cannot give this absolute right to another

that is not God, no more than he can cut off the creature from depend-

ing upon himself. In our way of owning our petty interests it may be

permitted, as a lord may make his vassal and slave free, or a prince

his subjects ; as Saul proclaimed that whosoever should overcome

Goliath, he would make his house free in Israel ; that is, free from

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taxes, imposts, service in war, 1 Sam. xvii. 25. But now no creature

can be exempted from duty to God ; for dependence upon God and

subjection to him are so twisted together, that the one cannot be with-

out the other. We wholly depend upon him for being, and all things

else, and therefore must be wholly subject to him. We still continue

in our being ; now the continuance of our very duty and being doth

still depend upon God.

Fifthly, God's sovereign dominion over us, and interest in us, may

be set forth by these three things, at least to our present purpose : —

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, either of honour or dishonour,'

Rom. ix. 21 ; and Jer. viii. 16, ' As clay in the hand of the potter, so

are ye in my hand, saith the Lord of hosts.' Nothing before it had a

being had a right to dispose of itself, neither did God make it what it

was by necessity of nature, nor by the command, counsel, or will of

any superior, or the direction of any coadjutor ; neither is there any to

whom he should render an account of his work ; but merely produced

all things by the act of his own will, as an absolute owner and sovereign

lord of all his actions : Eph. i. 11, ' He worketh all things according

to the counsel of his will ;' and Rev. iv. 11, ' Thou hast created all

things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.' Such was

God's absolute power. This should be thought of by us, because

whatever was given us in creation is not a matter of right, but the

mere effect of God's good-will and good pleasure. He might have

made us stocks and stones, and not living creatures, or, among living

creatures, plants only, with a life of vegetation and growth ; or if a

sensitive life, in the lowest rank, toads and vipers, or at best, but as

horse or mule, without understanding, and not men. Among men, all

the blessings and privileges we were born to might have been with-

held without any injustice. The various constitutions and complexions

of men, all their gifts and natural capacities, are the fruits of his

sovereign will.

2. A right of having and possessing all things so made and framed by

him. Amongst men, whosoever maketh anything by his own proper

art and labour, and of his own stuff, must needs have a full right to

it, and a full power to dispose of it ; yet no workman ever made any-

thing without some matter ; but God made all things without matter

pre-existing, and therefore surely his right is greater. Wherefore

God is called not only the maker of heaven and earth, but the possessor,

Gen. xiv. 19. God is the great proprietor, and in a sense the only

proprietor that hath dominium proprie dictum : ' Gold and silver are

mine,' Hag. ii. 8 ; and Hosea ii. 9, ' I will return, and take away my

corn and my wine in the season thereof ; ' Ps. 1. 10, ' His are the cattle

upon a thousand hills ; ' yea, ' The whole earth is the Lord's, and the

fulness thereof,' Ps. xxix. 1, 16. All is God's, in whatsoever hands it

be : ' The Lord hath need of him,' is argument enough. Now this

doth mightily increase our confidence, check our usurpations, quicken

us to faithfulness, that the great owner may not be deprived of his

right.

3. He hath a right of using and disposing all things thus in his

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possession according to his own pleasure. Reason will tell us that the

use, benefit, and utility of anything belongeth to him whose it is ; so

God is the sole disposer of all things. As he made them for himself,

so he governeth them ultimately and terminatively for himself ; some

things immediately, all things ultimately : ' By whom and for whom

all things were made,' Prov. xvi. 4; all the conditions of men, riches,

poverty, health, sickness, ease, pain, life, death. Now this right of dis-

posing of us is of great use to keep us in a quiet subjection to God's

laws and providence, without murmuring or repining. We cannot

say to him, What makest thou ? or, Why doest thou this ? Isa. xlv.

9. It is enough God did it. But to apply the whole.

Use 1. It serveth to check many sins. All mischief and disorder

cometh from looking upon ourselves as proprietaries and owners, and

not considering who hath the great interest in us. Surely were these

truths well digested and thought of by us, it would work a great cure

upon mankind.

1. That nothing we have is our own.

2. That whatsoever is given us by God, is given us for his service,

to be done to him.

3. That to this Lord of ours we must be answerable, who will one

day call us to an account. Or will you take one of them, if all be too

many to be remembered by you ; and that one implieth all the rest :

' Ye are not your own, but are bought with a price.' If a man did

think of this, My heart is not my own, it is God's, and he must have

it, he would not fill it with the dross of evil thoughts. My time is

not my own ; my tongue, my wit, my language, it is not my own.

Would the prodigal waste his estate so vainly ? Reprove him, and he

will tell you, I spend but my own. The covetous man saith, ' Shall

I take my bread, and my water, and my flesh, and give it to men that

I know not ? ' 1 Sam. xxv. 11. How easily might you persuade him

to charity, could you convince him it is another's goods, and to be laid

out when the Lord hath need of it. It would check our pride to con-

sider ' who made us to differ,' 1 Cor. iv. 7. Alas ! master, it was

borrowed, as Elisha's servant told his master. A groom is proud of

his master's horse : they are proud of that which is none of theirs,

that are proud of their parts and proud of their estates. Yea, it

would check our spiritual pride, when we have done anything for God,

or suffered anything for God, or given anything for God's sake : 1

Chron. xxix. 12-14, ' Of thine own have we given thee, for all is thine.'

Use 2. Is to press us to more faithfulness in God's service ; to serve

him more with our parts, time, strength, wit, wealth, power, and in-

terest. All the good things that God hath given us are God's still.

Now you should ' give unto God the things that are God's. You are

robbers if you lay not out all that you have according to his will, and for

his glory. But (1.) ' Give yourselves to the Lord,' 2 Cor. viii. 5, and

then other things will come in the more easily. You are his already ;

you cannot add to God's right; yet it may add to the obligation, bind

you more strongly to subjection and obedience. Oh ! then, in the first

place, become his servants and vassals ; avouch God to be your God :

Deut. xxvi. 17, ' Thou hast avouched this day the Lord to be thy God.'

Wicked men give up themselves to the Lord, but it is by constraint :

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' All that the Lord hath spoken we will do.' But, ' Oh, that they had

an heart ! ' Deut. v. 28, 29. (2.) Having given yourselves to the Lord,

give other things to him. A Christian lays himself, and all his in-

terests and capacities, at Jesus Christ's feet, that he may make an

advantage of everything for God : Zech. xiv. 20, ' In that day there

shall be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness unto the Lord ; yea,

every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord.'

We have received nothing from ourselves, and therefore should improve

all we are and have for God. (3.) The reality of our dedication will

be known by our use, if hard at work for God, and this be the business

of our lives : Phil. i. 21, ' To me to live is Christ.' It is not enough

negatively that our gifts be not employed against Christ as weapons of

unrighteousness, but positively for God, that he gets something by

every relation and acquaintance: Neh. i. 11, 'Prosper, I pray thee,

thy servant this day, and give him mercy in the sight of this man ; for

I was the king's cup-bearer.' He improved his place for God when he

was in it. God hath made many great and rich, but what doth the

Lord get by them ? Are they more useful ? Some have wit, but do not

consecrate it to Jesus Christ ; have power, interest, and great place, but

they do not honour God thereby : though they profess to give up them-

selves to God, yet in the use of themselves there appeareth no such

matter : they use their tongues as their own, hearts as their own,

wealth, strength, and interests as their own. Therefore you should

keep a constant reckoning how you lay out yourselves for God.

Undertake nothing but what will bear this inscription upon it, ' Holi-

ness to the Lord.' Put this question to yourselves, Can I dedicate this

to the Lord ? Eccles. ii. 2, ' What doth it ? '

Secondly, In the parable, this man, the owner, is represented as

'travelling into a far country,' and undertakes there to receive a king-

dom, and disposing of all his interests till his return. This noteth

Christ's ascension into heaven ; and the point will be —

Doct. 2. That Christ at his departure appointed every man his

work, and at his ascension gave gifts unto men, to be employed for his

glory till he come again.

There are two things offered in the parable and in the point : —

1. His appointing every man his work; as the man disposed of all

his matters till his return. Christ hath given order how every man,

according to his ability and calling, should employ himself till he

come again. We read, Acts i. 3, how Christ before his ascension in-

structed his disciples in 'all things pertaining to the kingdom of

heaven ; ' that is, in all the duties of rulers and ruled, teachers and

taught ; the ordinances, laws, and institutions of his kingdom, the duties

and privileges of the subjects thereof; what immunities they enjoy,

what obedience they must perform. This was his last charge before

his departure. Now we are to keep his charge as we will answer it to

him at his coming : 1 Tim. vi. 13, 14, ' I charge thee in the sight of

God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before

Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession, that thou keep this com-

mandment without spot, unrebukable, until the appearance of our

Lord Jesus Christ.' It was needful that Christ should go from us for

a while ; for he would not govern the world by sense, but by faith.

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Now he will make trial of our faithfulness and diligence during his

absence ; and therefore, having appointed us our work, he withdraweth.

He will come again to take notice not only of the malice of his enemies

against his people and interest, but also of the coldness and negligence

of his own servants and domestics: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flam-

ing fire, rendering vengeance upon them that know not God, and obey-

not the gospel ;' nay, if not flatly disobedient, yet if evil slothful servants.

2. His giving gifts. Gifts were given at Christ's ascension ; when

he took his journey, then he bestowed his goods to his servants. As

Elijah let fall his mantle, when he was translated, so did Christ bestow

his gifts and the graces of his Spirit : Eph. iv. 8, ' He ascended up on

high, and gave gifts to men.' There is a threefold reason of this: —

[1.] The bestowing of the Spirit was necessary to supply the want of

his bodily presence : John xvi. 7, ' Nevertheless. I tell you the truth ;

it is expedient for you that I go away : for if I go not away, the Com-

forter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto

you.' While Christ was with them, the Spirit was not given ; but

when his bodily presence was removed, then cometh the Comforter :

God will not withhold what is useful. If he take away outward com-

forts, he will give us the Spirit.

[2.] It was fit he should enter upon his kingdom before his mem-

bers participate so largely of his fulness, John vii. 38. Before his

incarnation grace was given upon trust, therefore more sparingly ;

afterwards coming in the flesh, the disciples were dull in comparison

of what they were when the price was paid. He was entered into pos-

session of his dignity, had taken actual possession of his kingdom ;

then he poureth out the gifts and graces of the Spirit, that the glori-

ous estate of his church and subjects might not go before, but come

after the glorious estate of their king and head.

[3.] To show that in his exaltation he is still mindful of his ser-

vants. As soon as warm in the mediatorial throne, he sendeth down

gifts and graces : Acts ii. 33, ' Being at the right hand of the Father

exalted, he hath shed forth this which ye now see and hear.' Pre-

sently he beginneth to show for what reason he is gone to heaven,

powerfully to apply the work of redemption.

Use 1. Hath Christ appointed to men their work ? It should

quicken us to keep the charge of the Lord: Gen. 1. 16, 'Thy father

did command before he died.' If we have any respect to the memory

of our Lord departed from us, any expectation of his coming again, so

let us be faithful in the work appointed us to do. He instructed his

apostles in all the duties and privileges of the kingdom of God, and

they have instructed us, and you must answer it to Christ at his

coming ; therefore be diligent in glorifying God in your places.

Use 2. As he gave gifts. Look upon Christ as exalted at the right

hand of God to dispense the gifts and graces of the Spirit, for the

bringing about the salvation of all that come to God by him. It is said,

2 Kings ii. 9, 10, that if Elisha should see his master ascending, he

should have his spirit doubled upon him. It is true here ; if by faith

we look to Christ ascended, his Spirit in some measure will come upon

us ; we have free liberty and access to him, to enjoy him for ever.

Thirdly, The master in the parable giveth not the same measure

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of talents to each servant : Christ giveth not a like measure of grace

to every one ; but to some more, to some less, as he thinketh expe-

dient. Here are five talents, and two talents, and one talent, given to

each servant, as there was a different measure given to Timothy and

Demas.

JDoct. 3. That it pleaseth the Lord to dispense his gifts variously

amoug his people, to some more, to some fewer talents.

See this is often inculcated in the scripture : Bom. xii. 6, ' Having

then gifts, differing according to the grace given to us ;' 1 Cor. vii. 7,

' Every man hath his proper gift, one after this manner, another after

that.' God giveth to every one in the church a measure and portion of

gifts as it pleaseth him. So 1 Cor. xii. 11, ' All these things worketh

one and the same spirit,' which is the proper seat of this doctrine. So

Eph. iv. 7, ' To every one of us is given grace, according to the mea-

sure of the gift of Christ.' So 1 Peter iv. 10, ' As every one hath

received the gift, so minister the same one to another, as good stewards

of the grace of God.' I have brought all these scriptures to show

you that this is a thing worthy to be taken notice of, and seriously

improved by us.

I shall give you some observations concerning this diversity and

variety.

1. That every one hath some talent or other to improve for God.

He that had least, had one ; and the least gift is compared to a talent :

there is none of God's people but they have received some gift from

him, which, being rightly employed, may make them useful for the

glory of God and the good of others ; if not in the higher and more

public office, yet as wives, children, servants, Titus ii. 10. Every one

hath his service and opportunity to do something for God : all offered

to the tabernacle gold, or silver, or brass, or chittim-wood, or goats' -

hair, or badgers'-skins. So, as Christ went to Jerusalem, some strewed

the way with garments, others cut down branches, some cried Hosanna ;

that was all they could do.

2. That there is a great diversity in the talents which we have.

The Lord doth not give all to one, nor to all alike.

[1.] There is a diversity of employments and offices. The apostle

telleth us, Horn. xii. 4, ' All members have not the same office ; ' some

an eye, some a hand, some a head, some a foot. Magistracy, ministry

are distinct offices in the church, which ought not to be confounded

or invaded : Eph. iv. 11, 12, ' And he gave some apostles, and some

prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers : for

the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edi-

fying the body of Christ ;' and Isa. liv. 11, ' I will lay thy foundations

with sapphires, and thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles,

and all thy borders of pleasant stones/ Here are variety of employ-

ments, foundations, windows, gates, borders, to hold forth the variety

of the gifts and graces of the members of the Church.

[2.] There is a diversity in the kind of gifts. In the general, some

are common, some saving, Heb. vi. 5, 9. Carnal men have great

abilities for the good of others, the stamp may be iron or brass, though

the impress be on gold and silver ; some bodily, some spiritual. Some

are called to glorify God with their honour and estates ; so Luke

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ix. 11 ; others with the gifts of the mind. The gifts of the mind are

common or saving. Among the common gifts, ' One hath the word

of wisdom, another the word of knowledge/ 1 Cor. xii. 8-10. Some

are able to lay down the truth soundly, others able to apply it forcibly.

Some have the gift of prayer and utterance, others are able to inform

the judgment or convince gainsayers ; some to clear up doctrines,

others to stir affections. As the three ministers of Geneva, Vireto

nemo docuit dulcius, Farello nemo tonuit fortius, nemo doctius locutus

est Calvino. Among hearers, some have more wisdom, some more

knowledge, some more affection. Amongst the penmen of scripture,

there is a great variety: John is sublime and seraphical, Paul spirit-

ual and argumentative, Peter in an easy fluent and mild way, Isaiah

more court-like and lofty, Jeremiah more priest-like and grave.

Among the saving gifts there is a diversity of graces, though all have

all in some measure. The new creature is not maimed, yet some are

more eminent, some for one grace, some for another : Abraham for

faith, Job for patience, Moses for meekness, Timothy for temperance ;

every grace working according to the diversity of tempers. Some are

modest and mild, others bold and zealous ; some are mourning for sin,

others raised in the admiration of the grace of God in Christ ; others

exemplary for strictness, and weanedness from the delights of the

animal life.

[3.] There is a diversity as to the measure and degrees. Every

barque that saileth to heaven doth not draw a like depth : there is

' the measure of the gift of Christ,' Eph. iv. 7 ; and ' the measure of

every part,' ver. 16. To some it may be said, ' Great is thy faith ;' to

others, ' ye of little faith ! ' Some are fathers, some young men, some

babes in Christ, 1 John ii. ]3, 14; and in heaven there are degrees

of glory suitable.

[4.] That this diversity cometh from the same free love of God, and

therefore not to be used contrary to the mind of the giver. This is

the free gift of God, flowing from his undeserved grace, there being

nothing foreseen in any that can merit the least good at God's hand :

1 Cor. iv. 7, ' Who made thee to differ ?' Kom. xii. 35, ' For of him,

and through him, and to him are all things.' The sun oweth nothing

to the stars, nor the fountain to the streams.

[5.] Our account must be answerable to our receipts ; there is a

proportion of return expected : Hezekiah rendered not according to

what he received. They that have received much shall account for

much ; and they that have received little shall account for little : he

that received five talents must look to reckon for five : as he com-

forted his friend that had but one eye, that he should account but for

the sins of one eye.

Now for the reasons of this diversity.

1. To show the liberty of his counsels. Christ may do with his

own as he pleaseth ; he will be known to be the sovereign Lord in the

distribution of his gifts, and giving out his grace to his creatures as he

shall see good : Mat. xi. 26, ' Even so, Father ; for so it seemeth good

in thy sight ; ' 1 Cor. xii. 11, ' For all these worketh that one and the

self-same Spirit, distributing to every man severally as he will' Not

as you will, but as he will. The Spirit is compared to wind, not only

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for its force, but its liberty, John iii. 8 ; when and how he pleaseth.

To some he giveth riches, to some gifts, common knowledge and

utterance ; some have this gift, some that ; some in a lower measure,

some in a higher ; some have a peculiar excellency in gifts and graces,

others only the common sincerity.

2. That all may know that all fulness is only in himself, Col. i. 19.

The greatest degree of gifts and graces that God bestoweth upon any

is far below that fulness that is in Christ ; they have a measure, but

Christ without measure, John iii. 34. He giveth to none so much

but there is always something wanting ; and they that have received

most are capable of receiving more.

3. God will have this difference for the beauty and order of the

whole : variety is more grateful. Hills and valleys make the world

beautiful ; so do distinct orders, ranks, and degrees of men. All eye

or all belly is monstrous ; difference with proportion maketh beauty ;

therefore one excelleth another, and several gifts and ranks there are

for the service of the whole.

4. That every one in the sight of his own wants may be kept

humble. When we are singular for any excellency, we are apt to

grow proud and unsociable ; the eye is apt to say to the hand or foot,

' I have no need of thee,' 1 Cor. xii. 21. Every man hath something

to commend him to the respect of others ; therefore God hath so

scattered his gifts that every one should need another, that we may

have the use of that gift which we have not the possession of.

[1.] To maintain love and mutual respect, and that there might be

no schism in the body. The apostle saith, Eph. iv. 16, ' The whole body

compacted and joined together by that which every part supplieth.'

[2.] Diversity of gifts was most intended, not to dissolve the bonds

of union, but to strengthen them rather ; and therefore the apostle,

when he had reckoned up the bonds of union, he presently addeth,

' But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of

the gift of Christ/ Eph. iv. 7. First he speaketh of what is one in all,

and then of those things which are not one in all, but diverse in every

one. Every one hath his distinct excellency to endear him to the

respects of others. Diversity of gifts are an ordinary occasion of

division and strife ; contempt, envy, pride, discouragement ariseth

from hence, but in itself one of the strongest bonds of union ; whilst

all in their way contribute to the good of the whole, and make use of

that excellency in another which themselves want, and we mutually

communicate to one another our benefits. As divers countries have

divers commodities, and one needeth another ; one aboundeth with

wines, some have spices, others have skins, and commodities in other

kinds, that by commerce and traffic there might be society maintained

among mankind ; so God in his church hath given to one gifts, to

another grace, to maintain a holy society and spiritual commerce

among themselves.

Use 1. Is to persuade us to employ our several talents for God,

be they more or less ; none are to be idle : 2 Tim. ii. (3, ' Stir up the

gift that is in thee.'

1. If we have but one talent, God expects the improvement of it :

Adam in innocency had his work appointed him by God.

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2. Those that have the greatest gifts should not contemn those that

have few or less ; and those that have few not envy others that have

more, but be mutually helpful one to another, acknowledging the wis-

dom and goodness of God in all that we have. It is a base spirit that

would shine alone, or set up one gift to the prejudice of another:

'Let no man glory, for all things are yours,' 1 Cor. iii. 21. He that

laid the world in hills and valleys would not have all champaign and

smooth ground, Prov. xvii. 15.

Use. 2. Give yourselves and all that is yours to God. Nothing is

more reasonable than that every one should have his own ; therefore

let us consent to God's propriety, and absolutely resign ourselves to

the will, dispose, and use of our creator ; but first ourselves, and then

what is ours.

SERMON XII.

Then he that had received the Jive talents went and traded with the

same, and made them other Jive talents. Likewise he that had

received two, he also gained other two. But he that had received

one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. — Mat.

XXV. 16-18.

This is the second part of the parable. We have heard of the master's

distribution, now we shall hear of the servants' negotiations, how they

employed the talents received. There was a disparity and inequality

in the distribution, so in the negotiation. Two of the servants used

their talents well ; the third traded not at all, but ' went and digged in

the earth, and hid his lord's money.' Among them that used their

talents well there was a difference, but still with proportion to what

they had received : ' He that had received five talents made them other

five : and he also that had received two gained other two.'

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them

for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of

others.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our

receipts.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not faithful ;

for one hid his lord's money.

For the first point —

Doct. 1. That those that have received talents must trade with them

for God's glory and the salvation of their own souls and the good of

others, I shall first explain the point, and then prove it.

First, For the explication or illustration, I will inquire —

1. What things are to be accounted talents ?

2. What it is to trade with them ?

3. To whom the gain and increase redoundeth ?

First, What are these talents ? In the general, all the things God

hath intrusted us with, or anything that may help to promote the

glory of God; reason, health, strength, time, parts, interests, power,

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authority, wealth, the mercies of his providence, afflictions, ordinances,

means of grace ; 3 r ea, grace itself. All these are vouchsafed to us

freely by God, and may be improved for his glory. There is none of

us but have had many advantages and opportunities put into our

hands of glorifying God and promoting our own and others' salvation.

Of all it may' be said, Prov. xvii. 16, ' Wherefore is there a price in

the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to use it?'

