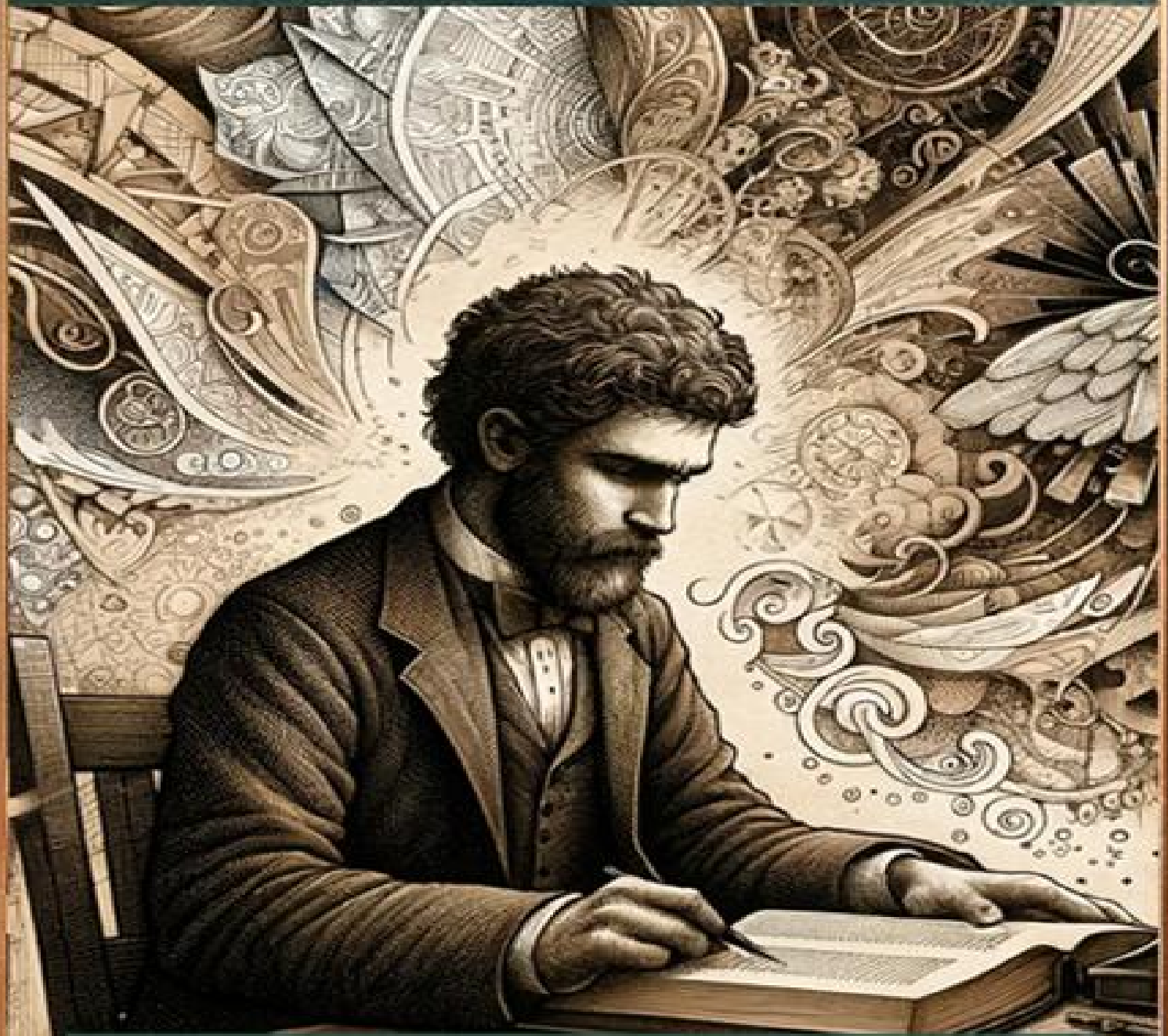
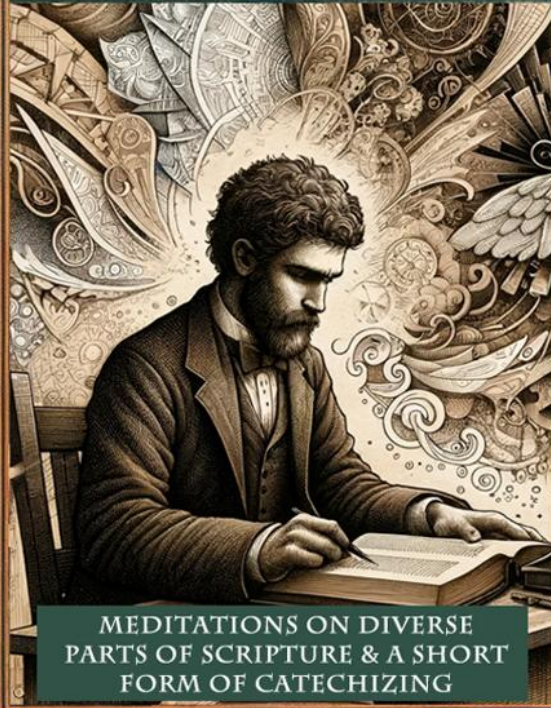


THE WORKS OF
RICHARD GREENHAM
VOLUME 4



MEDITATIONS ON DIVERSE
PARTS OF SCRIPTURE & A SHORT
FORM OF CATECHIZING

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The Works of Richard Greenham - Vol. 4

**Meditations on Diverse Parts of Scripture
& A Short form of Catechizing**

Richard Greenham

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Editor's Note – During the EEBO-TCP Transcription Process, all the text was hand transcribed according to visual representation; and as such, sometimes the letters s, l, f & t are misconstrued with each other, these letters regularly being almost illegibly similar in the original facsimile script. Though it is rare for these errors to remain post-edit, unfortunately they may remain if uncaught. My apologies in advance where such errors occur. Also, the symbol <H&G>, when included, signifies omitted Hebrew & Greek. Lastly, some archaic words may be updated to more contemporary terminology; but changes have been kept to a bare minimum.

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Wherein are briefly set down the Principles of Christian Religion.

GODLY MEDITATIONS ON THE 119TH PSALM.

*** Only Meditations on this Psalm attributed to Mr. Richard Greenham have been included. The verses completed by Mr. Robert Hill in the 5th and final edition of Greenham's Works have been purposely left out. These later additions were included because Mr. Richard Greenham's Meditations on Psalm 119 does not contain commentary on every verse within the Psalm, and the publisher of the final edition sought to have a complete commentary. ***

No man can see the height, length, depth, nor breadth of the Law, for to find the end thereof, were as if a man should search the heavens, measure the earth, and compass the wide and broad sea. I have seen such perfection in thy Law, that if the straightness were not in men's minds, it were of all things most large. If any man would stand upon his strength, in time he should become weak, if any man would stand upon his wisdom and learning, he should sometimes become both unwise and unskillful, if any man would advance himself of his dignity, he should once be forgotten; for I see that all these things would come to an end, but thy Law hath no end. I

have seen great, wise, learned, and mighty men, who thought they could compass anything by their wisdom, and bring to pass all their devises by their might and power, but yet they have failed, and thy word above all is exceedingly large. For as no mans wit and foresight is so great, but some danger may befall him, which he cannot prevent; none so strong, but he may be overcome ere he beware; none so glorious, but the excellency of his honor may fade away suddenly; so there is no peril, no strength, no glory, but by thy Law, if the want and straightness be not in ourselves, we shall have wisdom to prevent it, power to overcome it, and glory to confound it.

Whosoever is desirous to Learn and Remember the Word of God, that he might Live after it, let him Consider what is Written in the 119th Psalm.

PORTION 2.

—• **Verse. 9. - Wherewithal shall a young man redress his ways? In taking heed thereto according to thy word.**

First of all be persuaded that the word of God is that only rule whereby the whole life of every man, and that in everything must be ordered, even the life of a young man, who hath most reasons for himself, why he should be excused as he is most disordered.

—• **Verse. 10. - With mine whole heart have I sought thee: let me not wander from thy commandments.**

Then upon this persuasion give yourself unfeignedly to the reading and hearing of God his word, as the means whereby God hath appointed to teach you, and pray to God in the careful use of those means for his holy spirit, that thereby you might come to the true understanding of his word.

—• **Verse. 11. - I have hid thy promise in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.**

That which you have thus learned, let it not only swim aloft in your brain, but let it be deeply settled and graven in your heart as a treasure, laboring to frame all your affections according to it: otherwise if thou know never so much, it will not keep you from sinning against God.

—• **Verse. 12. - Blessed art thou, O Lord: teach me thy statutes.**

You thus profiting, give thanks to God always for that which you have learned, be it never so little, it is more than many in the world do know: yet content not yourself with it, as though you had sufficient, but pray unto him to be further enlightened, because it is less than many other do, and yourself ought to know.

—• **Verse. 13. - With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.**

But above all be careful to talk of that to others, which you do daily learn yourself, and out of the abundance of your heart speak of good things unto men.

—• **Verse. 14. - I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies, as in all riches.**

That you may do all these things, labor to have a joy in the word, and in all the exercises of it more than in any worldly thing, and to be occupied in these things with greatest delight: for in whatsoever we take greatest delight, that will stick fastest in us.

—• **Verse. 15. - I will meditate in thy precepts, and consider thy ways.**

Last of all, meditate and consider of that with yourself which you have learned, and muse upon it alone, not contenting yourself with the general rules: but laboring in your conscience to make the use of them profitable to yourself in the particular practice thereof.

—• **Verse. 16. - I will delight in thy statutes, and I will not forget thy word.**

Thus doing all these things carefully, you shall surely never forget that which you learn: for though you do not remember everything, yet God will by his spirit call so much especially into your remembrance, as is needful for you to know, and then especially when you have most need of it, as in the hour of death, and in the day of temptation: but as you fail in all, or in any of these, so may you fear to fail in the truth of them.

PORTION 3.

—• **Verse. 17. - Be beneficial unto thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word.**

The Prophet desireth life, where he teacheth why men should desire to live, that is, that they might keep God's word: for life is common to them with beasts and plants: and yet all desire to live, some for one end, some for another: but God's child maketh this the end, that he might keep God's word. And in that he joineth these together, he signifieth that his life without it, is no life, as in the 4 part, verse 11, where he counteth himself dead, unless he find a readiness to obey God's will. A widow living in pleasure, is dead whilst she liveth, and this is to be understood of all that live in any sin. And this if all they considered which are not joined to Christ, it would amaze them: for though this appear not now, yet at the last day it shall appear.

This cannot be persuaded to the carnal man, but to us that have the knowledge of God, it ought to be certain: and we must try our hearts whether this be our desire to live, that we may keep God's word. Many men do speak this, and sing this; yet few in heart do this: therefore if we be thus

minded, we must show it by referring all our doings to God's glory, which we shall then do, when we measure all our doings by the word. Therefore Paul (Rom. 4, and Phil. 2,) desireth not life, but that he may be joined to Christ. All other religion is of no effect, till this principal end be in our hearts; for no man can have two ends of his life, as to come to preferment, and to be saved: but this must be only the end, that we might be joined to Christ. He desireth not to know, but to keep, which presupposeth knowledge: we are here then provoked to practice, and not to rest in knowledge, but to labor to do that we know. And this is the cause why they of the old Testament desired longer life, that they might finish that only which they had to do, at such time as they felt some signs of God's displeasure, and had not sufficiently tasted of God's favor: so we, if we cannot find assurance of the forgiveness of sins, then let us desire to live: but when we are come to this, that with Paul we can say, I have finished my course with joy, then will the children of God be ready to die. Many there be that have neither care of life nor death: and although they feel and see signs of God's displeasure, yet they are not moved: but the children of God know, that it is better to be a living dog, than a dead lion. And seeing by their evil life they have dishonored God, they would be joyful to purchase some praise to him by their holy conversation. (2 Tim. 4:7)

He knoweth his great inability to do good, and therefore desireth it of God. It is not in our choice to do good or evil, for then this prayer had been in vain: he knew that this was not in him to keep God's word; and therefore in the next verse he desireth that his eyes might be opened: where he acknowledgeth, that he had not so much as the knowledge of God's word in himself; therefore he was far from yielding such obedience thereunto as the Lord requireth. He desireth now to understand, which goeth before practice,

and is lesser than it, and yet it is the means to come to practice. And if we cannot understand it without special grace, then much less can we practice it. Many of us in judgment do hate Papists, yet in practice we are such, seeing we do many things without prayer, and the knowledge of God's word. Knowledge goeth before practice, and therefore many in vain do say that they keep the word, when they labor not to know it.

—• **Verse. 18. - Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy Law.**

In the former verse he showed that he could not keep the word without God's grace, now he showeth that he cannot know it unless the Lord open our eyes, this is the want that is in all men, but flesh and blood shall not reveal this, and Paul saith, that it was hid from the Princes of the world, which must serve to humble all flesh, and to stir us up to pray to the Lord when we come to read it, otherwise we shall read and not understand it, because wonderful things are contained therein: therefore when we see the wonderfulness of this law, this is one degree of profiting, because the ignorant think they have knowledge enough.

David well instructed in the word, yet made this prayer: to teach us that we must go daily forward, for we know but by degrees, and ignorance is mixed therewith, therefore many continuing long, fall in the end away, which may teach us to pray that he would not lead us into this temptation, that we should think we have knowledge enough.

This is the cause why many fall into errors, because that they resting in that, which they have conceived in their own brain, and have heard or learned of others, and in the mean while never looking to be taught by God's spirit: when they see their teachers fall away, then do they fall away also, because their ground is gone. So many therefore as love to abide

steadfast in the truth, and never to be removed there from, let them never rest, neither in that they conceive of themselves, neither in the words and doctrine of men; but let them always by prayer crave that the Lord by his spirit may instruct them: and this if they do, the Lord will not turn them away empty, but will so season their hearts by his spirit, that though a thousand fall away on the one side, and ten thousand on the other, yet shall they continue steadfast to the end.

The cause why we have so great need to pray, is set down, when he calleth the things contained in the word, wonders. And surely if iniquity be a mystery, as the Apostle calleth it, then much more is the law of God. Yet so it is not unto all, for the Prophet in this Psalm saith, that the very entrance into God's word giveth light to the simple. And Psal. 88, when he had called the word parables, he saith, that fathers must teach them to their children: and we know that the things which fathers must teach to their children, ought to be very easy and plain. The word then is said to be full of mysteries or parables to all those, whose eyes the Lord hath not enlightened, and whose hearts he hath not touched by his spirit. But as for them who are beloved of God, and whom the Lord bestoweth his spirit upon for their direction, those have an easy entrance into his word, and they do behold the mysteries of the law. Therefore saith Christ unto his Apostles, To you it is given to know these things, but to the other are all things spoken in parables. Then it is for good cause that the Prophet desireth to behold these mysteries: yet he restraineth his desire, and desireth to know no other mysteries than are contained in the word. Many would gladly desire mysteries, and many fly to revelations; yet they will not be kept within the bounds of God's word, but will needs follow the speculations of their own fantasies, of this sort is the Family of love. But we must desire

with this man of God to behold mysteries, and keep ourselves within the compass of the word, ever craving for the good spirit of God to enlighten our hearts in the true understanding thereof: that we never be like the carnal Protestant, which resteth in the outward word, never craving for God's spirit, to help their understanding therein; neither yet like the fantastical Family of love, which followeth revelation, and illumination without the word.

—• **Verse. 19. - I am a stranger upon earth: hide not thy commandments from me.**

[I Am a stranger upon earth.] He setteth down another reason why he would be instructed in the law of the Lord, because he is but here a stranger, that is, that he had not here any long abiding place, but continued here for a while. And this do all the men of God profess, Heb. 11, verse 14, that they looked for another city: and therefore God was not ashamed to be called their God: so in another place David saith, I am a stranger as all my fathers were. If this were the affliction of God's children in times past, it must be in us now, if we with them will be partakers of the same promises in the kingdom of heaven. We see then where we must make the beginning of all godliness and good religion, even in denying this world, and acknowledging ourselves to be but pilgrims in the same. When a son is sent beyond the seas to learn the tongues, &c. and hath his time appointed him how long he hath to tarry, the consideration of that time, if he be anything toward, will move him to take pains, that when he returneth home, he may please his father: So let us then often set our times before us, let us in time learn knowledge, and apply our hearts speedily thereto. Again, if we be strangers, we have few friends and many enemies, and therefore it standeth us in hand to be careful of the law of God, which may teach us that good

path, in which if we walk, we shall well please God, and so be guarded and defended against our enemies. We have our own corruption to strive with, the vanities of the world, the evil examples of wicked men to provoke us to do the like, their malicious practices against us, and the great enemy of mankind the devil: and with principalities and powers in heavenly things. If we do well and wisely consider of these enemies, we shall soon see what need we have to be instructed in the law of God, that we may be able to resist them.

[Hide not thy Commandments from me.] The Prophet beholding these enemies, craveth of the Lord that he would not hide his commandments from him. This hiding doth the Prophet oppose to that enlightening which he spake of before: as our Savior Christ doth, when he saith, I thank thee O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise, and revealed them unto babes: where is signified, that unless the Lord do reveal his law unto us, he is said to hide it: for it is hidden from us, and we cannot attain unto the knowledge of it, unless he make it known unto us.

—• **Verse. 20. - Mine heart breaketh for the desire to thy judgments always.**

The Prophet showeth the vehemency of his desire, when he saith, that his soul fainteth for the desire thereof. So in another place he saith, that his heart panteth, and that his soul cleaveth to the dust; and many such complaints the man of God maketh, when he seeth the Lord withdrawing his spirit from him, that he cannot so clearly see into God's word: as contrariwise he showeth his joy, that in heart he conceiveth, when the Lord by his spirit doth open his sight, that he can feel some comfort thereby, when he saith, How sweet are thy precepts unto my mouth? Oh, how love I thy Law? &c. Many men, being not acquainted with this practice of the

Prophet, do think that it is some melancholic humor, &c. when they see God's children suddenly sorrowful, or suddenly full of rejoicing: but those that have experience of these things do know, that the grief sitteth near their heart, when they cannot feel comfort in God's word: and that then they are most comforted, when the eyes of their minds are most enlightened. For seeing that our nourishment and life is in the Word, we ought continually to fetch nourishment from thence, by meditating therein. Therefore many are on a sudden cast into great sadness and heaviness of heart, and yet they know not for what cause; whereas this no doubt is one among the rest: because they use not to meditate in God's word, therefore by this means would the Lord drive them to his word, that there they might find comfort, and so forever after have the word in greater estimation, and bestow greater diligence thereupon.

By judgments here is meant the whole word of God, whether it be promises or threatening's; wherein the Lord sheweth himself to be as good as his word, in performing and bringing to pass that which he hath spoken.

This desire which the Prophet had to God's Commandments, it was not for a start, and soon done, but it was continually: wherein he showeth a plain difference, between a true desire, and that which hath no truth in it: for there is not the wickedest man that liveth, but he may for a time seem to have very good things in him, and at a start the most wicked will make a show of very good desires; but all this is like a morning cloud, and soon vanisheth away: therefore if we will have our desire to be true, let us also labor that it be continual.

—• **Verse. 21. - Thou hast destroyed the proud: cursed are they that do err from thy commandments.**

The Prophet doth not let pass God's judgments without profit, but meditateth upon them, that thereby he may be kept in greater obedience: because the Lord hath in former times executed his judgments, he will show himself righteous still: and therefore the Prophet gathereth, that though the wicked be not all presently punished, yet they are all accursed, and in time they shall be punished. By erring he meaneth not every slip, but the falling away from God.

—• **Verse. 22. - Remove from me shame and contempt: for I have kept thy testimonies.**

In this confidence, that the Lord will destroy the wicked; he assured himself that he would defend him against those, that set themselves against him. The judgments of God then have these two effects: first, to humble him: secondly, to comfort him: as portion 7, and 15, so that he feareth when his heart is broken; he also loveth when he receiveth hope of help, in confidence whereof he maketh this prayer. The use of God's judgments upon others, must we make to ourselves; first, that we be brought to acknowledge our deserts, and so fear, and to behold his justice, that we may have assurance of mercy. This is hard to flesh and blood, for some can be brought to rejoice at the destruction of others, and cannot fear: some, when they are feared cannot receive comfort. But those which God hath joined together, let us not separate: therefore let us make these uses of God's judgments. His prayer is this, Lord let not mine enemies which pursue an evil cause, let them not have their desire, in bringing me to contempt, least whiles I labor to keep thy Law, and am become contemptible, thy Law also should receive some blot. First, here we see that it is no strange thing, that they which keep God's Commandments, should be slandered: and therefore we must reform our judgment, which is ready to condemn those, of whom

they hear an evil report. Secondly, seeing he prayeth against contempt, he showeth that contempt is the greatest cross that can come to the children of God: for many could lose their goods, which yet would be grieved for the loss of their name; he here prayeth so, not only because of that natural cause which he had, but chiefly because his name was joined with the glory of God. All the punishments of Christ did not so much grieve him, as when he was reproached: therefore the devil chiefly goeth about this, that when this cometh to pass, that all speak evil of us, we might doubt whether our cause were good or no, and so fall away: therefore the Prophet prayeth thus earnestly against it. When we are brought to contempt for our deserts, we ought not otherwise to be grieved, then that God is dishonored; but when he shall by this means bring us to the knowledge of our sins, then shall we be content to shame ourselves, because thereby we shall glorify God.

—• **Verse. 23. - Princes also did sit, and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.**

He was thus abused even by Princes, and these did speak against him even in judgment, whither he was drawn as a malefactor; therefore he prayeth thus earnestly against it.

We must then prepare ourselves for evil words, not only of the common sort, but also of the chiefest. David had comfort in God's statutes. When we are thus dealt with rightfully, then let us be humbled: but if in a good cause we be thus dealt with, then let us take heed, for the devil will go about, either to make us use unlawful shifts and means, as to revenge, to lie, or to contend by our own wit and policy, and to flatter, and confess that to be a fault which is none: or else altogether to despair of help, or to be careless of our calling, and to cast it off, that thereby he may have more advantage; for he will make us weary of well doing by trouble, therefore many are

overcome thereby. The help against all these is God's word, for that will assure us that our cause is good, and that God will help us therein.

—• **Verse. 24. - Also thy testimonies are my delight, and my counselors.**

By this means had he help by the Word, by making it his delight and counselor: for this the devil in trouble will go about, to bring men to their wits end; or else to break their hearts, and make them faint, and a wounded spirit who can bear? He put not away craft with craft, but made the commandments his counselors, whereby he first learned wisdom, and then good means to withstand the wicked. Hereby then we shall not only have wisdom but also comfort: we are not come yet to be called afore Princes, yet who so will live godly in Christ, shall have troubles, though not always in goods, nor life, nor banishment, yet in reproach and contempt, even from thy wife, thy servants, thy children, thy neighbors, &c. The word teacheth, that reproach is not without cause: for when the ways of a man please the Lord, the righteous shall be his friend, and the beasts of the field shall be at league with us: therefore there is some sin in us which the Lord by this means would correct; then let us first look to that, and then seek to the word, that there we may find comfort and wisdom to sustain us. For this is the cause that we are without comfort in our trouble, because we meditate not in his statutes, and make them our counsellors. If thou be God's child and despisest lighter troubles, he will send greater, till he have broken thy heart: but if thou belong not to God, the curse shall be hid from thee, and thou shalt be eaten up before thou be aware. Thou must not strive with the devils weapons, as to requits evil for evil; for fire is not quenched with fire, but with water: evil is not overcome with evil, but with good; and therefore rough speeches must be overcome with gentle: and ever when thou art

uncourteously dealt with, then consider thine own sins, and labor to feel them, and thy heart shall be brought down: for then shalt thou be brought to the presence of God who will not suffer thee to be honored, because thou hast not honored, him, &c. yet consider that he doth but fatherly correct thee, and therefore put thy trust in him. Mark what wisdom he hath given to his children in the like troubles, and then go to him by prayer, and lay open thyself to him with hope and faith, and thou shalt have comfort. But if when the temptation cometh, we cannot come to the word, and to prayer, that thereby we may find comfort, we have not laid up the word in our heart, though we can say it all by heart; therefore we must turn a new leaf, and learn after to lay up the word in our heart.

PORTION. 4.

—• **Verse. 25. - My soul cleaveth to the dust: quicken me according to thy word.**

The comfort and wisdom which he had, was by vicissitude, and change, sometime comfort, sometime sorrow: so God's children find this change both into joy and sorrow; those know this that have experience of it, others know it not. Here then is a mirror of God's children; the worldly minded men would always keep one tenor and never be moved: but the children of God do thus change; they cannot find this wisdom and comfort at the first, but then, when they are brought low. Many, when they hear a promise, think to have it by and by; but they mark not, that a promise and the fruition of it is not all at once; for the law will make them fit before they enjoy it. This causeth many to fall from the promises, which seemed to believe, because they have not help at the first: but the children of God melt and cleave to the dust, and yet trust in God and wait on him, and then feel comfort: others

in the beginning of trouble pray, and wait a little, but if help come not quickly, then cast they all away. But the child of God hath a patient spirit, and therefore feeleth comfort, when the hasty minded man wanteth not his woe. He marketh the deliverance of others, and hopeth for the same, and so waiteth still on God. He was as good as dead, and saw no help but the word. The nature of man is ready to trust in means, so long as he hath them; therefore God pulleth all means from us that we may only trust in him. Let us think that God hath delivered others, and therefore he will deliver us.