Reason and parts are a price put into your hands, so is time and

strength, so are riches and power, so are ordinances and providences,

and indeed all the blessings of this life. God must be gainer, and also

yourselves. In a spiritual sense he must have a share in your time,

"strength, wealth, and power ; and you must gain by every ordinance

and every providence something whereby you may be more fitted to

glorify his name, and to do good in your generation. But more par-

ticularly talents may be referred to two heads — dona sanctijicantia

et administrantia : graces, helps, and saving gifts.

1. Bona sanctijicantia, sanctifying gifts, or the graces of the Spirit ;

these are highest, and are called the ' true riches ;' Luke xvi. 11, 'If

therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who

shall commit to your trust the true riches?' To be trusted with an

estate is not so great a trust as to be trusted with grace : this is a gift

more precious, and should not lie idle. God trusts ordinary men with

common gifts before he trusts them with grace. When we suspect

that a vessel is leaky, we try it first with water before we fill it with

wine. God expecteth more honour from new creatures than he doth

from all the world besides, that they should do more good in their

places ; partly because they have new obligations by redemption :

1 Cor. vi. 20, ' You are bought with a price ; therefore glorify God in

your bodies and souls, which are God's.' You are twice bound, and a

double obligation will infer a double condemnation, if we answer it

not. And partly because by regeneration they have new dispositions,

they are more fitted to glorify God and do good to others ; Eph. i. 12,

' That we should be to the praise of his glory.' Their to ehai, their

new being, fitteth them to honour God. They serve mainly for this

very use, and therefore this duty of trading for God lieth first and

most upon them. Wherefore hath God created them anew in Christ

Jesus but to glorify his name, and admire his grace, and live answer-

able to his love, and to bring him into request among all about them ?

Mat. v. 16, 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see

your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' They

that are eminent for the profession of godliness, and are set as lights

in the world, or a city upon a hill, these should bring much honour

to God, and provoke others to do so ; as the stars, which are the shin-

ing part of heaven, draw eyes after them ; if they should be eclipsed

they set the world a-wondering : so should they shine as lights in the

' midst of a crooked generation,' Phil. ii. 15 ; or as the star that shined

at Christ's birth conducted the wise men to him, so should they by

their profession and practice lead others to Christ.

2. Bona administrantia, subservient helps. Now these are of several

sorts.

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[1.] Either gifts of nature, both of the mind and of the body. Of

the mind, as promptness of wit, clearness of the understanding, sound-

ness of judgment, or solid wisdom; all these were given you of God,

and he expects an improvement of these for his glory ; that every man

should be what lie is tor his creator. It was a good saying of Epic-

tetus in Arrian, Si essem luscinia, &c. — If I were a nightingale, I would

sing as a nightingale : Si essem alauda, &c. — If I were a lark, I would

piere as a lark ; but now I am a man I will glorify God as a man.

But alas ! how often do men of the best endowments miscarry ! Isa.

xlvii. 10, ' For thou hast trusted in thy wickedness, thou hast said,

None seeth me. Thy wisdom and thy knowledge it hath perverted

thee ; and thou hast said in thine heart, I am, and none besides me.'

Satan made use of the serpent, who was the subtlest of beasts of the

field, Gen. iii. 1. The devil loveth to go to work with the sharpest

tools. God hath given great abilities to some above others, to enable

them for his service. Now the devil, to despite God the more, turneth

his own weapons against himself. But it should not be so. We should

remember that we have nothing but what we have received, and ' who

maketh us to differ?' 1 Cor. iv. 7. So of the body, as health and

strength. Surely these bona corporis are talents. God fitteth every

man for tlie work wherein he will be honoured by him : Gal. i. 15,

' Separated from his mother's womb,' with a body fit to endure travel

and hardship. Strength is not to be wasted in sin and vanity, but

employed for God. It is better it should be worn out with labours

than eaten out with rust.

[2.] Outward interests, such as wealth, honour, and power ; these

are comfortable to the animal life, and lay an obligation upon us, and

also they give us many advantages of doing good, which should always

be taken hold of, and used by us ; as the greater veins abound with

blood to supply the less : Prov. iii. 9, ' Honour the Lord with thy sub-

stance, and the first-fruits of all thy increase.' Though many never

forget God more than when he hath blessed them, it is their duty to

make some improvement of this talent also: Eccles. vii. 11, ' Wisdom

with an inheritance is good.' It is good of itself alone, but it is better,

more useful and beneficial to ourselves and others, when God giveth

us, with the blessings of this life, wisdom. Wealth is an excellent

instrument, whereby a man is enabled to do much good, and is a help

to piety and charity: Poor men are not heeded and regarded. So

honour and great place is an opportunit}' whereby grace may put forth

itself with greater advantage : Neh. i. 11, ' The Lord show me favour

in the sight of this man ; for I was the king's cup-bearer.' He men-

tions his relation as having made an advantage of it.

[3.] The providences we are exercised withal, whether mercies or

afllictions, we are to give an account of them : mercies and comforts

vouchsafed to us by God. It is a naughty heart that would enjoy

anything apart from God, and looketh to his own personal content-

ment more than God's glory, Joel ii. 14. In a great famine they desire

plenty, that there may be a meat-offering and a drink-offering for the

Lord. So for afflictions ; God expecteth some improvement of them.

There is mercy in it, that God will put us under his discipline : Job

vii. 18, ' What is man that thou shouldest visit him everv morning,

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and try him every moment ?' And we must account for our afflic-

tions, Amos iv. 2, 3. God reckoneth up our chastisements.

[4.] Ordinances and instituted helps ; they come under a fourfold

notion — duties, privileges, means, talents. As duties enjoined, so they

are part of our homage due to God. It is not a matter arbitrary ;

there is a tie upon our consciences to keep us to the due observance of

them. As privileges: Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to them the

great things of my law.' This keepeth us from weariness, that we may

not consider them as a burdensome task : they are a great privilege,

dearly bought : it is by the blood of Jesus that we draw near to God.

As means for our growth and improvement ; that notion is necessary,

that we may not rest in the work wrought, but look after the grace

dispensed thereby. There is much difference in doing things as a task

and using them as a means ; means are for some end. As talents for

which we must give an account, which will quicken us to more earnest

diligence in the improvement of them. Some do not look upon them

as duties, and so neglect them ; others not as privileges, and so are not

so cheerful in the use of them ; others not as means, and so rest in the

work wrought ; others not as talents, and so are indifferent whether

they get good by them, yea or no.

Secondly, What is it to trade with them ? It implieth —

1. A conscionable use of all our gifts.

2. A diligent improvement of them to the ends for which they were

intended.

1. That we should use them well and holily ; our graces well, our

parts well, our estates well. Our gifts and graces are not for pride

and ostentation : ' Open my lips, that my mouth may show forth thy

praise,' not my own, saith holy David. The service of hell must not

be maintained with the contributions of heaven, neither must we seek

God's approbation to the setting up of our own glory : Phil. i. 15,

some ' preached the gospel out of strife and envy.' Unmortified cor-

ruption will make a man's most excellent gifts subservient to his basest

lusts, though exercised in the choicest duties of prayer and preaching.

Applause, vainglory, and such like carnal motions and ends may set

some men on work, and make them prostitute the service of Christ to

their own lusts. This is not to trade as factors for God, but to set up

for ourselves. So for estate ; to spend it in pomp and vanity, it is

' sowing to the flesh,' Gal. vi. 8. To spend our wit, time, and strength

upon the service of our fleshly lusts, or to make our body a strainer

for meat and drink, or a channel for lust to run through ; to be all for

present profit, pleasure, and preferment ; this is, instead of trading

with talents, to use them to God's dishonour.

2. That we should be laborious according to our gifts and oppor-

tunities. As a servant is sent abroad to spy all advantages of gain for

his master, so we are sent into the world to take all occasions of doing

good : 1 Cor. xv. 58, ' Always abounding in the work of the Lord. 7

Ministers are to watch for souls, and magistrates are to watch for good,

and private Christians to be careful to maintain good works. To do

a little good by the by will not be accepted ; we must be hard at work

for God.

Thirdly, To whom the gain and increase redoundeth ? In a moral

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consideration there are three beings — God, neighbour, and self:

accordingly we are appointed to work for three ends — the glory of God,

the salvation of our own souls, and the good of others; and as we

promote either of these ends, we are said to gain and increase our

talents.

1. The glory of God must he regarded in the first place, or, which

is always concerned with it, the advancement of the kingdom of Christ,

and his interest in the world ; for all the gifts that we have received

are for the Master's use. Though God cannot be enriched by anything

that we can do, yet he counteth it an increase if we study to bring

him into request, or to advance the kingdom of his Son. Therefore

this must be our supreme end in all things : 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether

ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' If in

eating and drinking, and the use of our ordinary comforts, much more

in the supreme and important actions of our lives, such as we would

make a business of : God must be specially eyed there. God only is

independent and self-sufficient, of himself and from himself; but self-

seeking is monstrous and unnatural in the creature ; .they are of him,

and by him, and for him: Rom. xi. 36, 'Of him, and through him,

and to him are all things.' The motion of the creatures is circular,

they end where they begun, man especially. Other creatures glorify

God necessarily, we voluntarily and by choice ; they passively, as they

minister matter to the beholders to glorify God ; we actively, as we are

to intend and seek his glory in all things. They are made for God

ultimately, but mediately for man ; but we are made for his immediate

service, and should glorify him in all.

2. The saving of our own souls, that must be regarded next to the

glory of God. For next to the love of God, man is to love himself,

and in himself first his better part. The great errors of the world

come from mistaking self, and misplacing self : they misplace self when

they set it above God, and prefer their interests before the conscience

of their duty to him ; then they mistake self, thinking themselves more

concerned as a body than a soul, and prefer the satisfactions of the

carnal life before the happiness of the spiritual. We never truly love

ourselves but when we love our souls and seek their good. God ordereth

all his providences for his own glory and the good of his people : Rom.

viii. 28, ' All things shall work together for good to them that love

God.' So should we order all our actions. All things are sanctified

to them that are sanctified to God, as helps and means, and something

to bring us to him ; so should we use all gifts, ordinances, and provi-

dences. We distinguished before of dona sanctificantia, et adminis-

trantia; this is the difference between them. The graces of sanctifi-

cation, though profitable for others, yet are chiefly intended for the

good of him that hath them ; gifts of edification, though profitable for

the owner, yet are principally intended for the good of others. A man

that hath sanctifying grace, he doth good to others with it, that is but

utilitas emergens, not finis proprius; it is not the proper and chief

end for which those graces were chiefly given ; but other subservient

gifts are for the good of the body, not for the worth of the person that

hath them : 1 Cor. xii. 7, ' The manifestation of the Spirit is given to

every man to profit withal.' That was the main and proper end.

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3. For the good of others, their edification and benefit ; as the sun

doth not shine for himself, nor the fountains flow for themselves. We

drive a joint-trade for heaven, and God hath scattered his gifts, that

every part may supply somewhat for the good of the whole ; as every

member in the body hath its proper station and several use, by which

the whole body receiveth benefit : Bom. xii. 4, ' For as we have many

members in one body, and all members have not the same office;'

1 Cor. xii. 14, ' For the body is not one member, but many.' A man

hath not wealth for himself, nor parts for himself, not ministerial gifts

for himself, to promote his own ends, but to bring in souls to God ; not

for pomp, but for use. All have their proper and distinct offices, some

to serve, others to rule, some to counsel, others to execute. Every one

hath their proper and distinct use ; for God maketh nothing in vain,

nor was the world appointed to be a hive for drones and idle ones.

Therefore we should all in our places be doing good to others, helping

them by our counsel, or by our estate and interest, or by our service ;

but especially should we do good to their souls ; for we are to love our

neighbour as ourselves, that is, by a regular love. Therefore first seek

their spiritual good, as we would do our own, gaining upon them by

assiduous counsels, provoking them by our example. Otherwise we

hide what we have in a napkin ; and what profit hath the world by

hidden wisdom more than by hidden treasure ?

Secondly, The reasons, or the confirmation of this point.

1. They that have received talents must trade, with them, because

they are not only a gift, but a trust, given us to employ. As a gift,

they call for our thankfulness ; as a trust, for our faithfulness. He

that hath an estate made over to him in trust, and for certain uses

expressed in the conveyance, hath indeed no estate therein at all, but

only with respect to those uses. The right of a feoffee in trust is jidei

commissarius, is quite distinct from that of an owner and possessor.

Just so it is here ; and oh ! that we could make you sensible that all

that you have is for such uses whereby you may bring some glory to

God and some good to others, and so save your own souls by the dis-

charge of your trust ! Surely, then, men would use their gifts more

industriously, spend their estates better, their time better, and be more

profitable in all their relations.

2. This trust is committed to servants, not to strangers or freemen,

who are at their own dispose-; so that from the quality of the persons

receiving there is an argument and obligation upon them. I may

desire another to take a trust, who may refuse me ; but those under

command must do as their Lord would have them. Now, thus are we

to Christ, who hath an absolute right in us, and both made us and

bought us.

3. The argument is still more binding, if there be a formal covenant

and promise on their part that they will faithfully perform this trust.

Now there is a covenant between God and us : '1 will be your God,

and you shall be my people.' In that covenant we bind ourselves to

seek his glory, and to do his people good. As we take God, whole

God, to be ours, so we give up ourselves and all that is ours to him, to

be for his use and service. In this covenant the altera -pars paciscens

is an inferior. Though there be a mutual interest, yet there cannot

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Le such an interest in God as God hath in us. God hath not only an

interest in us, but a dominion over us, which an inferior cannot have

over a superior ; so that we are God's more fully than he can be ours.

Now a trust accepted and broken afterwards involveth us in the greater

crime. I am God's, and will be God's, and would I could do more fof

his glory ; as a Christian in general, as a husband, or wife, or father,

or child, or servant, I will more honour God in my place.

4. The fruit, comfort, and excellency of the thing trusted is most

seen in the use. It is true of all sorts of talents. Take the lowest

outward subservient helps, wealth, power, and honour. A man doth

not see the comfort and use of wealth so much in anything as when he

doth employ it for God. If he hoard it up, he hath it only for show ;

if he layeth it out to clothe his back or to feed his belly, he doth but

make himself a more honourable sort of brute beast ; all the while he

is sowing to the flesh, or sacrificing to his god, the belly, or offering

up a meat-offering or a drink-offering to appetite. But how sweet is

it when we have opportunities of doing more for God ! Then he seeth

the use of wealth indeed ; it giveth him advantages of service, and a

more diffusive charity. Ordinances, the worth of them is most known

in the use and improvement ; not when we resort to them out of

custom and fashion's sake, but use them as means to do our souls good.

So for gifts ; as wells are the sweeter for draining, so gifts are

improved by using: so graces of the Spirit. God's most precious

gifts should not lie idle : 2 Cor. vi. 1 , ' We beseech you receive not

the grace of God in vain.' In short, you do not taste the true sweet-

ness of wealth when gorgeously attired, your tables plentifully fur-

nished, and you glut yourselves with all manner of fleshly delights ;

but in feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, that satisfieth the mind

and conscience of them that do it ; as you do not reap the increase of

.corn by scattering it in the sand, but casting it into a fruitful soil.

Use 1. To press us to this negotiation ; for if these things be so, we

should all rouse up ourselves, and say, What honour hath God by my

wealth, my parts, my honour and greatness, my place and office?

what protection to his cause, what relief and comfort to his people ?

1. Consider, it is our business in the world. Now every one should

ask for what end he was born, and continued in the world so long. Our

Lord Jesus, John xviii. 37, saith, ' To this end was I born, and for this

cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the

truth.' Every one is sent into the world for some end ; for surely God

would not make a creature in vain. We did not come into the world

merely to fill up the number of things, as stones and rubbish, nor to

grow in bulk and stature, as the plants, nor to enjoy pleasure without

remorse, as the beasts : God would never then have given us those

higher faculties of reason and conscience. For what end did I come

into the world but to glorify God in my place, to act that part in the

world which the great Master of the scenes appointed to me ? Why do

I live here ? What have I done in pursuance of my great end ?

Most men live as beasts ; eat, and drink, and sleep, and die, and

there is an end of them ; they never asked in good earnest for what

purpose they came hither.

"2. Every one is trading for somebody, the devil or the flesh, regard-

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ing his maker's glory or his own satisfaction : there is no medium.

Now which are you doing, trading for heaven or hell ?

3. Consider how much you are intrusted with. Look within you,

without you, round about you, and see how much you have to account

for ; the faculties of the mind, the members of the body, your time,

health, honour, estate, lifted up to heaven in ordinances, Mat. xi. 23 ;

much given, Mat. xii. 48, and. Neh. i. 11. Now improve all for God.

4. Talents are increased the more employed. We double our gifts

by the faithful use of them : ' He that had five talents gained other

rive ; and he that had two, other two.' The more grace here, the more

glory hereafter. If they be not employed they are lost. How many

poor, blasted, withered Christians may we find, by slacking their zeal,

and for want of diligent exercise ! But on the contrary, as the widow's

oil increased in the spending, and the loaves multiplied in the break-

ing, in Christ's miracle, and the right arm is bigger and fuller of

spirits than the left, so grace, that decayeth by disuse, groweth by

exercise. The corn sown bringeth in the increase.

5. We must give an account at last to God, Luke xix. 23 ; he will

' demand his own with usury.' What honour hath God had by us as

ministers, magistrates, masters of families, husbands and wives, parents

and children, masters and servants ? Beasts are not called to an

account, for they have no reason and conscience, as man hath. What

will you say when God shall reckon with you, what you have done

with your time, strength, and estates? If an ambassador that is

sent abroad to serve his king and country should return no other

account of his negotiation than I was busy at cards and dice, and could

not mind the employment I was sent about ; or a factor, I spent riot-

ously that which I should have spent in the mart or fair, will this pass

for an excuse ?

6. What a sad thing is it to have gifts for this end, to leave us

without excuse, as the Gentiles have the ' light of nature,' Rom. i. 20,

and Christians the ' light of the gospel :' John xv. 22, ' If I had not

come, and spoken to them, they had not had sin, but now they have no

cloak for their sin.' Others have the word preached to them : Mat.

xxiv. 14, ' And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the

world for a witness to all nations;' compared with Mat. xiii. 9, 'Know

that a prophet hath been among them ; ' have advantages and oppor-

tunities, but no heart to use them ; only that God may be clear when

he judge th.

7. We improve the stock of corruption left us by Adam, why not

the gifts given us by Jesus Christ ? This fire needeth no blowing ;

of itself it breaketh out into a flame; and shall not we stir up ourselves,

that we may be more useful ? In employing our gifts three things are

necessary — prudence, fidelity, and industry.

[1.] Prudence. This is necessary for a steward or factor : Luke

xii. 42, 'Who then is a wise and faithful steward, whom the Lord shall

make ruler over his household ? ' Now, there is a twofold wisdom

— a wisdom that is not from above, and a wisdom that is from above,

James iii. 16, 17. The first is earthly, sensual, devilish ; it either

serveth for earthly profits, or to give content to the flesh, or to affect

dominion and greatness. He that hath this wisdom sets up for him-

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self,' and will never be a steward and factor for God. And this is to

be wise for the present. But the wisdom we speak of is to be wise for

the future, that it may be well with us to all eternity ; and that is

the wisdom that is ' pure and peaceable/ and full of good fruits ; for

that is the truest wisdom; it serveth :iil turns, and provideth for God

and self too : that is a holy self-seeking, to seek self in God : it hath

what the other affecteth in a more sincere way of enjoyment, ' Honour

with God,' Eom. ii. 7; 'Pleasures with God,' Ps. xvi. 2; 'Rich towards

God,' Luke xii. 20; 1 Tim. vi. 18, ' Rich in good works, that they

may lay bold of eternal life.' This prudence would serve the turn,

and make a man take all advantages of doing good.

[2.] Faithful : 1 Cor. iv. 2, ' Moreover, it is required of a steward

that a man be found faithful ; ' that he sincerely seek the glory of

God, and watch all advantages to promote his Lord's interest, and

carry himself well in his trust.

[3.] Industry, that he stir up himself, 2 Tim. i. 6 ; 2 Tim. iv. 14,

' Neglect not the gift that is in thee.' Oh ! let us not be idle, but

hunt out occasions of doing good.

Doct. 2. In trading, our returns must carry proportion with our

receipts.

' He that had five talents gained other five, and he that had two

gained other two.' God will not accept of every man's rendering for

the mercies of common providence, deliverances ; 2 Chron. xxxii. 25,

Hezekialrrendered something, but not according to the benefit received.

Nor for the mercies of his covenant, justification, or pardoning mercy:

Luke vii. 47, ' Her sins, which are many, are forgiven ; for she loved

much : but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' All

love requireth love, and an answerable degree. So for sanctification :

he expecteth more from them to whom he hath given more grace :

1 Cor. xv. 10, ' But by the grace of God I am what I am ; and

his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain, but I

laboured more abundantly than they all ; yet not I, but the grace of

God that was with me.' And in general, of all talents, ordinances, he

expecteth improvement suitable, clear knowledge, strong faith, more

ready obedience : Luke xii. 47, 48, ' And the servant that knew his

lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will,

shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did

commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes : for

unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required.'

Otherwise his judgments will make it evident : Amos iii. 2, the valley

of visions had the heaviest burthen. So for gifts of the mind. God

expecteth service according to their measure : Eph. iv. 16, ' That

which every joint snpplieth, according to the effectual working in the

measure of every part ;' according to that place they hold in the body.

No member is either dead, or idle, or living and working only to

itself, but every one is to contribute for the good of others according

to its measure. So for estate. God looks for more from them whose

superfluities are larger than others enjoy, that they should be ' rich in

good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18. God accepteth the widow's two mites,

that was more than the abundance of the rich ; for ' she cast in all

that she had,' Luke xxi. Still the rule holdeth.

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The account riseth with the gifts ; and God will accept that at one

man's hands that he will not accept of another, whose capacities and

opportunities are greater, who have more time to spend in his imme-

diate service, more wealth to bestow, more advantages of acquainting

themselves with God. Only let me give you two cautions in judging

of our returns.

First, That in gifts, either of mind or of the body, our faithfulness is

measured by our endeavour, and not by our success. Dominus non

considered, saith Jerome, lucri magnitudinem, sed studii voluntcdem.