PORTION. 6.

—• **Verse. 42. – So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers: for I trust in thy word.**

He showeth that of himself he cannot but sin, so that the wicked shall reproach God for him: but if God shall continue his goodness, then shall not his enemies blaspheme. This teacheth us, that without the grace of God, we cannot but sin; and therefore we must depend upon him, and this is the cause that many fall, because we trust too much to ourselves.

[I have trusted.] Here is required a sure faith to apprehend the promises spoken of before, and this if we have, we shall not fall to Gods dishonor.

—• **Verse. 43. - And take not thy word of truth utterly out of my mouth: for I wait for thy judgments.**

He might for a while not find the word of truth to answer; yet he prayeth that the word be not utterly taken from him: so he said, forsake me not over long: This then showeth that our case doth alter and change, ebb and flow, as it pleaseth God, which reproveth them that are always in the same case; for the children of God have another course, and we must look to be so ourselves. And this is a comfort, when we feel ourselves weak, yet God's

children have been so; also it may humble us, considering that God doth for some sin lay this upon us; let us pray, that we may not be so forever.

[For I have waited, &c.] This showeth that we may be so for a while, yet we must wait, till it please him to help us. For thy judgments: that thou wilt execute judgment on the wicked, that thy children may obtain the promises: for then doth the Lord execute judgments, when he punisheth the wicked as he hath threatened, and when he fulfilleth his promises to his children, giving them a tongue to answer his blasphemers.

—• **Verse. 44. - So shall I always keep thy Law forever and ever.**

If thou wilt deal thus, then shall I keep thy word: where he teacheth, that if God do daily assist us, we shall stand; but if he do not, we shall fall flat. This must teach us to pray, and that earnestly: and this showeth perseverance, contrary to the Papists, which teach to doubt of salvation: for the persuasion of God's goodness doth assure us that we shall continue to the end: and if we feel our faith weak, and pray with assurance of his goodness that he will help us, we may be assured to stand.

—• **Verse. 45. - And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.**

He will walk in the commandments that he may be at liberty, for that is the plain way, all other are bi-paths, which he shall be free from if he stick to the commandments. For this is the cause that we are troubled and entangled, because we ask not counsel at God's word, and wholly stick unto that: and therefore we fall into some sin, and be overcome with some temptation. For the word is a lantern to direct our steps: without this we shall wander; but if we tend to this light, we shall be at liberty. This setteth out the benefit that those have which enjoy the word; and their misery that want it. This then requireth, that we be thankful for God's word: and reproveth them that having the word, yet wander astray, and love darkness

more than the light, and falsehood, heresies and lies more than the truth. This is a sin to be punished, when we have the word, and yet walk not at liberty, and if we cannot be at liberty when we have the word, it is sure that we cherish some secret sin, and do not search into God word. For that is so full of wisdom, that it will rid us out of all. Yet the children of God have their infirmities, out of which they have good issues. But the ignorance of God's word is the cause of many troubles; for though a man were in as great a straight as Abraham was when he should offer his son, yet should he be directed. Then this layeth a straight charge on us to study the word of God.

—• **Verse. 46. - I will speak also of thy testimonies before Kings, and will not be ashamed.**

If God will thus assist me, I will speak even before the wisest, and stand in the sight of the Kings though it be fearful. This then will assure us that we shall never fall, if we study, hear, read, &c. on God's holy word, and take heed to our ways according thereto. Then if we desire to stand forever, let us meditate on God's word; for God hath given this not only to the learned, but also to idiots. Here we see that we never rightly profit, till we be not afraid before whomsoever we come: for if we be assured that our cause be good, then may we be assured that it shall be given us what to answer, and this maketh men afraid when they doubt of their cause. We are not afraid to speak to a Gentleman if a Lord be with us: then shall we not need to fear a King, when the King of Kings is with us: as Moses, Heb. 11. None then have this gift of boldness, but they to whom God giveth it, not the wise, not the mighty of the world. The Word giveth us what to answer; then if we fail, it is a sign that we fail in the Word. But let us deal earnestly with the Word, and keep a good conscience, and it shall be given us. This

doth again commend the word of God unto us. If we be not ashamed of him before Kings, we shall be Kings in his Kingdom.

—• **Verse. 47. - And my delight shall be in thy commandments, which I have loved.**

That he may come to this grace, he will love the Word, because he delighteth in it, for delight is the sign of love. Do we not then delight in the Word? We have not a love to it: so of prayer, and hearing the Word, if we delight in it, we will prepare ourselves to hear it, and meditate in it afterward; for he showeth his love when he saith: I will meditate: then, if we will not find terror of conscience, and fall into many evils, let us make conscience to call it to mind: For if we do take the Name of God in vain, by hearing the Word without meditation; then the Word being a true witness, shall be a witness against us in that day: for this meditation is commended, Part. 13. There are set times for hearing, praying, &c: but meditation must ever be with thee, that thou mayest know, whether the thing thou doest be agreeable to his will, and whether thou mayest look for his blessing in it.

PORTION 7.

—• **Verse. 49. - Remember the promise made to thy servant.**

When he had said, he would keep God's Law, he then prayed that he might do it. Secondly, he had the promise for that he prayed, to teach us to rule our prayers by God's word. Thirdly, he sticketh to the promise of the Gospel, not to the law. Fourthly, when he saith, remember, he doth not reprove the Lord of forgetfulness, but rather prayeth that he himself might be kept, that he should not fall.

He had not any particular promise, but applied the general promises to himself. This must serve to answer the devil asking what promises we have

of salvation or forgiveness of sins; for we have the promises that are made to the whole Church, which we have applied to ourselves. So did Abraham Gen. 22, the woman of Canaan: Matth. 15.

[Thy servant.] The promises are made to us, not that we should abuse them, but thereby should become his servants. Wherein thou hast: There is a time between the making and the fulfilling of the promise, which God doth to try whether we will account of the promise, and stick unto it: By this it is manifest that faith and feeling are not all one: but that is faith which without feeling believeth: for when feeling is, then it is an experimental faith.

—• **Verse. 50. - It is my comfort in my trouble: for thy promise hath quickened me.**

When he felt sweetness in it, then he was comforted; for there is a changeable working in God's children. He showeth the nature of faith, which will neither be stayed in vain, nor wicked things; but all his delight was in the word, where though he felt not full comfort, yet he had so much as stayed him. This is contrary to the men of the world, which in their trouble will either seek delight in vain things, or in evil things. This is the nature of faith to feel comfort then, when they are at the point of death. This showeth that God's children have sometime comfort, sometime none. And this is true faith that can comfort us when all means fail, and when we have them, yet not to stay in them. For a righteous man liveth by faith: and therefore when he feeleth Christ live in him, in forgiving his sins, renewing him, and giving him hope of everlasting life; he liveth: but if he cannot feel that, then he is as a dead man. Can we find comfort and delight in the word, when we cannot find comfort in anything else? This is a notable argument of faith. And though we feel drowsiness, yet if we can by fear shake it off, and find sweetness in the word, this is faith. The word then and prayer are

the chiefest comforts in troubles. Contrarily when the word feareth us, because we feel sin abound in us; and because we find not that taste in the word which we ought; as that the threatening's fear not, the promises comfort not, &c. If (I say) we can then fear, though we have plenty of all outward things, and there be no outward occasion to fear, this is an argument that we have faith: but if faith be carried with the time, then it is no faith, but is choked with prosperity or adversity.

—• **Verse. 51. - The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: &c.**

The Prophet was in great distress, because of the reproaches of the wicked, as Psal. 22, yet for all this he was stayed by God's law, though their mocks were exceeding great, that is, often, and in grievous manner. It is no new thing then, that God's children are had in derision: and it is one of their sorest outward troubles, as we see in our Savior Christ, which heard this, he saved others, &c. after which he cried, My God, &c. and this was the last temptation, therefore the greatest. For if this come once into the mind that we suffer for evil doing, then will there be no comfort. The Heathen would do anything for their country; yet would not lose their praise. And this is the cause why we see many fall to heresies, because they cannot be in estimation as they would. The greatness of this temptation did not drive him from the law, Psalm 37. Everyone will be forward when others will speak well of him: but few do learn here with David to do well though they be ill used. And this did the devil espy in the nature of men, therefore he saith of Job, Hast thou not hedged him about? &c. Then let us try ourselves whether such reproaches will drive us from our duties: for if they do, all is not well: but if thou see they do not, then take comfort, and know that thou must approve thyself to God, and not to men; which to do, is an argument of faith, as in Samuel, 1 Sam. 12. David, though his sin was not known, yet he

crieth, Against thee have I sinned. Then if thou canst be sorrowful for thy secret sins, though men speak never so well of thee, and neither will, nor can accuse thee, thou hast saith. Thus then briefly reproach and discredit amongst men must not drive us from well doing: neither must praise and credit among men make us favor ourselves in our sins, or take greater liberty to ourselves.

[He swerved not from Gods law.] But we see, that if we be mocked, we will mock again; if we be reviled, we will revile again. But David would not so do: as we see by his doings when Shemei cursed him, 2 Sam. 16.

These are true notes of repentance, when men can charge themselves more sore than others will: and that they labor to approve themselves to God, which trieth the hearts.

[The proud.] Faith maketh humble, but infidelity maketh proud. Hab. 2, for by faith we know that we have no goodness, are full of corruption, disposed to evil, and unfit to goodness; and this humbleth. But they that know not these, are proud, whatsoever they seem to be. Such are those that contemn the threatening's, and will continue in their sins. For faith in the commandment humbleth and throweth us down: and faith in the promises doth make us with fear to wait upon God, and to be humbled. They are humble to their brethren, which are humbled to God in their heart: and they that are proud and contemn their brethren, are not humbled in their heart. For if they did see that the Lord had forgiven infinite sins to them, then would they forgive a few to their brethren. Secondly, if they considered, that whatsoever they have, they have it for their brethren's profit, then would they be humble to them. Thirdly, if they knew that there is no difference but by grace, then, &c. Can we not forgive? Then are we proud. Can we not devour injuries? Then are we proud. For our own sins being not

forgiven nor cared for, therefore we cannot forgive others, nor regard them. Humility is a true mark of God's children, and pride is a note of the wicked.

—• **Verse. 52. - I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord, and have been comforted.**

He showeth how he was stayed, namely, by looking into the judgments of God against the wicked, and his deliverance of the just. It is not then the good nature of men, the wisdom, &c. that can comfort against reproaches, but rather make worse; but it is the word that comforteth. Thereby he knew that howsoever the wicked flourished, yet they should perish; and howsoever the godly be afflicted, yet they shall be rewarded. Peter speaketh against these mockers in the last chapter of the second epistle, The world shall perish in fire: where he teacheth to answer them, that it is as easy for God to destroy the world with fire, as it was with water, seeing he hath spoken it. So David, when he was brought to say, My God why hast thou forsaken me? Then he stayed himself by this, Our fathers trusted in thee. So Psal. 67. I will remember thy works of old. So Psal. 119, part. 15, by all which he showeth that as God had done, so he would do still.

He remembered all the judgments of God: so Heb. 11, by all the works of God showed in his children, it is proved that we must suffer affliction patiently. So Psalm 106. Then God's people must have a multitude of examples; that if we profit not by one, yet by another: if not by a few, yet by many: for so have the children of God done from time to time. This then is the cause why men fail in reproach, or any other cross, because men have not store of examples out of God's word, especially out of the stories, to strengthen them: for if they would look into the word, and gather them, they might be stayed. If this man were strengthened by former works, how much more ought we which have many more? Especially this, Act. 17, that the

Son of God hath suffered that he may judge all the world: so the great works of God in the Apostles time, the great works of God in the days of Queen Mary; and in these days the judgments of God are on many that have dallied with his word, in giving them over to heresies: Then how ought we to be comforted with the assurance that God will come to judgment?

Object. This seemeth hard, that he was comforted in God's judgments, whereas in another place he saith, I fear because of thy judgments.

Answ. Although they fear the judgments in their flesh, yet they dare approve them to be God's judgments, as David saith, O God of my righteousness: not comparing them to God, but to the wicked, and looking to that promise which in grace he hath made to us; yet not in all our life, but in some righteous cause that we have in hand, as Stephen did. Then if men ever fear at the judgments, and nothing else, the heart is not yet upright; for they are sinners: therefore we must labor to feel comfort by them, in knowing that we are sheep, not goats, that we shall have a reward, and that the wicked shall be thoroughly punished. For otherwise the devil will buffet us, in seeing those that men call wicked, how yet they flourish and the godly are in misery. Then have we truly profited by the word, when with comfort we can behold God's judgments, as is often said, Come Lord Jesus, come quickly. For the child of God is not afraid of evil tidings, Psal. 112.

—• **Verse. 53. - Fear is come upon me for the wicked, that forsake thy law.**

This agreeth well with the former, which was a spiritual joy: for when he seeth that the Lord will judge, and that he is guiltless, he is comforted: but when he seeth the wicked sin, and by sin provoke God's judgments, because they are his flesh, and because they are God's image, therefore he feared. The zeal of God's glory causeth God's children to fear: as Elias, I only, &c.

and David, My zeal hath, &c. and their own sins, as Psal. 119, part. 15. God's children then are afraid when they see the glory of God defaced, and men run to their own condemnation. And here is a difference between true joy, and worldly in God's judgments, Prov. 24, 1. Cor. 5, the one, because their hearts desire is fulfilled: the other, that sin is punished, that God's glory is revenged, and that they are delivered: for in respect of the parties punished, they fear, as Christ over Jerusalem mourned: and this is usual in all the Prophets, when they see the judgments of God approach. Here is a difference between the zeal of the worldly, and of the godly: the one when he seeth a sin done he laugheth, and rejoiceth: but the other fear, as, The rebukes of them that rebuke thee are fallen upon me. The former is the cause that many fall by God's judgment into those things which they find fault with in others. The other is a true note of faith, to fear for the destruction of the wicked, which they themselves fear not. But this is especially, when they see a professor fall, for that grieveth them greatly. The third difference is, that God's children when they are comforted, they also fear; for the regenerate part only is comforted, the unregenerate part doth still fear; and there is good cause that it should fear; as Noah feared, and David, Psal. 119, part 15, but the wicked have no fear, but are overcome with fleshly joy: and therefore the Apostle saith, Phil. 3. Finish your salvation with fear, because of corruption, that either doth or may break forth: as David was afraid when he had sinned. We must then be comforted by God's judgments, but so that we fear. Secondly, we must think that sin is not a small thing, not to be laughed at, but to be feared. Thirdly, that we must be touched for the sins of others, as if they were our own. Fourthly, to forgive injuries against ourselves, but to be greatly displeased and vexed for the dishonoring of God's name. For all these are proper to God's children.

When men take a carnal pleasure in God's judgments, they abuse the grace of God to wantonness: but the children of God, as they joy in their inward man; so do they labor to be humbled by the law in their flesh, which otherwise would be proud: for the flesh would hold no mean, but either would be too sorrowful, or else too joyful.

Thus David mourned for the sins of others: so Paul saith the Corinthians ought to do, 1 Cor. 5, and 2 Cor. 7, where he showeth, that this was the estate of the whole Church, to mourn when any one member had offended. And this is not a new thing: for those are saved which mourned for the iniquities of Zion, Ezek. 9. Then we must be grieved for the sins of others, to show that we are free from their sins, that we are lovers of righteousness, and desirous to glorify God. And when this sorrow can work in us a prayer for them that sin, it will be an argument that we shall be comforted, and shall escape when the judgment cometh. Then men ought to mourn for their own sins: for if God's children cannot be discharged, unless they can mourn for the sins of others; how much less shall we be discharged, if we cannot mourn for our own sins?

—• **Verse. 54. - Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.**

He showeth that he was not envious against the wicked for their delights; but taketh a delight in another thing, that is, in praising God, that he might not be entangled with their pleasures. The remedy of sin, that we fall not into those sins which others have, is to fear lest God punish some secret sin in us, as he hath done in them: For God doth never let us fall into gross sins, but to punish some other sin we lie in, which is secret, and we will not come out of, because it is unknown. And if we will not be entangled with the pleasures of the wicked, we must do as David doth here, so acquaint us

with the word, as that we make our songs of it: that is, that we do not only read, hear, and talk gravely of it, but also make it our songs when we will be merry, as Paul Col. 3, for where there is a delight, there men will even be singing of it. And hereof come these spiritual songs in the Bible, to show their great delight in the word. So (Ephes. 5.) Paul maketh this a sign, that we are full of the Spirit, when we can sing of them.

Here we are taught that our songs ought to be made of the statutes of God, and agreeable to the same, and not after our own will. This we see to be the matter of these Psalms, the laws, the promises of God, &c. The talking of godliness maketh worldly men heavy: but the children of God use all worldly things as though they used them not, and then they are heavy when they displease God: but contra, &c. The want of a spirit in singing, doth show a great decay in godliness; and coldness in this holy exercise argueth a coldness in faith and true religion. Then if men object: Will you not have men to be merry? Yes, but yet with the word, otherwise their mirth is sin. The want of this showeth that men do not their duties with cheerfulness, which thing is threatened in Deut. 28:47.

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

As in another place, the name of God is a strong tower: to the former means he addeth this of prayer, to show that without this the other are unprofitable. In the night: First, that is, continually, because in the day also. Secondly, and simply, because he avoided the applause of men. Thirdly, cheerfully, because the heaviness of natural sleep could not overcome him. All these show that he was wholly given to the word: as we see men of the world will take some part of the night to their delights. And in that he did keep God's testimonies in the night, he showeth, that he was the same in

secret, that he was in the light: whereby he condemned all those that will cover their wickedness with the dark. Let us examine ourselves whether we have broken our sleeps to call upon God, as we have to fulfill our pleasures. All these means did the Prophet use to keep him from falling by the reproach of the wicked: which we also must use if we will overcome it.

—• **Verse. 56. - This I had because I kept thy precepts.**

As God doth punish sin by sin; so doth he reward goodness with goodness: as that, To him that hath it shall be given. Matth. 23, for the Lord crowneth his own gifts: so that if there be in us a love of God's word, this beginning will God increase and bless, so that rivers of water shall flow from him, John 7, and the little lump of leaven shall sour the whole.

If thou be wicked, God will punish one sin with another, as in Saul. So David, when he was not thankful for his sleep, he fell to adultery, which was punished with murder. But if we be thankful for that we have, we shall have more. This then is the cause that we have no more mercies, because we use not them well which we have: for if we could open our mouths wide, we should be filled, Psal. 81.

PORTION. 8.

—• **Verse. 57. - O Lord, thou art my portion, I have determined to keep thy words.**

Here the man of God protesteth that the Lord is his portion; and he further saith, that he will keep God's commandments. All will say that God is their portion, and that their chief desire is to be in his favor: but David severeth himself from others, when he saith, that he will keep the commandments. And hereby he is assured, that the Lord is his portion, because he maketh his word his chief desire. We shall then know that we make God our

portion, when we have this delight to hear the word, &c. and those that have not a delight in the word, they make not God their portion. The like saying is part 15, verse. 2. Let us then always examine and try our hearts to Godward by the word: if we say that he is merciful, then let us see if we believe his promises: if that he is just, then that we believe his threatening's. Thus if we can set the word aloft, it is a sure argument that we have made God our portion. Again, if we can be grieved, when neither promises nor threatening's can affect us, and we are desirous that they might: this showeth that we have a longing desire to have God our portion.

[I have determined.] David was fully resolved of this: for he had duly considered all things, and therefore in wisdom made his choice, and hath made a full resolution. Many have such motions by starts, as the covetous man, the adulterer, &c. but it passeth away, therefore they show that they have not made God their portion; for if they had, then would they have this resolute purpose.

—• **Verse. 58. - I made my supplication in thy presence with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy promise.**

He showeth by a second argument, that God is his portion, in that he prayeth to God: for that which we love, we desire to commune and talk with. Then by this we may likewise try ourselves: for if we have this delight to pray, and if we be sorry when we cannot do it, then do we further show that the Lord is our portion, or else not. Again, we see that it is not enough to make a determination, unless we further pray that the Lord would assist us in our purpose. This is the cause that we cannot make such determination, nor have such good purposes, because we are not often in prayer. The devil will be most busy to tempt, when we have determined;

and we ourselves are ready to be secure: therefore even then we have most need to pray.

[With my whole heart.] He showeth that he is not a hypocrite: And then shall we know that we are not, when our hearts are set before God, and we pour them out before him, as much as we have uttered in words before men. This maketh the children of God to sigh when they pray, because they have to do with God: and this maketh the hypocrites that they cannot see themselves, because they know not that they have to deal with God. And when the children of God cannot come to show their hearts to God, then if they sigh and groan for want of a heart; this is a testimony that we pray in the Spirit, Rom. 8. But when men pray as though they prayed not, and hear as though they heard not: nothing doth the Lord hate more than this.

[Have mercy.] This is the chief of his prayer, and the first, that God would give him mercy; not to crown his work wrought, contrary to the Papists which plead merits: for though the Lord do give new grace, yet not of merit, for that we have is defiled by us, but because he hath a love to crown his own gifts. He doth not pray for mercy of fashion, but even in the presence of God, because the true feeling of his need did drive him to make this prayer. For as when we in the feeling of our heart can long after mercy, this may be a pledge that we shall find mercy: so they that have no feeling of their infirmities, cannot long for mercy; and therefore have no assurance that they shall have mercy: for it is the feeling of our misery that maketh the mercy of God sweet unto us.

He prayeth not for what he lusteth, but for that the Lord promised: for Saint James saith, you pray and have not, &c. and this is the cause, that we have not the thing we pray for, because we pray not according to the word. His word must be the rule of our prayers, and then shall we receive: as

Solomon prayed and obtained: he hath promised forgiveness of sins, the knowledge of his word, &c. these if we have, let not our hearts be set on the other.

He prays for the promise, and maketh not a stipulation by the law: for it is the promise that giveth grace: then shall we here have comfort if we can believe, because we have the covenant of grace, and not of merit. For if we had but the law, the best man must fail and miss, but now it is the promise, of which the worst shall not fail, if they do believe. Object. He had some special promises. Answ. He had but the general promises, whereon he grounded these particular. The promises therefore are generally made, that everyone might know that they belong unto him, and that he might apply them to himself; as here the Prophet doth.

—• **Verse. 59. - I have considered my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.**

He showeth how he came to make God his portion, because he had considered the vanities and inconveniences of his ways, and the mischief that they would bring him to.

Thus then shall we come to turn our steps to God, by examining our sinful ways and the reward of sin. And because men do not thus examine themselves, therefore do they make so small account of the word of God: for if they knew that the gain of sin bringeth loss, and pleasure bringeth pain, then would they not continue in their sins.

The like doth David set down, Psal. 4, where he calleth then to examine themselves before God, and thus Paul, 1 Cor. 5, provoketh the eloquent Preachers to the judgment of God.

This is a new argument to prove God to be his portion: for seeing he had made God his portion, it behooved him to search if there were anything in

him that might displease God, that then he might avoid it.

If we consider that sin maketh us ashamed before God, as Adam was, it will make us leave sin, Rom. 6:22. If we then will daily consider, whether we may offer them up in Christ to God, or whether they make us ashamed, and whether they be to be allowed of men or not, this will make us more wary.

[Testimonies.] There is no true examination without the word; for thereby we know that sin bringeth death; but righteousness bringeth peace in this life, and everlasting joy afterward; this joy made him examine his ways.

—• **Verse. 60. - I made haste and delayed not to keep thy commandments.**

This showeth his care that he had to make God his portion, by this speedy haste he made. All the lets that are in a man, all the corruption of the world, and all the baits of Satan did not stay him; but the spirit made him with joy full haste to seek after God. Paul had lets, and this man had not greater perfection; yet both of them, speaking of a regenerate man, show that if we will not nourish occasions, the Spirit will not suffer us to be overcome: therefore we may attempt the like haste in trust of his help, and we shall find that we shall be enabled in some measure hereunto.

—• **Verse. 61. - The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy Law.**

Though the troupes of the wicked band themselves against him, yet he forsaketh not the Lord: and this is a true trial of his love to the word, that he stood in this affliction. For that love which continueth to the word in affliction, is true: and he that hath such a love, hath a true love. For if when we are ill dealt with, we do not so again, but still stick and continue our love to the word; it is an argument that we love the word, because it is of

God, and not for glory. The children of God in affliction have been daunted; as Job, &c. and this man, no doubt, felt his flesh: yet here he showeth that he overcame it, and stayed himself in faith of the promises, and continued in obedience.

—• **Verse. 62. - At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments.**

A New argument, because he giveth thanks to God for his judgments, even at midnight. Then we must be occupied in setting out the praises of God; for it is the special note of God's children, for hypocrites for need may pray. The children of God feel great want in this: therefore when our hearts are prepared to give God thanks, it is a great gift of God. Midnight, showeth that he was both sincere, and also earnest. Do we this at noon day? If not, then we are far from this: for he used this at morning, noon, and evening: so did Daniel. Singing of Psalms was usual after meat, as our Savior did.