The crown of faithfulness and the crown of fruitfulness do both adorn

the person that wears them. Though they be not gathered, yet our

work is with God : Isa. xlix. 4, ' Then I said, I have laboured in vain,

I have spent my strength for nought, and in vain: yet surely my judg-

ment is with the Lord, and my work is with God.' Though little

fruit and effect on men, yet not the less regarded and rewarded by

God.

Secondly, That in the laying out of our gifts, God doth not measure

them by the quantity and value of what is given, but by the affection

and heart of the giver. Affectus pretium rebus imponit, saith Ambrose;

which is a comfort to the poorer sort, who have but little to give and

contribute to good uses : 1 Cor. viii. 11, ' If there be first a willing

mind, a man is accepted according to what he hath, not according to

what he hath not.' So in other things ; the smallness and meanness

of the benefit doth not diminish God's estimation of man's love and

affection. On the other side, it is an awe to the great and rich. All

those pompous services, if not a real mind, are not accepted, 1 Cor.

xiii. 1. God loveth non copiosum, sed hilarem datorem, not a large,

but a cheerful giver.

Thirdly, Where the matter will afford it, a liberal and open heart

will not be defective in quantity: they think nothing too much for

God, and therefore will do all that they can ; all seemeth too little :

1 Chron. xxii. 14, ' And now behold, in my trouble (Heb. or poverty),

I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents

of gold, and a thousand thousand talents of silver, and brass and iron

without weight.' Look, as there may be a winter's day in summer,

and a summer's day in winter, for the proportion ; so much may be

little, and little much, according to the mind and love of the giver ;

the widow gave 6\ov top fiiov. Some do twice as much good with a

little as others with a great deal. Love will not be backward.

Reasons of the point.

Because righteousness doth consist in a proportion, and so it holdeth

good both for our duty and God's judgment.

1. For our duty ; that we should be fruitful according to our means,

opportunities, and helps ; for every one of these increase our obliga-

tion.

2. For God's judgment. God is not a Pharaoh, to require the full

tale of brick where he doth' not afford stubble. In all his proceedings

there is great equity ; he considereth men according to their advan-

tages: Born, ii. 9, ' Tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man

that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.'

Use 1. Let this assuage the envy and trouble of the meanest. If

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thy gifts be mean, thy account will be so much the easier. Merchants

that have the greatest dealing are not ever the safest men : Eccles. i.

18, ' He that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.' None so miser-

able as they that have received much and returned little; which should

prevail with us to an acquiescence in God's providence, though our

talents be not so large.

2. Let it quicken those that have received greater gifts than others

to do so much the more good with them. You are more bound, and

that which God will accept from others he will not from you. If you

have many ordinances and means of improvement, you should get the

more grace, Heb. vi. G, 7, and Mat. xi. 22-24. You are deeper in the

state of condemnation if you do not bring forth fruit proportionable to

the means of salvation : if greater abilities, you must give God the

more glory ; if a greater estate, you must be richer in good works,

1 Tim. vi. 7, 8 ; for you to shut up your bowels : 1 John iii. 17, ' How

dwelleth the love of God in you?' Potentes potenter cruciabimtur.

Mighty shall be the destruction of the mighty. If we have greater

mercies, there is greater duties ; and greater duties, greater sins ; and

greater sins, greater judgments. Surely if men had any sense of their

accounts, those that have much to answer for would have more

trouble.

Doct. 3. Among those that have received talents all are not alike

fruitful.

I shall handle the point with respect to the context we have in

hand.

1. Though but one be mentioned, yet the number of unfaithful ones

is very great. In parables the scope must be regarded. Now the

general scope is to show that as the virgins are not all admitted, so all

the servants of the house not accepted. In the parable, indeed, two of

the servants are faithful, one unfaithful. We cannot conclude thence

that the number of those that used their talents Avell should be greater

than of those that hid them or neglected the improvement of them ;

as in the former parable, that the number of the foolish shall be just

equal with the number of the wise ; or in the parable of the wedding

garment, that but one shall come to the gospel-feast unprepared. No ;

the ornament of that scheme and figure which Christ would make use

of to signify his mind required it should be so expressed ; for since

our Lord, to avoid perplexity and confusion, would mention but three

servants, it was fit that one should be an instance of eminent faithful-

ness and service, another of service in a lower degree, that the meanest

may not be discouraged, and the other should represent the unfruitful

ones. Now experience showeth they are more than one to two ; yea,

more than ten to one, much the far greater number. Oh ! how few

are there even of those that hold much from God, that return him

aught of love and service ! The idle and unprofitable ones are found

everywhere, in all ranks and conditions of men.

2. Observe, he that had but one talent is represented as the unfaith-

ful one, and that with good advice. If the example of reprobation and

punishment had been put in the servant that had five talents, or two

talents, we might have thought that men of eminent gifts, rank, quality,

and employment in the church, shall be called to an account, and pun-

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ished for their neglect. No ; but as our Lord hath laid it, it reacheth

his full scope and purpose. For in the instance of the servant that

had but one talent, those that had five and two may easily know how

much sorer punishment shall light upon them, if he that had least be

called to such a strict reckoning for his non-improvement. However,

this we may observe, that he that had the least gift was unfaithful.

To be sure, those that have most spiritual gifts, do usually improve

them, and the rest are left without excuse.

3. Observe, his crime is, ' he went and digged in the earth, and hid

his lord's money.' Men dig in the earth to find metals and talents,

not to hide them there. Mark, it is not said he did embezzle his

talent, as many waste their substance in riotous living, quench brave

parts in excess, sin away many precious advantages of ordinances and

education, and powerful convictions. No ; he did not embezzle his

talent, but hid it. Mark again, he did not misemploy his talent, as

some do their wealth, others their wit, to scoff at religion, or to put a

varnish on the devil's cause, their power to oppress and crush the

good : the precious gifts that many have are like a sword in a mad-

man's hand, they use them to hurt and mischief. No ; no such thing

is charged upon this evil and naughty servant. It is fault enough to

hide our talents, though we do not abuse them. That you may con-

ceive of this, I shall show you —

1. His sin, in hiding his lord's money.

2. What may be the cause of it in those that imitate him.

First, It was a sin, partly because it was against the command of his

master. In Luke xix. 13, ' He gave them a charge, occupy till I

come.' Partly because it was against the end of the distribution of

the talents. To keep money unprofitably by us is a loss ; it was made

for commerce, so were gifts given us to profit withal ; scattered into

several hands to bring in some increase to the Lord and owner.

Partly because it was against the example of his fellow-servants, who

were industrious and careful to comply with their charge : 2 Cor. ix.

2, ' Your zeal hath provoked very many.' And partly as his obedience

and account would have been easier ; as it is more easy to give an

account of a small sum than a greater, as there is less trouble, less

danger; so his refusal is less excusable. And partly as it was an

abuse of his master's patience ; it was long ere he called him to a

reckoning. God will bear long with us, in infancy, childhood, and

youth, but he will not bear always ; if we do not bethink ourselves at

last, our account is hastened, and God will suffer idle servants no

longer to have an opportunity of promoting his glory, the good of

others, and their own salvation.

Secondly, What may be the causes of such-like unfaithfulness ?

Men are taken off from improving their talents —

1. Sometimes by a slothful laziness, and should that hinder us,

especially us that are servants to God? What man can endure an

idle servant ? Though he should not whore and steal, yet if he do not

his work, you put him away. Everything in the world costs diligence,

and shall not we be diligent in our master's work ? How will men

labour for a small reward in the world, and is not heaven worth our most

industrious care ? Shall not we be hard at work ? 1 Cor. xv. 58. The

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reward is still propounded to the diligent: 1 Cor. iii. 8, 'Every man

shall receive his reward according to his own labour;' 2 Cor. ix. 6,

' He that soweth sparingly, shall reap sparingly.' Idleness is its own

punishment. An idle man is a burden to himself, like a man buried

alive. When it is morning, would God it were evening. He contracts

distempers ; a key seldom turned rusts in the lock; standing pools are

apt to putrify. David, when he was idle, fell into those foul faults.

An idle man can think of nothing but the delights of the flesh, and so

becometh a ready prey to Satan.

Oh ! then, shake off laziness and the ease of the flesh ! God is at

work, John v. 17 ; the creatures are at work ; the sua is always going

up and down.

2. Another cause is a foolish modesty and pusillanimity. Oh !

this should not be; we should not, like Saul, hide among the stuff

when God calleth us forth to some employment for his glory, 1

Sam. x. 22 ; or, with Moses, draw back when opportunity is offered us

to be useful in our generation, Bxod. iv. 20. God can help the stam-

mering tongue, and will bless mean gifts when you sincerely obey

his call.

3. Self-love : Phil. ii. 21, ' All men seek their own things, not the

things of Jesus Christ.' Many care not how it goeth with Christ's

matters, if their particular go right : they serve their own worldly

ease, profit, credit, pleasure.

4. Distracting businesses, or love to the world; this is digging

in the earth, and hiding our talent indeed : 2 Tim. iv. 10, ' Demas

hath forsaken me, and embraced the present world/

5. Fear of danger, if publicly active for God. Some are so

cowardly that they are browbeaten with a frown ; cannot venture a

lesser interest, cannot bear a scoff or a disgraceful word ; therefore

sneak, loath to own what they are, or to do for Christ and his despised

cause. This is not a Christian frame : Phil. i. 28, ' In nothing terrified

by your adversaries, which to them is a token of perdition, but to you

of salvation, and that of God/ It looketh like Christ's business ; he

speaketh of endeavours to propagate the faith of Christ, and to gain

men to embrace the gospel.

Use. Let us see if we be found in the number of the faithful or

unfaithful. A negligent ministry, a Gallio, a careless magistrate, an

idle master of a family, a slothful Christian, is like the servant in the

text. You have your use whether you be in a public or private station.

Let us be faithful ; if but one talent, the smallest gifts must not lie

idle, but be seriously exercised for God's glory ; if but one, your

temptations are the less, private men are not exposed to such dangers

as public persons. It will aggravate your negligence if, when less is

required, you are found idle. Oh ! therefore, shake off the ease of

the flesh, that loathness to be troubled with the faithful discharge of

your duty.

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SERMON XIII.

After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneih

loitli them. And so he that had received five talents came and

brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me

five talents : behold, I have gained besides them five talents more.

His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful

servant ; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make

thee rider over many things : enter thou into the joy of thy lord.

He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou

deliveredst unto me two talents : behold, L have gained two other

talents besides them. His lord said unto him, Well done, good

and faithful servant, thou hast been faithful over a few things,

L will make thee rider over many things : enter thou into the joy

of thy lord.— Mat. XXV. 19-23.

We now come to the third part of the parable.

The first we called the distribution ; the second, the negotiation ;

and the third, the account. This account is —

1. Spoken in the general, ver. 19.

2. More particularly described and set forth. There we shall take

notice —

First, Of the reckoning with the good servants.

Secondly, With the bad one. In the passages that concern the

good servants, you may take notice of the servants' account and the

master's approbation. The account of the first servant is in ver. 20 ;

of the second, in ver. 22 ; the master's approbation in ver. 21 and 23.

He entertaineth both the servants with the same countenance and the

same words.

First, I begin with the general intimation of the account, ver. 19 ;

where the time —

1. When he cometh, after a long time.

2. His work ; what he will do when he cometh ; he reckoneth with

his servants.

First, For the time.

Doct. 1. There is a good space of time between Christ's ascension

and second coming.

Quest. But why is this last reckoning so long delayed ?

Ans. Not from any unreadiness in Christ ; he is ready to judge if

we be ready to be judged, 1 Peter iv. 5.

1. There is a reason on the part of the good ; and that is, that the

number of the elect may be gathered, who live in several ages and

places ; and it requireth some time and pains to work upon each soul

of them ; for ' not one of those must perish,' 2 Peter iii. 9. And

after they are converted, there must be some time allowed to exercise

their diligence : they must have a day to work in, John ix. 4, and to

try their faith and patience in : Rev. vi. 11, ' They should rest yet for

a little season, until their fellow-servants and their brethren that

should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.' A certain number

are enrolled for sufferings, as well as for heaven, many of which had

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not obtained their crown ; as the high priest tarried within the veil

till his ministration ended. As long as there is need of Christ's

intercession, he defers his second coming.

2. On the wicked's part ; it is necessary they should have a time of

improvement, that they may be left without excuse : Rom. ix. 22,

' What if God, willing to show his wrath, and to make his power

known, endured with much long-suffering the vessels of wrath fitted

to destruction ?' It is for the glory of God that he should take them

when ripe. Then the 'angel thrusts in his sickle,' Eev. xiv. 15.

Therefore they have longer time of prospering in their sinful ways.

[1.] Let us not make an ill use of this, either to deny or doubt of

his coming, as those, 2 Peter iii. 3, or of slackening or putting oil'

your preparation, as the naughty servant, Mat. xxiv. 48, 49. But let

us ' wait with patience,' and ' hold out to the very last.' Saul held

out till Samuel was even ready to come, and so forced himself to offer

sacrifice, whereby he lost his kingdom, 1 Sam. xiii. 8, 9. If he had

stayed a little longer, Samuel had come. So many grow weary of

doing and suffering, and miscarry in the very haven. We wait in ordi-

nary things : James v. 7, 8, ' Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the

coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious

fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the

early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts, for the

coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' His hastiness cannot alter the

seasons ; so we, in improving our interests and employing our talents,

should not faint : Gal. vi. 4, ' And be not weary in well-doing, for in

due season we shall reap if we faint not.

[2.] Let us shame ourselves that, having so much time, we have

done so little work. Our master hath tarried long, and given us a

large space of time wherein to employ ourselves ; but what have we

done for his glory ? Alas ! either we do nihil agere, or male agere, or

aliucl agere ; either we do nothing, or nothing to the purpose, or that

which is worse than nothing, which will undo us for ever. Oh ! what

thoughts will we have of a careless and misspent life when we come to

die ! Many do not think of the end of their lives till their lives be

ended ; and then they moan and bewail themselves when they lie

a-dying. Oh ! rather think of your last end and great account betimes.

It is lamentable to begin to live when we must die. Quidam tunc in-

cipiunt vivere cum dcsinendum est — they end their lives before they

begin to live. Therefore if hitherto you have been pleasing the flesh,

idling and wantoning away your precious time, say, 1 Peter iv. 3, 'Let

the time past suffice.' I have been long enough dishonouring God,

and destroying my own soul : hath my master tarried so long, and

shall I still abuse his patience ? This is a holy and right use of this

delay.

Secondly, His work, what he will do when he conieth : he ' reckoneth

with his servants.'

Doct, 2. Those that have talents must look to reckon for them, for

though he be long first, yet at length the Lord cometh.

1. Consider the certainty of this account ; his wisdom, justice, good-

ness, and truth require it. His wisdom requireth it ; for no wise man

would put his goods to trust, and never look after them more ; and

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shall we imagine that the wise God would send reasonable creatures

into the world, and furnish them with excellent gifts and endowments,

and never consider how they employ themselves ? Is man God's ser-

vant ? then certainly he is liable to an account. You had never come

into the world but for this business, to serve and please God. For

God maketh nothing in vain, but all things for himself, Pro v. xvi. 4.

And do you think that after you are made for this end you may live as

you list, and never be called to a reckoning ? So absurd a thought

cannot enter into the heart of a reasonable man : Eccles. xi. 9, ' Rejoice,

young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days

of thy youth, and walk in the ways of thy heart, and in the sight of

thine eyes : but know thou, for all these things God will bring thee to

judgment.' Man would be but a sort of beast if he had no other end

of his actions but to eat and drink and sleep, and no other account to

give. Surely the most wise God would not have given us such excel-

lent faculties in vain. He fitteth all creatures for their use : every

workman fitteth his work for the end for which it serveth ; so God

hath made man for some end and use. And God's justice requireth it

that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that

do ill. In the world it is not so : his servants are very often abused

while doing their work most faithfully, the world thinks them mad,

hateth them. They that neglect their own work beat their fellow-

servants ; therefore the honour of his justice requireth they should be

called to an account : 1 Peter iv. 5, ' Who must give an account to

him who is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' There is- not a

thought in wicked men's hearts, nor a word in their mouths, contrary

to God and his people, but he taketh notice of it, and will exact an

account thereof, a strict and impartial account of all their hard

speeches. And the goodness of God requireth it. His goodness to

the world in general ; the world would be a wilderness, and men like

ravenous beasts, if there were not some bridle and awe of a world to

come upon them ; but every one that had power would prey upon

others, but that there is a higher judge. God hath appointed a

supreme tribunal, where causes are judged over again ; otherwise those

that have power enough to do mischief would be under no restraint.

But it is goodness to his people, whom he hath set a-work, and there-

fore hath appointed a day when he will give them their wages ; his

goodness will not permit that they should be any losers by God, their

love and obedience to him that deny themselves, their own affections

and interest, for his sake. Therefore certainly the great God of recom-

penses will come and call the world to an account, that the faithful-

ness of his servants may appear with praise and honour. This is a

supreme truth : Heb. xi. 6, ' That he that cometh to God must believe

that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.'

And his truth requireth it, it is laid at pledge in the word ; that is the

proper ground for faith to build upon. Now there we have not only

God's word, but God's oath : Rom. xiv. 10, 11, ' For we must all stand

before the judgment-seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith

the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess

to God.' There we have plentiful evidence.

2. It is a personal account : Rom. xiv. 12, ' So then every one of us

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shall give an account of himself to God.' We should not look to

others what they be and do. As to ourselves, we must give an

account of ourselves, our life, our heart, our own thoughts, words, and

actions. It is personal, partly because every one must give his account

apart ; not every one shuffled together and in gross ; but every servant

apart and severally ; first he that had five talents, then two, then one.

And partly because every one unavoidably must answer for himself.

Here we may have our attorney or advocate to appear for us in

court ; but there every one for himself, every man must in person,

give an account of his own fidelity.

3. It is an impartial account, every one without exception : Kev.

xx. 12, ' I saw the dead, both small and great, stand before God.'

Small and great, king and peasant, they shall all one day be called to

an account, whether faithful or no. None so high as to be exempted

from this account ; none so mean as to be neglected in it : he that

received five talents and he that received one both gave an account.

The poor beggar is not left out, nor the king excused.

4. It is a particular account. God will not take our accounts by

the heap and lump, but there is a narrow search into all our hearts

and ways. The great thing is, What we have done in that place and

relation where God hath set us our stewardship ? Luke xvi. 2, but

that is not all ; we are to give an account of every action : Eccles. xii.

14, ' For God shall bring every work into judgment.' Every idle

word must be accounted for, Mat. xii. 36. All the time we have

spent, degrees of grace we received, what we have done, proportion-

able to our trust, five for five, two for two.

5. It is an exact account, that nothing is lost : Eev. xx. 12, ' The

books were produced ; ' the book of conscience, and the book of God's

remembrance : one of these is in the sinner's keeping, and yet it cannot

be blotted out nor defaced : but at the day of judgment, conscience

shall be extended to the recognition of all our ways. Now these books

of account that are kept between God and the creature are somewhat

like the books of merchants, of debtor and creditor, what returned and

what received. God's mercies to us are booked, so are our returns.

That God's mercies are put upon the book and register appeareth by

the expostulations used in scripture when God proceedeth to any par-

ticular judgment ; as for instance, opportunities of grace, and instruc-

tions of the word ; the word preached, et? fiaprvpiav : Mat. xxiv. 14,

1 And the gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for

a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come.' God keepeth

exact account : ' Behold, these three years came I seeking fruit,' Luke

xiii. 7 ; ' This second epistle write I unto you,' 2 Peter iii. 1. He

taketh notice of a former. God remembereth the prophets' words

when the prophets are dead and gone. Every pressing sermon, every

notable help : ' This second miracle did Jesus in Cana of Galilee,'

John iv. 54. Christ's special works and manifestations of himself

ought to be marked and kept in memory. God doth so for deliver-

ances from danger : Isa. xi. 11, ' The Lord shall arise the second time

for the deliverance of his people.' He taketh notice that he has been

once at it, and would be again. So what talents and gifts we have had,

whether five, two, or one. Secondly, on the other side, all the good

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that we do ; therefore the apostle speaketh of ( fruit abounding to his

account,' Phil. iv. 17. The Lord taketh notice of our faithfulness in

evil times : Mai. iii. 15, 16, ' And now we call the proud happy ; yea,

they that work wickedness are set up ; yea, they that tempt God are

even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to

another ; and a book of remembrance was written before him, for them

that feared the Lord, and thought upon his name ;' 1 Kings xix. 18 ;

Acts xvii. 34. Kindness to his servants : Mat. x. 42, ( And whosoever

shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water

only, in the name of a disciple, he shall not lose his reward ;' Eccles.

xi. 1, ' Cast thy bread upon the waters, and thou shalt find it after

many days;' it is not lost. On the other side, injuries done to his

people ; he hath a bottle for their tears, and a book for their sorrows,

Ps. lvi. 8. All the snares contrived : Deut. xxxii. 34, ' Is not this laid

up in store with me, and sealed up among my treasures ? ' Job xiii.

27, ' Thou lookest narrowly to all my paths, thou settest a print upon

the heels of my feet.' Every action leaveth a track, every word, Mat.

xii. 36, every thought, 1 Cor. iv. 5.

Use. Is our account ready against that great day of audit ? Most

neglect it, put off the thoughts of it. Take occasion hence to reckon

with yourselves aforehand, and see what an account you can give to

conscience. We should prepare more for this solemn day of reckoning,

and therefore should take notice of what we do, and what we receive.

We had need keep a register of every day's work, and every day's

mercies. There are three questions in scripture ; often put them to

your hearts : Deut. xxxii. 6, ' Do ye thus requite the Lord. foolish

people and unwise ? is not he thy Father that hath bought thee ? hath

he not made thee and established thee?' Heb. ii. 3, 'How shall we

escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Isa. v. 4, ' What could I have

done more for my vineyard that I have not done in it ? Wherefore,

when I looked for grapes, behold it brought forth wild grapes ? ' The

profit of daily arraigning conscience is great.

1. It keepeth us sensible of our duty, maketh us often have recourse

to grace, when we continually observe our sins, duties, afflictions, mer-

cies, comforts, opportunities of receiving grace, and do but intermingle

this thought, that one day for all these I must give an account.

2. It presseth us to be more earnest for pardoning mercy, and every

day to make even. This is the great folly of men, that they put off

sin when God doth not put it away. There is an expression often

used in scripture, ' Their iniquities shall find them out ; ' this notion

of accounts will help us to understand it. It was committed many

years ago, never heard of it since, but at length they shall hear of it :

God reckoneth with them. If men escape and prosper a month, or a

year, or two, they think all is forgotten ; but at length it findeth them

out. Sins are called debts, and all debts lie upon account against us,

till they be cancelled. Augustus bought his quilt of one who slept

securely, when he owed an hundred thousand sesterces. We may

wonder at the security of sinners, who sleep when their damnation

sleepeth not ; they run upon the score, and never think of a reckoning.

Solomon adviseth a man in debt ' not to sleep till he be delivered like

a roe from the hunter,' Prov. vi. 4. 5. It is good advice to us, to get

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our spiritual debts discharged : Ps. li. I, ' Blot out my transgressions.'

Christ hath taught us to pray for daily pardon as well as daily bread.

The thought of these records that are kept, and the account we must

make, should quicken us to it. Oh ! what a clamour will our sins

make when God sets them all in order before us ! Ps. 1. 21. Thousands

of vain thoughts, light words, and sinful actions, much mispense of

time, abuse of mercies. We know not how soon God will put the

bond in suit : other debts have a day of payment fixed, but this God

hath reserved in his own breast, when he will call us to an account.

3. It presseth us to live always as those that are to give an account.

Paul quickened himself to diligence upon this consideration, 2 Cor. v.

9, 10. If we were never to be called to an account, we should do God

all the service that possibly we can, we are so much obliged to him ;

but he hath set a day wherein he will reckon with us. Oh ! what

watchfulness, what diligence and faithfulness, should this produce in

us ! James ii. 12, ' So speak and so do as those that shall be judged

by the law of liberty.' We read in the story of the Albigenses, when

the president of St Juliers coming to Angrogne would have forced a

man to re-baptize his child in the popish way, he prayed the president

that he would give it in writing, and sign it with his own hand, that

he would discharge him before God, and take the peril upon himself ;

this made him relent and profess his trouble. Conscience is startled

at God's records. If a man should do nothing, and speak nothing but

what is to be registered and proclaimed at the market-cross, how

watchful would he be ! All is recorded, the books will be opened ;

therefore, when we are about to do anything unworthy, say as he, Acts

xix. 40, ' We are in danger to be called to an account for this day's

uproar, there being no cause whereby we may give an account of this

concourse;' so should you. We that are to give an account, how

careful should we be how we use our time, health, strength, under-

standing, authority, wealth, and other blessings of God. The common-

ness of these notions maketh them to lose their life and influence ;

therefore we should especially act faith in believing, and urging the

soul with this account.

Secondly, It is particularly described ; and there —

1. Of the servants' allegation.

2. The master's approbation.

First, The servants' allegation, ver. 20 and 22. The two first ser-

vants came cheerfully to their account, as having discharged their

duty faithfully, and with all diligence improved the talents received.

Not that in the day of judgment good men shall make any narrations

of what they have done; they need not, for Christ shall do it for

them: they rather wonder that anything they have done is taken

notice of, as in the 37th verse of this chapter ; but all this is spoken

after the manner of men, and to keep up the decorum of the parable.

If it signifieth anything, it signifieth the confidence of a good con-

science, and what comfort and boldness it breedeth in the clay of our

accounts.

Doct. That a faithful discharge of our duty will give us comfort and

boldness when our Lord corneth to reckon with us.

1. There is a confidence and comfort that ariseth from a good con-

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science, or from sanctification as well as justification. In the inward

court, conscience is one of the witnesses, as well as the Spirit of God,

Roin. viii. 16, and much comfort ariseth from its testimony : 2 Cor. i.

12, ' This is our rejoicing, the testimony of our conscience.' A carnal

man is ashamed of the grounds of his rejoicing, and what it is that

keepeth his heart merry ; hut a godly man can own the causes of his

joy, which are, in the first place, the blood of Christ: Eom. v. 11,

' We joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have

received the atonement;' next, the testimony of his conscience con-

cerning his sincere walking. But if a man can live with these comforts,

can he die with them ?

2. The review of a well-spent life is a great comfort in death. Our

Lord Jesus, at the end of his days, when he was to go out of the

world, John xvii. 4, saith, ' I have glorified thee upon earth, and

finished the work thou gavest me to do.' Hezekiah, when that sad

message was brought to him, that he must die, and not live, Isa.

xxxviii. 4, that comforted him upon his death-bed : ' Remember now,

Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in truth, and

with a perfect heart, and have done what is good in thy sight.' So the

apostle Paul, when he drew nigh his end, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, saith, ' I

have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, 1 have kept the

faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,

which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' Oh !

it is a blessed thing if we can have this comfort, when conscience puts

off all disguises, and the everlasting estate is at hand, and we are

immediately to appear before the Lord ; to remember then that we

have been careful to please and honour God, and done his work, how

sweet is it !

3. In the day of judgment ; their works follow them into the other

world, Rev. xiv. 13. Their wealth doth not follow them, but the con-

science of having done well abideth with them. Conscience is heaven

or hell to us. In hell it maketh up a part of the worm that never

dieth ; so in heaven, it giveth us confidence, 1 John ii. 28 ; and 1 John

iv. 17, ' That we may have boldness in the day of judgment.' Works

are not meritorious, and have no causal influence upon our salvation,

yet they have the full place of an evidence, and so may wonderfully

comfort and embolden our hearts.

Use. Let us labour to get this evidence. The time of death is a

time that will rifle all our false hopes. You are in your health and

strength now, but how soon you may shoot the gulph, you know not ;

we are hastening into the other world apace. When you are imme-

diately to appear before God, you will have other thoughts of the world

to come, and the necessity of preparation for it, than you have now ;

that which will comfort you now, will not comfort you then. You

must look that the devil will then be most busy to tempt and trouble

you, and as now he prejudiceth you against the precepts of the

gospel, so then against the promises of it : all your worldly comforts

then will fail, and have spent their allowance, and become to you as

unsavoury as the white of an egg. Will this comfort you, that you

have sported and gamed away your precious time ? that you have fared

of the best, and lived in pomp and honour ? Oh, no ! but this will

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comfort you : I have made it my business to glorify God, I have

been faithful in my place, have gotten some evidence of the love of

God. It is not riches or greatness, or any earthly advantage will do

you good. Oh! it is a cutting thought to the careless and negligent :

Now I must give an account of every clay and hour I have spent in this

world; the improvement of every opportunity will be called for. Then

all your vanities and carnal pleasures will be smart upon you, and vex

your souls with the grievous remembrance of them. Well, then, can

you in any measure look back upon the discharge of your duty ?

There are two extremes : —

1. Some are presumptuous and confident, because, they are not gross

sinners. But what have they done for God ? The sluggish and un-

profitable servant was cast into utter darkness ; he did not misspend

his talent, but yet he did not improve it. The tree that bringeth forth

no fruit is hewn down, though it did not bring forth bad fruit. It is

not a negative religion will comfort thee, but a positive and a fruitful

one. You are no drunkard, no adulterer, no profane person ; but have

you been at work for God ?

2. Others are pusillanimous and diffident, because they do not arrive

at the eminency and perfection of the highest. David had other wor-

thies besides the first three. There were two faithful servants ; one

brought five talents, the other two. Now the middle is of those that

can see in themselves more zeal than formality, more grace than cor-

ruption, that, for the main, have made it their business to honour God,

though conscious to many weaknesses and defects, yet throughout grace

gets the upper hand ; according to the degrees of grace received they

are faithful with God.

Secondly, The master's approbation, ' Well done, thou good and

faithful servant/ The faithful servants are well accepted by Christ.

First, he entertaineth them with praise, ver. 21, 23. Secondly, with

preferment and advancement, ' Thou hast been faithful over a few

things, I will make thee ruler over many.' Thirdly, with joy, ' Enter

into the joy of thy Lord.'

Doct. That at Christ's appearing, faithful servants shall not only be

commended, but gloriously rewarded.

1 Peter i. 7, that your faith may be found unto praise, honour, and

glory, at the appearing of Christ.

1. There is not only verbal commendation, but real remuneration ;

glory and honour put upon them, as well as praise ascribed to them. (1.)

Praise, because he shall then commend their faith before men and

angels : Kev. iii. 5, ' I will confess his name before my Father and his

angels/ (2.) There will be a solemn owning and honouring of them,

when all the holy angels shall be present. Oh ! what a favour is it to be

commended of God ! 2 Cor. x. 18, ' For not he that commendeth him-

self is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth.' When they had

finished the tabernacle, all was viewed and approved by Moses : Moses

blessed them. Oh ! what is it to be blessed and commended by the

Son of God in that great assembly of the whole world !

2. Here is preferment and advancement to a higher place in the

family. Christ will prefer them as men do their servants : Mat. xxiv.

47, ' Make him ruler over all his goods.' These expressions are taken

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from the greatest honours a man can do his faithful servants in the

world, I Kings xii. 20. As Jeroboam was made ruler over all the

charge of the house of Joseph, so will Christ advance his servants to

high dignity, sometimes expressed by ' setting them upon thrones,'

Kev. iii. 21 ; ' giving them crowns,' 1 Peter iv. 13 ; 2 Tim. iv. 8. That

antithesis is to be regarded ; few things, and many things. All things

are few in comparison of heaven, our works, our gifts, our sufferings ;

the reward is far above all these: Eom. viii. 18, ' For I reckon that

the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with

the glory that shall be revealed in us ; ' 2 Cor. iv. 17, ' For our light

afflictions, that are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding

and eternal weight of glory.' It is all little that we do or suffer ; it is

little that God hath done for us in this world, in comparison of what

he will do for us there. Here is the earnest ; that is but a small part

of the whole sum.

3. The next expression is, ' Enter into the joy of thy Lord.' Here

Christ slideth into the thing signified by the parable, as afterward in

assigning punishment unto the unfaithful servant : ver. 30, ' Cast him

into outer darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Here is joy, and ' the joy of the Lord ; ' and faithful servants are said

to enter into it.

[1.] The estate of the blessed is a state of joy ; which ariseth partly

from the beatifical vision ; partly from their own blessedness, and also

the blessed company.

(1.) The beatifical vision, or the vision of God : Ps. xvi. 11, ' In thy

presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand pleasures for ever-

more.' There is a mighty complacency that we take now in seeing,

knowing, loving, and being beloved of God. What can be found in

the creature is but a drop to the ocean in comparison of what a believer

findeth in God himself. God is to them an overflowing fountain of

all felicity. But there is gaudium vice, and gaudium 'patriae. Here

it admits of increase and decrease ; but there the soul is so filled that

it cannot receive any more : Ps. xvii. 15, ' As for me, I will behold

thy face in righteousness ; I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy

likeness.' God maketh out himself in the utmost latitude. As to the

wicked, he stirreth up all his wrath. Here he punisheth by the

creature, and so doth not put forth all his power ; as a giant striking

with a straw cannot put forth his strength. In heaven the soul shall

be filled with unspeakable joy and delight. What delight is to the

sense, that joy is to the mind. Three thing are necessary to delight —

a faculty, or power of the soul capable of pleasure ; and then the thing

itself ; which being brought to the mind, doth stir up delight. As in

bodily things, colours, fruits, tastes, pleasure consists in the near union

and conjunction of these things. The more noble the faculty, the

more excellent the object ; the nearer the conjunction, the greater the

delight and pleasure. Now in heaven our faculties are perfected :

God is the subject, and there is a near conjunction. Oh ! what

embraces between him and the soul !

(2.) In their own glorified estate : 1 Peter iv. 13, ' Rejoice inas-

much as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory

shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.' So Jude :

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1 Now unto him that is able to keep ) r ou from falling, and to present

you faultless before the presence of his glory, with exceeding joy.'

The fulness of our joy is suspended till then, that we may long much

for that day. It will be a glad day to all faithful ones. Joy is quies

animi in bono adepto ; there is an aggregation of all good for soul and

body. If the hope of this blessed estate breedeth joy, what will enjoy-

ment, what will fruition do ? If a glimpse or taste be so sweet, what;

will the full enjoyment be ? Kom. v. 2, In deep troubles, yet ' we

rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;' 1 Peter i. 8, ' Whom having not

seen ye love ; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye

rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' Their hearts are now

and then filled with such a joy as they can hardly contain and keep

within doors, when they have but a well-grounded hope, or assurance

of the full possession of it.

(3.) In the company of the blessed. It is comfortable to meet with

the saints of God now, though it be but in a mourning duty ; but the

communion of saints there is quite another thing ; they are our ever-

lasting companions ; they are free from all sin and weakness, Heb.

xii. 23. Especially it will be a delight to them whom we have been a

means to bring home to God : 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20, ' For what is our

hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing ? Are not even ye, in the presence

of the Lord Jesus Christ at his coming ? for ye are our glory and joy ;'

and Phil. ii. 16, ' That I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have

not laboured in vain, nor run in vain/ The glory that shall be put

upon gracious souls at the day of judgment will add to the glory and

joy of those faithful ministers by whose labours they have been gained

to God.

[2.] It is called the 'joy of the Lord ;' that is, either provided by

him — called 'my joy,' by Christ, John xv. 11; this by way of pur-

chase, allowance, and gift, dignified as one of those whom the Lord

delighteth to honour, Esther vi. 6 — or such as he himself possesseth.

Jesus Christ himself had his 'joy set before him,' Heb. xii. 2, that happy

and glorious estate that happened upon his sufferings : to this he

inviteth us, into his own joy. Men are not wont to treat their servants

so as to let them enter into their joy : Luke xvii. 7, ' Which of you

having a servant ploughing, or feeding cattle, will say unto him by

and by, when he is come from the field, Go, and sit down to meat?'

No ; but, Make ready. But Christ, Luke xii. 37, ' will make them sit

down to meat, and he will come forth and serve them.' In the civil

law, Accubitus servi a domino invitati, it was a token of manumis-

sion. Now Christ will bring us into his joy, Luke xxii. 30, ' That ye

may eat and drink at my table, in my kingdom, and sit on thrones

judging the twelve tribes of Israel;' John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will

that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold

my glory;' Rom. viii. 17, 'If we suffer with him, we may also be

glorified together ;' 2 Tim. ii. 12, ' If we suffer with him, we shall

reign with him.' We are sharers in all the happiness that he enjoyeth,

and are partakers of the same glory, and the same kingdom, and the

same joy.

[3.] We enter into it. It is a Hebraism such as that, Ps. lxix. 27,

' Let them not come into thy righteousness ;' that is, be partakers of

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it. So Ps. lix. 11, 'Not enter into my rest;' that is, partake of it.

So the servant entereth into his Lord's joy, id possessor sit gaudii,

non tantum spectator. However, it notetli the highest and fullest

participation ; they enter into the blessed state of eternal joy, and it

abideth for ever with them, in a full, constant, uninterrupted joy. We

shall have as much as we can hold, and we shall hold more than now

we do.

Use 1. It inforraeth us that it is good to be Christ's servants, and

to be faithful in his work. See how ready the Lord is to reward our

little sorry service. Come and receive the fruit of my bounty, and the

reward of your fidelity. Who would not serve such a master ?

2. Consider it, this doth make up all the shame and disgrace that

can be in our trials. We have enough in hand for all the pains and

shame that we suffer for his service ; the inward peace that we have,

and the sense of his approbation : but our great reward, when we and

he meet together, should strike all discouragements dead, and be

enough to allay all the sorrows of this life, and the censures of men.

3. To quicken us to diligence, let us often think of this. When

God intended to give Canaan to Abraham, he biddeth him ' walk

through the land, and view it,' Gen. xiii. 17. He hath promised to

give the joys of heaven to us ; we should often consider it ; then en-

couragement is no encouragement if it be not regarded.

Lastly, The same words are used to both alike ; the second servant

is approved, his faithfulness commended and rewarded, as well as the

first servant.

Boot. Whether our talents be few or many, yet if we be but sincere,

we shall be put into everlasting happiness.

The essential happiness of the saints is the same, though the degrees

differ ; ten cities, and five cities, in Luke.

1. They may be alike in fidelity, though a difference in opportunity.

Their industry will be alike. Though their gifts and opportunities be

not alike, their zeal to God and love to souls will be alike.

2. The grounds of essential happiness are the same to all.

[1.] They have the same Kedeemer and Mediator, Exod. xxx. 15.

If they had a better Christ, another mediator to ransom their souls,

they might expect another happiness ; but all is brought about by the

same Kedeemer, Jesus Christ, theirs and ours, 1 Cor. i. 2, by his

mediation, sacrifice, and meritorious righteousness.

[2.] The same covenant, which is the common charter of the saints :

Acts ii. 39, ' The promise is to you, and to your children, even as

many as the Lord our God shall call.' A covenant which oft'ereth the

same benefits, and requireth the same duties. The same benefits,

pardon and life. Pardon : Rom. iv. 23, 24, ' Now it was not written

for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him ; but for us also, to

whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus

Christ from the dead.' Life is the common portion of all the saints :

1 Tim. iv. 8, ' Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteous-

ness ; and not for me only, but for all those that love his appearing.'

It requireth the same duties of all the saints, and they have the same

rule to walk by, Gal. vi. 16 ; ' This same gospel is the power of God

unto the salvation of every one that believeth,' Rom. i. 10. Weil,

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then, if all have no other charter from God to show for pardon and

life, and all are bound to the same duties, surely all shall have the

same happiness.

[3.] The same Spirit to be Christ's agent, to sanctify, and to prepare

them for this glory. He is at work in all the saints : 1 Cor. xii. 4,

'There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit;' 2 Cor. iv. 13,

1 We having the same Spirit of faith.' This is considerable, because

the Spirit doth form us for this very thing ; that is, prepare us for

this very estate. If all have the same heavenly principle, all shall

have the same heavenly happiness. We have the same almighty

power within to destroy sin, to raise our dead and earthly hearts to

God, to keep in us the same love to him, and prepare us for this

blessed estate.

[4.] The same mercy of the same God distributeth the reward.

The main grounds of the expectation of the best are the mercy of God

and the merits of Christ ; and we have the same mercy to trust unto :

Bom. x. 12, ' For the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call

upon him.' As rich in mercy to you as to others, to pardon your

failings, to wash off your stains, and finally to receive you into his

blessed presence. They look for mercy, and we look for the same

mercy, Jude 21. All that keep themselves in the love of God may

do so.

3. The things which are absolutely requisite to this essential hap-

piness are the same. As the vision and fruition of the same God,

1 Cor. xiii. 12, with John xvii. 24, 'All that believe in me through

their word:' they have the same place, heaven; the same state, the

same company ; they all make one family, Eph. iii. 15. Now some

are in heaven and some on earth, but then they shall all make one

heavenly society, called ' the city of God/ Heb. xii. 22, 23 ; they shall

all 'sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.' They have the same

work, which is, to love and laud God for evermore.

Use 1. To persuade us to be contented with the meanest estate, till

God's providence call us to a higher. Every one must glorify God in

the place where he hath set him ; as in a choir of voices, it is not who

sings the bass or who the treble, but who well discharges his own part,

bass or treble. So in our account, it is not what part we have acted,

so much as how we have acted it, whether glorified God in the work

which he hath given us to do, John xvii. 4. If thou hast doubled thy

talents, thoughbut two, Christ will welcome thee into the 'joy of thy

Lord/ It is not who hath undergone the greatest bodily labour in

religion, or passed the severest sufferings, or gone through the emi-

nentest offices and employments, but who hath most honoured God in

his place, got most holiness in his heart, been most humble and con-

tented with his condition.

Use 2. Is for the encouragement of poor weak Christians, who have

the essentials of godliness, though they be weak, and have, not attained

to the eminency of many others. These should not be dismayed ; there

are persons of all sizes, and several degrees in heaven, and they are all

possessed with the same common happiness : 2 Peter i. 2, ' To them

that have obtained like precious faith with us.' Mean believers in

some sense have like precious faith with an apostle, as to the great

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ends of the covenant ; the same jewel. Complectitur et puerulus, com-

plectitur et gigas ; one holds with a strong, the other with a trembling

hand ; the jewel is of the same value. The same sacrifice for sin ; we

all depend upon the infinite mercies of the same God ; the same

physician of souls hath us in cure who hath cured all others ; the same

captain that hath saved others who are more eminent is conducting us

to salvation, and is preparing us for the same estate which they hope

to enjoy. They have no greater nor better high priest and mediator

with God than we have ; they are going to the same place that we

are, and we that they are ; only they have gotten the start a great way

before us. But whilst we strive to overtake them, and make as much

haste as we can, though we bewail our imperfections, yet we should

not lose the comfort of our sincerity.

Doct. 2. Though the essential happiness of the saints be the same,

yet there are degrees in glory.

Luke xix. 16-19. We read there of having authority over ten cities

and five cities. More is required of the first servant and more is given

him ; and more is required of the first servant than the second ; as we

expect a horseman should come sooner than a footman. But more

particularly to prove that there are degrees of glory. First, from scrip-

ture : 2 Cor. ix. 6, ' He that soweth sparingly shall reap sparingly, and

he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully. As there is a differ-

ence in the kind of the crop, according to the kind of the seed, Gal.

vi. 6, 7, so according to the degree. Some do well, others do better ;

so some fare well, others fare better, are more bountifully rewarded ;

for God will deal more liberally with them who shall accordingly with

greater fidelity acquit themselves in well-doing. There is a proportion

observed. Again, the common happiness of the saints is to shine as

the stars, Mat. xiii. and Dan. xii. 3 ; yet the apostle telleth us, that

' one star differeth from another in glory ; so shall it be in the resur-

rection from the dead,' 1 Cor. xv. 41 ; namely, that their glory shall

be according to their inequality in zeal, service, and faithfulness to

God. Another place shall be that, 1 Cor. iii. 8, ' Every man shall,

receive his own reward, according to his own labour ;' that is, accord-

ing to the degree ; for he speaketh there of degrees of serviceableness

in the church. Every man hath a labour of his own, that is, such a

measure and degree of service appropriately his ; and so by conse-

quence hath his own reward, somewhat which doth exactly answer his

labour. Some have thought no, that the saints in heaven, their

reward is exactly equal. It is true all shall have enough, but some

more than others : so Eph. vi. 8, ' "Whatsoever good thing any man

doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or

free;' that is, shall be punctually and particularly considered by God

for it ; he shall receive the same, not for kind, but quantity and pro-

portion ; they shall have in their reward a particular and appropriate

consideration ; a bondman a bondman's reward, a freeman a freeman's

reward ; every degree of goodness shall be considered by God : so there

seemeth to be a distinction between a prophet's reward, and a righteous

man's reward, and a disciple's reward, Mat. x. 41, 42. Add that con-

cerning Zebedee's children, Mat. xx. 21, 22. She cometh to Christ,

and prayeth that her two sons might sit one at his right hand and the

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other at his left in his kingdom. Christ doth not deny but that some-

thing there is which may be signified by his right hand and his left;

yea, rather asserts it ; for he saith, ' It shall be given to those for whom

it is prepared of my Father.' There are some chiefest and highest

places of glory and preferment in his kingdom, and he hath pre-

pared these places for persons of the greatest worth and eminency in

his service ; for these the greatest honours of the world to come are

reserved.