[Judgments.] That is, that God took vengeance on the wicked, and performed his promises to his children: and this confirmed his faith; for here he had an experimental faith. And this if we note the judgments of God, in that he is the punisher of sin, and rewarder of goodness, we shall have strength against the temptations which shall be offered, to make us think that sin is not punished, and that it is lost labor to serve God: and of this argument are many of the Psalms. And this he did at midnight, when all things are most fearful, and therefore a fit time to examine ourselves in fear: and this showed that his faith was sound, seeing he could now praise God. His subscription to the righteousness of God's judgments, was an argument of his faith, for the nature of flesh is to think they are rigorous.

—• **Verse. 63. - I am companion of all them that fear thee, and keep thy precepts.**

To receive help from them, and to be helpful unto them: so Psalm 16. Then if we will make God our portion, we will make much of good men: for if David did this, how much more ought we? It is an argument of pride to despise the company of others. If thou want knowledge, it is to make thee seek it of them that have it: if thou have more than others, then oughtest thou to bestow it upon others: so that thou oughtest not, either for the greatness of thy knowledge, or for the want of knowledge, to withdraw thyself from the company of them that fear the Lord.

If he loved good company, he hated evil men, Prov. 29, for they are abomination one to another: as he saith, I hate them that hate thee. And this is the property of a good man, Psalm 15, yet this must not stay us from doing them good in our callings, as the Magistrate to the subject, &c. As the evil may be in good men's company, yet not companions to them; so may the good be with the evil, and yet not their companions: for we believe only the communion of Saints.

[That fear.] Here is the description of God's children: first, that they fear God, which is the foundation of all: Prov. 1, and then they that fear God rest not in the judgment of men, but approve themselves to God, to do, or to leave undone anything, as it pleaseth or displeaseth God. This fear bringeth forth obedience: and without this fruit, it is but to boast of fear. And these men are they that we must be companions unto.

—• **Verse. 64. - The earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.**

The same thing was in the second verse, yet after another manner. Though the whole earth be full of mercy, yet he desireth only the statutes of God: and this is the eighth argument. So he saith, show me thy favor, teach me thy statutes, part 9, and 16. and because he made this the chiefest sign of God's

favor, to know his word, it is an argument that the Lord was his portion. Let us see how oft we have made this petition, and how vain our petitions are desiring riches, &c. he desired not his kingdom so much as this. He was a Prophet, yet he desireth it: and this is it, the more we know, the more we must desire to know, and never make any stay. He prayeth chiefly for the teaching of the Spirit, without which he should err. He differeth far in desire from the men of this world: for they crave many things before knowledge, and if they have knowledge, they rest therein, and never look, nor ask for the teaching of the Spirit. Secondly, he confirmeth himself that the Lord will teach him, because his goodness is over all the world: he letteth his Sun rise on the evil, how much more will he grant the good requests of his children? When we would then pray to receive, we must remember all God's goodness, and we must desire the teaching of the Spirit, so far as agreeth with the word, and not desire the revelation of the Spirit without the word.

PORTION. 9.

—• **Verse. 65. - O Lord, thou hast dealt graciously with thy servant according unto thy word.**

He putteth the Lord in mind of his former mercies, and so comforteth himself. For when he had said that the Lord's goodness was over the earth, and that he also had found the same, hereby he comforteth himself in that he shall receive more. For God is not as man is; but take we never so much from his treasure, there is never the less: and the more he giveth, the readier he is to give. He knew that God's gifts are without repentance, and that he is not weary of well-doing, but will finish the thing he hath begun: and nothing is more forcible to obtain mercy, than to lay his former mercies

before him. Here are two grounds: first, if he dealt with him well, when he was not regenerate, how much more will he now? And secondly, all the gifts of God shall be perfectly finished. And here is a difference between faith and an accusing conscience: the accusing conscience is afraid to ask more, because it hath abused the former mercies: but faith, assuring us that all his benefits are tokens of his favor, bestowed on us according to his word, is bold to ask more, accusing ourselves of our unworthiness, and laboring to come out of our sins.

When he asked according to God's word, he made the word a rule of his prayer, which assured him that his prayer should be heard, we must not then abuse God's mercies, lest they accuse us: but if we accuse ourselves, then let us see if they have been given according to God's word, and then may we ask new.

—• **Verse. 66. - Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.**

He maketh this prayer oft, but we do not so; and therefore the vanity of our prayers is rebuked, which so often ask other things, and so seldom ask this. He was the man of God, regenerate, therefore he maketh this spiritual request; which though carnal men mislike, because they cannot conceive of the word, yet it is a sign of faith. He maketh this prayer though he believed; because his knowledge was in generals, but his practice in particulars: therefore if God in the particulars did not direct him, he should fail in doing. Hereof cometh it, that the learnedst men are deceived in particulars, because they rest in their general knowledge. Example of admonition: we have general rules to teach us to admonish; but when we come to practice in particulars, then must we either have the new grace of God, or else we shall fail in the practice.

If this man that believed prayed thus; how much more ought they that believe not? And they that believe generally, must confess their blindness in particulars: and therefore they should pray for it.

Although ignorance be helped, yet it is not altogether cured, therefore have we need to pray. Secondly, because our knowledge is in generals, but practice is in particulars, and therein must we have a new assistance: Therefore when we have not good success in our business, we must not, as men are wont, lay the fault on this or that; but we must see the cause in ourselves, who although we have the general rule of our doings; yet fail in the particular practice thereof.

[I believe.] He confesseth that all wisdom was in God's word: and this although we confess, yet in practice we often think that some wisdom of men must be added thereto. But he confesseth that all wisdom is in the word, and that it is sufficient to make men perfect.

—• **Verse. 67. - Before I was afflicted, I went astray: but now I keep thy word.**

This is another reason which moved him to pray, that he might not be as a horse always beaten; but teach me that I may prevent these beatings. If I be taught of thee, I miss not; if I be not, I err. In prosperity I could not seek to be taught, but in affliction draw me thereunto, so that now I desire to be taught of thee. If prosperity made this man worse, seeing we are in prosperity let us be jealous of ourselves, and now seek for that, which God will bring us to by affliction, and which will bring affliction upon us. If he will hear when we humbly cry in affliction; how much more if we make our humble suite in our prosperity? Afflictions come because we will not judge ourselves; then it is a blessing to have the word to judge us, and the

Preacher to rebuke us, that our wanton lusts may be corrected. Then we are fond, if we will be weary of the word, or of daily admonition.

If the word help in affliction, how much more in prosperity if we tend thereto? Whom God loveth, he correcteth: and we shall know that God loveth us when we are corrected, if we be made better by it: for in itself it is a punishment of sin, but when in the death of Christ it is sanctified to us, so that it maketh us die to sin, and that sin is loathsome to us; then is it a token of God's favor. For afflictions are common to all, Eccles. 9, but when we profit by them, then are they good to us. For if good things become hurtful, if they be not sanctified: much more shall afflictions, if they be not sanctified in the death of Christ, to make us examine our ways, and see our sins, and to drive us to Christ. But the wicked are either worse, or no better. Then we must profit by them, or else we make away for a greater punishment.

—• **Verse. 68 - Thou art good and gracious: teach me thy statutes.**

He desireth to be taught by God, that whether he were in prosperity or trouble, he might live well; because prosperity would make him forgetful, and affliction would overwhelm him, if God did not teach him. This must teach us, that in what state soever we be, we desire to be taught of God, otherwise we shall false. After he had showed that he keepeth God's commandments, he craveth for grace, where he pleadeth not his merit. Though he kept the word, yet he prayeth that he may still be taught, because he know not all, and because he was ready to err both in practice and judgment. And this must teach us not only to desire to be taught when we err, but even when we do well. He prayeth especially for the teaching of the spirit.

—• **Verse. 69. - The proud have imagined a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.**

He showeth another cause why he would be taught, and that is, he hath to fight with the world. And we have the same causes, as our corruption, and the world. The world loveth none but her own. And if we were as zealous as others have been, we should be as sore troubled. For they are envious, and if we should fight with them with their own weapons, we were too weak, and therefore we have need to be helped of God.

[Proud.] Faith humbleth, and infidelity maketh proud. Faith humbleth, because it letteth us see our sins, and the punishments thereof, and that we have no dealing with God but in the mediation of Christ; and that we can do no good, nor avoid evil, but by grace: but when men know not this, then they think much of themselves, and therefore are proud. Therefore all ignorant men, all heretics, and worldlings, are proud. They that are humbled under God's hands, are humble to men: but they that despise God, do also persecute his servants.

By proud, he here meaneth them that had good gifts: to teach us, that though we be persecuted of them that are in high places, yet this is the manner of God's people. These first mocked him, part 7, then they did him injury, part 8, and here they devise subtle devices against him: and this is the continual practice of the wicked. This is a great temptation, to set a fair face upon an evil cause, and to deface a good cause; as is noted by the Hebrew word. This was great grace that he could withstand it. The way is to approve ourselves and our cause to God: for if we depend upon men, then shall we be amazed. This maketh that true, which is Eccles. 8, that it happeneth to the good as though they were evil, and contra. This is the practice of the Family of love, to raise up evil reports against the cause of

true religion, and against the persons, and they prevail much. This is the practice of men in these days, to deface the persons by calling them Puritans, and the cause that it will overthrow states.

[With my heart.] The word must have the whole heart, and not a part: or else we shall not withstand this temptation. He meant that he did thoroughly meditate; not that he did nothing else. For want of this, we see that many being well colored with the word, yet do shrink when evil reports arise.

—• **Verse. 70. - Their heart is sat as grease: but my delight is in thy law.**

He further showeth the danger of this temptation: for as they were subtle to devise wickedly, so were they able to bring their wickedness to pass. For by this speech he meaneth that they had all things at their own will, and were through their riches in great authority.

[I delight.] He showeth how he overcame this; by fattening his heart with the word, as the wicked fattened themselves by their riches; or else he should have been carried away. Then let us never rest in reading or hearing the word, till we come to such delight in it, as that we fat ourselves with it, as the worldlings do with their riches.

If we could do this, then should we easily take our hearts from these earthly things: for this is the cause that men set their delight on earthly things, because they know no better. And that they may find this delight, it is needful that they find comfort in the promises, by the forgiveness of sins, by the assurance of God's favorable providence in this life, and everlasting life afterward: which when they feel and find, then shall the word be so sweet, that they shall forgo all things for it. Till we come to this delight, temptations will daunt us; but if we once can come to this, that we can make the word all in all, that is, our glory, our honor, worship, riches, fame,

credit, pleasure, &c. then shall we be soon brought to accompt these outward things as nothing; so that we may have and enjoy the benefit of the word, and the comfort thereof.

—• **Verse. 71. - It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn thy statutes.**

He uttereth the same thing that he did before, but he addeth somewhat thereto. First, he saith, that it was good for him that he had been afflicted: noting the goodness and mercy of God in taking riches, health, &c. from him, and giving him affliction which turned to his good. Riches, health, &c. are the good blessings of God: but all manner of affliction, as sickness, poverty, &c. of themselves be evil, because they are the tags of God's curse, and punishments of sin. How then can it come to pass, that good things should become evil, and evil things become good? The good blessings of God, when by our corruption they are abused to wantonness are made hurtful unto us, because they make our condemnation greater: but these crosses, when in the cross of Christ they are sanctified unto us, then are they good, for as much as they work a care in us to keep the commandments.

Where he saith it is good that he hath been afflicted and not, that I am afflicted, it agreeth with that which is in the epist., Heb. 12. No affliction is joyous for the present time: for in poverty there are no riches, in sickness no health, &c. we must not then look presently when any cross comes, to say it is good: for this cometh afterward, when we have been so exercised with it, as that we are more humbled under the hand of God, and have some greater care to please him; when I say we have been thus exercised, then will the cross bring the quiet fruit of righteousness, and then shall we say, it is good for us that we have been afflicted. But if we be impatient; or if the cross

make us either more careless, or no better than we were before, that cross is but a preparation to another, &c.

[I will learn, &c.] Because there is none but he will vow and promise amendment, when the hand of God is on him, but the children of God alone reap fruit afterward; therefore in these words doth the Prophet sever himself from the wicked: and whereas he said before that he did keep the commandments, noting a present fruit of his affliction; so he now moreover addeth, that he will keep them, noting that the use of his trouble should continue with him forever. Let us then consider of this, all of us either at one time or other have vowed somewhat to the Lord; let us see if we be now careful to keep and perform it: if we be not, our affliction hath done us no good, we have no profit by it.

—• **Verse. 72. - The law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver.**

Here he noteth one fruit of his affliction, that he was brought to make such account of God's word, as that he preferred it to infinite numbers of gold and silver. And truly if we consider that it is the word of God that sustaineth us in our trouble, and is our comfort, we cannot then choose but make much of the word. No number of goods can help us in misery, and if the word do that which all other things cannot do, very meet it is that the word should be preferred to all other things whatsoever.

PORTION. 10.

—• **Verse. 73. - Thine hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding therefore, that I may learn thy commandments.**

He prayeth still for wisdom and understanding. Those men are beasts, which being in ignorance, love it better than knowledge, and darkness better

than light: these men must be sent to the beasts to learn, Isa. 1. The Ox, &c. The heathen say that this is a natural property to desire knowledge. The Lord must teach these men with rods; for they will not hear the voice of the charmer, charm, &c.

He seeketh knowledge out of the word, to make a difference between him, and the heathen, which by their knowledge get nothing but commendation: but our wisdom must be out of the word, Deut. 8.

He desireth knowledge that he might practice it; whereby he condemneth them that seek knowledge, and care not for practice: and teacheth us to seek all knowledge only to practice it.

Seeing he desireth to be taught, he condemneth them that think they may come to this knowledge by their own study and diligence, without the teaching of the spirit.

David so well learned prayed thus earnestly, and shall we be thus cold? He so much to feel want, and we to be without feeling? For to be without knowledge, is to be without desire of more, and a little knowledge if men rest in it maketh proud.

How goeth it then with them that think they know all things, seeing this man to whom they are inferiors, prayeth thus? This request was made before, but he addeth a new reason. So in the first part, and second, and third, and fourth, and fifth, and almost in every part this request is made, and in every place a new reason to move the Lord to hear his prayer.

He putteth the Lord in mind of his former mercy, that he might obtain more, and saith he is a creature, even a man with a soul, and not a beast; therefore give knowledge, &c. wherein he confesseth that if the Lord give not knowledge to him, he were better be a beast: and such are all those that are but only men: for all the pleasures in this life are not worthy the sorrow

in the life to come, Eccles. 11. Therefore if men have not their reason sanctified by the word in faith and love to serve God: they are no better than beasts.

Seeing God hath given reason, he will give knowledge, with this he is comforted.

Objection. But how can he hereby be comforted, seeing others have reason also?

Answer. All mercies must be considered in Christ, through whom they are sanctified, and by whom we are sure that the Lord will crown his own gifts.

Another reason to teach us when we have the gifts of God sanctified unto us, is, when we are humbled in ourselves, and mislike ourselves though we have received more than others, for we must think ourselves unworthy of them, and desire that God will yet more sanctify them to us, and give us the right use of them: then shall we, and we may, lay them before God as an argument to move him, that he would deal mercifully with us, and further continue and increase his mercy and good will towards us; because hereby we know that in Christ they are sanctified unto us.

—• **Verse. 74. - So they that fear thee, seeing me shall rejoice, because I have trusted in thy word.**

Here is an end why he desireth knowledge, for that others by my example shall be moved to seek thee, and shall have hope that thou also wilt hear them when they cry. This then is a great honor, that we shall not only save our own souls, but also be helps to others, that they may be saved, wherein the Lord vouchsafeth us great honor: for to cause the careless to seek God, and to confirm the weak, is a great honor. Likewise hereby we shall stop the mouths of them that speak against the ways of the Lord.

Contrariwise when a professor falleth away, he loseth his soul, he hurteth the weak, hardeneth the wicked, and openeth the mouths of the wicked. Thus by the one God is glorified, and our brethren profited: and by the other the clean contrary.

When we see any man trusting in God to be delivered out of temptation, then may we be confirmed and comforted with hope, that we also shall be delivered. This is said, Psal. 34. Other shall be comforted. And Psal. 40. They that see me, let them be comforted. For when the Lord confirmeth any of his promises to any of his children; we may likewise be comforted that we shall find them also true. So the Apostle reasoneth, Abraham was justified; therefore shall we: so Heb. 11. As contrariwise, when we see the truth of God's threatening's upon any, then we should know, that if we have the same sin, we shall also feel the same punishment.

Then must we consider of God's children, how that by nature they are no better than we: therefore if we can believe, then shall we have hope to become like them, for God doth not accept persons. We must likewise consider of the wicked, that by them also we may be instructed.

None shall rejoice at the example of the godly, but they that fear God; and this fear is the beginning of all goodness: some that fear God may have a doubtful conscience, and they shall have comfort by the examples of God's mercies in others. Without this fear men cannot rightly consider of God's works; but who so feareth, he shall profit by them.

Here is the true use of all the Scriptures, not to marvel only at the examples of God's mercies or judgments; but to be comforted and confirmed by the one, and to fear by the other.

—• **Verse. 75. - I know O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou hast afflicted me justly.**

This is somewhat like, that It is good that I have been afflicted: but after a new manner; as though he should say, Thy judgments are righteous and just, though my flesh doth persuade me the contrary. And to show the certainty of this, he saith, I know, This know ledge he had by the word: because we shall then subscribe to the justice of God, when we can subscribe to the word. Then if we would subscribe to the righteousness of God's judgments; let us by the word meditate upon his threatening's and promises; and though we cannot see the reasons of all, yet must we acknowledge them to be holy, because the Lord is holy; and his word is holy, therefore his works are holy.

If we be not able to behold the beams of the Sun, much less can we see the brightness of God's works: and let us ever accuse ourselves of blindness and rebellion, rather than the Lord of injustice. He is then acknowledged to be just, when we yield to the righteousness of his precepts. And when we can confess his justice thus, we shall well confess his mercy. Then if we will confess the justice of God, we must confess his judgments to be holy; otherwise we do not.

[And that.] This is a special Note of faith, that he can apply that particular to himself, which the Lord had given generally: and till we do thus, we neither believe promises nor threatening's. We must not rest then in generals, but apply them to ourselves, whether they be promises or threatening's: and this will draw us out of sin, and comfort us in trouble.

[In faithfulness.] He had before confessed God's justice, and now he confesseth his mercy: as if he had said, Thou of thy mercy hast thus laid thy rod upon me, that I may be such a one as thou mayest perform thy promise to, as Psalm 130. This must make affliction sweet, because the special end thereof is not to punish us, but to make us fit to receive his promises, and he useth it as a remedy and medicine against sin, and as he showeth his justice,

in that he suffereth not sin in his children; so he showeth his mercy, in that thereby he cureth them.

—• **Verse. 76. - I pray thee that thy mercy may comfort me, and according to thy promise unto thy servant.**

Because he had confessed the merciful dealing of the Lord, therefore he craveth mercy, for he knew that with the Lord is mercy to be feared, Psal. 130. He dare not stand to the rigor of God's justice, but he flieth to his mercy, contrary to the Papists, Pelagians, and Family of love.

And thus must we labor to cure our unbelief by his promises, that we fall not to despair, for we are ready to presume in prosperity, or to despair in trouble; but they must be both cured, the one by the meditation of God's judgments in prosperity, the other by the promises in trouble. For then the judgments have done with us, when they have brought us to humble ourselves to the Lord, because of our sin, and then are we to look for his mercy: for then are we fit for it. We must then couple justice and mercy together, and make use of both.

He had joy before, and yet he craveth comfort; where we note the change of the consciences of God's people, sometime joyful, sometime sorrowful. This must be a stay to us against the temptation which Satan will offer, saying, Thou art fickle, and ever changing, all is vain: Nay, we are as the children of God in all ages have been.

[According.] He had no special promise, but applied the general promise to himself; for all the promises are made in general manner; Come all. &c. that all the Church might have their part in them, and none should think that they were shut out. This had the woman of Canaan when she came to Christ: because she stayed on this general promise, that he was sent to the miserable, as she was.

As we can never leave sin, or come to true repentance, unless we believe that that God which hath punished sin in others, will also punish sin in us; so shall we never receive comfort by the promises, unless we can particularly apply those promises to ourselves, which are generally made to the Church. But if we can do this, we shall have comfort in our souls, and strength to withstand the temptation which the devil ministereth, saying, What promise hast thou that thou shalt be saved?

To know that God is merciful, is not enough, unless we be among those, to whom the promises belong, and then we may know that we shall be holpen; because through his promises, he is become a voluntary debtor to us. As a man, that is able to help us, yet we have no assurance that he will help, unless he give his word to us. Then though God be merciful, yet is not the misery or worldly men cured, because the promises do not belong to them, unless they believe. Then it is no marvel, though the Papists doubt of their salvation, because they have no faith, nor will have to apply the general promises of grace to their own hearts.

There is a difference between God's children, and the wicked in their trouble: first, the children of God are convinced both in judgment and in affection: but the other are but only convinced in judgment, as Pharaoh, Ahab, Saul. For where the judgment and affection are both convinced, there followeth conversion: now because these were convinced, and yet not converted, therefore it was only in judgment, and not in affection Secondly, the children of God do so confess his Justice, as that they also confess him merciful, which settleth them in sound judgment, and inflameth their affections: but the other do only confess his judgment; and therefore we see thieves and whores recant, and yet return to their filth again; because justice can break, yet mercy only changeth from evil to good. Thirdly, the children

of God by one fault are brought to amendment of their whole lives, through sorrow which worketh repentance: but the wicked by God's judgments are brought to a confused thinking of sin and amendment, or else rest so much in one, that they look not to any other: as Pharaoh confessed that God is righteous, but he let not the people of Israel go: Ahab confessed, yet he restored not the vineyard again: and Pharaoh by this one sin was not brought to the sight of his Idolatry, nor to any care to leave it.

If we will then have use of this threefold difference, let us ever pray, that our affections may ever yield to that, which our judgments do subscribe to: and that not only for fear of punishment, but because with the Lord there is mercy: and when we are convinced of any one sin, let us so labor to amend that, as we also look the whole course of our life, to amend whatsoever is amiss therein.

—• **Verse. 77. - Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy Law is my delight.**

In that he doubleth this request in two verses, he showeth that he had no light feeling of sin, yea that he was as a dead man, because he felt not the life of God in him. This must we mark, that when we are brought to so low estate, that all comfort seemeth to be past, yet let us remember that God's children have been so; and therefore let us double our prayers, knowing that with the Lord is mercy, with him is life in death, and help in the greatest extremity. This if we can do, then shall we be armed against the greatest temptation that Satan hath; and that is this, to persuade us that our case is such, as never any of God's children were in: our temptations such, as no man had; our sins such as none have committed: with which if he can prevail, then doth he make us past hope of recovery, then doth he make us past using any means to be recovered: for when we are persuaded that the

disease is incurable, then we leave all means that might help us. Mark the tender consciences of God's children.

If this man of God, which had been no common sinner, was so humbled for sin, that his moisture was turned into drought, Psal. 32, before he could be brought to confess his sin; it first showeth, how greatly sorrowful we should be: and again, the great hypocrisy that is in our hearts, whereby the devil worketh in us, to think that our sins are but small, and therefore to be careless of them, that at the last he may make them so great, as that we shall think they be not able to be forgiven. This is his practice and his purpose, therefore let us take heed of it.

[That I may live.] He did eat and drink, and he had the use of his senses, yet this he counted no life, because he felt not himself reconciled to God; but was in sorrow and heaviness: yet he was skillful in music, which might have put sorrow away: he had also friends, and many valiant men, in whose company he might have delighted; yet in all these he took no pleasure, but still this was in his mind, how he might be reconciled to God. What shall we say then of them, which, so that they may have these outward things, they never care for God's favor: or if they be in trouble, they only seek to put away their trouble by company, play, &c. and never seek with their heart to be reconciled to God? Both these are far from the affection of this man: and let us know, that though we had kingdoms at our pleasure, though we had at commandment all pleasure and pastime; yet if we were not reconciled to God, and if they were not sanctified to us in Christ, they would nothing avail us, and the end of them would be but heaviness.

Then let us not flatter ourselves, for the life of sin is the death of the soul, and without Christ there is no life: but if through Christ we be reconciled to

God, then can no misery make us miserable: and though we want all outward things, yet we have all in God through Christ.

[For thy Law is my delight.] He felt not this presently, but he meant, that when God should restore him to life, that he might not deceive himself, he should feel God's mercy in his word: so that without God's mercy in his word, he felt no comfort. Many will confess them to be miserable, if they have not God's mercy; but few will with David acknowledge that without mercy in the word they are miserable. The word is the means to bring us to God's mercy, therefore by the word we must esteem God's mercies.

Let us examine, if the reading, hearing, and meditating of God's word be as sweet unto us, as our very life: or whether we have special feeling of God's favor in his word; so that the feeling of God's goodness doth even make us with this man of God to delight in it.

The great delight in God's word overshadoweth all worldly pleasures, and will make men use them, as though they used them not: but if we cannot come to this delight, then is it no marvel, if that we put our whole pleasure in these outward things.

The way to come to this delight, is to keep a continual war against our affections; for if we please ourselves in them, then shall not the word be pleasant, till those affections be controlled; but if we can tame our affections of anger, lust, &c. then shall we feel sweetness in the word when we come to it.