Reasons of the point.

1. From the nature of that glory and blessedness we expect. It

standeth in communion with God, and conformity to him, or the vision

and full fruition of God, Ps. xvii. 15 ; 1 John iii. 2. Now the more

holy the more suited to this happiness, and therefore have larger

measures of it : Mat. v. 8, ' Blessed are the pure in heart, for they

shall see God ;' Heb. xii. 14, ' Without holiness no man shall see the

Lord.' We ' behold his face in righteousness.' Now we are more

capacitated, vessels of a larger bore. It is unreasonable to imagine

that clarified souls have no more fruition of God than those that only

have grace enough to make a hard shift to get to heaven : Sicut se

habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis. Holiness singly

fits to see God, and without it we cannot see him. So a little holiness

fits us to take in a little of God ; the more holiness the more of God.

2. From the pleasure God taketh in his own image. So much of

the image of God as his creature hath, so far more amiable in the sight

of God : ' The Lord delighteth in the upright,' Prov. xi. 20. If God

delighteth in them, he delighteth more in one that is more holy and

upright. Thus from God's holiness we may argue he doth not delight

in the impure : Ps. v. 4, ' Thou art not a God that hast pleasure in

wickedness.' He cannot so fully delight in the less pure : Ps. xviii.

25, 26, ' With the upright man thou wilt show thyself upright, with

the pure thou wilt show thyself pure.'

3. From the justice of God, and the quality of that happiness which

we expect. Though it be an act of free grace and bounty in God to

bestow it on us, yet it is a reward ; and reward is considerable with

respect to the work. The reward is not of merit, but grace ; but yet

God's merciful justice respecteth the degree of our service: Heb.

vi. 10, ' God is not unrighteous, to forget your work of faith and labour

of love.' It is an act of remunerative justice, according to the new

covenant. The higher service hath an ord inability to the greatest

reward.

4. God doth in this world give the greatest blessings to those that do

most eminently glorify him; therefore signal faithfulness is eminently

rewarded in the world to come ; as God promiseth to make a covenant

with Phinehas, because he was zealous for God, to make an atonement

for the people, Num. xxv. 13. This the rather holdeth good, because

the rewards of the Old Testament were a kind of figure of eternity.

5. In the punishment there are degrees, therefore in the reward God

will punish men differently, more or less according to the rate of their

sins. We read of dveKrorepov, more tolerable. So he will reward men

more or less according to the different degrees of their faithfulness: so

Mat. xi. 21, 22, ' It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the

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day of judgment than for you.' So Luke xii. 47, 48, we read of many

stripes and few stripes. It is true the reward is not of debt ; yet there

is an equity observed in his bounty.

6. The glorified state of the saints in all probability suiteth with all

the rest of the creation. There is a difference and disparity in every-

thing else. Among men in the world, in wisdom and rank, and quality

and riches ; in the church some have meaner, some larger gifts. There

are degrees among the devils. We read of Beelzebub the prince of

the devils. Among angels there are archangels, principalities, powers,

thrones, dominions. So it is likely among the saints.

7. The profit : it encourageth to godliness : this inequality of rewards

giving greater things to those that do more, and be more faithful, than

to imagine that they who sow more sparingly shall reap as plentifully

as those that sow liberally. It is a great damp to all worthy dealing

and signal excellency, that all shall fare alike ; but it quickeneth us

to our utmost activity to remember that as our work is our reward

will be.

Use. Is to quicken us to be more faithful to God for these consi-

derations : —

1. Heaven being the perfection of holiness, if you do not desire more

degrees of holiness, you do not desire heaven itself : 1 John iii. 2, 3,

' Behold now ye are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we

shall be : but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like

him ; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this

hope in him, purifieth. himself as he is pure.'

2. It is gross self-love to go as near the brink of hell and destruction

without falling into it, and to beat down the price of salvation as low

as we can ; and he that will do nothing more than what is simply

necessary to salvation will never be faithful with God. To save the

stake of their souls they will serve God as little as they can.

SERMON XIV.

Then lie which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I

knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast

not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not straived : and I was

afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth : lo, there thou,

hast that is thine.— Mat. XXV. 24, 25.

We have seen the account and reception of the faithful servants ; we

now come to the master's reckoning with the unfaithful one. The

order is observable : first he rewardeth the faithful servants, and then

punisheth the careless and negligent. His own nature inclines him to

reward ; he doth good and showeth mercy out of his own self-inclina-

tion ; but our sins force him to punish. And mark, he that had

received one talent is called to an account as well as he that had

received more, that no man may think to be excused for the meanness

of his gifts and place. It is true he giveth an account for no more

than he hath, but for so much as he hath he must give account.

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Christians that have five or two talents must give an account for five

or two ; but heathens, that have but one talent, the light of nature,

give an account for one. The apostle telleth us, ' That as many as have

sinned without the law, shall perish without the law, but as many as

have sinned in the lav/, shall be judged by the law,' Bom. ii. 12 ;

every one according to the dispensation they have lived under. The

apostle intimateth a distinction of two sorts that are to be judged :

2 Thes. i. 8, ' In flaming fire, take vengeance on them that know

not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

Those that have great parts and great opportunities will not be accepted

with the same improvement that others are that have fewer ; neither

from the same person will God accept a like service when sick as when

well ; but according to their abilities and opportunities he doth expect.

Well, but let us see what account he bringeth that had but one talent.

The parable offereth —

First, The servant's allegation or excuse.

Secondly, The master's answer or reply.

We are now upon the former ; and there —

1. The remote cause of his neglect ; his prejudice against his master,

"Lord, I knew thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not

sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.'

2. The effect of this prejudice; and so the next and immediate

cause of this neglect, ' I was afraid.'

3. His negligence and unfaithfulness itself, in bringing his talent

without improvement, ' I went and hid thy talent in the earth : Lo,

there thou hast what is thine.'

[1.] In the prejudice, Christ impersonateth our natural thoughts and

the secret workings of our minds ; we dare not say so, but many think

so : as if God were a hard and morose master, whom it is impossible

to please. The servant in the parable had as little cause for his pre-

tence as we have for our hard thoughts of God : he knew the contrary.

If he would consult his own experience, he might have found his master

to be good and kind, who had taken him into his family, intrusted

him with a talent, waited long for his improvement. But this is the

nature of man ; self-love will rather blame God than acknowledge our

own fault and sin, tax his severity than confess its own negligence.

[2.] In the servant's being afraid, Christ would teach us that ill

opinions of God beget pusillanimity and slavish fear.

[3.] In his non-improvement, but rendering the talent as he received

it, that pusillanimity or slavish fear and sloth go together, or those

that are afraid of God will never do him hearty service.

I cannot handle all the points that will arise from this paragraph,

yet I shall discuss one, that will take in the substance and effect of all.

And that is —

Doct, That slavish fear is a great hindrance to the faithful discharge

of our duty to God.

First, Let me observe to you that there is a twofold fear — filial and

servile, childlike and slavish. The one is a lawful and necessary fear,

such as quickeneth us to duty, Phil. ii. 12, and is either the fear of

reverence, or the fear of caution. The fear of reverence is nothing

else but that awe we are to have of the divine majesty as creatures, or

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our humble sense of the condition, place, and duty of a creature towards

the Creator. The fear of caution is a due sense of the importance and

validity of the business we are engaged in, in order to salvation:

certainly none can consider the danger we are to escape, and the

blessedness we aim at, but will see a need to be serious. And therefore

this fear is good and holy.

1. But there is, besides this, a slavish fear, which doth not further,

but extremely hinder our work ; for though we are to fear God, yet we are

not to be afraid of God. This is that which the apostle calleth, irvev/na

SouXeta?, opposite to the ' spirit of adoption,' Kom. viii. 15, and a

cowardly fearful spirit, opposite to that spirit of power and love and of

a sound mind, which is the principle of all faithful service to God.

They that are under the spirit of bondage serve not God as children

serve a father, but as slaves serve a hard and cruel master. Fear is

the inseparable companion of this spirit, which must needs be a great

hindrance to our duty, because it begets hatred to God, and the tor-

ment it bringeth to ourselves. As it breedeth hatred to God : oderunt

quern metuunt, quern odimus periisse cupimus. When we only dread

God for his vengeance, we keep off from him, as a dissolute servant

hateth that master who would scourge him for his debaucheries. The

nature of this fear is to drive us from God : Gen. iii. 7-10, ' I was

afraid.' So because of the torment it bringeth to us, Eph. iv. 18, for

the legal spirit, it is called a ' spirit of bondage/ Rom. viii. 15 ; it hath

fear and torment in it, and is an enemy to us, for it banisheth all those

sweet principles which should enliven our service ; as love to God, and

delight in our work, which doth enliven and inspire everything that we

do with an earnest spirit. But where love is wanting, and all the com-

fort that should accompany our duties, it is lost ; either a man doth

nothing, or all that he doth is in a compulsory manner, by mere force;

and so our hands must needs be weakened in God's service, if we be

not totally discouraged ; for often it endeth in a despair of pleasing, or

being accepted with God. There is a lazy sottish despair, as well as

a raging tormenting despair : Jer. xviii. 12, ' There is no hope ; we will

walk in the imagination of our own hearts.' Cast off all care of the

soul's welfare. This was the fear of the slothful servant in the text ;

and such a fear have many others in the bosom of their hearts, by

which they can never do anything effectually in the business of religion,

by reason of their strong prejudices, occasioned by their own torment-

ing fear.

2. That this fear is begotten in us by a false opinion of God, that

rendereth him dreadful, rigorous, and terrible to the soul. The ser-

vant in the text dotli not only say, ' I was afraid,' but giveth a reason

of it, ' I knew that thou wert an hard man, reaping where thou hast

not sowed, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' A paraboli-

cal speech to set forth a cruel tyrant, that doth exact upon those that

are under him without mercy and reason. Our affections follow our

apprehensions, and we either love or fear according to the inward

notions that we have of God in our minds : ' They that know thy name

will trust in thee,' Ps. ix. 10. If we had righter notions of God, we

would love him more and trust him more ; but when we conceive

amiss of him, accordingly we are affected to him. And therefore we

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should take heed what picture we draw of God in our minds ; for if

we have only such apprehensions as render him grievous and burden-

some to us, these thoughts will leaven our hearts, and make us either

neglect his service, or do it by constraint, in a very awkward and un-

comfortable manner. If the devil can bring you to have a base

opinion of God, as cruel and tyrannical, and once possess you with

sour thoughts and fretful jealousies, or harsh surmises of his govern-

ment, it will turn all your love and obedience into hatred and slavish

fear. Therefore those that consider that love is the great principle of

obedience should also consider that there is nothing so necessary to

breed love as good thoughts of God, and a due sense of his goodness in

Christ. Come to this once, and then all that he requireth and doth

will be acceptable to us. His laws will not be grievous, nor his pro-

vidences seem burdensome to you, nor his judgments intolerable.

How can you love him till you represent him as an object of love, one

upon whom you may cheerfully depend for life and defence, and from

whom you may comfortably expect the rewards of obedience ? There-

fore take heed of painting out God in your thoughts as a hard master.

The apostle telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, ' He that cometh to God must

believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently

seek him.' As soon as we apprehend his being, we should also pitch

upon his bounty and goodness. First that he is, and then that he is

a rewarder. There is in all men some impression of a godhead, which

is clearly understood and seen ' by the things that are made,' Eom. i.

20. This apprehension of God calleth for worship ; for next that God

is, we must believe he must be worshipped, John iv. 24. These two

notions live and die together ; they are clear and blotted out together.

As the apprehension of God is clear, and more deeply engraven upon

the soul, so is this notion of man's duty of worshipping God clear,

and imprinted upon the soul also. The one impression cannot be

worn out without the other. But now, want of a true knowledge of

God breedeth slavish fear, fearing God in excess, rather than loving

him in any tolerable measure, because a man naturally looketh upon

God with the same eye that a malefactor doth upon his judge. Fear

is more natural to carnal men, because a bad conscience is very sus-

picious, and our sense of God's benefits is not so great as the sense of

our bad deservings is quick and lively. Therefore naturally we have

no other notions of God than as a rigid lawgiver and severe avenger.

The heathens, who in all their worship discovered the natural senti-

ments of religion that are in the hearts of men, observed this in their

straits, Ut prizes placarent iratos deos, &c. Wrath and anger were

the first thoughts they had of a divine power ; and it is as true among

Christians. Guilty nature is more presageous of evil than of good,

when it is serious. It is true, wicked men cry out, God is merciful,

and that is generally the cause of their laziness and slightness in reli-

gion ; but it is when they do not mind what they say : these are but

sugared words in their tongues ; when they are serious they have other

thoughts. Bondage is more natural than liberty, fear than hope, be-

cause of the covenant w r e are under, which is a covenant of works, a

ministry of death and condemnation, and so begetteth fear, and repre-

sented God as terrible : yea, it is found in those that are more serious,

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and have some beginnings of a good work upon their hearts ; they are

too apt to entertain ill thoughts of God, and looking upon him in the

glass of their guilty fears, represent him as harsh and inexorable. All

their terrors and troubles are raised by false apprehensions of God ;

and therefore the course of their obedience groweth the more uncom-

fortable. This is a truth, that the law and grace contendeth for the

mastery in every heart that entertains thoughts of religion ; not only

corruption and grace, but the law and grace : and as their law notions

prevail, so their slavish fear increaseth ; but as the gospel apprehen-

sions prevail, so their love of God increaseth, and their comfortable-

ness in religion. Therefore still the caution is bound upon us, to take

heed what notions we have of God, and that we have not any diminish-

ing extenuating thoughts of his goodness and mercifulness ; that we

do not look upon him as one that lieth upon the catch, to spy out

advantages against us ; for that thought will mightily weaken our

hands in the Lord's work. Do not think of him as one tliat delights

in the creatures' misery. No ; rather in showing mercy and goodness,

and as ready to give out grace to the humble that lie at his feet, how-

ever he dealeth with the stubborn and obstinate refusers of his grace.

And therefore, if I may digress into application, while I am yet in

.some doctrinal considerations, I would advise —

[1.] That to preserve the sense of religion in the general, men

would consider how much God standeth upon the credit of his good-

ness, and that he giveth them no cause of discouragement as from

him : Micah vi. 3, ' my people, what have I done unto you, wherein

have I wearied you ? ' That his commands are not grievous, Mat. xi.

29 ; 1 John iii. 5 ; that the trials sent by him are not above measure,

1 Cor. x. 13, nor his punishments above deservings, Nell, xi. 9-13 ;

that he is not hard to be pleased, nor inexorable upon our infirmities,

Mai. iii. 17. These tilings should be constantly in our minds, for the

vindication and justification of God from our natural jealousies and

evil surmises that we have of his conduct and government.

[2.] I would advise poor trembling souls that are alarmed by their

own fears, which represent God as an enemy, and standing at a dis-

tance from them, that they would study the name of God ; for surely

things are known by their names, and poor disconsolate souls are

bidden, Isa. 1. 10, ' To trust in the name of the Lord,' &c. Now what

is the name of God ? Even that which he proclaimed : Exod. xxxiv.

5-7, ' I am the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and

abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiv-

ing iniquity, transgression, and sin.' Therefore take all his name, and

meditate upon it. Satan laboureth to represent God by halves, only

as a consuming fire, as clothed with justice and vengeance. Oh, no !

It is true he will not suffer his mercy to be abused by contemptuous

sinners ; he will not clear the guilty, though he waiteth long on them

before he destroyeth them ; but the main of his name is ' his mercy

and goodness.' Take it as God proclaimeth it, and see if you have

any reason to have hard thoughts of God. You will find, that though

he be a high and holy one, yet he is willing to be treated with ; that

he is great, but yet good, ready to receive returning sinners : if thou

hast sin and misery, Christ hath compassion and pity ; he is the

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' Father of mercies,' 2 Cor. i. 3. Miser icors est, cui alterius miseria

cordi est — mercy hath its name from misery, and is no other thing

than laying another's misery to heart, not to despise it, nor to add to

it, but to help it. And therefore, if thou be miserable, and knowest

it indeed, his nature giveth a strong inclination to succour the miser-

able. Ay ! but saith the convinced soul, there is nothing in me to be

regarded. The Lord telleth, ' I am gracious ; ' and grace doth all

freely, and from a self-inclination ; it giveth all the qualifications ho

require th. But I have been long a presumptuous sinner. Why, (Joel

telleth you his name is ' long-suffering.' He that gave not the angels

one hour's space for repentance, hath long delayed the execution of our

sentence, and calleth us to himself, that we may escape the condemna-

tion of angels. But I am exceeding perverse and wicked. The Lord

telleth you he is ' abundant in goodness.' I am full of fears and

doubtings. Still he is ' abundant in goodness and truth.' I have

abused much mercy, and can mercy pity me? The Lord telleth you,

he ' keepeth mercy for thousands, and can forgive iniquity, transgres-

sion, and sin.' His treasure of mercy is not soon spent and exhausted :

no sin can exclude a willing soul ; mercy will pardon thy abuse of

mercy, if thou repentest of it.

[3.] To the people of God, who having a clearer sense of their duty,

and a larger heart towards God than others have, and so are the more

troubled for the poverty of their graces, and weakness and imperfec-

tion of their services than others are, which may breed bondage and

uncomfortableness. I would have them consider that humility and

meekness doth still become them, but not dejection and despondency

of mind, that they should ever be complaining, fearful, and disconso-

late. We have not a hard master ; he hath made joy a part of our

work, Phil. iv. 4 ; he gave his Son, Luke i. 74, 75, ' That being deli-

vered from our enemies, we might serve him without fear, in holiness

and righteousness.' We should consider that he is ready to bear with

failings where there is an upright heart ; that God accepteth what we

can through grace well and comfortably perform. It is a general

maxim of the gospel, though spoken upon a particular occasion, 2 Cor.

viii. 12, ' That if there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to

what a man hath, not according to that he hath not:' that. the God

whom they serve in the spirit can put a finger on the scar : ' Ye have

heard of the patience of Job,' James v. 11. Ay! and we have heard

of his impatience too, his cursing the day of his birth, and his bold

expostulations with God ; but this is passed over in silence, and his

patience commended. Nothing should be a discouragement from

serving cheerfully so good and gracious a God, who is so ready to

accept and assist us, 1 Peter iii. 6, compared with Gen. xviii. 12. He

will own a pearl on a dunghill, the least act of sincere obedience,

though there be many failings. But I must return.

3. The usual ill thoughts of God are these three — (1.) That he is

rigorous in his commands; (2.) Niggardly and tenacious in his gills

and helps of grace; (3.) And as to acceptance, that he is hard to

please and easy to offend. All these may be gathered out of the words

of the unfaithful servant, and all these lie deep in the hearts of men

against God's sovereignty.

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[1.] Hypocrites accuse God of tyranny in his laws, as if ho dealt

hardly with his creatures, to leave them with such affections in the

midst of the snares and temptations of the present life, and requiring

such duty from them. Certainly, all that God hath required of us is

holy, just, and good, conducing not only to his glory, but to the recti-

tude and perfection of our natures. Man would not be man if such

things were not required of him ; so that if we were in our right wits,

and were left to our own option and choice, we would prefer subjection

to such laws before exemption and freedom, Micah vi. 8. Are justice,

temperance, chastity, piety, patience gyves and fetters to human nature?

We cannot be without these and preserve the nobleness of our being

and the good of human societies. It is true this lower world fur-

nisheth us with many temptations to the contrary, but these tempta-

tions work not by constraining efficacy, but only by enticing persuasion ;

and have we not more earnest persuasions to love God and please God ?

Are not God and Christ and heaven more lovely objects than all the

pleasures and profits and honours of the world ? These things do not

force the will, but draw your consent ; and surely God hath pro-

pounded more lovely things in his covenant to draw this consent from

them. The great fault is in our lust, 2 Peter i. 4 ; as the poison is not

in the flower, but in the spider.

[2.] He accuseth God as backward to give grace and help our im-

potency, and as if he did require more than he giveth. This is obvious

and express in the words of the naughty servant : ' Reaping where

.thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.' But

this also is an unjust charge ; for God requireth nothing but according

to the talents received. Now he needeth not take anything from the

creatures, for he giveth all ; he had one talent, and God expected the

improvement but of one. Let men try to the utmost, and see if they

have cause to make this complaint ; they will find, that ' the way of

the Lord is strength to the upright,' Prov. x. 29, and that all these

jealousies are but a slander against God's government. Why do yon

complain that he would reap where he hath not sown ? Is it because

you would have God force you to be good whether you would or no,

and by an absolute constraining power drive you out of your flesh-

pleasing course ? Consider how unbeseeming it is the wisdom of God

that men should be holy and good by necessity, and not by choice.

Virtue would then be no virtue, not a moral, but a natural property,

as burning is to fire ; and it were no more praiseworthy to mind hea-

venly things than it is for a stone to move downward. It is true God

must make us willing, but willing we must be. Now there is no such

thing on your parts, when you wilfully refuse the hopes God offereth :

Acts xiii. 46, ' Since ye put away the word of God from you, and judge

yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles.' At

least you do not apply your hearts to work with God, or frame your

doings to turn to him, as it is in the prophet ; you do not improve

means, and mercies, and providences, and helps vouchsafed. And will

you, after all this, think God a Pharaoh, that requireth brick and

giveth no straw ? Here it is verified, Prov. xix. 3, ' The foolishness of

man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord.' We

usually ruin ourselves, and then complain that God giveth no more

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grace. But do not we justify this conceit of wicked men, when we say,

God requireth duly of the fallen creatures, who have no power to per-

form it P 1 answer —

(1.) We must so maintain God's goodness as still to keep up his

sovereignty and right of dominion. Man had power, which was lost by

his own default ; but God doth not lose his right, though man hath lost

his power: their impotency doth not dissolve their obligation. A drunken

servant is bound to the duty of a servant still. It is against nil reason

the master should lose his right to command by the servant's default.

A prodigal debtor, that hath nothing to pay, yet is liable to be sued for

the debt without injustice. God contracted with us in Adam, and his

obedience was not only due by covenant, but by law and immutable

right ; not by positive law only, or contract ; and therefore he hath a

right to demand obedience, as the fruit of original righteousness.

(2.) It is harsh, men think, to answer for Adam's fault, to which

they were not conscious and consenting. But every man will find au

Adam in his own heart : the old man is there wasting away the relics

of natural light and strength ; and shall not God challenge the debt of

obedience from a proud prodigal debtor ? We are found naked, yet

we think ourselves clothed ; poor, yet we think ourselves rich, and to

have need of nothing : therefore God may admonish us of our duty,

demand his right to convince us of our impotency, and that we may

not pretend we were not called upon for what we owe him. Man is

prodigal ; we spend what is left, lose those relics of conscience and

moral inclinations which escaped out of the ruins of the fall.

(3.) God requireth it that we may acknowledge the debt and con-

fess our impotency, being practically convinced thereof, and so humbly

implore his grace.

(4.) God is still offering recovering mercy, and never forsaketh any

but those that forsake him first : 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, ' If thou forsake

him, he will cast thee off for ever ; ' 2 Chron. xv. 2, ' If you forsake him,

he will forsake you.' Did you improve yourselves, and beg God's

grace, and carry on the common work as far as you can, then it were

another matter. He that useth God's means as well as he can, he lieth

nearer to the blessing of them than the wilful despiser and neglecter

of them. Unsanctified men may do less evil and more good than

they do : therefore if they neglect the means, they are left inexcusable ;

not only as originally disabled, but as wilfully graceless : so that no

such prejudice can lie against God; he offereth grace and power, and

men will not have it.

[3.] The third prejudice is, that he is hard to please, and easily

offended ; as if he did watch advantages to ruin and destroy the

creature. Oh, no ! This cannot be thought of God. He that rewarded

the picture and shadow of duty, as in Ahab, ] Kings xxi. 29, the first

offers of it in his servants, Isa. xxxii. 5 ; that regarded the returning

prodigal, Luke xv. 20 ; Isa. lxv. 24 ; whose bowels relent presently ;

who hath promised to reward a cup of cold water given for Christ's

sake, Mat. x. 42, and that our slender services should receive so great

a reward ; that beareth with his people's weakness ; that ' spareth

them as a man spareth his only son,' by their failing, surely he is not

harsh and severe.

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[4.] These prejudices are very natural to us, and therefore should he

regarded by all. This appeareth partly by the first fall of man. Pre-

judice against God was the fiery dart that wounded our first parents to

death. The first battery that Satan made was against the persuasion of

God's goodness and kindness to man ; he endeavoured to make them

doubt of it by casting jealousies into their minds, as if God were harsh,

severe, and envious in restraining them from the tree of knowledge, and

the fruit that was so fair to see to, Gen. iii. If once he could bring

them to question God's goodness, he knew other things would succeed

more easily ; for the sense of the Creator's goodness was the strongest

bond by which the heart was kept to God. And partly because still

the devil seeketh to possess us with this conceit, that God is harsh and

severe, and delighteth in our ruin ; and casteth jealousies into our

heads, as if God did infringe our just liberties by the restraints of his

law. And we have the same impatiency of restraints which they had ;

and the flesh being importunate to be pleased, we are apt to find out

excuses ; and as the naughty servant condemneth his master when he

should beg pardon, so such is the perverse disposition of man, when we

should confess our fault, we will abuse God himself ; as Adam, Gen.

iii. 12, ' The woman thou gavest me, gave me, and I did eat.' This

monstrous conceit of God we further by observing his injuries (as

we count them), rather than his benefits. We take notice of afflictions,

but not of daily mercies. David had much ado to hold his principle :

Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2, ' Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a

clean heart : but as for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had

well-nigh slipped.' These thoughts are very incident to us.

Use. Oh ! then, when we set our hearts to religion, let us take heed

of slavish fear ; and if so, take heed with what thoughts of God you

are leavened, and that you do not draw a monstrous and horrid picture

of him in your minds. Oh ! look upon him as full of grace and mercy,

ten thousand times more inclined to do good than any friend you have

in the world. The devil governeth the dark parts of ,the world by

slavish fear, but God governeth by love. To this end consider —

1. That in his word God representeth himself by mercy and good-

ness rather than any other attribute. Mercy is natural to him ; he is

' the father of mercies/ 2 Cor. i. 3. God is not merciful by accident,

but by nature. The sun doth not more naturally shine, nor the fire

more naturally burn, nor water more naturally flow, than God doth

naturally show mercy. It is pleasing to him, Micah vii. 18 ; James

ii. 13, ' Mercy rejoiceth over judgment.' Punitive acts are forced from

him, but gracious acts drop from him of their own accord, like life-

honey. Nay, God is mercy itself : 1 John iv. 8, ' God is love.' It

cannot be said of a man that he is learning and wisdom, though learned

and wise. But God is not only loving, but love, an infinite sea of love,

without banks and bounds. It was well observed of CEcolampadius,

that men were taught amiss to know the nature of God by vulgar

pictures and representations (for their fashion was then to picture God in

some fair and beautiful form, and the devil in some foul ugly shape).

Puerorum major pars nescit quid sit Deus, quid sit Sathan. But he

adviseth parents, if they would teach their children to know what God

is, they would first teach thorn to know what goodness is and justice

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is, what mercy is, what bounty and loving-kindness is ; per illo.s enim

proprie quid Deus sit discimus. Again, it they would know what kind

of creature the devil is, they should first know what malice is ami

filthiness, and what villany and treachery is ; for Satan is a compound

of all these. The best picture that could be taken of the devil would be

by the characters of malice, falsehood, and envy. But God is justice

itself, goodness itself, mercy itself, as it is expressed in scripture.

2. In Christ, who is the 'express image of his person,' Heb. i. 3.

Now, Christ disdained not the company of sinners, went about healing

sicknesses and diseases, and doing good. His miracles were acts of

relief, not done for pomp and ostentation.

3. In his providence : Acts xiv. 17, ' He left not himself without

witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruit-

ful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.'

SERMON XV.

His lord said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest

that I reaped where I sowed not, and gathered where I have not

strawed ; thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the ex-

changers, and then at my coming I should have received mine

own with usury.— Mat. XXV. 26, 27.

Here is the master's reply to the servant's allegation. In the words

we have two things : —

1. An exprobration of his naughtiness and sloth.

2. A retortion of his vain excuse upon his own head, ' If thou

knewest,' &c. Not as if the lord did grant it to be true that the sloth-

ful servant' had alleged ; but his own opinions and conceits were

enough to convict him.

[I.J Here is a o-vyxeopTjo-is, a concession ; for dispute's sake, be it as

thou hast said.

[2.] The inference, ' Thou oughtest therefore to have put my

money to the exchangers, that at my coming I might have received

my own with usury.' The argument is returned upon himself. The

bankers and usury here mentioned are only by way of comparison, aud

can no more be urged to justify the putting money to use than, ' Be-

hold, I come as a thief,' can justify theft; or that parable Luke xvi.

should justify fraud and injustice; the unjust steward did wisely, non

servi fraudem, sed prudentiam, &c. Parables are not taken from those

things that de jure ought to be done, but de facto are done. There-

fore I shall not interpose any judgment of mine upon this occasion as

to that case, whether any putting money to use be lawful, yea or no:

only observe, that Christ will have his own with usury ; some improve-

ment he expects when he cometh.

First, I begin with the exprobration. It was a sharp but well

deserved reproof ; if the bad servant had feared this aforehand, it might

have been better with him ; shame is the fear of a just reproof. Mark

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the different entertainment of the good and bad servant: there it is, Good

and faithful servant ; here, Thou wicked and slothful servant : Christ

will upbraid the unfaithful at the day of judgment. He is called a

■wicked, evil servant, because unfaithful ; slothful, because negligent.

Doct. 1. A slothful servant is a wicked servant.

These two terms are here coupled. There is a twofold sloth : — ■

First, Common, in the ordinary affairs of this life : 2 Thes. iii. 10,

' We commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should they

eat;' 1 Tim. v. 8, ' He that provideth not for his own is worse than

an infidel ; ' ver. 13, 'And withal, they learn to be idle.'

Secondly, Spiritual, called a/ci]8ta, and torpor spirituals, one of the

seven deadly sins among the papists ; a remiss will in divine and

heavenly matters, or a negligence in the duties of holiness, because of

the labour and trouble that accompanieth them : Kom. xii. 11, ' Not

slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord ; ' Heb. vi. 12,

' That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and

patience have inherited the promises/ There are in these scriptures

two words, oKvrjpoi, and vcodpbt, dull, stupid, backward. They are

both bad ; but this latter is worst, because of the matter about which

it is conversant. The one in our particular, the other in our general

calling. To be negligent in our ordinary callings is bad ; but much

more in the great affairs of our souls. It is not only an evil thing, but

an evil sin. Of this principally.

1. Because total omissions, against knowledge and conscience, espe-

cially of necessary duties, are very great sins. That omissions are

sins as well as sins of commission, appeareth from the nature of the

law, which consists of a precept and prohibition. It enforceth good,

as well as forbiddeth what is evil : Ps. xxxiv. 14, ' Depart from evil,

and do good/ In the government of man, the law useth both these,

the bridle and the spur, inciting him to that which is good, and re-

straining him from that which is evil. You deny God his due when

you withhold from him that service, love, and worship which he re-

quireth ; which is a great evil in his creatures, which are made by

him, and fed and maintained by him. You wrong him when you

deprive him of your service for whose use you were made. Therefore

sins of omission are sins. Now, of all omissions, omissions of the most

necessary duties are most culpable ; want of love to God, fear of God,

faith in God, are greater evils than not praying at such a time, hearing

of the word, or labouring in our callings at such a time. The life of

religion lieth in the one more than in the other ; and they are more

indispensably required. The scripture pronounceth a heavy doom

upon these kind of defects : 1 Cor. xvi. 22, ' If any man love not the

Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.' Among these, sins contra

remedium are more baneful than peccata contra officium: Heb. ii. 3,

'How shall .we escape if we neglect so great salvation?' Especially

when total. To omit an act of love to God, or to fail in point of faith

in a particular case or exigence, is a great evil ; but to be wholly care-

less and mindless of the favour of God, or to seek after it in a very

overly slight manner, is worst of all : Rom. iii. 11, ' There is none that

understandeth, that seeketh after God.' They do not make it their

business to remember God, or their duty to him, or their study to

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please him ; they think of him seldom, or very neglectfully worship

him, or make mention of him very coldly, serve him carelessly, or by

the by. This showeth that men are naughty, wicked, and in a cursed

estate ; especially when they are convinced of better, that God de-

serveth more serious regard at their hands, and Christ to be more dear

and precious to them, and their converses with him more delightful.

The religion they profess doth plainly call for more at their hands;

and their consciences are clamorous, and the Spirit of God importunate

with them. To omit a duty against knowledge is as great a sin as to

commit evil against knowledge : James iv. 17, ' Therefore, to him that

knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.' The closer the

application by serious convictions, strong motions, and impulses to do

better, the greater their sin ; for this argueth a flat disobedience and

contempt of God, aud a grieving of his Spirit, Eph. iv. 30, to give

him the repulse when he would fain enter and take possession of our

hearts. Now, put all these things together, and you will soon find

that a slothful servant is a very wicked, naughty servant. Satis est

malt ipsam nihil fecisse boni. They are not only evil servants that

teach falsities, but they also that do not promote the kingdom of Christ

to their power ; not only they that do no hurt, but they that do no-

good : Mat. iii. 20, ' Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is

hewn down and cast into the fire.' Not only the poisonous, but the

barren tree.

2. The motives that draw us to this idleness and sloth are paltry,

base, and such as offer great wrong to God. Alas ! what have we to-

hinder us in God's service, but a little worldly profit, pleasure, or

honour ? Now, what a gross sin is it to love the world above God, or

to neglect Christ that died for thee, merely to please the flesh, and to

seek its ease and contentment ! Probatio unius sine contumelia alte-

rius procedere non potest : Heb. xii. 15, ' Lest any root of bitterness

springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.' If there were

some better or more considerable thing in the case, the fault were the

less, and our negligence might the more be excused ; but this is a gross,

sin, to despise God for poor contemptible vanities. The world counts

profaneness by another measure than the scripture. You count adul-

terers and drunkards and swearers profane ; but the scripture counteth

them profane that have not an esteem of spiritual privileges. There

are peccata majoris inf amice, and peccata majoris reatus. Some sins

in the eye of the world have more filthiness and turpitude in them,,

and some sins in the eye of God have more guilt, as when we despise

the favour of God, and do not think it worthy our most serious and

lively diligence ; the smallness of the temptation aggravateth the negli-

gence. The service of God is of everlasting consequence, but the

things of the world are of short continuance ; all this dust is gone

with the spurn of a foot ; one turn of the hand of God separateth thy

neglected soul from thy pampered body, and then ' whose are all these

things?' Luke xii. 20; 2 Cor. iv. 18.

3. Negligent unfruitfulness is a breach of trust, to which we are

bound by covenant, and so a disappointment of God's expectation. To

fortify this consideration, I need not repeat that all God's gifts to us

imply a trust ; the very scope of this parable showeth it, aud it may

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be further confirmed by Isa. xliii. 21-24, ' This people I have formed

for myself, they shall show forth my praise. But thou hast not called

upon me, Jacob, but thou hast been weary of me, Israel : thou

hast not brought me the small cattle of thy burnt-offerings, neither

hast thou honoured me with thy sacrifices. I have not caused thee to

serve with an offering, nor wearied thee with incense ; thou hast bought

me no sweet-cane with money, neither hast thou filled me with the fat

of thy sacrifices: but thou hast made me to serve with thy sins, thou

hast wearied me with thy iniquities.' That where God hath given a

people advantages, he expecteth answerable service and improvement ;

and that we are bound to this by the covenant of grace, wherein we

give up ourselves to the Lord for his use and service ; and that God

reckoneth upon this : Gen. xviii. 19, 'I know my servant Abraham,

that he will command his children and his household after him ;' and

Luke xiii. 7, ' Then said he to the dresser of the vineyard, Behold,

these three years have I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree ; ' and Isa.

Ixiii. 8, ' For he said, Surely they are my people, children that will not

lie.' Only now I press that unfruitfulness and breach of trust is a

great crime, and a disappointing the righteous expectation of God, a

very provoking thing ; and therefore the slothful servant, that doth not

answer the ends of his trust, nor fulfil his covenant vow, must needs

be highly culpable, though he should not break out into acts of gross

excess, and apparent enmity against God.

4. He that ceaseth to do good, evil must needs ensue ; and the un-

profitable servant hath his blots and blemishes, which render him

odious unto God. Homines nihil agendo, male agere discunt, saith

Cato. Standing pools are apt to putrify ; and the Psalmist saith, Ps.

xiv. 2, ' They are all become filthy and abominable, for there is none

that seeketh God.' When the gardener holdeth his hand, the ground

is soon overgrown with weeds. Sins of omission will make way for

sins of commission ; and those that neglect improvement lose all reve-

rence and awe of God every day more and more, and so are given up

to a hatred of his people, and many brutish lusts. As a carcase not

embalmed is more noisome every day : Job xv. 4, ' Thou castest off

fear, and restrainest prayer before God.

Use 1. Let us all be ashamed of our sloth. There is more evil in it

than we are aware of.

1. Consider the necessity of diligence. There is nothing in religion

can be gotten, kept, increased, or maintained, without great diligence.

No comfort without it: 2 Peter i. 10, ' Wherefore the rather, brethren,

give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' 2 Peter

iii. 14, ' Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be

diligent that you may be found of him in peace.' No grace without

it : 2 Peter i. 5, ' And besides this, give all diligence to add to your

faith virtue, and to virtue knowledge.' No hope of coming to heaven

without it : Heb. vi. 11, ' And we desire that every one of you do show

the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end.' I Hi falsi

sunt, saith Sallust, qui diversissimas res expectant, ignavice voluptatem,

et prcemia virtutis. It is in vain to think that a loitering profession

will ever "bring any glory to God, comfort, or increase of grace to our-

selves., or breed in us any comfortable hope and expectation of blessed-

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ness to come. All excellent things are hard to come by ; it is true in

earthly matters, it is much more true in spiritual.

2. Consider the evil of sloth. A slothful man and a profane man

differ very little : Prow xviii. 9, ' He that is slothful in work is brother

to him that is a great waster.' The one getteth nothing, and the

other spendeth all. Thou wilt say, thou art no drunkard, no whore-

monger. But thou art idle and negligent, so that you and they are

brothers ; all the difference is as between a consumption and an apo-

plexy ; the one destroyeth in an instant, the other consumeth by

degrees ; the one is like splitting a ship, that goes down to the bottom

presently, the other like a leaky ship that sinkelh by degrees. Though

you do not run into the same excess of riot with others, yet you are

idle in the Lord's work : it cometh much to the same effect ; the heart

groweth poorer and poorer, till at length it ends in final hardness.

Nay, in some sense negligence is worse than gross profaneness. Many

from great sinners have turned great saints, but few from a lukewarm

careless profession have come to anything. Therefore these are ' spewed

out of God's mouth/ Rev. iii. 1G. There is more hope of a sinner

than of a lukewarm careless person, for he doth not think himself

evil, and so is more liable to security. God may give grace to the

one, but taketh away the talent from the other.

3. Consider the rewards of diligence. This labour will turn to a

good effect : 1 Cor. xv. 58, ' Your labour shall not be in vain in the

Lord.' If there were nothing in chase, or not so great a reward, we

had more excuse ; but when the reward is so full and so sure, shall not

we labour for it? We labour and toil, and use all diligence to obtain

the things of this world ; and shall we think to go to heaven with our

hands in our bosom, or lying upon a bed of ease ? To see men under

the power of a lust may shame us, Ps. cxxvii. 2. Men rise early and

go to bed late to gain the world ; men labour, sweat, and travail, and

spare no cost to go to hell. The devil gets more servants than God

with all his promises, threatenings, and mercies. Shall they be so

diligent that have such bad work, worse wages, and the worst master,

and shall not we bestir ourselves ?

4. The whole course of nature inviteth us to labour and diligence,

in order to our future estate. The sun is unwearied in his motion,

that he may go up and down, preaching God to the world : Prow vi. 6,

' Go to the ant, thou sluggard ; consider her ways, and be wise.' There

is a great deal of morality hidden in the bosom of nature, if we had

the skill to find it out. What can the ant do ? ' She provideth her

meat in summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest' These little

creatures are not able to endure the cold of winter, therefore work

themselves deep into the earth, but they carry their food along with

them ; and should not we have as great a sense of futurity ? We

cannot endure the day of the Lord unless we make provision : Prow

x. 5, ' He that gathereth in summer is a wise son, but he that sleepeth

in harvest is a son that causeth shame.' Now is our season to work,

that in the day of our accounts we may not be unprovided.

The means against sloth are faith, patience, and love. Faith and

patience we have in one place : Heb. vi. 12, ' That ye be not slothful,

but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the pro-

Vers. 2G, 27.] sermons upon matthew xxv. 475

mises.' They inherited the promises, that is, the things promised.

If we propound to ourselves such a divine and nohle end as those great

and glorious things that are offered in the promises, we must use the

means. They had faith, so must we have ; they had patience, and we

must he patient.

[1.] By faith we are not to understand confidence and reliance upon

God's promises ; a probable human faith and hope will not be sufficient;

but a firm adherence to God's word : whatever falleth out we are sure

to have enough in the promise. We must have faith, because the

things promised are invisible, rare, and excellent, far above the power

of the creature to give. The promise is a firm and immutable foun-

dation of our hope ; we should rejoice in it as much as if the thing

promised were in hand : ' In God I will rejoice, in the Lord I will

praise his word ;' or praise his word till the thing promised cometh to

be enjoyed : ' Faith is the substance of things hoped for.'

[2.] For patience : Heb. x. 36, ' For ye have need of patience, that

after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.'

And we must have patience, because the things hoped for are to come,

and at a great distance : Boni. viii. 25, ' But if we hope for that we

see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' Besides, we shall meet

with many difficulties, oppositions, and trials, all which must be over-

come: many things must be done, many things must be suffered, and

we must make our way through the midst of dreadful enemies before

we can attain our end. Further, our desires are vehement, and we

long for enjoyment, which is yet to come ; therefore we must be patient,

that we may quietly wait God's leisure : Bom. ii. 7, ' To them who by

patient continuing in well-doing, seek for glory, honour and immor-

tality, eternal life.'

[3.] The next grace is love. Where there is love there will be

labour, Heb. vi. 10, ' For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work

and labour of love ;' 1 Thes. i. 3, ' Kemembering without ceasing your

work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope ;' Bev. ii. 3, 4,

' And hast borne, and hast patience, and for my name's sake hast

laboured, and hast not fainted : nevertheless I have somewhat against

thee, because thou hast left thy first love.' And love is said ' to endure

all things,' 1 Cor. xiii. 7. It was love made Christ to suffer hunger

and weariness, and to forbear to refresh himself for the good of souls ;

it was love made him endure the bitter agonies of the cross. Love

puts strength and life into the soul, addeth wings and feet to the body,

spareth no pains nor cost. Keep up this grace, and you have an over-

ruling bent upon your hearts.