—• **Verse. 78. - Let the proud be ashamed: for they have dealt wickedly and falsely with me: but I meditate in thy precepts.**

As he had before said that the godly should be comforted in his deliverance, so here he saith, that the wicked should see their wickedness,

and be ashamed, either with such shame as might bring them to repentance, or which might confound them if they would not repent.

He prayeth against their enterprises, not against their persons, nor the image of God in them. He hath some prayers given by special instinct for the overthrow of the wicked in other places; but here he maketh that prayer which the Church ought to make. For we cannot pray that God's people may be comforted in our deliverance, but we must also pray that the wickedness of the wicked may turn to their shame. This being observed, that we pray not against their person, but their enterprise; then this, that we simply respect the glory of God, and the good of God's people. For if we should do it of some special grudge, then should we make God's glory a cloak of our evil purpose, and sin against him.

We may then pray that the Lord would bless his word among us, that he would sanctify us by it, that our good works might be known to others, for his glory. Therefore we may pray (so that it be in love) that the heresies of Papists, Families of love, and others may be discovered and overthrown, and the persons ashamed of their doings.

[They dealt falsely with me.] This showeth that their dealings that he prayed against, and not against their persons, because their dealings were wicked and false. And this teacheth when we must thus pray, even when their wicked dealings are plain, and their doings false; and then may we pray with hope, because the righteous God loveth righteousness; and if the cause be good, it will come to a good end. For though truth may be ashamed, yet it cannot be ashamed forever: for God will defend his own cause, and though the wicked for a time prevail, yet in the end they shall come to shame. This then first comforteth us in every good cause, that it

shall have a good issue: and again, that we take no evil cause in hand; for if we do, it will bring shame at the last.

[But I meditate in thy statutes.] He repeateth the same thing often, and surely if the world could not contain the books that might be written of Christ, and yet for our infirmity the Lord hath comprised them in such a few books, and yet one thing in them often repeated, it showeth that the matter is weighty, and of us duly and often to be considered. And again we are taught that, that is a thing, that none do so carefully look unto, as they ought. And he showeth, that as his enemies sought by evil means to hurt him; so he sought to keep a good conscience, that so they might not hurt him. Then we must not set policy against policy, nor *Cretisare cum Cretensibus*: but let us always tend to the word, and keep us within the bounds of that, and fight with the weapons that it teacheth us. And this is the cause, that many good men are overcome by the wicked, because they strive with them with their own weapons; and then they must needs be too hard for us. Again, seeing they never want evil means because they give over themselves thereto: so if we would give over ourselves to God and his word, and admit nothing but that which agreeth to the word; then should we be made wiser than our enemies.

—• **Verse. 79. - Let such as fear thee turn unto me, and they that know thy testimonies.**

As he had not his own flesh to fight against only, but the world also: so he did not only fight himself alone, but seeketh the help of others. When many see that religion cannot be truly professed, but danger will come of it, because many set themselves against it, they fly from it, and go to the greater part, which is the wicked. If we will avoid this, let us join ourselves to God's children, and they will help us with counsel and advise: for one

may be strong when we are weak, another may have counsel when we shall not know what to do: therefore by them, we shall be kept from many evil things. So Paul, 2 Tim. 1:16, after he had complained of the wrong that many had done unto him, he straightway giveth thanks for the family of Onesiphorus, which refreshed him more than all his enemies could discourage him; so that he durst oppose this one household to the whole rabble of the wicked. It may also be a comfort to us, when the temptation of Elias cometh to us, to think that godliness were gone out of the world: for then shall it be good to set the children of God before us, that we may hear of them, and be in their company, and so be comforted.

Again, it is no small thing to be godly indeed: for then we shall be a comfort to God's children, when they hear that we continue in godliness: whereas otherwise, we are very many stumbling blocks, if we shall be ready to fall, or have fallen.

Again, the mouths of the wicked shall be stopped: for when the Magistrate, Minister, and professor continue in holiness, then though he would speak evil, yet his mouth should be stopped; and what great glory should come to God by this? So that here is a special spur to move any to stand and continue in godliness.

If David did thus desire the company of God's children, what ought we to do? But men know not their wants, they know not the communion of Saints, therefore they are careless of this. Yet Paul desired to come to the Romans, that he might receive mutual comfort: for every member of Christ hath somewhat wherewith he may do thee good: because he is anointed with the same oil that thou art; therefore by him thou shalt remember something forgotten: or have thy judgment reformed in some particular thing. But we know not the profit of this, because we have no use of it.

In the eighth part, he said this, chiefly that he might do them good; and here chiefly that they might help him. He showeth that the feet of God's children are directed by God; and if they come to us, it is a blessing of God; if they do not, it is his punishment.

By fear, he meaneth, that when good men fear God, they have a chief care to please God, and a chief care that they might not displease him, but may be approved of him in all their doings. He joineth knowledge with fear, because that knowledge without fear puffeth up, and so becometh unprofitable. Secondly, because knowledge without fear resteth not simply in the word, but seeketh by means. Thirdly, because if men have knowledge without fear, they will not come much to the afflicted, because they have not been humbled. Therefore that we may be humbled, and that we may not run riot, but contain ourselves in the word, and become profitable and comfortable both to others and ourselves; fear must needs be joined with knowledge. It is also necessary that knowledge be joined with fear: first, because fear without knowledge may at the last kick against God, as did Paul, and the Jews: and Papists of conscience whiles they feared God without knowledge, persecuted God's children: secondly, because many that fear God aright, yet do hurt in good causes by indiscreet dealing, whereas they had no purpose so to do. Knowledge then must direct fear, and fear must season knowledge, and both must be joined together Job. 31, doth show notably in many causes, how needful the fear of God is; where this is rendered as a reason of many things, that he feared God.

—• **Verse. 80. - Let mine heart be upright in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed.**

He prayed before for good understanding, here he prayeth for sound affections: this order in prayer must we also use: first to pray for

knowledge, and then for good affection. For good affections without knowledge, are nothing worth, and knowledge without affections is nothing. Then we must pray, that as we have greater knowledge than others, so our affections may be better than others, and our hearts more upright. He showeth that there is no uprightness but in the Commandments, therefore what good affections soever seem to be in Turks, Papists, and such as have not knowledge, these cannot be upright, because they have not the word. No man can know his own heart but by God, (Jer. 17.) and by the word, which is of the same nature that God is.

PORTION. 11.

—• **Verse. 81. - My soul fainteth for thy salvation: yet I wait for thy Word.**

In this part he showeth his miseries, that he was in, and his hope to be delivered, which in the latter end he prayeth for. His soul fainteth: and this is amplified in the verses following. His affliction was great, and through the infirmity of his flesh, he was grieved with it. The Philosopher thought that it was patience to contemn sorrow, and not to be moved with it: but the examples of Scripture show that the children of God do feel their sorrow; yet they are sustained by waiting for God's mercies, whereby they are at the last delivered. It is necessary that we should be touched with our troubles: First because, if we felt it not, we should be proud as the manner of worldly men is. Secondly, we should not come to the feeling of our sins, for which afflictions are sent to us: Thirdly, we should have no trial of our Faith: Fourthly, if we should not know that God's children had feeling of them, then when we feel them, we should be brought to despair. For then shall we think, that we are not in the number of God's children, and therefore we

should leave off striving, and give over our good cause, and so fall from God.

But when we consider that as Elias, so all God's children have had infirmities, James 5, and Paul and Barnabas, Acts 16, when we shall see that they, which are set before us for examples, were brought to streightness, and that they did not despise them, but by striving overcame them: then if we feel such weakness in ourselves, we shall be encouraged to take the Cross upon us, with hope that with them we may overcome. It is good to know these things before affliction; for the more we profit in this doctrine, the better we shall bear our afflictions.

When this man was thus afflicted, he waited on the word, because of his weakness, and in patience did tarry the Lord's leisure: neither doubting of his own cause, nor yielding to the evil causes of his enemies: this is patience, and this is the practice of God's children, as Job 33. Then must we look for these afflictions, because of our sins, because of the greatness of the wisdom of God, and his mercy, to deal thus with us, that he may heap up blessings on us in this life, and everlasting glory in the life to come. If we cannot abide small afflictions, how should we abide greater? Again, some will abide small and short troubles, yet if they increase and continue, they will fail: which showeth that men have not Faith to glorify God. For that Faith glorifieth God, which believeth God's word to be true, and waiteth for the accomplishing of it. For because we live by Faith, therefore we have need of patience, Hebrews 10, for the Lord will deliver those that are such, Psalm 147, Isaiah 57. For he will save them, and come to dwell with them, because he hath a pleasure in them.

—• **Verse. 82. - Mine eyes fail for thy promise, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?**

The next verse hath the same meaning, and the doubling of it, maketh it more weighty. He saith Word or promise, for salvation, to show that the word bringeth, and confirmeth our salvation. When he saith that his eyes and body were troubled, he showeth that the fainting of the soul, is the fainting of the body, to teach us in the diseases of the body, not only to look to natural causes and remedies, but to have an eye to the soul, and remedy that; for a wounded spirit who can bear? The way to cure the body, is to cure the soul first, as Psal. 103, and healed, (Job 33.) God speaketh once or twice, &c: his flesh shall be as, &c. Example Hezekiah was sick, but after his sins by prayer being forgiven, then his disease was healed, Isaiah 28, and Chron. Benhadad was sick of a curable disease, yet for his sins it could not be helped. Job was a very Lazar, for the trial of his faith, yet the way for him to recover (saith Elihu) was thus to be humbled for sin; and Elihu for this was not reprov'd, but the Lord confirmed his words from heaven. Then though God's children be not chiefly punished for sin, yet because they have sin in them, therefore they must take this way also. As we see Job confessed his sins before he was restored. So Hebrew 12:3. You have not fought to blood: meaning that though God might justly punish, yet he will use affliction for our trial, and withal will kill our corruption. Psalm 32, after he had called them blessed, whose sins, &c. he showeth how he was brought to it, first, by setting down the corruption of men, which God must cure with corrections; yea they were so sore on him, that his moisture was turned into drought: but when he confessed his sin, then the Lord forgave the punishment of his sin. Must this man be taught by this means, and have not we need of it? In the book of the Chronicles, Asa is reprov'd because he sought to the Physicians, and not unto the Lord. His meaning is not that Asa sought not to God at all, but that he sought not chiefly, nor first to God: so

that this is spoken by comparison, that he sought not to God so much as to the Physicians. Again, the purpose of God's spirit is not to disallow the use of Physic: for when Hezekiah was absolved of his sins by Isaiah, then did the Prophet command that fig leaves should be taken, and laid to it: and how can he then mislike that, which he there commanded? This general doctrine then may be gathered, that what disease or affliction soever cometh to a man's body, for what cause soever, yea though it be for the trial of faith; yet the way to come out of it, is to look to our souls, and to cleanse them: for if they be once purified, then the body will be easily cured. For if God said, judge yourselves that ye may not be judged; he will be likewise sure not to judge us, if we will judge ourselves; but when we shall begin to judge ourselves, he will leave off to correct us, Psalm 89, and 1 Cor. 11.

—• **Verse. 83. - For I am like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.**

We must remember the promises and the commandments in all our troubles, and they will sustain us: for if any fail in trouble, it is because they trust not the promises, or keep not the commandments. If we will be sure then that no affliction shall hurt us, but help us, and turn to our good, and to assure us of life everlasting, and to be delivered out of them in God's good time; then let us look to all the promises made to us in Christ, and build a good conscience upon God's commandments. But if we fail in these, then may we be sure that in trouble we shall fail, 2 Cor. 7.

And these two help one another: If thou wilt be sound in the faith, then labor to keep the commandments: and if thou wilt not be driven from the obedience of the commandments, then confirm thyself in the promises of the forgiveness of sins, of God's providence, and of eternal life. For if thou canst believe these, then neither pleasure nor pain shall make thee forsake

thy obedience: but these shall be so pleasant to thee, that thou shalt wholly labor to please God. These two reasons Paul useth 1 Tim. 3, to move men to obedience; First, the promises of the forgiveness of sins: secondly, of everlasting life, and to these add God's providence. And this is the cause of all sin, because men believe not that the threatening's of God are true. For if they could be persuaded of that which is Psal. 89. He will visit their sins, &c. the children of God should not need to think of hell, and other torments belonging to the wicked in the life to come. Because that if they knew, that though they were delivered from pains in the world to come, yet the Lord would punish their sins in this life, and would bring them to poverty, to contempt, to be reproached, to be slandered, &c. even this would make them loath to offend. And surely the Lord will do this: for if he be neither a wise nor loving earthly father, which will not correct his sons when they do evil, surely it must needs be that God must either be unwise and not loving, or he must punish them his children that offend. For though he hath made a covenant with them, that hell shall not prevail against them; yet hath he not made a covenant to free them in this life, because that he will drive them to the cross of Christ, by laying crosses upon them.

Again, if men could believe the promises of God made in Christ, for the forgiveness of sins, for God's fatherly providence, and for life everlasting; then would they, having these promises, purge themselves from all filthiness, and finish the course of their salvation in sear, 2 Cor. 7, verse. 1. And this belief in God's promises is it, that maketh men leave sin for conscience sake, and to yield obedience to God's will; so that this belief bringeth forth pure obedience to God's will. Again, belief in God's promises is strengthened by obedience: as Peter saith, Make your election and calling sure by good works. For when the Lord shall see that we have a care to do

his will, then will he multiply the graces of the spirit upon us, so that we shall be better confirmed in his promises. If we will not then be brought to doubt or despair of God's promises, when trouble and anguish shall come; then let us labor to build a good conscience upon the word and commandments. And if we will not be drawn away with worldly pleasures, then let us consider those promises which God hath made unto us. For when men begin to doubt of God's promises, they begin also to doubt of the commandments: and when men doubt of the commandments, they also doubt of the promises: and when men doubt of both, then is sin a light matter unto them. For faith in God's promises breedeth obedience, and obedience confirmeth saith in the promises: therefore we must labor for them both, and pray for both.

—• **Verse. 84. - How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me?**

This verse and the second verse, show that it is lawful for God's children to make known their infirmities to him, so that they wait patiently for help from him. For this only displeaseth him, when we please ourselves in moiling against them: otherwise when we come in reverence, it pleaseth God that we should lay out our infirmities before him. Thus Abraham and Mary laying out their infirmities, with misliking of them, desired that they might know how the things should come to pass: but Sara and Zechariah did contrary. This is a comfortable thing, that when we are in any trouble, we may lay out our temptations to him, so that it be with trust in the promises, and misliking of our infirmities, with a longing after God's mercy, in a fear of his Majesty, and a desire to be helped of our evil and corrupt infirmity.

[When.] He had been exercised a long time, and now he prayeth that he may be helped, least he through infirmity put his hand to evil. Many will make their complaint, but it is too soon, even before they have been exercised. But we must be contented to be in long trouble, and we may yet look for God's help, acknowledging it to be his great goodness, that he continued and held us out so long in trouble.

[Wilt thou execute.] This is an ordinary prayer, not against any certain persons, but rather generally against God's enemies, and their evil causes. For the Lord executeth judgment upon his children for their conversion, as Paul, Act. 9, and upon the wicked for their confusion. He prayeth against them that belonged not to God, and yet not so much against their persons, as their evil causes, and no otherwise against their persons, then they are joined with the causes. And thus may we do, for the confusion of God's enemies; otherwise we cannot.

—• **Verse. 85. - The proud have digged pits for me, which is not after thy law.**

This showed first that he prayed against their evil cause: secondly, that he suffered unjustly: first, because he suffered for the truth: secondly, because he behaved himself godly in his cause, not using unlawful means. And we must look that we have these things before we pray this prayer: first, that our cause be good: secondly, that it be rightly handled: therefore heretics and wicked men cannot make this prayer. David was long in this trouble, and yet he provoked them not with evil words, but labored to overcome their evil with goodness, as Psalm 33. So when we do them no evil, when we have labored to do them good, and prayed, and fasted for them in patience and long suffering; then, if it be against God's enemies and their evil causes, we may pray this prayer.

—• **Verse. 86. - All thy commandments are true: they persecute me falsely; help me.**

He hath an assured persuasion of the truth of his cause, and of the evil using of his enemies; both which he knoweth by the truth of God's word: this maketh him to stand out in his good cause, and to stick to the truth of God's word. This is a great thing: for the devil will throw into men's minds; if this cause were good, it should not be persecuted: but thou art more precise than needeth, &c. to this end, that if he could once bring them to doubt of their cause, they should leave suffering: for if men be once persuaded that their cause is evil, or if their cause be good, and yet if they know it not, then can they not suffer for it. Therefore if we will stand in trouble, let us now in peace be assured, and grounded in the knowledge of the truth, and build up ourselves now in faith and a good conscience. For if this be once said to us of the devil, Thou hast heard much, and yet least not profited, leave thy cause betime, or else thou wilt shame thyself, and thy cause too; then it must be a great thing that will make us stand.

[Help.] Though he had been long in trouble, so that he was ready to be destroyed, yet he prayeth, contrary to the reason of the flesh. This taught, that even in the greatest trouble we may call upon God, and when all help seemeth to be past, then is the time to be holpen, because the wickedness of the wicked is at the full, and our trial is manifest. For the lot of the wicked shall not, &c.

—• **Verse. 87. - They had almost consumed me upon earth, yet did I not forsake thy statutes.**

Here is another argument of David's faith, and constancy, nothing could make him forsake God's word. He was like a bladder bottle in the smoke, verse 83. Pits were digged for him in which he was near fallen, he was in a

manner consumed upon and from the earth, yet nothing can make him to forgo his hold, abandon his general, run from his colors, and forsake that profession which he had made of Piety. Thus the malice of the wicked will never have an end, the state of God's children is oftentimes desperate, and so long as the ungodly remain upon earth, the godly must think by them here to be troubled. In the world saith Christ ye should have trouble, but in me peace, be of good comfort, I have overcome the world. John: 16.

There, 1. Saul, his courtiers, his generation, and alliance, yea and many of Judah by his means: they, thine enemies, the Churches enemies, and the enemies to the commonwealth: they adversaries to thy providence in anointing me King, opposites to thy mercies in my manifold deliverance, even they.

[Had almost] not altogether, for thou wast on my side, thou diddest confound their consultations, disannul their designs, overthrow their enterprises. Thus God bringeth to the grave and reviveth again, and though his servants be ready to perish, yet will he send a gracious deliverance.

[Consumed me.] Nothing but desolation will serve the wicked. Searing, wounding, hurting will not serve. But the memorial of the just must be rooted out.

[Upon earth.] Perhaps he means his exile in the land of Judah: yea, but God hath provided heaven for his, there shall we be free from all confusion, though we lose earth, yet shall we never loose heaven, we may lose an earthly Jerusalem, we shall not our heavenly.

[I did not forsake.] Here is the true godly man indeed, he will forsake house, and lands, father and mother, wife and children, friends and favors, before he will forsake his God, and that profession he had made of Piety and godliness, whereunto he was directed in the word.

—• **Verse. 88 - Quicken me according to thy loving kindness: so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.**

He showeth that he was dead: and when he desireth to be quickened, by loving kindness, he showeth that without this there is no quickening, for there is no merit.

[I will keep.] He that kept them before, yet in weakness; and his affliction did somewhat hinder him, as Psal. 17. Deliver me from the affliction, &c. therefore he desireth to keep them better. For trouble hindereth the course of obedience, and maketh us forget many things which we have learned: Then what a benefit have we which now are in quiet, and have our liberty? Without loving kindness there is no quickening. He playeth to be delivered, that he may keep God's commandments: and this is the right end of this prayer, either to be delivered out of the present evil, or to be preserved from it. We do now pray to be preserved; we pray for our Queen, &c. But if it be not to this end, we differ nothing from beasts. This was the end of David in his prosperity, Psalm 23, and this was his end why he would be delivered from trouble, that he might dwell in God's house a long season: For it was his grief that he could not glorify God. He desireth to be quickened to keep

God's commandments: then what are we that are as dead men, when we hear and pray?

PORTION. 12.

—• **Verse. 89. - O Lord, thy word endureth forever in heaven.**

This part showeth the comforts that stayed him in his trouble: his eyes fainted, yet he saw God's word to endure forever in heaven. And this is his saith, which when he saw no help in earth, yet could lift up his heart to heaven. And he noteth the weakness of his enemies, that though they had almost made an end of God's Saints in earth, yet they cannot take the word out of heaven, which is the seat thereof. This must comfort us when persecution waxeth hot, so that we might say with Helias, I am left alone: yet the Lord keepeth his word in heaven, from whence he will send it to another place. In the confidence hereof David crieth; Psalm. 2. Why do, &c. and in the death of Christ, the Savior of the world seemed to be dead, so that they mocked him, He saved others: yet God's word was in heaven, and Christ became a Savior to them that believed. When the children of Israel were brought low in Egypt, yet God's word in heaven was true, and they returned to the promised land. When the Jews were translated to Babylon, so that all hope of return was taken away, yet Daniel and other knew the word was in heaven, that after 70 years they should return. This is true in particular persons, as Job, David, Hezekiah, and others being brought very low: yet through hope of God's word which is in heaven, they looked for deliverance, though they saw no help in earth. This is good for us to lay up against trouble to come, and this comforted Bradford, Rogers, &c. which said, God would bring his word from heaven to this land again.

And because we cannot see heaven (though we must believe it by faith, which is of things not seen) therefore he showeth that it may be seen in earth, Thy truth endureth from generation to generation, &c. though all things under the Sun be changeable, yet God's truth is one forever. Heaven and earth shall pass. Matth. 24, and Luk. 21. This generation shall not pass: where under Jerusalem he setteth out the state of the world till the last day. For as the Jews did not receive the true Christ, so they were deceived with a false: and when they would not look to cure their souls, the Lord sent famine, war, and pestilence to consume their bodies: and as they would find no place in their souls for his word; so the Lord would leave them no place in that good land. And thus shall the word continue throughout all generations. For wheresoever the Lord hath a number of his, thither he will send his word to work in them faith and repentance, and so to strengthen them that they shall never fall. And as for all the rest, the Lord will try them with his word: and when they shall be found not to receive the truth in love, they shall be given up to believe lies; afterward love shall wax cold, and then iniquity shall prevail: so that the Lord shall be constrained to send famine and pestilence, with which they shall be exercised till their final destruction. Thus did the Lord deal with them at Jerusalem, and thus shall the Lord do from generation to generation. For his word after this sort shall go from one nation to another people, till the Gospel of the kingdom hath been preached through all the world, and then shall the end come. Then we see that the contempt of the word bringeth destruction to cities and nations.

—• **Verse. 90. - Thy truth is from generation to generation: thou hast laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth.**

The earth, as the Philosophers think, standeth in the midst of the firmament; and as the Scriptures teach us, the waters are above the earth: so

that to reason the earth seemeth to be very fickle and ready to fall, albeit to our sense nothing seemeth so steadfast. How cometh it to pass then that the earth falleth not, or is not covered with water, but because of the word wherein God hath commanded it so to be, as in the beginning he made it by the word? The Lord gave bounds to the Sea the which it should not pass, and those bounds it kept two thousand years; then by the word of the Lord it overflowed the earth: but after that, it hath to this day continued within his banks, because God hath so appointed it. And if these be so sure by the word of the Lord, the word must needs be sure and steadfast, wherein God hath promised that he will have his Church to the end. The like reason Jeremiah useth, chap. 31, and 35, 36, 37. So long as the Sun and the Moon continue in heaven, so long will I have my Church upon the earth, though the wicked rage against it. This must stay and comfort us, when these thoughts assault us: Oh, if the word should be taken from this place, where then should it rest? If this King, or Queen should die, where should the word become then? This must assure us, I say, that the Lord will provide for his Church so, that the word may continue amongst them, so long as his covenant of the night and the day abideth.

—• **Verse. 91. - They continue even to this day, by thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.**

These are deputed of God to be his servants: and this answereth an objection. Object: These things are changeable. Answ: This, in that they are so, it is to serve God's judgments, for the salvation of the good, and the confusion of his enemies.

The Sun is certain, and yet for the glorious victory of God's people under Joshua, it stood still So did it turn back for Hezekiah. The waters also were his servants, to take vengeance on his enemies at the flood: so likewise the

red Sea saved God's children, and destroyed his foes. Then when these creatures keep not their course, it is the work of God for the good of his people, and the hurt of his enemies. Much more are the ordinary works his servants, as moderate rain, dry weather, &c Lev. 25, for to testify his favor to his children; as immoderate drought for the hurt of his foes. So discord, famine, plague, war, &c: all these wait on God, to serve him when he will punish any people: as peace, love, plenty, health, strength, &c. are to the comfort of his people.

[All are his Servants.] All the creatures round about, are ready to serve him at his will, from the Angels in heaven, to the worms in the earth: therefore he is called the Lord of Hosts; they are not ordered by nature, fortune, or such like, but by God's providence: example, Psal. 107. If we were persuaded of this, then should we be seared, if our hearts were not right with God: and we should be comforted when our hearts were right before him: knowing that these serve to testify his love to them that fear him, and to testify his wrath where he is displeased. This must drive us from second causes, to look to God: If God be with us, who shall be against us? If we were persuaded, that they shall all bear witness with us or against us, then would we be fearful, and desirous to be reconciled to God: for he hath given these creatures to us no otherwise to use, then that we may be in Christ; for if we be not, then must we give account for them: but if we be reconciled to God, then have we a special comfort, that nothing shall hurt us, and when they might seem to hurt, they shall help us: our enemies shall be our friends, and the stones shall be at league with us; and nothing shall separate us from the love of God. Fire shall burn us easily, and water shall easily drown us: for though Tyrants abuse these for a time, yet they are God's servants, and they groan with us for our redemption. Do all creatures

groan, and shall we be secure? Do they their service, and shall not we do our duties? Then most grievous shall our condemnation be.