Use 2. If spiritual sloth be so great an evil, let the children of God

take heed of it when first it beginneth to creep upon their spirits ; as

when they begin to pray without affection or fervour of spirit, to medi-

tate of divine things without any sense, affection, or fruit ; when they

find it difficult to withdraw from carnal company or vain discourse,

and are hardly persuaded to return unto themselves, and to consider

their ways, and can freely let loose their thoughts and words to all

manner of vanity, and their comfort is rather sought in the creature

than in God ; they can rarely speak of others, but it is in reflecting

upon them rather than themselves ; when reproofs grow burdensome,

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and are not entertained as a help but as an injury ; when they give up

themselves to carnal sports, and take a license for vain recreations, and

so fly from the labours that are profitable and necessary for their soul's

health ; their zeal languisheth, their duties are not so frequent, nor the

means of grace used with life, vigour, and affection, but they are more

coldly affected towards them ; a satiety and fulness creepeth upon

them; they do not so solicitously avoid the causes of sin, begin to

indulge the body, or the bodily life, to have more admiring thoughts

of the honours and pleasures and profits of the world ; either neglect

or quench the motions of the Spirit: all these are the effects of a

remiss will, or a fainting heart, that beginneth to tire in the ways of

God.

Use 3. It serves to justify God in his judgments upon the careless

and negligent, though they be not grossly dissolute and profane. There

is more contempt of God in neglecters than you can at first be sensible

of. Hypocrites complain of the severity of God, the rigour of his

law, the grievousness of his judgments; they should rather complain

of the naughtiness of their own hearts. They are convinced of more

duty than they are willing to perform, and they are not willing,

because they follow after a few paltry vanities, which is a great dis-

honour to God. It was not the austerity and rigidness of the master

in requiring improvement that hindered the increase of his talent, but

his own baseness, being wedded to sensual delights. They say, ' The

ways of the Lord are not equal ;' but their hearts are not right with

God.

Secondly, I come now to the retortion of his vain excuse upon him-

self. The damned can have no just complaint against God ; they are

apt to murmur, and lay their defects upon the rigidness of God's

government or God's providence ; but in the issue the blame will light

upon themselves, even the things they allege make against them. He

was convinced the master expected increase, therefore he should have

done what he could : Luke xix. 22, ' Out of thy own mouth I will con-

demn thee.' So it is here ; men's consciences convince them they ought

not to live in idleness, and if they have a master, the thought of their

account should enforce them, if not their own inclination, especially if

a severe master. Grant the sinner's supposition, it bindeth the duty

upon him, and so he cuts his throat with his own sword ; as they said

of Job, chap. xv. 6, ' Thine own mouth condemneth thee ; thine own

lips testify against thee.'

Doct. No excuse shall serve the unfaithful and slothful servant at

the day of judgment.

Let a man deceive himself now, and please himself with these pre-

tences as he will, all his excuses shall be retorted upon him, and made

matter of his condemnation ; for the judge is impartial, and omniscient,

his eyes cannot be blinded ; nay, he can open your own consciences,

and so overwhelm you with the evidence and conviction of your sins,

that you shall have nothing to say. As in the 22d of Matthew, ' The

man was speechless' when arraigned. But because the excusing

humour is very rife, and many things serve the turn now which will

not bear weight then, I shall a little handle this matter of excusing.

In the general, an excuse is an apology or vain defence, whereby the

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sinner seeketh to palliate bis negligence in God's service. To unde-

ceive you —

First, Take these general considerations.

1. That carnal men are ill versed in the art of excusing evil, when

they have a right principle to go upon, and that which they think

maketh for them usually maketh against them. Solomon telleth us,

Prov. xxvi. 9, ' That a parable in a fool's mouth is like a thorn in the

hand of a drunkard.' The thorn was their instrument of sewing, as

the needle with us. Now, a drunkard woundeth and goreth himself,

because of his uneven touch, when his spirits are disturbed with

excess of drink. Do but observe how contrarily and perversely wicked

men will reason, and what inferences and conclusions they will draw

from those very principles the godly make a good use of. As in 1 Cor.

xv. 32, ' Let us eat and drink ; for to-morrow we shall die.' Now, com-

pare this with 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, ' But this I say, brethren, the time

is short ; it remaineth, that both they that have wives, be as though

they had none ; and they that weep, as though they wept not ; and

they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as

though they possessed not ; and they that use the world, as not abusing

it : for the fashion of this world passeth away ;' 2 Kings vi. 33, ' And

while lie yet talked with them, behold the messenger came down unto

him ; and he said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord ; why should I wait

for the Lord any longer ?' Compare this with 1 Sam. iii. 18, ' And

Samuel told him every whit, and hid nothing from him ; and he said,

It is the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.' So Haggai i. 2,

' Thus speaketh the Lord of hosts, The people say, the time is not

come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' Compare this

scripture with 2 Sam. vii. 2, ' And the king said unto Nathan the

prophet, See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God

dwelleth within curtains.' When David dwelt in a stately house, his

heart was set upon building a house for the Lord. So Rom. ii. 4,

' Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and

long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to

repentance ? ' with Titus ii. 11, 12, ' For the grace of God, that bringeth

salvation, hath appeared to all men ; teaching us, that denying

ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously,

and godly in this present world ;' Jude 4, ' Ungodly men, turning

the grace of God into lasciviousness.'

2. Sometimes carnal men pretend certain causes and excuses, when

their conscience knoweth it is otherwise ; and then the things alleged

are not the real opinions and inward sentiments of their own minds,

but something said or taken up to justify their sloth: 1 Cor. vi. 9,

1 Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of

God ? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adul-

terers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,' &c.

As hopes of impunity, though they live a godless and sinful course of life.

If they were serious, conscience would tell them men may be deceived

with these things, but God cannot. Ye may stifle conscience for a

while with these allegations, but it will speak, and then these sorry

fig-leaves will not serve the turn to hide your nakedness.

3. Sometimes these excuses are the fruit of blindness, sottishness,

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ignorance, and infatuation ; and the sluggard hath a high conceit of

his own allegations : Prov. xxvi. 1G, ' The sluggard is wiser in his own

conceit than seven men that can render a reason.' He thinketh others

are mopish, giddy, and crack-brained people, that make more ado with

religion than needeth, are too nice and scrupulous ; take it to be good

prudence to keep out of harm's way : his very foolish thoughts he

thinketh are wise reasons ; that religion is a merry tiling : Prov. xv.

19, ' The way of a slothful man is a hedge of thorns, but the way of

the righteous man is made plain.' He imagineth difficulties and

intolerable hardships in a course of godliness. It is our cowardice

and pusillanimous ignorance maketh the ways of God seem hard.

All things are comfortable, plain, and easy to the pure and upright

heart. Thus lie bloweth hot and cold, speaketh contrary things,

according as he looketh upon them with a slight or pusillanimous

heart.

4. Excuses argue an ill spirit and an unwilling heart. When they

should do something for God, there is something still in the way,

some danger, or some difficulty, which they are loath to encounter

withal : Prov. xxvi. 13, ' The slothful man saith, There is a lion in

the way.' They are fruits of the quarrel between conviction and cor-

ruption, and are usually found in us when we first begin to understand

the way of the Lord, but are loath to come up to the terms. Certainly

it is better be doing than excusing. Doing is safe, but excuses are

but a patch upon a sore place. If we have done a fault, it is better

confess, and seek a pardon, than to excuse and extenuate.

5. Consider the invalidity of all things that are usually alleged by

sinners; and to help you, consider —

[1.] Nothing can be pleaded as reason which God's word disproveth.

The scriptures were purposely penned to refute the vain sophisms that

are in the hearts of men : Heb. iv. 12, ' To divide between soul and

spirit, joints and marrow, and to discern the thoughts and intents of

the heart;' to discover the affections of a sensual heart, however

palliated with the pretences of a crafty understanding, to hide the evil

from themselves and others. You must not lift up your private

conceits against the wisdom of God.

[2.] Nothing can be pleaded as reason which your consciences are

not satisfied with as reason. That is the reason there are so many

appeals to conscience in scripture. Do not your consciences tell you

you ought to be better, to mind God more ? That if these things be

true, 2 Peter iii. 11, 'That all these things shall be dissolved, what

manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and

godliness ?'

[3.] Nothing can be pleaded by way of excuse which reflects upon

God, as if he had made a hard law. We are apt to plead so : ' The

way of the Lord is not equal;' ' The woman thou gavest me, she gave

me, and I did eat.' Will you excuse your idleness and sin by the

severity of your master, and cast your brat at his doors?

[4.] There can be no excuse for a total omission of necessary duties.

In a partial omission, the law itself alloweth a dispensation ; as in

case of sickness we are taken off from some work which God requireth

at other times. But some things are indispensably required : John

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iii. 5, ' Except a man be born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter

into the kingdom of God ;' Heb. xii. 14, ' Without holiness no man

shall see the Lord.' Here is necessitas precepti et medii.

[5.] You should harden yourselves with no excuse or reason but

what you dare plead when you stand before the bar of Christ ; for

then will the weight of all pleas be considered. Now, God hath left

all creatures without excuse, Bom. i. 20. There is some witness of

God to them, that convince th them of more duty than they are willing

to perform.

Secondly, And more particularly, the usual excuses are these : —

Object. 1. I have no time to mind soul-affairs ; my distractions in

the world are so great, and my course of life is such, I have no leisure.

Ans. 1. Whatever your business be, you have a time to eat and

drink and sleep ; and have you no time to be saved ? Better encroach

upon other things than that religion should be cast to the wails, or

jostled out of your thoughts. David was a king, and he had more

distracting affairs than most of us have, or can have ; yet, Ps. cxix.

147, 148, he saith, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and

cried ;' and ' Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, that I might medi-

tate on thy word.'

2. Do you spend no time in idleness, vain talking, or carnal sports ?

And might not this be better employed about heavenly things? Eph.

v. 16, ' Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.'

3. Much of religion is transacted in the mind. A Christian is

always serving God ; his second-table duties are first-table duties.

As carnal men go about heavenly things with a carnal mind, so the

Christian goeth about carnal things with a heavenly mind.

4. God would be sure to have a portion of time, therefore the Lord's

day was appointed : Isa. lviii. 13, ' If thou turn away thy foot from

the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day, and call the

sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable ; and shalt honour

him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor

speaking thine own words,' &c. That it may be dear to us in the

flesh, and in the Lord, when we have God's command, and the laws

of the land too.

5. All your time is lost that is not spent in God's service.

Object. 2. But I have no power nor strength to do good ; and what

will you have us do ?

Ans. You can do more than you do, but you will not make trial.

God may be more ready with the assistances of his grace than you

can imagine. The tired may complain of the length of the way,

but not the lazy that will not stir a foot. If you did make trial,

you would not complain of God, but yourselves ; and beg grace more

feelingly. You are not able because you are not willing. Your im-

potency is contracted by evil habits and long custom in sin ; that is

an aggravation of your sin.

Object. 3. It is dangerous and troublesome to own God and religion

heartily.

Ans. Did not you resolve to serve God whatever it cost you? And

is God harsh and severe because he trieth whether you will be as good

as your word, and will not let you go to heaven with a vain complaint

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in your mouths ? Will this comfort you in hell, and for the loss of

everlasting happiness ? In hell will you say, I came hither to save

myself a labour, and to be exempt from the diligence of the holy life,

and sufferings incident to it? Will you stop a journey for your lives

because the wind bloweth on you, and there is dirt in the way?

Nothing can take oft' a minister from seeking the conversion and salva-

tion of souls, Acts xx. 23, 24 ; and can anything be an excuse to you ?

Should your souls be dearer to us than you ? It is necessary for our

trial that we should meet with scorns and oppositions. Should a weak

blast drive us from God ? Rev. ii. 13, 14, ' I know thy works, and

where thou dwellest, even where Satan's seat is ; and thou boldest fast

my name, and hast not denied my faith ; even in those days wherein

Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was slain among you, where

Satan dwelleth.' It is exceeding commendable to be zealous in such a

place, or in such a time, when religion is hazardous and dangerous.

Christ suffered more for you than you can for him, and God hath greater

terrors than man can present.

Object. 4. I am of a slow wit, have a weak understanding, know not

to which party I should cleave and join myself.

Ans. Certainly not to that which is most pleasing to corrupt affec-

tions. But divisions in the church are to try the approved, who is

chaff, and who is good grain : 1 Cor. xi. 19, ' For there must be also

heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made mani-

fest among you.' The scripture is not dark, but we want eyes. You

may know the mind of God : Ps. cxix. 18, ' Open thou mine eyes, that

I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.' And John xvii. 17,

' Sanctify them by thy truth ; thy word is truth.'

Object. 5. I have so many temptations and enticements, I hope God

will consider my weakness.

Ans. You are as earnestly persuaded upon better motives if per-

suasion will do it. What is a little worldly glory to eternal glory,

brutish pleasures to pure delights ?

Use 1. Since sloth is so great an evil, let the children of God take

heed of it.

And so, first, of sloth and idleness in their particular calling. This

was one of Sodom's sins : Ezek. xvi. 49, ' Pride and fulness of bread,

and abundance of idleness.' This is sensuality, as well as other sins

that are more noted in the world, as being an indulgence to the flesh,

as well as other things, which are commonly decried, because they be-

tray us to more shame in the world.

1. Every creature is God's servant, and hath his work to do wherein

to glorify God ; some in one calling, some in another : Neither rich

nor poor are exempted ; for a lawful calling is not a matter of necessity,

but duty, enforced by a commandment. What our callings should be

is determined by providence giving gifts and education, and obtruding

us upon such a course of life. But it is a mistake to think that bare

necessity maketh a calling ; no, it is obedience. And if we be with-

out such necessity, we may live idly, without any calling. No ; every

man and woman hath their labour and service ; for God made no man

or woman in vain. Would the wise and almighty God make so noble

a thing as a rational human creature onlv to eat. and drink, and sleep,

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and rise and dress themselves, that they may show themselves to com-

pany, and impertinently chat away their hours and precious time ? No ;

lie hath ordained them for some service, which at length they are to

give an account of ; as the Mediator did of his work : John xvii. 4,

' I have glorified thee on earth, and have finished the work thou gayest

me to do.'

2. This work is not of one sort. Some are called to a higher, some

to a lower employment, some noble, some citizens, some fathers of

families, others matrons or mothers of families, some are magistrates,

some ministers ; but every one must do their duty in their place.

Christianity falleth in with natural relations : 1 Cor. vii. 20, ' Let every

man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.' God gives

every man his work : Mark xiii. 34, ' The Son of man is like a man

taking a far journey, who left his house, and gave authority to his

servants, and to every man his work.'

3. The work of our callings must be constantly and diligently

attended upon. A rich man cannot say, I have no need ; therefore I

will attend upon my calling at my pleasure. You must not consider

your present need, but your future account. The baseness of a man's

calling must not be a discouragement to a poor man, seeing God

counteth himself honoured in the lowest service as well as in the highest,

and hath promised the reward of the inheritance to servants as well as

nobles : Col. iii. 24, ' Knowing that ye shall receive the reward of the

inheritance ; for ye serve the Lord Christ.'

4. Every one that feeleth any tediousness growing upon him in his

work should often rouse up himself by considering —

[1.] The active nature of man was never made to be idle ; and shall

we cross the law of our creation ? When the beasts lie down in their

dens, ' Man goeth forth to his labour and work till the evening/ Ps.

civ. 23.

[2.] The preciousness of time, which is too good to be loitered away

upon mere nothing. We should buy it at any price, not waste it :

Eph. v. 16, 'Kedeem the time/ We shall wish we had done so when

it is too late.

[3.] The eye of God, who observeth every man in his station, how

he acquitteth himself with good fidelity. Eye-service, with respect to

man, maketh us unfaithful : Eph. vi. 6 ; but eye-service with respect

to God is the great ground of diligence, Col. iii. 22, 23.

[4.] The near approach of death. Would we be found eating, drink-

ing, playing, sporting away our precious time, or diligently employing

ourselves in our callings, at that day ? Luke xii. 43, ' Blessed is that

servant whom when his lord cometh he shall find so doing/

[5.] Our accounts, which mainly concerneth — (1.) Our particular

calling, and that course of living wherein we were set to glorify God.

The unprofitable servant will be cast into utter darkness, Mat. xxv.

30. God will judge all according to what they have done in their

places ; and then what will become of the idle and the slothful ? (2.)

In our general calling, as Christians. Take heed of being naughty

and slothful servants.

First, Let us inquire who may be characterised with this brand.

1. Who ? Those who complain for want of strength, yet do not

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diligently use the means whereby they may be quickened and strength-

ened : they are idle, and lie upon the bed of ease, and complain that

God doth not give grace ; languish for comfort, rather than set about

the work of obedience. Christ telleth his disciples, John xiv. 21, 'He

that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

me ; and he that loveth me, shall be loved of my Father ; and I will

love him, and manifest myself to him.'

2. That content themselves with a loitering profession, when their

hearts swarm with noisome lusts, and are unfurnished of faith and

love, and other necessary graces ; and yet think a lazy profession will

serve the turn : Mat. vii. 22, ' Many shall say to me in that day, Lord,

Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name cast out devils,

and in thy name done many wonderful works : and then will I pro-

fess, I never knew them.' Because they pray, and hear, and receive

sacraments, they think all is well, and they have no more to care for.

Is this ' working out our salvation with fear and trembling' ? Phil. ii.

12 ; ' Serving God instantly day and night' ? Actsxxvi. 7 ; ' Labour-

ing for the meat that perisheth not ' ? John vi. 27 ; ' Denying our-

selves ' ? Luke xiv 7 . 26.

3. That snuff at a little mock-service as if an intolerable burden :

Mai. i. 13, ' What a weariness is it ! '

4. The children of God may feel this temper coming upon them.,

when though they do not cast off prayer altogether, yet they cut off or

abate and diminish their prayers, either in fervour, or frequency, or

continuance and perseverance in prayer ; pray without sense, affection,

or life ; or do not pray so often, or do not continue instant in prayer.

This cutting short of duties in time tendeth to a quitting of them

altogether. Man is ready to cast off what he thinketh to be a burden.

So when they are backward to meditation, or to withdraw from the

delights of the flesh, and the distraction of ordinary employments. In

all such cases we should rouse up ourselves. Time is short ; our

account sure and near ; we are labouring for heaven and salvation :

shall we tire and faint ? ' Be not weary of well-doing.' It is spoken

with respect to the duties of piety, Heb. xii. 12; duties of mercy,

Gal. vi. 9; duties of our calling, 2 Thes. iii. 13. Oh! then, let us

rouse up ourselves.

SERMON XVI.

Take therefore the talent from him, and give it to Mm ivMch liaih ten

talents. For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall

have abundance ; but from him that hath not shall be taken away

even that which he hath. — Mat. XXV. 28, 29.

We have seen the arraignment of the evil servant ; now followeth the

sentence, which intimateth a double punishment — privative and posi-

tive, loss and pain. The former is in these two verses; wherein you

may observe three things : —

1. The taking the talent from the evil servant.

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2. The disposition of the talent so taken from him.

3. The reason of both.

Let me explain these branches, and then draw one point from the

whole.

First, The taking the talent from the evil servant, ' Take therefore

the talent from him.' Naughty servants either lose the gifts them-

selves, or the benefit, comfort, and reward of them. Here, in time,

they lose their gifts ; when time is no more (which is the case in our

parable), they lose their reward.

Secondly, The disposition of the talent so taken from him, ' And

give it to him that hath ten talents ;' that is, five by trust, and five

more by gain and improvement. The giving of the talent to the first

servant was thought unequal by some, because he had such plenty

already ; as appeareth, Luke xix. 25, ' They say unto him, Lord, he

hath ten pounds.' But the Lord adherethto his sentence : ' For I say

unto you, Unto every one that hath shall be given,' &c. He giveth

most to those that have done most diligent and faithful service, and

delighteth to enrich them more and more with the rewards of grace.

Object. But how can we receive other men's talents ? Shall the

elect receive benefit from the reprobate, and their loss be our gain ?

Ans. 1. It is spoken after the manner of men. Nothing more usual

among men than to take that from the unfaithful which was com-

mitted to them, and to give it to the faithful. It is such another

expression as Kev. iii. 11, ' Hold fast that thou hast, that no man take

thy crown ;' as if that crown which we had lost were taken and worn

by others. So Num. xi. 17, 25, God took of the Spirit that was upon

Moses, and gave it to the seventy elders ; as if what were given to his

assistance were taken from him, and his abilities were lessened with

his work ; whereas it is only meant of the communication of the same

graces.

2. The meaning is, he that useth his gifts well shall be amply

rewarded ; so amply, as if the happiness which others expect should

accrue to them, and be put on their account.

Thirdly, The reason of both, in the 29th verse, ' For unto every one

that hath shall be given.' That these expressions are proverbial is

out of question with the learned. Habenti dabitur is an expression

verified in all ages and in all countries. The rich have many friends,

and he that hath much shall have more : every one will be presenting

them : and they have great advantages of laying out themselves, and

improving themselves more than others have. So, on the contrary

side, by the neglect of others, and their own incapacity to improve

themselves, poor men commonly grow poorer. Upon this occasion

were the words first used, which our Saviour is pleased to translate

and apply to his own purpose. The sense of the words, as they lie

here, will be known by taking this copulate axiom and proposition

apart. The first branch speaketh of gain, the second of loss.

First branch. ' Unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall

have abundance.' The word exeiv doth not only signify the possession

of a thing, but the use, which is the end of possession : and so he that

hath is he that hath to purpose, that occupieth and trafficketh with his

grace or gift received, with that care and diligence that belongetli to

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so great a treasure and trust : ' To him shall be given ;' lie shall

increase his stock, and accordingly the comfort, benefit, and reward

that belongeth to it. Yea, it follows, ' He shall have abundance,'

TrepiaaevdtjcreTcu ; not a single abundance, but a continual increase,

even unto perfection ; an increase of gifts, graces, and rewards. The

sum is, to him that useth and improvetli God's grace shall by degrees

be given so much as that at last he shall have all abundance.

The second branch of this copulate axiom is, ' From him that hath

not, shall be taken away even that which he hath.' As he that had

one talent, but had it not for his master's use, is counted and reckoned

as though he had none. We have not what we have if we use it not

well ; as we say of a covetous man, avaro tam deest quod habet, quara

quod own habet. It is as if we had it not : idle gifts and habits lie

dead and useless. In Luke it is, chap. viii. 18, ' And from whomso-

ever hath not, shall be taken that which he seemeth to have.' He

maketh no use of his gifts, but lets them lie idle, as if he had not had

them. Of grace and righteousness the proposition holdeth most true ;

of reprobates their grace and righteousness is but a pretension : of

other gifts which they have, they have them not for use, for the Lord's

service; and so, in effect, they have them not: therefore, they shall

be taken from them ; that is, they lose their reward : Ezek. xxxiii. 13,

' If he trust in his righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his right-

eousness shall not be remembered ;' 2 John 8, ' Look to yourselves,

that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we

receive a full reward ;' Gal. iii. 4, ' Have you suffered so many things

in vain ? If it be yet in vain.' Men may suffer many things for the

truth who afterward make foul defection from it ; but all is vain, lost,

and to no purpose, as to anything that can be expected from God.