(Here are five verses wanting)

PORTION. 13.

—• Verse. 97. - **Oh how love They law? It is my meditation continually.**

This Psalm is a lively representation of a man regenerate, and teacheth us, what are, or ought to be his meditations, his exercises, and his affections; so that by how much a man shall have found himself to be truly conversant in this Psalm, so much may he think himself to have profited in regeneration: and by how much the less he hath found, that he is less occupied in the practice hereof, so much he is to suspect himself to fail and come short of newness of life. In these days, because we attribute so much to ministerial knowledge, and have felt so little profit by the teaching of the Spirit, and seeing we brag so much of faith, and have so little love; lastly, whereas we boast of our profession, and yet are so little profited in holy conversation, the Lord for such contempt of his truth, doth now teach us by deluding spirits, and fantastical devisers, and the lying Family of love. Wherefore unless we be more enflamed with a love of the truth, and an hatred of heresy, than we have been; it may come to pass, that as in the Primitive Church the Gospel of Jesus Christ being preached at the first, of men of the lowest state, and afterward for the good liking of it, was brought to be preached after the more learned sort: even so heresy now beginning in the unlearned and ignorant people, may by the just judgment of God, for the contempt of the word, take place even among the best learned. For it is as easy for the Lord in his judgments, to send a lying spirit into four hundred

learned men, as to suffer the common Israelites to be deluded therewith: so then we have the mysteries of iniquity to teach the mysteries of righteousness, and we must learn love of them, which are the abusers of love. Wherefore if we desire to know Christ crucified by the spirit in his word, if we will know him to be our Prophet, our Priest, and our King, we must be new creatures, for the old things are gone, and new things have succeeded them in their place; we must let love be laborious in us, and fruitful in good works. But when we have not so good misliking of heretics, we shall find them as the grasshoppers of Egypt, we shall see new and old enemies join together, to the great dishonor of our God.

[Oh, how I love thy law.] We have then in this verse a just occasion to examine ourselves, how we profit in the love of God's word, wherein the Prophet for our example and imitation, pathetically protesteth, how he loveth the word of the Lord, and to declare that it was not in outward show, but in inward affection, and that he did not indeed delude himself, as we do in many things, he proveth it by effects, for that here alone is true wisdom, and not elsewhere to be found. Wherefore it shall not be amiss, to gather all such proofs, whereby we may see his love was unfeigned, and came from the bottom of his heart. The first is a special hatred that he had to the contrary, that is, to all false religion, opposed to the true service of God. Secondly, it may be showed in the circumstance of the time, and that for two causes, both in respect of the law, which then had little countenance, and in respect of his person, which then did suffer contempt. The third is the reposing of his felicity in the word, when either he felt the sweet promises of God, or his inward man delighted with the law, in that he preferred it before all profit, pleasure, and glory, with which things natural men are most delighted: as also his great grief of mind, when either he felt not such

comfort in God's promises, or his inward man not delighting in his word; or when he saw any other transgressing the same. The fourth is, his careful using of the means, which were many, namely, his conference with God's children, either in reaching his gifts unto them, or in the participating of their gifts with him, his praying, and praising of God, his holy meditations, and his vowing with himself to keep the law of the Lord.

In that so vehemently he bursteth forth into this speech, Oh how love I the law? We are to see his great zeal, to compare ourselves with it; and where he saith, continually, we are to learn, that if we find in ourselves any weariness and loathsomeness to this exercise, we are not as yet sound at the heart.

Concerning this word, thy law, we may note, that he putteth the law of God, and his love thereunto, for his love to God, for this end, because every man will say, that he loveth God; as the Turk, the Pope, the Family of love; but few of us, and none of them, do love his word. For is there any heretic, or hath been, who persuadeth not himself, and would persuade others, that he loveth God? Wherefore to our use, we must know, that if we fear the Lord, we must fear him in his threatening's denounced by his word; if we say, we love him, we must love his promises contained in his truth; if we obey him, we must obey his commandments revealed in his will; if we will worship him, we must worship him according to the prescript rule of his own ordinances. (Job 14.23)

For the first reason, which we have showed to be, the hearty hatred of false doctrine, or false religion, he saith, Portion 15, verse 1. I hate vain inventions, but thy law do I love. And in Portion 21, verse 3. I hate falsehood and abhor it but thy law do I love. And in the fourth Portion verse 5, he flatly prayeth against it, saying, Take from me the way of lying, and

grant me graciously thy truth. Where we see, that as the man of God showeth his love to the truth, so he showeth his hatred to lies. Neither must we understand here, that which he calleth the way of lying, for a breach of any particular commandment, but for a general breach of the whole law of God, and for a thing opposite to the truth of God's word: so also is it to be understood, when the Spirit of God calleth Satan, the father of lies, that is, of feigned and forged doctrine, both in religion and life, as also God is said to be the Father of all truth.

Now it is manifest, I need not, as I think, to show this out of the Law, nor by the Prophets, nor by the example of godly Kings, how it is by precept commanded, and by practice used: only we will show a few places instead of many, Deut. 7:1-6; Deut. 13:6,7; Zach. 13:3. Where we may see, that natural love shall give place to heavenly love; the second table must give place to the first; and the love of man to the love of God. Psal. 16:4 the Prophet professeth, that he will not once make mention of their names within his lips. For examples we may see Rev. 2:6, how acceptable it was in the sight of the Lord, that the Church of Ephesus hated the heresy of the Nicolaitans: and Rev. 3:15, the Spirit of God reproveth the Laodiceans, because they were neither hot nor cold. So grievous a thing is it in the eyes of the Lord, when the world will rather take up false religion, than zealously gainsay it.

But it may be, that their civil conversation, and outward courtesy, doth much slake our hatred against their superstition and heresies. But what? Is this such a thing to blear our eyes? Hath not the like kind of life been pretended in the Pope, in the Turk, and in other kind of heretics? But we must know, that we are espoused unto Jesus Christ, and that two manner of ways: first, by pure means; then by single and pure hearts rightly using

those means, by whose Gospel preached seeing we through him are washed and purified, to be presented a bride blameless before God, shall we think that presumptuous sin shall prevail against us?

It may be we shall fail in some particular things, but it shall not break the whole course of our life: we may sin of human frailty, but we shall not sin of devilish hypocrisy; temptations may give us a foil, but they shall not finally overcome us; sin may dwell in us, but it shall not reign over us. Now when a man will be overwise and over righteous, not contenting himself with those ways, which the Lord in his word hath set down, he cannot be sound, because his religion being corrupt, his life cannot be uncorrupt. On the contrary, if we find our sins to be covered in Christ, that our ignorance is enlightened by his wisdom, our guilty lives justified by his righteousness, our unclean affections sanctified by his holiness, and our miserable and unstayed spirits stayed upon the hope of his redemption, we may boldly say sin shall not reign, and over master us, seeing God hath justified us, who will come and lay anything to our charge? Wherefore seeing we are purified by faith, and our faith is grounded on God's word, and seeing all their civil behavior is hidden under hypocrisy, covered with self-love, and stuffed with vain-glory, we may boldly say they are but hypocrites deceiving us with the histrionical vizard of civil righteousness.

Furthermore, if we shall compare the estate of the Church of God, with the condition of the malignant Synagogue, we shall see them as far differing, as the light and darkness, as the shadow and the body, as God and Belial. As to point out one estate, namely in affliction, we shall find in them neither faith, nor constancy, but hypocrisy, and perjury; no wisdom of the Spirit to descend themselves, but dissembling to hide themselves; no heavenly joy, in their suffering no patience of mind, but miserable

murmurings, and blockish unsensibleness, no long sufferings, nor heroical spirits when they shall boil in cauldrons, as some good Christians have done; all which notwithstanding we shall find in Christ his Church, wherein they that suffer are persecuted for the testimony of a true faith; their faith is unremovable on the word of God, their constancy in persevering wonderful, their wisdom in answering abounding with courage and humility; their joy through hope, and as it were a present enjoying of the life looked for unspeakable, their patience unminishable, which thing whilst the wicked Church goeth about to follow, it is like an Ape imitating a man, and may be compared to the Ass, which would be like a Lion.

For dare heretics avouch their sects, as the true Church profess Christ and his Gospel? Will they not lie and dissemble, when Christians speak their conscience? Will they not rail, when God's children speak humbly, and constantly? Do they not die either like ravening dogs, or else become like blocks and stocks? So that Satan seemeth even to have possessed them wholly. Let us see then if the malignant Synagogue doth not so far differ from the true Church as an Ape from a man, or an Ass from the Lion. Again, if we look on them in prosperity, they are nothing like unto us, the Papists curse us, we in holiness of the Spirit do pray for them: their Church the more it flourisheth before man, the more abominable it is in the sight of God: our Church is all glorious within, and is the beloved spouse of Christ: finally, they are devils in mans shape; for even profane Christians and Protestants dare not but in great secrecy blaspheme the name of God, profane his Sabbaths, defile their bodies with adulteries; yet these men will not stick to do these things openly; when light and darkness with them are so confounded, when ignorance is simplicity, when evil and good are shuffled together, what constancy can be looked for among men? They be

bleared with the vizard of civil honesty, which notwithstanding is to our shame, in that they can do so great things for vain-glory, and to get credit to their sect, when we cannot do half so much for God's glory, and to maintain his word. But if we will be politic to spare with Saul (evil men) the Lord in his wrath will make us persecute good men (for Saul not punishing Agag, did afterward persecute David,) wherefore our righteous souls must be grieved with the iniquities of our times, and we must show our zeal in religion by a hatred of lies, howsoever they be cloaked with the histrionical vizard of civil honesty. For as it is dangerous to adventure ourselves to be tainted with the gross air of the pestilence: so must we care and make conscience, to keep ourselves from all contagion of perilous untruths.

The second reason as we said, is the circumstance of the time, both in that his own person was contemned, as port. 14:6. The wicked have laid a snare for me, but I swerved not from thy precepts. As also in that the word of God was so slenderly regarded and almost brought unto utter contempt, as in port. 16, verse 6. It is time for thee Lord to work, for they have destroyed thy law.

For the first how wonderfully doth it commend his love to the word, that when they made fair proffers, no gain could get him; when they began to threaten him, no terror could dismay him; when they circumvented him with preferments, no pleasure could prevail with him, no promise could win him? For the second, they oppressed him with injuries, they undermined him with benefits, they supplanted him with politic slanders, and set fair faces on their vile causes, and yet none of these did so prevail, that either their violence could enforce him, nor their liberality allure him, nor their policies and subtle caviling beguile him one whit, to be drawn from the true worship of God, which was an infallible token, that unfeignedly he loved

the law. O singular trial, that when the law elsewhere had no entertainment, yet he did defend it though he was so highly contemned.

Experience doth teach us, that the more godliness is oppressed, the less it is regarded, and that not of the ungodly and wicked ones only, but even of the very children of God, as well by calling, as by election. David Psal. 73, saith of himself, that he fretted to see the prosperity of the wicked: Job, Jeremiah, Abacuck in times past, and many of the Saints of God in our times are greatly troubled and grieved, to see how it goeth with the wicked, and fareth with the godly. This then is a sure token of his love to God's word, even then to esteem it, when of the times it was hated: neither is this any true trial or argument of the love of God's word, to favor it whilst others do favor it, but when all formal liking of it beginneth to decay, then in truth and constancy to profess it, argueth true and constant love of it. And it must not be strange unto us, that the Church is often vexed with wicked heresies, because it is the infinite justice of God, when men with fear and love, do not obey the truth in a good conscience, whereby they diminish the glorious credit of the children of God, to give them over to some horrible heresy. At what time we may see both the grace of God in giving strength to his to believe even in the midst of heresies, as also the faith of his children even then to be constant when others revolt from the truth. As to continue in our former example of David.

First he was taunted, when it was said, who is this man? Is it not the son of Jesse? Then being betrothed and contracted to the eldest daughter of Saul, he was deluded and deprived of her. Afterward Saul provoked him with open violence, howbeit still he persevered in the love of God's truth.

To apply this to ourselves, if a man now a days be called a Precisian, or termed by the name of a Puritan, and that some worldlings thus reason with

him: What will you become a Precisian? Will you give over and forsake your friends? And commit yourself to their company, who are not able to prefer, pleasure, nor profit you? Will you now enter so hard a life? And suffer so odious a name? Doth it not come to pass, that this first blast bloweth us away? Other some can be content to give their names to God, but when they can take no course to get living and preferment, then they begin to shrink. These men making godliness a gain, will so long worship God, as they may get profit by it. But we must neither let contempt abash us, non-benefits allure us, and when all law is against us, and of all we shall be trodden under foot, when we shall be compassed with so many evils that these temptations will come upon us, it is better for you to give over, than thus to run on, and to put yourself in danger: that which hath been in you, was but a melancholic humor, if you give place to such affections, you may hurt yourself: when all these things shall meet with us, we must show our love by resisting them and cleaving to God's law. If we be not Jereboam's, yet we may be Rehoboam's; Jeroboam he set up Calves; Rehoboam a while determined to keep the laws of the Lord, but afterward he fell to Jeroboam's exercise. This now is a singular trial of his love, who saith of himself for our instruction, I have been had in derision, and the bands of the wicked have robbed me, &c. They have forged lies and laid snares for me, yet do I not forsake thy law. So that no injuries could weary him, no contempt discourage him, no benefits allure him, no subtle dangers make him to quail in despair: his faith was so sound in God's word, and his love so pure in an whole heart. One thing we have omitted in the former reason which here must not be left out. If we be espoused to Christ in the Gospel, we are assured that he will keep us from falling, or if we fall he will save us from lying in our sins.

But leaving this, let us come to the third reason, which was the great felicity, which he felt in the word, and the sorrow, which he felt in the contrary. For the first he preferred the word: 1. Before all profit, as port. 16:7. I love thy commandments above gold, yea above fine gold. 2. Before all pleasures, as port. 13:7. How sweet are thy promises to my mouth? Yea more than honey unto my mouth. 3. Before glory as port. 8:1. O Lord thou art my portion, I have determined to keep thy law. And portion 14:7. Thy testimonies have I taken as my heritage forever, for they are the joy of my heart. Now, because in a spoil all these things do meet together, as profit in the treasure, pleasure in the overthrow, and glory in the conquest or triumph, he addeth port. 21:2. I rejoyce at thy word, as one who findeth spoil. This made him thus to determine with himself, to content himself with the law instead of all profit, pleasure, and glory; because his glory was to be accepted of God, his pleasure the peace of a holy conscience, his profit by the word to prevail against his enemies.

Seeing then we are given to love ourselves, and to make godliness a gain, or rather love the word for gain, pleasure, and vain glory, we shall see how great a thing it is, to love the word for its own sake, that is, because it is the word of God. But many will urge the use of lawful things and say, Why may I not eat this meat? May I not wear this fashion? May I not put on such apparel? They be lawful in their natures. I answer, that they be indeed lawful in themselves, and whilst they are nakedly considered, and as they are unclothed of other circumstances; yet we are to abridge ourselves, with meditating on things convenient, lest we turn the liberty of the Spirit to a licentiousness of the flesh. See here how we love pleasures more than the word. Some are godly so long as they can get gain by their godliness, who quickly can be cold, when they have gotten greater preferment in the

Church of God. They forget that which we must remember, that we must grow in zeal, in love, in affection, and in diligence, as we increase in outward things, that we may show ourselves not so much to seek after profit as after a better life, not vain pleasure, but pleasure of the mind, not carnal glory out the hope of God's kingdom.

On the other side, we are to see how his afflictions grew, when he saw the neglect or contempt of the law in others: for his eyes failed, his heart was heavy, his spirit panted, his flesh parched away. Thus, whilst he measured himself by the word how his inward man ebbed and flowed in a delight of the word, his joy increased, and decreased with the estate of the mind, insomuch that he desired for no other end to live, than to feel the comfort of God's promises, and his affections governed by the word of God. For he saith, portion 3:1. Be beneficial unto thy servant, that I may live and keep thy word. Wherein he agreeth with a saying of Paul, Gal. 2:20. I live, yet not I now, but Christ liveth in me. But I fear that I speak mysteries and paradoxes unto a great many, who yet are but natural men, and may learn these things of simple men in the country. Well let us learn if we cannot bring forth 100 fold, yet let us bring forth 60 fold; if not so much yet at the least 30 fold; unless we be either stony ground, who for want of root, in time of tribulation and persecution will be offended; or as the thorny ground, being choked with worldly cares; or as trampled ground, which is trodden of all men. And here is one thing to be noted more notable, that is, he was not grieved for himself alone, but even for others, which made no conscience of God's word, was he grievously vexed and tormented, as portion 7:5. Fear is come upon me for the wicked, which forsake thy law. And portion 17:8. Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water, because they keep not thy law. And in portion 18:3. My zeal hath even consumed me,

because mine enemies have forgotten thy words. He was not only grieved for his own incredulity, but for the incredulity of others; he lamented not only his own wants; but also the wants of others; his glory was then chiefest, when the word was glorified; his grief, when the word sustained wrong, did most abound. Like zeal was in Paul, who cared not for his own bonds, so the word of God might be free: neither did he care how much he did suffer for the Gospels sake, which he preached, so others might thereby be confirmed.

Now if we shall lay this with due examination of our own hearts to our several lives, we shall see many grieved for their own sins, which are not grieved for the sins of others. But if we could be grieved both for ourselves and for others, it were an infallible token, that we sought not ourselves, but God's word. Many likewise are comforted, when they find God's glory set forth in themselves, who cannot so praise God when they see it in others.

Many indeed (as Job witnesseth) can declare eloquently against the sins of others, yet we see few weep and lame it for them, as he did. But above all, notable is that place of the Spirit of God to stir us up to this practice, which is Ezek. 9, where a man is mentioned with a writers inkhorn by his side, which is sent of the Lord to go through the midst of Jerusalem, and to save from the destroying and revenging Angel (which was to come) all them that mourned and cried for the abominations, which were done in the city. In which place, by marking the children of God unto salvation, is showed the manner of then, to wit, to mourn, and cry out against the wickedness of the people, which they see committed against God's glory. Paul (1 Cor. 5.) showeth the Corinthians, that they had rejected and despised the incestuous person, but he also telleth them, that they had not mourned for him: the effect where of is set down 2 Cor. 7, where the Apostle rejoiceth, that he

had wrought in them a godly sorrow, not to be repented of. We must therefore learn to lament the sins of them; with whom we live, and specially of them over whom we have charge, least in not so doing we be made guilty of the sins of others. Let us then away with that carnal emulation in the graces of another, and let us learn to give God the praise of his gifts in others, as though they were bestowed on ourselves. But alas, our corruption is great herein, and is well set down (in Luke) in the elder brother, who repined at the receiving of his younger brother into his fathers favor.

Now to draw to the fourth and last reason, which concerneth the means used of the Prophet, they were these; conference, prayer, praise or thanksgiving, and a vowing of his obedience to the Lord, whereof I will speak in order, and of the first: first, I am (saith he, port. 8:7) a companion of all them that fear thee, and keep thy precepts. And port. 10:7. Let such as fear thee, turn unto me, and they that know thy testimonies, that I may both impart my feelings and comforts unto others, and that they may strengthen me with their gifts: such was his humility, that notwithstanding his high calling, he desired even to profit by others. In natural things experience doth teach us, that young men cannot satisfy themselves with a private use of their exercise, but if anyone have invented a pleasant conceit, he cannot be quiet until he have joined himself with others therein: such is their love to their carnal devices. Which thing if it be so usual in earthly things, how much more is it requisite in heavenly things? Many will study for a trade and method by themselves, whereof none shall be partakers, but they will still be the fathers of it: but it was not so in David, but whatsoever he had, he would teach it others, and whatsoever good thing he heard, he would learn it. He had not this spirit, to say, Tush, I have enough, I know many things, I need not to confer. Paul thanketh the Romans, and protesteth

himself a debtor unto them, for their communicating of spiritual things unto him. Wherefore let us exhort one another, whet one another, admonish one another, and watch one over another for good, and suffer ourselves to be exhorted to perseverance, to be whetted for our duties, and to be admonished of our infirmities, and let us be grieved that we have made so little exchange of our talents, to bring so small increase to the Lord.

The second mean is prayer: wherefor he said so often, portion 5:1. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, &c. and portion 9:2. Teach me good judgment and knowledge. Where sometime he desireth to have his judgment enlightened; and sometimes his affections cleared. Well, was he one that was wiser than Gad and Nathan, and yet had this affection to grow in the knowledge of wisdom, and shall not we be ashamed, if we pray not? He felt this joy and delight of the word by measure in him, he felt sometimes a clean heart, sometimes a hard heart, sometimes unspeakable joy of mind, sometimes exceeding dullness of mind, sometime he seemed to have enjoyed the comforts of Angels, sometimes no comfort at all. So let us think ourselves to be as between light and darkness, clouds and brightness, sometimes having patience, and sometimes murmuring, sometime purposing to do good, sometime fainting in bringing them to pass.

Concerning thanksgiving, which was another of his exercises, it is said, port. 21:4. Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments. Where he showeth, that he used this kind of worship often; which thing with us is far contrary, because we pray more than we give thanks. The reason is, we are given in greater measure to feel our wants, which provoketh us to prayer, than to see God's benefits received, which might move us to thanksgiving.

The next means, by order the fourth, which the man of God useth, is here by name set down, meditation. But some will say; How cometh it to pass, that among so many and sundry means no mention is made of hearing and reading the word of God? We answer, that this is a Psalm of experience, and not of knowledge. And he that seeketh for knowledge here will want method: but we must travail with the Prophet to find the truth so applied to our hearts, as we may show as well our infirmities, as our excellent graces. Again, because hearing is the sense of discipline, and many will attend on reading and hearing, which will not bestow time to confer, to pray, to give thanks, to meditate, or vow their obedience to the Lord, he comprehendeth the one in setting down the use of the other. For if in our reading and hearing for want of meditation we do not profit, we are as colored in the Sun: wherefore we must admonish, and be admonished; we must pray, and provoke to pray; we must meditate and often think on those things which we have heard or read.

Indeed knowledge, reading, and hearing are sweet even to a natural man: but to confer, to be admonished, to pray, to give thanks, be things hard and difficult. It may be that some can pray to serve the times, because of the law which constrained them: but how many shall we find that do it privately, in truth, and voluntarily? Some read, and they rest in the general rules, not making any use of it to themselves, and so learn that which is another man's, not appropriating it to themselves for want of meditation. Whereof it cometh to pass, that we see many make a learned sermon in general precepts, who when they come to particulars, to comfort those that lie sick, or to raise up them that are tempted, for want of practice in themselves can say nothing. The very Heathen could grant, and you know who speak it, that a mans life was a cogitation of death. But because we can meditate of death,

for that we join with it the hope of immortality, I say, that a Christian man's life may well be said to be a meditation of the law of God, and how he shall stand before God's judgment seat. Which meditation in this man of God showeth, that even from the heart he loveth the law of God. If we examine ourselves, we shall find our tongues to cleave to our teeth, and to the roof of our mouths: whereby we see, that we cannot say this with the prophet, that from the abundance of the heart our mouth speaketh. For we find by practice, that we hear, read, and sing so coldly, as we show, that our affections are almost dead within us.

There followeth in the end of the verse, continually. We know by proof of daily experience, that whatsoever we love, of that we continually think. And in that this quality or circumstance is joined with meditation we are taught, that though we must read, hear, confer, pray, and give thanks often, yet we must meditate continually. For as it is absurd to say, that a man should be continually reading, or conferring; so we must know, that it is requisite in all these things to examine ourselves by meditation, whether we read profitably, confer effectually, or pray understandingly.

That we now have this continual meditation, we must pray that we may have a love to the word. Love indeed were of itself eloquent enough, if we had it in any good measure; but to stir up this love, we must use many reasons about the nature of the word, how it is mystical, pure, and eternal; which when we see in truth, we shall love the word.

Where he saith, in it is my meditation, we must understand, that it was no roving meditation, but that it was circumscribed within the compass of the law of God. Now to our profit, let us learn to meditate according to the law of the Lord, and so, as under the generals we may touch the particulars, to make the use of them in ourselves. Thus we have seen the cause of this

effect, to be love. For as the rich men of this world meditate of gathering goods, natural lovers of their love, and ambitious men of their preferments; so the man of God having no greater riches, pleasure nor glory, than in the word, maketh it his whole delight and study. For where we love, thither love doth easily draw our affections with it.

We have heard why mention is made only of meditation, namely, because it is the life of all the other means, and maketh them more fruitful; and why his meditation was married to the law, even because it excludeth all vain collections, which proceed of general knowledge. Besides, therefore is meditation named, because it most agreeth with the nature of love. For though we cannot always be reading, hearing, or talking of those things which we love, we may always think and meditate of them. Now what is the cause, that so much is preached, and so little is practiced, but because we use so little conference, prayer, and meditation? The remedy hereof is, to know what a sin this is, and that among all crosses in the day of trouble, none so great to torment our consciences, as that we have rested in a general reading, and hearing of the word, without applying of it to our several practices by meditation. He hath showed now his love: in the verses following he setteth down the fruit of his love. For as he showed, that the word of God is of such nature, that above all other things it is eternal: so also he showeth, that the effects thereof are eternal. And whereas men desire nothing more, than that wisdom whereby they may excel their enemies in policy, their teachers in doctrine, and the aged in counsel, he declareth that he made this choice, to set his love on God's word, which performeth all these things. As love then is the mother that breedeth meditation, and meditation is the nurse to cherish this love: so here, because the argument of the effect doth most with men prevail, he showeth the

mighty power and operation of the word of God. What is the reason why men do not rest and stay themselves wholly on God's law? Surely, because they are not persuaded, that there is such excellent wisdom in the same. We see then, that we must learn for the generals, to be wise in sobriety, and according to the word of God, knowing that the Scriptures are sufficient to touch, to improve, and correct, and to instruct in righteousness, that the man of God may be absolute, being made perfect unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3. The Wiseman counseleth us, Eccles. 7:18, that we should not be just overmuch, or make ourselves overwise, lest we be desolate. Where he showeth, that this is the way to bring blockishness, to make ourselves wiser than God, and to devise to become more just than the word prescribeth us. What is the cause why so many are so foolish in their death, when they have overreached themselves, as Achitophel, Surely because the Lord doth infatuate them, whilst they would be wiser than the Lord, so that their wisdom is turned into childishness, and their policy cometh to nothing. What is the cause that we are no more occupied in the reading and hearing of the word? Doubtless because it is a base and simple thing in our judgments and containeth not so high mysteries in it, as the Prophet here setteth down by proof in his own person. Neither must we think, that as it were with a trumpet he doth here blow and sound forth his own praise, but rather by his example is desirous to stir others up.

—• **Verse. 98. - By thy commandments thou hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.**

The first of the particular effects, is contained in these words: By thy commandments thou hast made me wiser than mine enemies. We see how men nowadays strain their wits to match their enemies in policies and devices, but few think on this sound means, whereby we shall surely prevail

against them. Now if it be so that whatsoever is written, is written for our instruction and comfort, in making mention of the means, the Prophet of the Lord doth teach us, that it was no extraordinary work of the Lord proper to him, but a means appointed of God for us all to follow. Whereby he teacheth us, that God will bless us to attain to the like wisdom, if we will endeavor to use the like means.

To apply this to our profit, we must gather the particular out of the general doctrine on this manner: whosoever shall have the commandments of God ever with him, he shall be wiser than his enemies, than his teachers, than the ancient: but David did so, or we do so: therefore David and we shall find this wisdom. But some man will say, Experience teacheth us a clean contrary doctrine, that God's children are not so wise in their light, as the children of this world are in their generation. I answer: That it is true, experience proveth, and our Savior Christ teacheth, but this I add, that the experience cometh from our small sight of the word, and not for any want of the word itself, when God's children have it on their side. And our Savior Christ his speech tendeth rather to show what it is, through our corruption, than what it ought to be; so that justly he useth it to our shame. Indeed civil wisdom which choketh in them all temptations, with worldly delights, having the devil to be their school master, doth work in them a contentation of mind, while for a season, they smother, as they think, the judgments of God breathing upon them. And because on the contrary, the spirits of God's children are occupied in heavenly things, yet often the flesh so laboreth against the spirit, that whilst they would be wiser than the Lord, or would use any indirect means against their enemies, or in using good means, fail in prayer, or, in not staying themselves on God's providence, and appointed time of deliverance, it cometh to pass that they are overcome. But whilst

they renounce themselves, and their own wisdom, and crave counsel of God in his word, and the direction of his Spirit by prayer, whilst they use good means in a good cause, and keeping a good conscience, wait on the hand of the Lord, they shall be sure to have the overthrow of their enemies. Proof doth teach us that a silly soul in the Country, which walketh in the ways of the Lord, will soon discover the shifting policies of a worldly learned man, brought up in the University; because the wrath of the Lord hangeth over the one, and his merciful spirit watcheth over the other: But so long as we will shoot with Satan in his own bow, and repel policy with policy, what folly shall be found in us? Though we can howl loftily with the wolf, and deal cunningly with the Grecians, when as the Lord will never suffer a good cause to be maintained by evil means? Some of us seek the word, but in seeking it we rest in our own good meaning, not humbling ourselves before the Lord; but our wisdom herein must come from the spirit. For we can no more by the eye of reason, see the light of the word, then Owls look upon the bright Sun. Wherefore the Lord will have us in all controversies with our adversaries, to depend on him, and to know, that the cause must not depend on our own shoulders, then must we by faith in the blood-shedding of Christ, believe that our sins, neither new nor old, shall hinder the helping hand of the Lord. We must trust on God's providence and promises, and stay ourselves by prayer on his wisdom, if we look to be wiser than our adversaries.

An excellent example hereof we have to prove, that secret sins not repented of, may hinder the Lord's dealing with us against our enemies. We read that after that filthy incest mentioned in Judg. 17, which made the Levite (whose wife was abused) to cut her in twelve pieces, and send her through all the parts of Israel; there was war between the Benjamite's and

Israel, and the Benjamites being but few in number, and maintaining an evil cause, in two battles overcame the Israelites, until at length they humbled themselves with prayer and fasting, and repented of that evil which was amongst them: so that in the third assault, the Lord gave his people strength mightily to prevail against their enemies. So we may have a good cause, and use good means, and yet for want of reconciling ourselves to God for some sin new or old, we may suffer the overthrow. If then our cause be good, we must use good means, faith in Christ, trust in his providence, and staying ourselves on his wisdom. Do we not see by experience, how the Martyrs of God humbling themselves on this manner, prevailed in mighty power against their accusers? Deut. 4. Moses showeth, that the enemies of God were driven to confess, that only God's people were wise, even because God gave them good laws. This was it that made Joseph wiser than his brethren, Moses wiser than the Egyptians, and Daniel than all the Magicians of Babylon, and David than all his politic enemies.

Mark (I pray you) all figurative, hyperbolical and dark speeches, the Metaphors and Parables, which are in the word of God, and you shall find, that they were learned people to whom the books were written, and had attained that measure of wisdom and knowledge, which in our time none can understand, but they which are brought up in learning: which thing we may also observe in them, of whom the Histories of the book of God are written, and yet who were more blockish then the Jews, after they had transgressed so obstinately the law of the Lord?

But shall we understand this, as though the children of God were in every particular action wiser than the wicked ones? No, but only in those things, and then, wherein and when they used this wisdom of the Spirit, and gave themselves and their causes to be governed according to God's word. Look

on David, who though he was wise, so long as he kept a good conscience, yet harkening to policy, and not willing to stay himself on the simplicity of God's word, how suddenly was he overcome, and yielded so far, that he dissembled even to fight against God's enemies? Whiles he was in his fetching policies, did not the Lord send enemies the instruments of destruction to his wife and children? Whilist he would rest on God he was wise, but when he would number his people, he was confounded. What did his policy in adultery prevail, to disguise in such sort Uriah, to make him drunken, to set him in the forefront of the battle, was he not much foiled? Solomon, who whilst he walked before the Lord, was wiser than his father David, when he gave himself to many wives, and began to be secure, and to run into gross Idolatry, was greatly displeasing in the sight of the Lord. Jehoshaphat so long as he obeyed the Lord, was feared, but when in policy he joined himself in affinity to a wicked King, he was almost confounded, and surely had been punished, had he not in repentance turned, and humbled himself before the Lord, whose policy also in joining his ships with the ships of Ahaziah, was afterward punished in his posterity.

—• **Verse. 99. - I have had more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my meditation.**

In the second particular effect, the Prophet saith, he did excel his teachers, which he doth not to brag or boast of himself, but commending the free graces of God, he stirreth up himself to make other men not only to content themselves, with a care of hearing the word, but also to make conscience of meditation. This then is left of the Spirit of God for our comfort, in that we may find the like fruit, using by prayer the like means; so that if we bring not forth a hundredth fold, yet threescore, or at the least thirty-fold, according to God's wisdom.

True it is, that the scholar often becometh better learned than the teacher, which is a singular blessing of God, that the learned man should ascribe nothing to himself, and to give God the glory, he enlighteneth where he thinketh meet, and increaseth when he seeth it good. Now we may see this by experience even in heathen men. Aristotle was wiser than his Master Plato, in whom this blessing of God appeared, in that they joined study and meditation with their learning. In Law and Physic they are most frequented, who with much reading have used much musing and practicing. None either in peace or war have ever governed excellently, but they were great musers, and did often sequester themselves from company, then more freely to attend on meditation. This doctrine shall be taught in a contrary thing. We know there is a special kind of musing, whereby Satan doth often teach and communicate things to many in greater measure, than they can receive by all the books in the world; so also there is a special meditating, whereby the spirit of God communicateth to us more heavenly things than either we hear or read. As when Satan will polish a man's wit to any evil, he will have him to wait on him: so God would have us to fill our judgments in the particular meditation of things heard, to see how all circumstances hold and fail. This is then the wit which experience confirmeth, that when we are taught anything, which by reason is conceived, we can add, if this be true, then that is false; if it holdeth in the lesser, then it holdeth in the greater. On this sort let any man hear with meditation, he shall find something by the general rule heard: having the Spirit of God for his teacher, which the Preacher had not, or saw not, or seeing expressed not. Do they then most profit, who after hearing do meditate, and see more by the ministry of the Spirit, than by the ministry of the Pastor? Let us mark it then, by the blessing of God upon it, and let us note the contrary by God's curse upon it.

What is the cause that there is so little profit by the ordinary ministry of the word, and so great fruits arise, where it is more seldom used; but because meditation is the life of learning, and the death of things conceived is the want of musing?

Mans mind is infinite, which nothing can satisfy but God or the devil; and continually rolleth either in good or ill. In that he addeth, thy testimonies are my meditation, we must note, that to have a sound meditation, we must be circumscribed within the limits of the word, otherwise it will be erroneous; but being joined with knowledge, it refineth our knowledge, and teacheth the use of it. If Philosophers saw that a man's life was a meditation of death, whereby as they abstained from many pleasures, they became nevertheless very vain-glorious, yet could they not attain to any sound comfort, because they were destitute of the hope of a better life. But God's children meditating on the last judgment day make a conscience of many things past, pare away many present corruptions, and sigh for the remembering of their poisoned temptations to come. How godly people have excelled their teachers, it needeth not long proof out of the Scriptures.

Moses excelled all the learned men in Egypt, Daniel surpassed all the Magicians in Babylon, Paul excelled his teacher Gamaliel, because though the Egyptians were learned, and the Babylonians profound; yet Moses and Daniel refined their knowledge (human) with the study of God's word. And Paul being brought up in the doctrine of the Jews under Gamaliel, after he came to meditate on the Gospel of Christ, excelled not only his teachers, but over-reached all other of the Apostles, in heavenly knowledge. We may then blush at the great knowledge in times past, but herein we may be comforted, because they as they were wise, were also wicked: but we may be as wise using their means, and more godly meditating on the word, which cutteth

off all errors in doctrine, and corruptions of life. Again, Eli brought up Samuel, who proved wiser than Eli by his continual meditation. Solomon excelled David by study and prayer, until he forgetting himself, gave himself to women. Paul was taught of Ananias the principles of religion, but he excelled him as far in the learning of the Spirit, as he surpassed Gamaliel in the doctrine of the Jews.

Let us mark then the blessings of spiritual meditations, which make us fit in wisdom to admonish, and in the spirit of consolation to comfort. For in my judgment, their wisdom which depend on general rules, is in their books, and must be fetched from their teachers; but meditations may well be called a ready mother of knowledge, and a nursing mother of wisdom.

If men then will whet their wits, and help their memories, they must use meditation, because when God's word hath taught us, we shall never need to consult with our book, nor take advice of our teacher.

—• **Verse. 100. - I understood more than the ancient, because I kept thy precepts.**

It followeth: [I understood more than the ancient, &c.] As we have heard of the glorious effects of the word in this man of God, how he excelled his foes in policy, and his teachers in wisdom: so now he showeth, how he went before his elders in prudence and understanding. He was wiser than his enemies. Why? Because in all his attempts, deliberated not with flesh and blood, but asked counsel of the Lord, by the word and by prayer. He excelled his teachers in good learning: wherefore? Because he contented not himself to stay on the naked rules by them delivered, but further labored with his conscience, to make the use of them profitable to himself. He overreached his ancients: Why? Because he ever had a special care to keep a true faith, and a good conscience, whereof many had made shipwreck.

Whereof then cometh it to pass, that the scholar is often better than his master? Cometh it not from hence, because the Lord worketh according to his will, and bestoweth like effects where like means are used, blesseth and curseth, depresseth and raiseth up, according to the using, and not using of necessary means? By meditation the judgment of the godly is refined, by musing the wicked grow by high degrees to the mystery of iniquity. For as they be much given to this kind of occupying their minds: so Satan doth most thereby convey himself into them, putting such platforms and devices into their head, that otherwise were wonderful to come into a mortal man's mind. So then they, that do not rest in hearing and reading, but endeavor by meditation to find and draw out an use of it in themselves, wonderfully do profit, and mightily excel others. Let us not rest in our oversights, but stir up and provoke our affections to take a new view of those things which we have heard, whereby we may gather more unto ourselves, than that which we have heard. And why? Man is a creature reasonable, and by the light of nature can thus reason with himself; if this be true, then the contrary is false; if it holdeth in the greater, then it holdeth in the lesser. If this good thing hath good effects, then though contrary evil hath ill issues. See how knowledge by meditation doth increase. Again, because every member of Christ is anointed with knowledge, according to that measure which the Spirit worketh, as well the hearer as the speaker may profit by using the means. For by meditation the judgment is refined, the wit helped, the memory strengthened, and stirreth up affections, as thus: Is this good? I will do it: Is this the obedience rewarded? I will obey it: Is this forbidden? I will avoid it: Is this threatened with so fearful judgments? I quake and tremble to think of it. By the help of this, many will speak on a sudden, because they speak out of the experience of their own consciences, when the

learning of others is in their teachers head, or else in their book. It is then the righteous judgment of God, that we are so unapt to practice, wanting dexterity of wit, bereaved of sound judgment, besides many other punishments, due to the contempt of God's word, when our own conscience shall accuse us, saying: This good thou mightest have had, this comfort thou mightest have enjoyed, hadst thou meditated on the word.

There remaineth the thread effect, which is in these words, I am wiser than the ancient, &c. Oh notable wisdom! That made him wiser than gray hairs, which are of longer experience. He doth not compare himself with dotish old men, but the wise Ancients, in whom though not the quickness of wit, yet the pith and marrow of knowledge remaineth. Neither doth he speak this so much to praise himself, as to stir up others. If then we shall see a comely old man, speaking law on the bench, and desire to hear some wise experience, the man of God here telleth us the way, how before those times we may attain unto it. And through the blessing of God on those means, the graces of God shall be greater in young years, if we labor for knowledge, and with knowledge join conscience, and with conscience practice. For the high way to knowledge is to meditate with our knowledge, and to tremble in our hearts, at the majesty of the word, not ceasing to labor with ourselves, until by musing we have felt some comfort. Here of it proveth, that they which have heard the word of God but a year, have more profited than they which have heard it six years. For unto him that hath, more shall be given, and from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken from him. If we observe it, we shall find profane Protestants, who now have seen three Governments, which both are ignorant in knowledge, and have gotten many placards and curtains for their gross sins. This may teach us to see into God's judgment, who punisheth so severely

the decay of faith; as also the mercy of God towards them, that lay up in their hearts, the meditation; and in their lives, the practice of that which they have heard. I see no more fearful tokens of the desolations of our times, than that men promising whole worlds unto themselves, seek so much for themselves, that they neither desire God's glory, nor the Churches profit.

A man may talk with a great Reader, and there be some good things in him, but talk with an exercised mind, and you shall find in him far greater, and more excellent wisdom. Why do not the old Protestants grow in knowledge, as they grow in age? But because they do not use to meditate. Many men seemed to have good gifts, great knowledge and dexterity of wit, who now are destitute and barren of all these heavenly graces. What is the cause? Surely the want of faith, and of a good conscience, doth make us fail in many good things: or else the cause may be some secret sin not repented of, why there is such store of ill, and such barrenness of good things. So that the Lord striketh many with such folly, that they which sometimes tasted of the good graces of God, are now become dull heads. Another reason, why old men do not grow in knowledge, is, because the more they have, the more they do desire. Many are so vain and light, that a man shall as soon bring a hog from his haunt, as them from their delights: so the Lord doth make them end their age and life in worldliness, which spend their lives and youths in vanities. If we see one given to vanity, what say we? Oh, there is a witty young man: if we see one given to worldliness, what say we? Oh, there is a jolly thriving fellow: and thus for want of a sanctified wit, and sight, we remain fools and unthrifths in spiritual things.

But it standeth with the righteous judgment of God, that they should be deprived of the understanding of heavenly things, which so greedily turn all

their wits to worldliness. On the contrary, where we make conscience to meditate, we grow from a small grain of knowledge to a whole field of understanding. For we see many using their wits to worldliness, die in folly, because the Lord recompenceth the vanity of their youth with ignorance in their age. So it is the mercy of God, to give them comfort of conscience in their death, which have had care of his word in their life. Now, we see, because some men think so basely of the word of God, how the Prophet hath commended it by the effects, found by experience in himself.

Again he showeth, that this was not in him, by any particular prerogative of God's spirit, (although the spirit wrought wonderfully in him) but that it earn by using the means of the word. Teaching us that as he was wiser than his enemies, because in all perils he asked counsel of the word: wiser than his teachers, in that he rested not in their universal rules; but by meditation did appropriate them to himself: and wiser than the Ancient because he learned as well to line according to the word, as to love it: so we also using the means, shall find the like effects, though not in like measure. By which effects we learn that without these means, we become foolish, doltish and blockish. The word of God the is such a treasure, that if such an holy thing be cast to swine, I do not doubt but we shall see our God will execute his heavy vengeance and judgments. Whereof now commeth it to pass, that witty young men, die old fools, empty of God's graces; who in their youth were well brought up of their parents, (as Johaz under Jehoiada) who also whilest they did look into their former life and repent, spake very effectually against sin, but in their age, have not so much knowledge as before? But because they continue not in the faith, and in a good conscience. It were better to preach to one that never heard of Jesus Christ, than to such an old Protestant, because the one is thankful, the other is

unthankful. Tell me O man, I speak unto thy conscience, when thine eye did see into the word, when thine ear did hear it; when thou diddest look into thine own conscience, when thou feltest sweetness in God's promises, when thou diddest tremble with sear of God's judgments, and diddest delight in the ways of the Lord: Oh, how quiet was thy conscience? What comfort didst thou find in thy mind? Oh, how whole a heart was in thee? And on the contrary, when neither God's promises were sweet, nor his judgments fearful, nor his ways pleasant unto thee, oh, how cold was thy zeal? How weak was thy conscience? How feeble was thy heart in good things? We shall see some nowadays, and that many, being but private men, speak with greater knowledge and conscience, than a Preacher. Why may a Preacher spend his breath, his strength, and his life in preaching, and so small profiting cometh of it? Even because he preached well, and practiseth ill. Wherefore we see here how necessarily, upon the foresaid effects, the Prophet pronounced as followeth.

—• **Verse. 101. - I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.**

Seeing the Lord will put much into their hands, who handle a little well, we must express our knowledge by life, and our profession by practice. If a man would consider, how fearfully the Lord hath made him, how wonderfully he hath redeemed him, with what power he hath converted him, should he spend his youth in vanity, or his age in worldliness, and so become deprived of all God's graces in death? Look into the former times: Joseph being but seventeen years old, was wiser than all his brethren: young Samuel was wiser than old Eli: Moses than the Egyptians: David than Saul: Solomon was wiser in his youth, than the gray hairs: Daniel, Azariah, Mishel, wiser than all the Astrologians, Chaldeans, and Magicians: Timothy

being but young, was preferred to the Evangelistship: Paul wiser than all the Apostles. Behold our age, how mercifully the Lord hath blessed many young men; and why are ancient men now so barren of knowledge? Even because they are barren in a good conscience.

There was in time past less knowledge, more practice, less science, more conscience, less understanding, more wisdom; but now there is more knowledge, and less practice, because men labor not to keep the word of God in a good conscience. When we shall see therefore heretics grow wiser than Preachers, Idolaters wiser than true Professors, some young imps of Satan, wiser than old Ancients in the house of God; we must know, they are made so foolish, either because they are not of a good conscience, or lie in some secret sin.

Would it not grieve a good Tillman to labor many Winters and Summers, and in the end to find no Harvest? What a fearful thing, think you, would it then be to a Minister, after he hath long travailed to find no fruit? The Lord undoubtedly will punish such fruitless Professors, with hardness of heart, if they will not hear with care, that care may cause prayer, that prayer may bring forth meditation, and meditation may have in fruit in godliness, and practice in perseverance.

In this verse then, the Prophet declareth, that as before he used the right means to godliness, and therewithal had the proof of good effects: so now he had power from God, to resist all lets, hindrances, and encumbrances thereunto. Whereby he teacheth us, that these two things especially make to attain true godliness; the one, to use good means thereto; the other, to avoid carefully all occasions which may hinder us from the same. Neither must we think that all these things can be done presently: for if Rome was not built all in one day, who would think Jerusalem should be built in one day?

Surely the necessity of this practice is such that unless men make covenants with themselves, and bind themselves as it were in body and soul to avoid occasions of evil, they shall never attain to true godliness. Many will confess, that they ought and will learn the way to holiness of life; but in the meantime, because they will not forsake their evil ways, they fail in their purpose. To the better understanding of the Prophet, we must understand, that evil ways are in two things considered, either as they be evil in their own natures, or as they be evil by circumstance: the first, all men will confess to be avoided, as full, concupiscence, wrath, murder, malice, and such like: and yet the cause why many men are less careful in holy things, is, because they make no conscience to stay evil things, nor to unburden themselves of all worldly delights. But what is the cause that thou canst not overcome worldliness and vanity? Thou dost not consider that thy reason is corrupt, and that if thou fightest not against thy corrupt reason, thou canst not avoid corrupt affections. If a man would fight against Ambition, he must not first fight against the thing itself, but against his own reason leaving him there unto, which on this manner persuades him. If I may attain to such dignity, I shall not become so much subject to others, but others shall submit themselves to me: I shall purchase to myself credit, countenance, and authority, to pleasure my friends, and withstand mine enemies. Thus we see why we cannot over-wrestle the vanities of this life, because we strive not aright. Now likewise, how are we so enabled to forsake our worldliness, even because we do not depend on God's providence. Then the way to fight against covetousness, is to fight against the distrust of God's providence, and want of belief in the word of God, in that for too much love of this world, and too little love of the word, they do not divide their times, that sometimes they may give themselves to prayer, to reading, to conferring of

the word. And how do these men reason with themselves? I shall one day be old, and Age is accompanied with many evils of weakness and impotency: I must not think then to live without misery, unless I live now with some care: I must provide for my wife and children, and not leave them to the broad world; it standeth me therefore in hand, to work, and to take pains, whilst I may. So the pleasure of this temptation, taketh away the sweetness of the meditation of the life after death. Many strive against anger, and yet the more they strive, the more they fret, because they resist not the beginning of their Anger, which is a secret pride conceived in their minds. For of pride, (saith the holy-Ghost in the book of the Proverbs) cometh contention. Such men have this reason, whereunto they yield; I have deserved well of their hands; I never did them injury, they ought to have esteemed otherwise of me, they have abused me greatly; who therefore can bear such contempt and injuries? Now if we fight in humbleness of mind, against this corrupt reason; we shall fight against our Anger. I suppose a brute beast is not so ill in his kind, as a man in his corrupt judgment. Then lowliness in taking a fight of our wants in good and heavenly things, is the thing that will humble us. This is that, which will cut our combs, when we think too well of ourselves, when we see too much by our painted sheath, this will make us to pull down our peacock's tail.