The Nazarite was to begin again if he had defiled himself in the days

of his separation, Num. vi. 12. Thus for their putative righteousness ;

for other common gifts which they really have, they shall be deprived

of all the real benefit which otherwise they might have had, if they

had laid them out for the glory of God, their own salvation, and the

good of their neighbours.

Boot. That all the good gifts which God hath bestowed upon men

increase by good use, but wither and are lost by negligence.

For this is the sum of Christ's sentence and reason.

Now, that I may speak distinctly of the point, I must say some-

thing as to the increase, and something as to the loss.

First, For the increase, ' To him that hath shall be given, and he

shall have more abundantly, ' I shall deliver my sense of it in these

propositions : —

1. That diligence is the means, and God's blessing is the cause, of

all increase ; and both must be regarded, or else we profit nothing.

We cannot expect God's blessing while we sit idle ; and it is a wrong

to grace to trust merely to endeavours, or without looking up to God.

It is said in Prov. x. 4, 'He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack

hand ; but the diligent hand maketh rich ;' that is, that is the means ;

for ver. 22, it is said, ' The blessing of the Lord maketh rich ;' that is,

the blessing of the Lord upon the use of means. God hath ordered it

so in his providence, that diligence should be always fruitful and pro-

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fitable, both in a way of nature and grace ; that the joy of the harvest

should recompense the pains and patience of the diligent husbandman,

and that the field of the sluggard should be overgrown with thorns.

Iron by handling weareth brighter and brighter, but by standing still,

or being let alone, it contracteth rust, by which it is darkened and

eaten out. Take away use and exercise, and wisdom turneth into

folly, and learning into ignorance, health into sickness, riches into

poverty. Strength of body and mind are both gotten by use ; he that

useth his talent with fidelity and sedulity shall increase in it, but such

as are idle and negligent shall grow worse and worse. God doth

plentifully recompense the diligence and fidelity of his servants ; he

that maketh use of any degree of grace and knowledge shall have

more given him ; by exercising what he hath he doth still increase it.

Whereas, on the contrary, remiss acts weaken habits, as well as con-

trary acts; this is a common truth, evident by daily experience ; but

then God's blessing must not be excluded. God would have us labour,

rather to keep us doing, than that he needeth our help. He that made

the world without us can preserve it without us, as he that planted the

garden of Eden could have preserved it without man's dressing, yet

we read that when he had furnished the garden of Eden with all de-

lights, God took the man and put him into it, ' to dress it and to keep

it/ Gen. ii. 15 ; that is, to use husbandry about it, that by sowing,

setting, pruning, and watering, he might preserve those fruits where-

with God had furnished that pleasant garden, and to bestow his pains

upon that whereof he was to receive the benefit, and that by busying

himself about the creatures, he might the better observe God in his

various works in and by them. And indeed nothing was such a means

to convince him of his dependence upon God as this labour of dressing

and keeping the garden which God put him into ; for he could produce

no new plant, but only manure and cherish those which God had

planted there already, and all his keeping and planting was nothing

without dews and showers and influence from heaven, and the con-

tinual interposing of God's providence. And still in every calling he

that is sedulous in it seeth more need of God's concurrence than those

that are idle ; for those that have done their utmost by experience find

that the success of all their endeavours dependeth upon his power and

goodness, or the effect followeth not. I am sure it holdeth good in the

work of grace : none are so practically convinced of the necessity of

divine assistance as they that do their utmost; for they see plainly all

will not do if God withhold his blessing ; and their often disappoint-

ments when they lean upon their own strength teacheth them this

lesson, that all is of God.

2. That this increase must be understood of the same talent, not in

another kind. It holdeth not, that he that useth the talent in one

kind shall thrive in another, for what a man soweth that shall he

reap. No ; the meaning is, the thing used is still increased. It is

not intended that by employing his talent in riches he should increase

in learning, that by improving his learning he should grow in strength

and beauty of body. No ; it holdeth good in eodem genere, in the

same kind. Use common helps well, and you increase as far as com-

mon helps will carry you ; use moral virtue well, and you increase in

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moral virtue ; use that measure of saving grace you have well, and you

shall have a great measure given you by God; set a-work thy know-

ledge, faith, zeal, and love, and all these graces will increase in you:

' Wait on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen

thy heart,' Ps. xlvi. 14; and Ps. xxxi. 24, and Isa. lviii. 13, 14, 'If

thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure

on my holy day, and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord,

honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor

finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words, then shalt

thou delight thyself in the Lord, and 1 will cause thee to ride upon

the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob

thy father, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.' So Ps. xci. 1,

' He that dwelleth in the secret places of the Most High shall abide

under the shadow of the Almighty.' God, that puuisheth sin with sin,

doth reward grace with grace : they that abuse the light of nature are

given up to a reprobate sense ; they that improve the grace they have

shall have more ; every act maketh an increase of the habit, and who-

soever employeth that spiritual wealth that he hath shall have an

addition from God, be more strong in faith and love, and more rich in

knowledge.

Ohject. But may not we enlarge this a little further ? Arminius

gathereth from hence that the works of the unregenerate, done by the

mere strength of nature, are so accepted with God that by them he is

moved and induced to give them supernatural grace. And many

others, that will not speak so grossly, think that if we improve the

gifts of nature, we shall have common grace, and if we improve com-

mon grace, we shall have special and saving grace. And ought we

not, and can we not, use these common gifts and graces to this end

and purpose, that we may obtain conversion and faith in Christ ; such

as the use of reason, the freeing of the mind from brutish passions

and affections, good education, the examples of others, the powerful

preaching of the gospel, and common illumination, and the knowledge

of the truth gained thereby ?

Ans. 1. Those that have common grace ought and are bound to

use it for the obtaining of more grace ; there is no doubt of that, for

therefore they are accused that ' They have ears and hear not, eyes

and see not;' and God findeth fault with his people that 'they will

not frame their doings to turn to the Lord,' Hosea v. 4. So much as

put themselves in a posture ; they are threatened that ' it shall be

more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrah than for them;' and that

'the Ninevitea shall rise in judgment against them, and condemn

them.' They are reproved for being ' idle and slothful servants, and

hiding their talents in a napkin.' Certainly they that are lifted up to

heaven in ordinances, that receive so much grace from God, and yet

turn it into wantonness, and do not know, nor worship, nor seek after

God, they aggravate their own condemnation ; their destruction is of

themselves; they shut themselves out of the kingdom of God, reject

the counsels of God against themselves. In short, they put away the

word of God from them, and judge themselves unworthy of eternal

life. The scripture everywhere speaketh at this rate concerning the

folly and negligence of men.

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Ans. 2. But if it be asked, whether they that have received common

grace not only ought, but also can, use it for the acquiring and getting

the special grace of conversion ? this question concerneth the manner

liow the will of God and the will of man meet together in the work of

conversion. And here we must use great care in answering, to avoid

inconveniences on all hands. Certainly merit they cannot, neither

de congruo, nor de condigno, nor by any covenant oblige God to give

them the grace of regeneration ; neither can Christ be said to have

acquired and purchased this grace for them to whom he is not given

as a Mediator ; nor by any promise is God bound to give us grace for

the good use of our natural abilities. No ; the distribution of con-

verting grace is not promised or bound to any works of righteousness

that we have or can do, but is reserved and referred to the free dispo-

sition, good-will, and pleasure of God : Bom. ix. 16, ' Not of him that

willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy/ So

Titus iii. 5. ' Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but

according to his mercy he saved us.' The first grace is given by God

as a sovereign Lord, according to the counsel of his own will. But

since the question is propounded, whether a man can by common

grace obtain special ? the answer must be prudent and cautelous, that

of the one side we may not prejudice the truth, nor of the other side

give scandal and offence to the weak. For —

[1.] If you answer that an unregenerate man may by the use of

common grace acquire and obtain the special grace of regeneration,

and that the whole business lies in the good use of his will, you seem to

dash upon the eternal purpose and decrees of God, by which he hath

determined not to give all men, but only the elect, this special grace ;

and upon the intention of Christ's dying, which was not to sanctify

himself for all, but for those whom the Father had given to him ; and

you seem to put the wdiole business upon man, as if he did make him-

self to differ, and that the good use of common grace doth all ; and

then the Pelagian axiom will be true, facienii quod in se est — that he

that doth what he can, God is bound to give him what he cannot ;

which will run little lower than the merit of congruity. Then we

cannot say, God hath made himself a debtor ; some would seem to

have given him first. All which are against the scripture ; and there-

fore we are justly afraid to enlarge and extend the liberty and power

of man in this business.

[2.] If you answer that a man cannot use that common grace which

he hath received so as to obtain the grace of regeneration, and that the

thing dependeth no way upon his will and choice, or that there is no

hope or possibility of doing otherwise than they do, or that, do their

duty or do it not, still condemnation rests upon them, then no less

difficulties will offer themselves. Flesh and blood will then complain

that God is harsh and austere, ' Reaping where he hath not sowed,

and gathering where he hath not strawed ;' and that he requireth what

we cannot do ; and when we do it not, doth severely punish us. What

shall we answer to the question, whether it be in the power of the

creature to acquire the special grace of regeneration by the good use

of common grace ? The best answer that we can give is, that the

question is curious, and needeth no answer. The business is not

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whether God will or not, but what I am bound to do. The great rule

in all such cases is, God may do what he pleaseth, but I must do what

he commandeth. He that is deadly sick doth not refuse physic till he

be made certain that it will recover him ; but useth it, and committeth

the event to God. He that is to plough, and commit his precious seed

to the ground, doth not stand to have assurance that the next year

will prove fruitful and the seasons kindly, but ventures, because usually

God's blessing concurreth with man's industry. So in the business of

salvation, Ave should not dispute of our power, nor the event of our

endeavours : it is enough to acknowledge the debt of obedience, to try

our power, to endeavour to do what we ought to do, and then leave

the event to God. There is no need to dispute of our power; it is

much safer to confess our impotency, to humble ourselves before God,

and to seek his blessing and grace in the means he hath instituted to

that end ; but not at all to doubt the counsel and will of God. And

the intention of Christ, whatever it be, will be no impediment to us in

doing our duty. And it is as certain that no man doth all that he

can, but by divers offences and abuse of the gifts received giveth God

just cause to be angry and withdraw his help. And it is also out of

doubt that it is not for want of God's help, but for their own folly and

negligence that they perish. Therefore let us do what we are com-

manded to do, and leave the event to God, confessing when we have

done all that we can that God is not our debtor, but that we remain

debtors to God, guilty of eternal condemnation, as long as we are not

partakers of regeneration and justification by Christ. If we could

learn to suppress our cavils and curiosity by this humble submission,

the business of our salvation would soon come to an issue, and we

should find God better to us than we could imagine.

3. The next consideration is, that this increase is given in by

degrees : we have not all at first, nor all at once ; but as our capacities

are enlarged, so is God's hand : Ps. lxxxi. 10, ' Open thy mouth wide

and I will fill it.' The more we improve the grace received, the more

are we strengthened for God's service, and our desires and expec-

tations, which are as the mouth of the soul, are more raised. It

is exercise maketh us see the necessity and worth of grace, and so

desire more as necessary to bear our burdens, perform our duties, and

resist temptations. And the more grace we have, and the more we

are acquainted with God, the more hopes have we towards him. By

hope and desire the soul is more widened and fitted to receive : as

Moses, ' Tell me thy name ;' and then, ' Show me thy glory.' None

see the want of learning so much as they that have most of it. So for

grace, the desire and sense of want increaseth with enjoyment ; so doth

God's bounty to us. The desires and endeavours of believers after

grace are not easily satisfied.

4. This gradual increase is continued, till at length all be full and

perfect. The apostle proyeth for the saints, Eph. iv. 19, that they

' might be filled with all the fulness of God.' God keepeth filling

still, till grace, begun here, be fully completed in glory hereafter ; and

in heaven they are filled up with God, as far as finite creatures are

capable of enjoying that which is infinite. The reason is, because the

riches of God's goodness are inexhaustible. God is never weary of

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well-doing ; where lie hath given, he will give ; and delighteth to crown

his own gifts. Some gifts of God leave some obligation upon hini

to give more. Deus donando debet. Christ's reasoning implieth so

much : Mat. vi. 25, ' Is not life more than meat, and the body than

raiment?' That is an argument, as long as God will use us for his

glory he will provide for us : Zech. iii. 2, ' Is not this a brand plucked

out of the fire?' The argument is from a brand almost consumed.

Would God so eminently appear for them, not to destroy them?

Certainly he will still take care of them. This holdeth universally true

in point of grace ; for it is given as an earnest ; not as donum, a gift, as

men give a shilling to a beggar ; nor as pignus, a pledge, to be taken

away ; but as arrha, an earnest of a greater sum, of which that is a

part. So that he that hath shall have more, and so abundance in all

perfection in heaven.

Secondly, Now I must speak to the loss. Talents may be said to

be lost, or taken away, two ways — in this world or in the next. These

proverbial speeches are made use of by Christ upon a twofold occa-

sion — after the parable of the sower, Mat. xiii. 12, and here after the

parable of the talents : the one relateth to losing in this world, and the

other in the world to come. They that rejected the gospel, and would

not hear, or heard it carelessly, or would not come under the power

and obedience of it, all their external privileges, glittering profession,

common gifts of illumination, fasts, partial practice, all will be lost.

Only the good and honest heart, that receiveth the good seed so as to

keep it, so as to be a principle of life to them, to these shall be given.

And then here is the other occasion when Christ speaks this. The

taking away of the talents is after the lord had been reckoning with

his servants, after he had been a long time absent, and in a far country.

Therefore this taking away the talent is not meant of the gift itself, as

of the comfort, benefit, and reward of it ; for all trading then is at an

end ; that is the time of recompense, and the talent is lost. It will do

us no good to have had estates, and to have lived in pomp and splen-

dour in the world, if we have not made use of it for God. Our fall

will be the greater because of our height. It will do us no good to

have borne office in the church if we have not been faithful : Mat.

vii. 22, ' Many shall say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have

prophesied in thy name.' Such as have taken up office and employ-

ment in the church, and made no conscience of doing the duty that

belongeth thereto, these will not have, but lose their reward : these are

' idle shepherds/ Zech. xi. 17 ; their unfaithfulness and idleness in

their trust will cost them dear. So for the ordinances and means of

grace : Luke xiii. 26, ' Then shall they begin to say, We have ate and

drank in thy presence.' It will be no plea that you have been at God's

board; nay, you will have the greater judgment: Mat. xi. 23, 'And

thou, Capernaum, which art exalted to heaven, shalt be brought down

to hell.' A place that enjoyeth the gospel is near heaven, it is the

suburbs of heaven ; but where not improved, these privileges plunge a

man deeper in the state of condemnation. Sins against the law do

not weigh so deep in his balance as slighting and neglecting the gospel ;

that brings on heavy wrath. So for common gifts, good affections,

partial reformation ; it is all lost, as to any reward, Ezek. xxxiii. 13.

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Yea, it is worse : 2 Peter ii. 20, 21, ' For if after they have escaped

the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of the Lord and

Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome ;

the latter end is worse with them than the beginning ; For it had been

better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than after

they have known it to turn from the holy commandment.' The wrath

against them that return back to their sins is much greater than

if they had never been so enlightened and reformed. Those that have

had more light, and some taste of the sweetness of heaven's way, if

they fall away, it is hard to renew them to repentance. This is the

principal sense intended in this place ; yet because the words are so

contrived that they comprehend also the loss we may sustain in this

world while we are trading for God, I shall show you how God pun-

isheth naughty and slothful servants in this world with the loss of their

talents.

1. Sometimes God taketh from them opportunities and liberty of

doing good. Nothing is so soon lost as this : Gal. vi. 10, ' As we have

therefore opportunity, let us do good to all men.' There are some fit

opportunities offered us by the providence of God for doing our duty

in this kind, as are soon gone ; and being past and gone, it is hard to

say whether ever we may enjoy the like. As when we are specially

fitted, and there is a concurring harmony of all circumstances. There-

fore, Ave should take hold of them without delay or fore-slowing. Oppor-

tunities are not always as long as life: Eccles. xi. 1, 2, 'Cast thy

bread upon the waters, and give a portion to seven and to eight ; for

thou knowest not what evil there may be upon earth.' Embrace the

present opportunity ; thou canst not foresee how soon thou mayest be

deprived of it. Thou mayest die, and leave thy wealth to those that

will shut up their bowels. Thou mayest be in want ; God may dis-

able thee : therefore, make use of the season for liberality, for doing

good, while you have it. So office, authority, respect in the church, is

an opportunity. God may cast us out of the vineyard by the malice

of men, or as unsavoury salt, Mat. xiii. : Mai. ii. 9, 'Therefore, I

have made you contemptible and base before the people ; ' though all

that are cast out are not so. Mat. xxi. 35, the husbandmen took

' his servants, and beat one and killed another.' However, it will be

a discomfort if we have been negligent.

2. Ordinances ; means of improvement may be lost : Gen. vi. 3,

' My Spirit shall not always strive with man ;' that is, by the ministry

of Noah. And God threateneth to take away the hedge of his vine-

yard when all his cost is lost : Isa. v. 5, 6, ' What could I have done

more for my vineyard ?' So Luke xiii. 7, ' And he said to the dresser

of the vineyard, Lo, these three years came I seeking fruit on this

fig-tree, and I find none ; cut it down, why cumbereth it the

ground ? '

3. Common gifts ; God justly taketh them away from those that

abuse, or make no good use of them. Many that excelled in gifts,

that seemed to have great parts, are pitifully blasted afterwards. It

is no hard matter to discern a maim and decay of gifts in them that

use them not, as if the Spirit were departed from them: Zech. xi. 17,

' The idol-shepherd's arm shall be dried up. and his eye darkened ;'

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that is, his gifts shall be taken away, at least, the power and life of

them. Many lose the freshness of their gifts of prayer, the liveliness

of their knowledge.

4. Initial grace, Heb. vi. Saving gifts and graces are a/j,€Taui\7)Ta,

without repentance, Rom. xi. 29. Where there is life begun, it is

not quenched ; but where there are some hopeful inclinations, they

begin to draw off their hearts from the world to God ; though they

had ' escaped the pollutions of the world, their latter end may be worse

than their beginning,' 2 Peter ii. 20.

5. Bona sanctificantia ought still to be improved, that the grace

of God be not ' received in vain,' 1 Cor. xv. 10. Grace in some mea-

sure may suffer loss by our negligence : 1 Thes. v. 19, 'Quench not

the Spirit ; despise not prophesyiDg.' Fire is quenched by pouring on

water or withdrawing fuel ; so the Spirit is quenched by living in sin,

which is like pouring on water ; or not improving our gifts and grace,

which is like withdrawing the fuel. Gradus remittitur, actus inter-

mittitur, habitus non amittitur. Though the habit be secured by

God's covenant, yet such portions and degrees of grace may be lost as

may not easily be recovered again.

Use is to commend to us diligence and industry, especially in the

work of our heavenly calling. A man's life is divided between waking

and sleeping, so is his waking time divided between labour and rest ;

for human nature cannot endure continual exercise without inter-

mission. Therefore a spiritual wise man should so govern his life

that his labour may answer his great work and trust, and his rest may

not infringe his labour, but help it. Our first care should be of labour ;

for man in this world is born to labour. Here is not the place of his

rest and recompense, but of his exercise and trial. Rest is but for

labour ; therefore doth he rest that he may be refreshed for his labour.

Six days are given in the law to labour, but one to rest ; and that rest

is not carnal, but holy, and to be improved for our main duties. Adam

in innocency was not made for idleness. Moses telleth us that God

put him into the garden to dress it. That happiness we partook of

then was consistent enough with our work. He that looketh upon

the beauty of the sun may easily collect that God lighted not such a

bright torch for man to sleep by, or to pass over his days in ease and

idleness. The law that was given man to labour remained after sin ;

yea, sin brought grievousness and burden to it : so what was a law

before, is turned into a punishment now ; for God told Adam that ' in

the sweat of his brow he should eat his bread/ In the whole course

of nature nothing is idle ; the sun and stars do perpetually move and

roll up and down ; the earth bringeth forth fruit ; the seas have their

ebbings and Sowings, and the rivers their courses ; the angels are

described with wings, as ready to fulfil God's commandment, and run

to do his pleasure. It were an unworthy thing, among so many

examples and patterns of diligence, for man alone to be idle. In the

least creatures God hath taught us ; as by the ant or pismire : Prov.

vi. 6, ' Go to the ant, thou sluggard.' Now. as all men must labour,

so chiefly a Christian. The scripture compareth our life to a journey,

which is a constant motion till it be accomplished ; to threshing, which

is the painfullest part of husbandry ; yea, to a warfare, when the enemy

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is at hand ready to light. We are always to watch and pray. If our

enemy did not alarm us, yet our. Master will call us to an account for

what we have done.

And consider the danger of negligence. It befalleth to the idle

and negligent, as those that came after the camp in the wilderness.

Amalek smote the weak and the feeble in the rear. Yea, God him-

self will be angry with us. The idle and slothfnl servant is cast into

utter darkness, the foolish virgins are shut out. If God, by his

prophets, curseth them whom he employeth to execute his judgments —

' Cursed is he that doeth the work of the Lord negligently/ — what will

become of them that are negligent in working out their own salvation ?

Horses grow resty if they be not used, and impatient of a burden ; so

all goes to wreck in the soul if we are idle. We should profit when

we look on the field of the sluggard, Pro v. xxiii. 30, 31, 34. So will

my soul be, if I let it alone. Oh ! then, shake off your sloth ; be not

always resolving, never beginning the heavenly course. Nothing can

be gotten, nothing kept, nothing to be enjoyed, without industry. The

saints in heaven are not idle ; but are always lauding, and pfuising,

and glorifying of God for evermore.

THE END OF VOL. IX.

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