What maketh young men so loose, and profit so little by all the admonitions, which are used to them, but only their corrupt reason, which on this sort deceiveth their souls: Why, is not this lawful? Do I anybody harm in so doing? Do not all others this as well as I? Well, if they will not bid war against these corrupt imaginations, they shall never prevail against their evil affections. Whereof is it, that the wisest men become whore-hunters, and the wisest women often become whores? Is it not because the

Lord punisheth the pride of reason with filthiness, and whilst they will not fight against corrupt reason, they cannot get the victory over their filthy affection? They will thus reason, I have been thus long married, and have no children, my wife is never quiet, she is a shrew; I will see if I can have children with another, and have quietness abroad. Bid battle then to reason, if you will fight against sin, for judgment being convinced, we may the better encombate with affection. Let us then take heed to those conceits, which are not yet in the bowels of the brain; for then the devil is brought to infect reason, and so draweth near to corrupt affection. All idle thoughts and discourses coming but to the mind, must make us afraid, least we become corrupted. And let us remember, that we must love the Lord, with all our hearts and minds, and that he taketh up to his glory all our cogitations. And therefore though we yield not to lust in affection, we must strike at concupiscence at the first motion, because our thoughts have not been wholly with the Lord: We must destroy the brood, whilst it is in hatching, and wound sin before it have received a perfect shape. For it is better to strive against sin, whilst reason is on our side; than when both reason and affection are conspired against us. Now let us examine ourselves, and every man search his own heart, whether we be grieved for the sudden discourses and glancing imaginations in us, or rather whether they be not sweet unto us. (Jam. 1:13)

What is the reason why we refuse to sin? Is it not because we think thus with ourselves; What shall I do this thing? Shall I commit this fact? It is a beastly thing; it is a dangerous attempt. For there are some which will mislike to have themselves misled with the temptations of murder, of stealing, or adultery, and yet will let pass quietly in them roving imaginations, and idle cogitations. We see in many after their fall

repentance cometh: for if in judgment we could before sin prevailed, discern the corruption of reason deceiving and leading captive our affections, as we do after we have sinned, we should not so soon be deluded. For we see it commonly cometh to pass, that we repent us, and mislike ourselves for some foregoing evil: we say, Oh what a fool was I, that could not consider of this? Where was my wit? How was I besotted? Convince a natural man of his reason, and he will be ashamed of his purpose, but so long as he hath reason on his side, he will not yield an inch. Why cometh it to pass, that there are almost no Heretics converted, and so many profane professors converted? But because the sin of these men is the sin of affection; the sin of the other is the sin of reason and judgment. Peter of whom we read in the Gospel, did not so much sin of affection, as in reason. For being put in mind of Christ his afflictions, how he should go up to Jerusalem, and suffer many things, and consulting with reason, thought it a very strange thing, and not agreeing to equity, that such a Prophet and mirror of the world, and that he that had done so many good things, and had wrought so many miracles, in that country, never doing any harm to any man, should suffer of such men. Wherefore when as our Savior Christ saw Peter given so much to natural reason, in that he cried Master save thyself, he checked him saying: Come behind me Satan: thou savorest not of things which are of God, but of flesh and blood. Upon which occasion least the other Disciples also should have presumed, our Savior Christ gave this general doctrine, that if any would become his Disciples, they should take up their cross and follow him. As also that none could follow him in truth, unless they denied themselves: where in denying of ourselves, he meaneth nothing else, as the occasion of his foregoing speech plainly showeth, then the forsaking of the reason of the flesh. S. James chap. 1, teacheth us, that if

we will mortify our affections, we must first use the means: secondly the steadiness, stillness, and mildness of our mind, in that we will not dispute with reason against anything in our regeneration.

I see, that many that will not deliver themselves and their reasons to be captivated unto the truth, and refuse to believe the mystical power of the Gospel, are in time carried away by foul and effectual illusions. For there are many who hearing in the word of the wonderful creation, redemption, and preservation of man, and of the matter of the Sacraments, cannot believe them; yet afterwards go to witches, and to be caught of the devil, which they cannot, unless they profess and practice an evil faith; so that they which will not profit by the truth, will suffer themselves to be deluded.

The other kind of evil in my division was of things not apparently evil. As in times past we were careful for nothing more, then with liberty of mind to use the creatures of God: so nowadays nothing is less to be taught, because loose liberty and licentiousness serve so for the flesh, and we do not by our liberty, serve one another in love. We can say, outward things are lawful, every man objecteth outward things cannot defile a man. I answer, that when outward liberty bringeth inward bondage, and the pretense of outward things lawful hinder the necessary inward things, they be made unlawful. All things are unlawful saith Paul, but I will not be brought under the bondage of anything. Well howsoever we pretend this lawful use of outward things, which in their own natures are the good creatures, to cloak our wantonness withal, let us know that the wickedness beginneth in wantonness, and wantonness endeth in wickedness, because it is the way of a dangerous downfall of our souls. For either the Lord will punish it with present and temporal punishment, or else will cast us into some great sins hereafter. And though I will not affirm, that every wanton young man is a

mere wicked man, yet I dare affirm that wantonness is the way to further evil. Besides, this am I sure of, wantonness maketh us unapt to good works, it takes away the comfort of God's spirit, the joy of the word, the sweetness of prayer, and of the Sacraments. Again, as it is certain that wantons pray not, meditate not, nor do any good thing aright, because that sin desireth all evil, and hindereth all good things: so if the word would teach us sin, we would learn it, if it make for our good, we cannot learn it. And that we may see, to how many evils youth and wantonness be subject, read Gal. 6, 1 Cor. 6, Eccl. 11, Psal. 25, Job. 14, Jer. 21.

So now we know what is the meaning of the man of God in this word, evil way, that is, that which is occasion of evil. We can say in worldly things, because the way is dangerous through ditches, thieves, pits or such like; Oh that the same mind were in us to prevent the perils of our souls! Our Savior Christ taught us, that if our eye offend us we should pull it out: if our hand or foot offend us, we should cut them off; the meaning whereof is, that we should not indeed shred them off, but refrain from the corrupt using of them, and turn them to a better use. We have showed hitherto, how carefully the man of God used the means to godliness, and also how careful he was to avoid all occasions of evil. We must not then think Christianity to be so small a thing, if as lingerers we make such frivolous excuses, that it is hard to be a good man, we shall surely never come to so high a dignity. We have also showed, that unless we labor to deny ourselves, we shall never buckle ourselves after the graces of God.

—• **Verse. 102. - I have not declined from thy judgments, for thou diddest teach me.**

As if he should say: I have seen and observed, that whosoever did refrain from evil, they were wiser than their enemies, they became more learned

than their teachers, and proved graver than the ancient; and that they which did not refrain were greatly punished, plagued, and trodden down, and as thou hast punished some, so wilt thou also punish others: wherefore I have not declined from thy judgments.

Was there ever town, people or person, which truly believed in Jesus Christ, in whose life and death did not appear plentifully God's mercy? And contrarily, how have the unbelievers been given over to hardness of heart, and a reprobate mind, many plagues, wars, and other judgments of God to them incident? Old Protestants are now become rusty, because they made no account of God's word in their youth. Esau lost his Birth-right for a mess of pottage; he sought it afterwards with tears, but could not have it, whose profaneness grew by pleasures. We see many wanton men to come to fearful ends and filthy adulteries, who beginning to condemn the word, fell to spending, from spending to rioting, from riot to adultery, from that to theft, and from stealing to death. If we will observe godly discipline, we must first learn God's doctrine: if we will learn his judgments, we must learn his mercy. We attribute too much to fortune, to fatal destinies, to charming's and such like; but no man doth look up to the hand of God, wherein we take his name in vain, in not using aright his judgments.

Thou hast taught me, that is, thou hast besides the ministerial preaching, given me an extraordinary knowledge of thy judgments. Many know much, who notwithstanding cannot profit by God's judgments. So that the brief and plain meaning of the Prophet, is thus much in effect, O Lord I have not had this knowledge in and of myself; but I received it of thy Holy spirit, it was thy mercy and thy grace, that made me know thy judgments.

The man of God then showeth us in this verse, that he did always set the judgments of God before him: what made him then so careful to do them?

The considering of them in his mind, the occupying his eyes to mark them, the using of his ears to hear how God performed his promises to the obedient, and executed his fearful threatening's on the wicked. A thing than which nothing is worthy of greater meditation. We hear often with our ears, but with little profit, the glorious promises and wonderful vengeance of the Lord, what is commanded, and what is forbidden: but when we consider, and see before our eyes, how the Lord hath performed these things, we are humbled from sin, and comforted to obedience. This is it that breeds trial, proof, and experience, to see how the Lord hath in his mercy dealt with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, and David his faithful servants, and how he hath plagued the Egyptians, the Sodomites, the old world, and other of his enemies. Thy judgments of old O Lord, saith David, have I considered. We shall never effectually observe the judgments of old, unless we observe the judgments of God of late. For they must both join together, least that we considering of them being old, and not on new, should think they were not, or at least that we resting on the judgments of God executed of late, not lifting up our eyes to the judgments of old, should ascribe them to evil fortune, chance and destiny.

We may then see how they which used the means of good things increased in them, and how they that refrained not from evil, did slide back unto wickedness. Wherefore that we may thoroughly be persuaded of the truth of the Lord in things commanded, forbidden, threatened, promised, it is requisite to observe the proof of them, so oft as God giveth just occasion thereof. For until we look on these things, and see his blessings and his judgments, we shall never have a care to do good, nor a conscience to avoid evil, and to look into them, is to look into the glass of God's word. Many deny providence, because they have not a knowledge of the word, or else

leaning to their reason, give too much to natural causes, or lastly, because they have not a daily growing in the word. For that may well be the sense of this place, Thou dost make me to grow in knowledge.

Here is also commended unto us the teaching of the spirit by the ministry of the word. For otherwise we may often read the Scriptures, and yet be ignorant in God's judgments, in not ascribing every judgment to his peculiar office. For when we hear of a heretic, we say, what is he a heretic? I marvel he is become such a one, I knew him an honest man, I never knew any evil by him: yet the word of God telleth us, that some men's sins go before to judgment, and some men's come after, and that it is come to him, either for want of good works, or for some secret sin.

It followeth:

—• **Verse. 103. - How sweet are thy promises unto my mouth! Yea, sweeter than honey unto my mouth.**

We have heard in the ninth portion, that until we put our whole felicity in the word, we shall not profit. That which here is called promises, I take rather for judgments, partly because in the proper tongue the word is left out, and partly because he had used this word, judgments in the verse immediately going before. But some will say, how can the judgments of God be sweet, which are so troublesome, fearful and grievous? I answer, that the godly have no greater joy, than when they feel either the mercies of God accomplished towards them, that fear him, or his judgments showed upon the reprobates.

Unto my mouth. That is, I take as great pleasure in talking, conferring, and persuading thy judgments, as my mouth, or the mouth of any that loveth honey, is delighted therewith. So he saith, portion 2, verse 6. I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies, as in all manner of riches.

The meaning then of the verse is, when I feel, O Lord, such effects of thy promises in myself, and in others that fear thee, and such fruits of thy vengeance on them that despise thee, I find great comfort in thy word. The Prophet David found this sweetness by experience in himself, and therefore spake by proof. Why do not we feel the like comfort? Because we use not the same means, we find not the like effects. For if we could see our enemies put to the wall by the word, then should our knowledge exceed the knowledge of others: if we felt the allurements of the world, the enticements of the flesh, and the motions of the devil bitter unto us; then should we taste this sweetness. Wherefore before we make conscience to use the means of good, and to avoid the occasions of evil, we cannot profit. Thus we have showed how the judgments of God may be sweet, that is, unto them, that rejoice either to see the promises of God performed to the penitent, or his wrath fulfilled in the impenitent. This delight made the Prophet out of the abundance of his heart to speak joyfully of them, portion 2:6. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth: And because they testify no small love to a thing, which for affection to it will rise at midnight, he addeth portion, 8:6. At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee, because of thy righteous judgments. This is then a true note, that a man hath delight in God's word, if from the abundance of his heart, his mouth can speak of it, and when the word of God dwelleth so plentifully in him, that he can speak it in wisdom. Again, if we have such an earnest and natural delight being weary, to refresh ourselves with fables; what a dullness is it in us, that we cannot find as great comfort in the word of God? Wherefore we are to examine our own hearts, that how so ever we have been delighted before to hear vain and frivolous tales; so from henceforth we may please ourselves in true histories in the word. For

though other may be corrupt with flattering's yet these histories are true, and free from all assentation, because they register as well the sins of the Kings and their kindreds, as their virtues. Neither can we ever sound the Prophet, until from the experience of our own selves, we can proclaim forth the examples both of God's promises, and of his judgments. We showed that the cause why we felt not such profit, as the man of God did in the word, was, because we used not the like pains; we use fewer means, therefore our love is the less to the truth; we avoid not so many occasions of evil, therefore we sin the more. If we then would be more diligent in conference, more fervent in prayer, more given to meditation, we should profit more; if we would refrain from evil, and abstain from occasions of it, we should both be great in good things, and avoid many afflictions.

The cause then why we either speak not of God's judgments at all, or speaking, speak so coldly, is because we are so dead in using the means of good, and so dull in avoiding the occasions of evil. The Prophet, port 7:4, saith, I have remembered thy judgments of old, and have been comforted. Where we are to note, that we are not at utter defiance of sin, and in full league with goodness, until we have found comfort, when either the Lord showed mercy upon his, or vengeance on the wicked. And then God's judgments will be sweet unto us, when remembering that no sin shall be unpunished, we abstain from sin, and seeing that no good thing shall be unrewarded, we are moved to goodness. For what can strengthen a man more, than to consider this, that God will punish sin one day, and that in time he will fulfill his promises to his children, which walk in truth before him, although in great weakness? We have also taught, that we must use such a moderation of our affections, as we may stay ourselves in meditation, and that this depriveth us of much profit herein, in that we do

not appoint some certain time for meditation, moderating other things of our ordinary callings, and making a conscience sometimes to refrain from our common speeches So our understanding, our judgment, our will to practice will be bettered. If then at our tables, in our beds, at our work, we would redeem some time to read, to pray, or to confer, we should find wonderful profit, and walking in earthly things, we should have heavenly minds.

—• **Verse. 104. - By thy precepts I have gotten understanding: therefore I hate all the ways of falsehood.**

As in the beginning of this part, the Prophet of God protesteth his love to the word; so now in the end he showeth his hatred to the contrary. This then as we have partly set down before, and more largely by God's grace shall show hereafter, is a true token of love to the word, when we either hate falsehood in religion, or corruption in manners. We are then to look into our hearts to see, if we hate Popery and heresy, if there be in us a hatred against blaspheming of the name of God, against adultery, false dealing, and such like. For we cannot love the true worship, but we must hate heresy; we cannot love God's name, and yet not hate the abusers of it; we cannot love chastity and true dealing, but we must hate adultery, and unrighteousness. But if we feel ourselves to be indifferent persons, and come what come may, we care not greatly, undoubtedly we are of no religion. For if thou doest not hate an Atheist, thou lovest not God; if thou hatest not heresy, thou doest not love God's law; if thou hatest not adultery, thou art not truly chaste; if thou hatest not false dealing, thou art unrighteous. We see heretics never hate one another, because none of them love the truth: for the Papists can be content with the Family of love, and the Family of love with them.

Wherefore we see, that many do falsely pretend religion, chastity, and true dealing.

Note here in that he saith, I have gotten understanding by thy word: as though his understanding was the cause of his zealous hatred of the false worship. What is the cause then that men do not hate evil in greater measure? Because they be ignorant and know nothing. Indeed novelty displeaseth them a little, but when they be somewhat acquainted with that which is taught them, they will like it well enough. Why do we hand over head take any religion? Even because we have not gotten understanding. Why doth heresy get such easy entertainment with many of us? Because we are unconstant and born away with every blast, as witness Peter and Jude, and because we are not fast rooted in knowledge, as is mentioned Ephes. 4. Many in our country are stiff in heresy, because they were never sound in judgment, they were ever inconstant, they were never rooted in Jesus Christ, and therefore were carried away with every puff of vain doctrine. Some indeed (as we have said before) fall for lack of good conscience: but some never come so far, because they heard not, or else heard very negligently: and therefore whosoever shall now come, and blow an illusion in their ear, he shall be heard. How shall we know an enemy? He cometh under the cloak of love, and is covered with the vizard of honesty, but his understanding faileth, his judgment is corrupt.

In that it is here said, all the ways of falsehood, we must note, that we are to grow from knowledge to knowledge, from faith to faith, from glory to glory, that growing in godly understanding, we may grow also in hatred of falsehood. This verse may seem to have some contrariety with the verse a little going before, where he saith, I have abstained from every evil, that I might keep thy law: but indeed there is none; because no true mortification,

both here and in that place, is required an hatred avoiding of evil. We must know that the way to make good things sweet, is the way to feel evil things sour: As when thou art grieved to feel thine eye an occasion of evil, or evil thoughts to be in thine heart with bitterness and vexation of spirit, thou must strive against them, and God will give thee strength to strive not only without constraint, but also of a love of good, and a hatred of evil. The first way then unto righteousness, is wearisomeness of sin, and to strive against it though with great trouble, because the more we vex, torment, and disquiet ourselves, the more we shall come to the love of good, and then the hatred of sin will grow of itself. If then a man cannot find this hatred of sin in him, he must labor to avoid all occasions that hinder his understanding of the truth, as distractions and troubles of mind, and use all means to grow in knowledge, as reading, hearing, conferring, and such like. For our not profiting in knowledge, is our not profiting in hating of heresies, and our not hating of heresy, is a token of our not profiting in knowledge. When we hear then, if our hearing do not work in us a love of the truth, and hatred of the contrary, we have not profited in knowledge: but if we grow in knowledge, we shall know it by profiting in the love of the truth, and in the hatred of falsehood. We have showed, how in the former portion, the man of God testifying his affection to God's law, and concluding with his hatred to the contrary, interminglith his reasons, that because he found by experience, that the word of God made him wiser than his enemies, than his teachers, and the aged, and did preserve him from every evil way: therefore he found such comfort in it, that no natural thing was so liking to his outward man, as this was to his inward man.

PORTION. 14.

—• **Verse. 105. - Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my path.**

This portion following is a prayer to the Lord, to be further instructed in the word of God, and to have his affections thereby more reformed. The reasons which he useth be three: the first is his faith in the word, in that he made account of it to be the only means, whereby he should be directed in all his ways, and this is contained in the first verse of the portion: Thy word is a lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my (steps) or path. The second, is his constant purpose to persevere in the obedience of God's word in the verse following: I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. The third is his miserable calamity, wherein he was, which constrained him to pray, which appeareth in the next verse: I am very sore afflicted, O Lord, quicken me according to thy word. These things are afterwards showed in the verses following, as his faith in God's law in the two last, and his calamity in the first and sixth verses, with prayer couched in the midst of the portion.

It is a marvelous strange thing, that one thing should be so often repeated, as this to commend still God's law, and to pray still to be taught in the same. This proceedeth from the comfort which he felt in the word, and from the fight of the corruption of his own heart, and is commended to us in writing, to show us our corruption, and to labor for the like fruit. Wherefore seeing experience hath taught us thus much, we must learn, that we can neither see the comfort of our seeking after God, nor our calamity and misery to be delivered out of it, unless we pray with the Prophet for the right knowledge of the law of God: so that we are much to thank our God, that he giveth us in another such a sight of our own corruption.

As in the first verse, there is a notable commendation of the word: so is there also a singular declaration of his faith: Thy word, O Lord, is a lantern to my feet, and a light unto my path. This seemeth to all men, to have been learned long ago, and belched out in time of Popery, and that it is no new thing, but a saying very well known: but when we look into the several practices of men, which is the righteous judge of all men's judgments, we shall find men to be far from any inward faith showed in such fruits. This made the Prophet to swear, in that he saw on one side his happiness so great in the word, and the corruption of his heart on the other side. And in meditating day and night in God's law, and considering his righteous judgments, he saith in truth, Thy word is a lantern, &c. If we will look into ourselves, we shall find, that those things which seem to be most easily believed, are furthest from faith, and that things most easy to be learned, are furthest from practice. True it is, that every man will say, Who will not believe this? What a beast were he that would deny the truth of God's word? But alas, our careless reading, our rare meditating, our cold praying, and praising of God for his word, our seldom conference of the word will testify against us in time to come, that we never truly believed. We must first look and note ourselves, and then we shall profit somewhat more. The man of God opposeth here the word to man's wisdom, which he had mentioned in the verse going before, as light is contrary to darkness. For as in darkness we cannot go safely, without the light of a lantern, or such like: even so are we in ignorance and rebellion, if we be not continually guided by the word of God and his Spirit. This then is a further thing, how durst blind bayards be so bold, who living in the darkness of Egypt, think they are in the light, and being unable to discern between presumption and despair, between promises and threatening's, between things straitly commanded, and

voluntarily done, suppose themselves to be sharp sighted? Nay, we shall find these fruits to be but in few. It is said, Matth. 22:23. The light of the body is the eye, if then thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be light. 23. But if thine eye be wicked, then all thy body shall be dark. Where our Savior Christ borroweth his speech from the senses of the body, and translateth it to the powers of the soul. For as every part of the body is lightsome, whilst the eye seeth: so a man being enlightened with the word, and the Spirit, having his eyes always to heaven, hath his affections aright: and on the contrary, as all things are loathsome to that body, which for want of the eyes is wholly darkened: so a man sitting in the darkness of ignorance, having his mind wholly set on earthly things, hath his affections disordered.

Now, that there is no light in us, but all is darkness in our souls, the Apostle Peter doth plainly show it, 2 Pet. 1:19. We have a most sure word of the Prophets, to the which ye do well, that ye take heed, as to a sure light in a dark place, &c. Where he commending the Christians for their care of the word, showeth, that it is a light in the dark, and teacheth us, that how much knowledge we have, so much we are in good affections. Also Paul, Ephes 4:17,18 saith, I testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not, as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, 18. Having their cogitation darkened, and being strangers from the life of God, through the ignorance that is in them, &c. Where he showeth, that the man unregenerate hath his mind, understanding, and heart corrupt and blind in that life, which God liveth in his, and that as the man which seeth being in darkness, or in light the blind man gropeth uncertainly; even so all our doing; are endless and headless, which are without the light of knowledge.

Shall we think now that every man believeth this to be true? No, for if they did, they would do otherwise. If they felt this in affection in any measure, would they not come out of their prison to the liberty of God's saints, would they not avoid the darkness to see the bright sun? What a folly were it for a man, who having scales and gleamy diseases on his eyes might be cured, and will not? This is a double fault, that when men may know, they will lie in errors and ignorance, and when they may be converted they will dwell still in Heresy. Oh what a thing is this, willfully to remain in darkness, and to sleep at the hearing of the word, when the Lord giveth them a lantern for their feet, and offereth knowledge; and yet to be no better than the stocks they sit on? If it pleased the Lord who giveth understanding to the ignorant, and draweth light out of darkness to reveal the light into their dark consciences, they should know that when light came unto them, they refused it, and that they are lovers of darkness more than of light. But he that worketh all things mightily in all men, must show this light unto their darkness, because they that are in hell think on none other heaven, and they that lie in unrighteousness, think of no other righteousness, and sitting in the valleys of death, they remember none other life. We must therefore pray, that the Lord's glorious light of the gospel may open the eyes of their consciences, and let every man examine his own heart, that he may pray to have his judgment cleared by the true knowledge of the word, and his affections renewed to the due obedience of the same. For how much knowledge we have, so much light have we; and look how much we lie in ignorance, so much we lie in darkness. We know but in part, when we are at the highest in this life, how great then is that darkness, when we know not so much as the word may instruct us in? When a man seeth as much in a Papist, as in a block, let him consider, that as little as the care is, which we

have of the word, and as small as our conscience is in the obedience of the same; so little is his light in heavenly things. Yea, though we have knowledge, and live not after it, we are yet in darkness, we grope as it were a far off, who having knowledge, have no conscience.

A saying that may touch us to the quick, that we are but having a glimmering light, as Paul had in the outward man at his conversion, or being as purblind men, not having our eyes clean out, nor our sight clear, when we have knowledge, and labor not to build virtue upon virtue. If then thou hast not a care to profit by the word, thou hast a dark sight, and a glimmering light, there is a shadow before thine eyes, thou canst not discern chalk from cheese. No marvel then, why so few are sharp sighted in the word, since either we know little, or knowing somewhat, we practice nothing.

Again, as if we have gone some part of the journey in light, and yet pass the other in darkness, it is very dangerous: likewise in regeneration, though we have spent some part of our life in the obedience of true knowledge, and in the residue of our life do not escape the wiliness of the flesh, we cannot without dangerous darkness hold forth our course in the Spirit. If we mingle light and darkness together, and confound the world and the Church, the wisdom of God, and the inventions of man, we do not as yet truly obey, nor walk in the light of the word.

For as whatsoever is not of Faith is sin, and whatsoever is not in the light is darkness: so whatsoever is not done according to the light of knowledge, is done in the darkness of ignorance. In all our affairs then we must learn to ask counsel of the word.

Here then is a good comfortable doctrine also, that we are so much in darkness, as in whole or in part we be in ignorance: so whether in part or in

whole we be warranted by the word of God for our doing; so far we have a guide, we have a load-star, a lantern, and a sure light, as Peter witnesseth, to conduct us. The Papists then are here confuted, which say the word containeth hard things: we grant indeed that there are many mysteries in the word of God, and that the testimonies of the Lord are wonderful, especially in the doctrine of salvation, and to a natural man; yet there be many things easy to a man regenerate, and the very entrance into them giveth light to the blind, and to them which are lowly in their own eyes. It is our great corruption, that when we know in part, we are as they that have a glimmering sight of their way, and therefore least they should be accounted stark blind refuse a leader. But although we see as in a glass, in part, and in measure, yet as a man may follow, if he be not blind, the light of the lantern: so we may come to knowledge, unless we shut our eyes at the truth. We may therefore as safely for the souls health, follow the light of the word, as we may for the safeguard of our body, follow the light of a lantern.

The way of salvation prescribed in the word, is a high, plain, and beaten way, if anything hinder us thereunto, it is the curse, and our sin in that we are not careful to be directed. For surely this is the word to open our understanding, yea, though we be born blind, if you do not willingly shut your eyes. But we must note that God's word is a lantern, when God's spirit worketh thereby: for whilst we go about the bare and literal sense, it is no otherwise then if a blind man should read, or a man having sight, should put a veil before his eyes. Wherefore the man of God prayeth, port. 17:5. Direct my steppes in thy word, &c. and verse: 7. Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes. Why then do we so little profit by the word? Because we, thinking that of ourselves we can conceive aright, do not pray to be taught by God his spirit. For as no man

seeth, or can see what is in man, but the spirit of man, and that which he uttereth with his tongue: no more can we see what is in God, but being taught by the spirit of God and his word. Wherefore the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. 2:20. God hath revealed them unto us by his spirit; for the spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. 11, for what man knoweth the things of a man but the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God. Flesh and blood, as our Savior witnesseth to Peter, cannot reveal the things of our salvation unto us, but the spirit of God.

And why then are we yet so unprofitable? Surely because we are not guilty of our own infirmities, and we see not the darkness and blindness which is in us, or if we see it, we feel not ourselves pressed with the miserable captivity and bondage, wherein it holdeth our souls. This sight made the Prophet so often use this prayer, Teach me true judgment, teach me true understanding, teach me thy statutes &c. All which repetitions might otherwise have seemed to have been a vain babbling, had he not used such a narrow sight of his inward corruptions with a desire to be delivered from them, which may condemn us of our darkness, and teach us, that there is no light in us, but by the word.

Many indeed are of a modest spirit, and have some sight of their ignorance, yet they have not a feeling of their misery in particular things, and do not examine themselves in every particular thing, what it is to be in darkness; and therefore, as we have said, do no more desire to be enlightened and governed by another, than he that having a slender eyesight and hardly discerning his way, refuseth to have a guide, as though he were blind. And though the Lord often shineth upon us, and maketh us guilty of our blindness, yet we do not see how loathsome, irksome, and

uncomfortable a thing darkness is, nor how pleasant, amiable, and comfortable a thing light is, although we confess in general, that we have not the light but are in darkness.

The want of seeing the monstrous ugliness of this palpable darkness maketh us dull in prayer for the light of God's spirit. Wherefore we must desire that that may be stricken into our consciences which we have in judgment, that is, that we may see how amiable, glorious, and heavenly a thing it is to be enlightened with God's light, and how horrible a thing it is to be plunged in the darkness of the soul; how sweet, excellent, and beautiful a thing it is to believe and love the word, and how loathsome and palpable is mistrust and ignorance.

We must then be persuaded, that though we are not in prison, we walk in the night and in the darkness, whilst we are in ignorance, yet the Lord will give us in time to suspect our hearts of ignorance, and work in us both a desire and a delight to love and live after the word, and that we shall find the truth of this verse in ourselves, to say with the Prophet, Thy word is a lantern to my feet, and a light to my paths.

Many there are which do not so much as acknowledge this doctrine; Some are come out of this darkness into the glorious kingdom of Christ, and yet swerve so much in life, that they show not themselves to have this true faith. And where men's manners swerve besides their profession, we see this sentence, more professed in mouth, than practiced in life, and they only do believe this to be true which enterprise nothing but that which hath it warrant out of the word. For these acknowledge, that in themselves there is nothing but darkness, and that they stand in need to be enlightened by the ministry of the word, and working of his spirit.

And as we confess the truth of this in general, so must we deduce it to particulars and severals, so that every man may say, I am either in light or in darkness, if I have a warrant for this which I do, out of the word, I am in light; but if I do it by the motion of mine own brain, I am in darkness. Besides, as this doth show the great necessity of God's word: so also it must humble us, because of our ignorance: as also it yieldeth this comfort, that as we think we travel safely in respect of our bodies, so long as we have the light of the Sun; so also we are in the safe way to salvation, as long as we are guided by the word. And when as some do object, that the Scriptures do contain great difficulties, and are hard to be understood; we said, that though the smallest things were deep mysteries, yet they be plain to the least of God's children. For Proverb 8:9. Wisdom saith, that all her words are plain to him that will understand, and straight to them that would find knowledge. And the man of God saith, Portion 17:2. The entrance into thy word showeth light, and giveth understanding to the simple. And though all men are not curiously to search into questions, yet all men are careful to seek the way of salvation. No man then can herein complain of darkness, but as it is in his own mind; neither need that so to be, if he will use the means to avoid it, and in a repenting heart crave the light by prayer. The cause therefore why the word is a parable, and a dark riddle unto so many, is either the pride of their own wit, when they think their wit to be so good, as they can conceive everything, and their judgment and learning to be such, as that they can understand anything, and profit by their own industry; when, as God is the author, so he is also the revealer of his truth: or else they do not esteem so reverently of the truth, nor are so much grieved with their blindness and ignorance as they should be.

—• **Verse. 106. - I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.**

Now as his faith was the first argument he used: so the second was his conscience, his love, and his affection to the word, which he showeth by his oath: and that we may know it to be no wandering motion of his mind, carrying him away, but a thing well considered of, and constant, he protesteth that he will keep his oath. Wherein he declareth, that many men have sometimes motions to good, but they either die presently, or else they be so cold, that they quickly fall away. But as we may see, he was no such light-headed man. We have here to learn, that this is a judgment of God, why many do not profit in the word, because they cannot, (being void both of grief, for their natural blindness, as also of the clear sight and faith in God's word) say in truth, Thy word is a lantern to my feet, &c. Now if these things be in us, we must pray that we may be moved with a purpose to continue in them, and purposing we must beware we break it not, but be constant.

I have sworn, and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. Concerning this binding of himself with an oath, which the man of God here useth, it declareth his care to keep a good conscience, in laying the judgments of God which were past, and the judgments of God to come, up in his heart. We see then, that as when men swear voluntarily, it is a token of their good conscience; so it appeareth most in good men, who setting so much by the glorious name of God, can sustain any private discredit, and swallow many troubles to maintain the credit of it. Wherefore God's children, though they are carefully to avoid all sins, yet make a greater conscience of this sin, than of any other; and when they take an oath, though before they made a conscience of that thing, yet now they

make a greater conscience. If he had found no weakness, no mistrust, or doubtfulness in himself, then needed he not so straitly to have bound himself. For if he had been always careful, what needed he to have used an oath? But the care which he had to meet with this weakness, was the cause of his solemn covenant, which teacheth us, that such infirmities as are in us, were in him, who because of the vanity and sluggishness, which he felt in his corrupt nature, did provoke and stir up himself to a greater care by an oath.

Then if we see, that even the man of God thought this to be a necessary mean to stir up his infirmities, why should we not think it as necessary for us? When the most diligent amongst us, may think himself to be behind him in many degrees. But the cause why we make no such oath, is, because we are fearful, and our delaying of this practice from time to time showeth, that there is not in us that feeling of our wants, that reverence of his word, nor experience of his goodness, which he felt.

This must make us afraid, and ashamed of ourselves, that we having the like infirmities, have not the like affections. True it is, that to be sparing in these oaths, is a good token of a Christian, so that he be but a novice in Christ's school (for every man must not use this oath, because he knoweth not his own strength) but we must not always be at A. B. C. and dwell still in the principles of Religion.

Neither must we think that the Prophet here made any new or strange covenant, but rather he iterated that covenant, which before he had made in circumcision, and although we make no such covenant now, yet we must know, that we have made them before. For this was a renewing of his oath, which he made, when he was circumcised, and entered into God's family. And because I am not here to enter into the discourse of many particular

vows; we shall speak of our general vow, which we make in Baptism, which though we do not renew, yet we are much to be ashamed of it. We find, that vows are either general or particular. And here by the way we must note, that that which we call a compact between man and man, the same is a vow between God and man. For as in civil affairs, a compact is a straight thing and bindeth us more before men, than a bare promise; and promises simply made, seem to have greater liberty than a compact: so also promises made to the Lord must keep us in obedience, but especially vows, as a double bond, are far more nearly and carefully to be performed.

Concerning general vows, we know that in the ordaining of Kings, vows were made from them to the Lord, as also some passed from their Princes to the people, as 2 Chron. 23, where Jehoiada took the Captains of hundreds in covenant with him: And all the Congregation made a covenant with the King Joash in the house of God. And as 2 Chron. 34:31. Josiah when he had destroyed the Idols, and reformed the Temple, after the finding of the book of the Law, stood by the pillar, and made a covenant before the Lord to walk after the Lord, and to keep his commandments, and his testimonies, and his statutes. &c. Also Neh. 10, we shall find a general covenant confirmed by an oath.

Concerning particular covenants, they are either simply according to God's word, or else taken up for some special end, either as means to come to some good, or else as bridles to avoid some evil, as 2 Chron. 15:12. When the people made a covenant to seek the Lord, &c. 14. They did swear unto the Lord with a loud voice. Also Neh. 10 the people take a new oath and seal it. Ezra 9, where we may see, that when Ezra had wept and fasted for the sins of the people, in that they had taken strange wives of the people of the Lands. 3. Made them to make a covenant with the Lord, and to put

away their strange wives: as also Neh. 5. On this sort Jeremiah persuadeth his people, chap. 34 to make a covenant concerning the liberties of their servants, and denounceth the fierce wrath of God upon them, for breaking their promise. Of these two kinds of covenants, the self-same rules are to be prescribed. If we feel in ourselves any special dullness, we must bewail it, and when we see that we have the more straits of mind, we must stir up ourselves and not neglect the means. We speak not here of free vows, but of such as the word of God commandeth, and that for fear of relapse and falling from the Lord, we may use these means, more surely to tie us unto him.

A contract is between man and man: which when it is between God and man, it is called a vow. In contracts men leave some liberty to themselves, so that for some circumstances they need not keep it: but it is meet that every vow be performed to God.

These vows and covenants, are either general, such as the King maketh with his subjects, as Joash, and Josiah, and Nehemiah maketh a general covenant: or particular, as Asa made a particular covenant; which covenant is either commanded, or taken up for some cause, of and in respect of ourselves, as means to avoid evil, or to lay hold of goodness, Ezra 9. The particular covenant or vow, which is commanded, is ever contained under the general, and hath respect unto some special part thereof. And therefore many godly Kings took oaths of their subjects to leave some special sin, or to do some special good deeds. So men, &c.

So Nehemiah made a particular covenant with the rich men, that they should not oppress the poor, Neh. 5. So Jeremiah caused the people to make a particular covenant.

There is the same reason of the general covenant and the particular that is commanded, for we are bound to do them: therefore if we be slack in either of them, we must be sorry for it, if we have received grace we must stir it up, and for the stirring up of ourselves we must not neglect this remedy.

Now, where some take this to be a place from whence they might either draw an argument of free will, or prove by it that we are able to keep the law of God: they deceive themselves: for first, note the word here used, he saith not that he hath sworn to keep the law of God, but the judgments of God, which he often before and after in the second verse from this useth, for the righteous performance of God's promises, or executing of his just vengeance; neither doth he mean here a simple keeping of them, but rather an inward and careful receiving of them in his heart, and not an outward performance. Thus the word (keeping) is often taken in the holy Scriptures, even for a laying up of the truth in our mind, from whence we may draw out the use of it, as occasion shall serve; as where it is said, Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it: that is, faithfully lay it up in their hearts, with a full intent to practice, when God shall give just occasion thereof. So that the meaning of this word is nothing else, but a solemn laying up of the judgments of God in his mind, mentioned also before, portion 3:6. Remove from me shame and contempt, for I have kept thy testimonies. So that he showeth, how he did mark diligently how God fulfilled his promises to his children, and executed vengeance upon the wicked. And because the fulfilling of God's promises, is to give strength to his to keep the word, he showeth, how he would take a view, how God performed this grace in his servants, both in forgiving the sins of the repentant, and giving his grace to them that crave it.

Now there are two things especially, which hinder us from this practice. First, the subtlety of Satan, thus reasoning in us; I would gladly vow, but when I have vowed such a good thing, I am further from performing my vow, than ever I was before. We answer, that this indeed is so, and cometh as a judgment of God for vowing so high a thing unadvisedly and rashly, with a secret presuming of ourselves, and not of God, with want of a prayer to the Lord for grace to perform the same, as the Prophet did. For so soon as the Prophet had vowed thus to the Lord, he immediately maketh his prayer, fervently asking of the Lord, that as he had given his heart whole unto him, so he would confirm this grace of his Spirit in him. Now, seeing the Lord hath also promised to cleanse our hearts, and that Jesus Christ is our wisdom and sanctification, and we are become the children of the highest, our meaning is not, that the full performance hereof should be sought for in ourselves, but in Christ.

The second thing whereby we are hindered, is that, wherewith Satan doth buffet us: when we have made some breach of our covenant made to the Lord, saying: Thou hast not kept thy promise, thou hast broken thy bond, thou hast violated thy covenant, and to do this once is as good as twenty: this will be a sufficient evidence against thee why doest thou therefore continue, and strivest any further in vain? We see how this prevaieth oftentimes, because there is no greater sin, than the sin of them, who sometimes have been religious, and by this practice of the devil, for some particular offense, have been persuaded that they have made an utter breach of their covenant. We answer for this, that seeing that Christ did not only die for our sins before Baptism, but also for our sins after Baptism, and did not only satisfy for our sins committed before our calling, but for those also which we commit after our calling, though through infirmity and frailty we

have fallen, and yet not lying down in presumption and malice, but there is a reverent fear and trembling in our hearts, that our corruptions rebelled against the Lord, the particular covenant being broken cannot take away the general, and cannot be excluded, but must be included in the same. When then we have made a breach of human oblivion, and not of obstinate maliciousness, this is as well forgiven in the general, as other sins. We may see this in politic matters between a good Lord and his servant, (for I presuppose a merciful, a courteous Lord) the Lord will not be displeased for failing in some particular performance of some particular covenant, so he findeth him ready to yield honor and obedience to the general covenants which are between them: even so the Lord, whose love exceedeth the love of a father, Psal. 103, and of a mother, Isaiah 49, towards his, will spare us for a particular breach, so it be not a general contempt, and done of willful malice. If then in such a case we will humble ourselves with sorrow, that we displeased our God, and desire the Lord not to take vengeance for any final breach, because there was no final intent to fall from the Lord, we shall surely find mercy and pardon at his hand. This is a doctrine very requisite, because it is the policy of Satan to persuade a man, that having broken one covenant, he hath broken all. The remedy then is, that we know our sins to be pardoned, and that we renew our covenant, which we do so oft as we come to the Sacrament. Let us learn therefore to make all our oaths with the Lord in great reverence, as did Nehemiah chap. 5, who caused the oath to be ministered in the presence of the Priest; then must we use prayer, and all means, whereby we may continue in the same: lastly, if we slip or fall in some particular, we must not be discouraged or faint. The cause then why men do not this, is either because they do not take it in hand in reverence, or

taking it in hand do not purpose to keep it, or keeping it, do fall by despair for some particular defect.

Thus we see how the man of God showeth his earnestness and his affection to the law of God, teaching us, why many do not so love the word, as to make it a lantern to their feet, either because they have not such vehement affection, or else they be not so permanent: and therefore we are to pray both against our coldness to the law, and our inconstancy.

It might seem strange to some, that he should swear to keep God's judgments: but we must know, that this keeping is not so much in outward show as in inward virtue. Again we see, that as in making this holy oath God's children do not exclude, but include the forgiveness of sins: so they do it not, but first presupposing the grace of God, by prayer to be obtained for the keeping of it. Besides, no particular or accessory covenant can take away the principal and general, because the one includeth the other. But here we must note, that then no secondary cause can take away the first, when we sin but of human frailty, and not of presumption, and when we so crave for mercy, that our hearts be set to recover ourselves, and we will not be sluggish in our sins hereafter, because then is the oath broken, and covenant disannulled, when we make a final breach. We must therefore fight against scrupulosity herein, knowing that God will spare us as a father doth his children, in that the whole breach of our covenant is a general relinquishing of the same. When then there ariseth a fear in our hearts to come so near unto the Lord (although it may be good) no more to pour this precious liquor into frail consciences, than to put new wine into old bottles, and rather appertaineth to them of greater graces: yet we must consider, that there were great infirmities in this man of God, against which he would strive by this mean, and so provoke himself to come nearer to the Lord. So

that as we must not undertake this thing without advice: so we must not always please ourselves in these beginnings, and when as concerning the time we should be teachers, we should need to have the first foundation of religion laid again. Wherefore we must needs acknowledge, that the cause of our long absence from the Lord, is our want of the defiance of sin, and love to the word, as the Prophet had; neither must we ever, when occasion will be given, neglect this mean, which may keep us from sliding back. And here we are to observe, that wicked or foolish vows, which hinder Christian religion, and those wicked vows of wicked religion, as the ridiculous vows of chastity, or such as may hinder us in our callings (as that a man should never eat flesh, or should not wear some kind of apparel) are to be avoided; because they have not their warrant out of the word of God. And though wine maketh drunkards, being immoderately taken; yet it is no reason, seeing it maketh glad the heart of man in its own nature, why others should not use it, which have weak bodies: yet thus much will I grant, that if a man that hath been drunk by too immoderate drinking of wine, doth vow for a time to relinquish it, this is not unadvised, seeing we are commanded, if our eye offend us, to pull it out, and if our foot doth hurt us, to cut it off. Again, if a man given to concupiscence shall solemnly vow to refrain the familiarity of wanton women, and will not come in place where light women frequent, but with Job shall make a covenant with his eyes, we see this by the word also to be warrantable. And thus much for means to avoid evil: now for means to do good.

If a man feel himself dull, and slow in reading the word, or slack in prayer, shall to the provoking himself the more make a covenant daily to read some portion of the word, and to bestow some time of the day in prayer; if this be taken up in the wisdom of the Spirit, to cast off

sluggishness, and provoke alacrity herein, we see, because at morning, noon-tide, and evening some of God's children have used it, he may set himself a task, and thereby may make a stay for his wavering mind. Howbeit these things must not be perpetual, as it is in other covenants. For a man may abstain from women and wine for a time, and yet not forever, because it must be done for some certain ends and causes, as also with some holy conditions. As for example, if a man hath taken a time of the day to pray in, and at that time he shall have some special cause of setting forth God's glory, or if his particular calling requiring an whole man, shall call him away; then if he omit it, there is no breach, because the thing which he is about to do, is according to God's law. This is needful to be considered with a godly care, that we double that some other day, when we shall be more at liberty, which we have for the same causes pretermitted the day before. If then there be just occasion offered of this remission (for otherwise we must not be remiss) we know that the covenant is not broken, in that we made it with a condition, that we would use it so far forth, as it might not hinder God's glory, our duty to our brethren, nor our several calling, because in such a case, to obey is better than sacrifice. But if there be no just cause of pretermittting this purpose, then is there just cause of sorrowing for breaking the covenant. But here we see an help, we have not done this task today, because of idleness: what then? We must return to the assurance of forgiveness of sins, and must redeem that with double diligence, which we have lost through willful negligence.

In these vows then taken up of ourselves, as means to avoid sin, or to do good; we must first take heed that they be made within the compass of the word. Secondly, that they be but for a time, and not continual. Thirdly, that they be ever made with wife and discreet considerations, least being broken,

our consciences be troubled. Fourthly, if there be any fault, that it be recompensed by double duty and diligence afterward.

Thus we see, how either for to prick us to good, or stay us from some evil, we may make a covenant upon condition, in a desire of God's glory, and in craving God's grace. And thus much of his care and conscience to God's judgments: now let us come to the third argument, which is his affliction.

—• **Verse. 107. - I am very sore afflicted: O Lord quicken me according to thy word.**

In that the man of God useth this as a reason before his prayer, it seemeth he was not meanly troubled, but sorely vexed, as we may see in joining that which he saith in the verse following: My soul is continually in mine hand, yet do I not forget thy law. Wherein carrying his soul in his hand, he meaneth that he hath no assurance of his life, but is in continual danger of it, as we count those things which be in our hand, to be hardly sure, and in peril to slip from us, as we may see by other places of the word. As in the book of Judges, Jephtha saith, I carried my life in mine own hand, that is, I did hazard my life. 1 Sam. 28:21, where the Pythonisse saith, I have put my soul in my hand. which is all one, as if she should say, I have ventured my life, or I was at deaths door. Job 13:14. Wherefore do I tear my flesh with my teeth, and put my soul in my hand? As if he should say, Why do I put my life in danger? For even as water lying in our hand is soon slipped out; so our soul being in our hand, is said to be at deaths door.

Besides, he confesseth that he had many snares, and pestilent devices of his enemies laid against him, so that at his least going astray, he was laid for, and ready to be taken. In that he needed thus to pray, we may see how reason might have moved him to the contrary. Flesh and blood might have taught Daniel, that in such narrow search he might have shut his window

when he prayed, or have conveyed himself into some secret chamber, and so to have used some policy, and provided means to have saved himself, had not the spirit of God mightily prevailed in him against all such temptations: So when by reason of some imminent danger, we are at our wits end, Satan would have us go in by-paths, and not to make the word of God a lantern to our feet. Saul, when he could hear nothing from the Lord, was driven thus by his extreme danger, to go to the witches. We see then how necessary it is for God's children, in the time of trial, to pray for their direction in the right ways. Again, because when we are hardly dealt with, we are ready to revenge with policy, we see how he prayeth to keep himself aright.

It was undoubtedly the great mercy of God to David then to pray, that no affection of revenge might enter into him. Oh how needful then is it for us, when the wicked shall deal with us unreasonably, to pray to the Lord to be kept in judgment from policy, and in affection from revenging, and that we may stay our judgment on God's promises, and our affections on his dealings?

Thirdly, if all means be wanting to us, then will the devil move us to despair, and therefore great need have we to pray, that we may be delivered from the darkness of despair, by the lantern of God's word. We see how necessarily the man of God prayed: not to be tempted above his strength, and that the rod of the wicked should not fall on his lot, least he should put his hand unto wickedness; and therefore craved wisdom in God's word, faith in his promises, and patience in his goodness. We see then the plain meaning of the man of God in this verse, if we call to mind in this word very sore afflicted, that which we have heard before, that his eyes failed, his heart fainted, his spirit panted, his natural powers melted, and to be brief,

that he was an image of death. As a man cannot abide great prosperity, no more can he abide great adversity. For as we are puffed up with the one, so we are cast down with the other, by mistrust in God's providence, and despair of his promises. Experience teacheth us, that as a little prosperity maketh us to forget God, so many inconveniences by affliction may befall us, as either dullness, deadness, blockishness, or wicked shifts, or ungodly doubts. Wherefore the man of God here teacheth us, that if he used such remedies in the greater troubles, then how much more should we use them in the less. We are here besides to accuse our unbelief, bewrayed in small things, seeing the Prophet in so great extremities exercised his faith, against all the reasons of flesh and blood. As the Lord giveth not so great graces unto us, as to him; so he will not press us with so great temptations, as he did him. And if the Lord did help his Saints in great afflictions, surely he will also help us, if we likewise strive against mistrust. We may see, the Saints of God were never so delicately brought up, that they never wanted; so that if the Lord hath so dealt with his most excellent and faithful servants, what will he do to us unfaithful ones? If he did so to them which were under the law, to whom were made greater promises of outward things; what will he do to us, to whom are promises made of spiritual things under the Gospel, as of the forgiveness of sins, of the renewing our hearts, of spiritual joys, of the kingdom of heaven? If the Lord then lay on us such troubles, as he laid on our forefathers, how much more should we suffer them, seeing we may profit by their example, who were under the Law, who were in the dawning of the day, or rather in the night in respect of us, unto whom Christ is crucified and risen again. We must then be ashamed of our womanish nature, who will shrink at so little trial, and think that the Lord should deal more gently with us, than with them. They were in the shadow

of the Law; we in the bright Sun of the Gospel, which if we see, we shall accuse ourselves of the wants of God's graces in us, seeing he dealt thus with his dearest Saints.

In that he addeth, quicken me according unto thy word, he showeth, that he meant not to escape by natural means, although as he would use them, so he stayed not in them: he used these as accessories, but the word of God as principal. For his principal was to be quickened by the word, and his accessory was the using of ordinary means.

Then in all afflictions let us crave of God, that we may not use unlawful means, but rather the promises of God, as our chiefest strength, and feeling them with God's favor in us, then may we use the other to these. For then will the Lord give success and blessing to natural and secondary means, when our hearts being chiefly stayed on the promises of God (as our chiefest strength, and feeling them with God's favor in us) in the forgiveness of our sins, and renewing of our minds, we crave a blessing on the creatures, as on the second means Besides, he acknowledgeth in this word (quicken) the Lord to be the author of life, and that without his word, he was as dead. This life indeed is the shadow of death, common with the reprobates and brute beasts, and our life is only in Christ Jesus. So Adam was called dead, what is that? Surely, in that his soul had nothing to do with God; and although God gave him a natural life, yet spiritually he was dead.

Thus the Saints of God thought they were at the last cast, and ready for the buriers, when they could not feel God's presence and promises. According to thy Word, that is, according to thy promises, for we have none assurance to come to God, unless his word be given unto us. What, had he especial or peculiar promises working in him? The diverse places of this Psalm will shew us no such thing, because this Psalm is an image of

Regeneration. They were general promises, as are other in many places of the Scripture, Rejoice O Zion for thy redeemer cometh. Every man might apply this to himself: as is also that place, Isaiah 66:2. I that dwell in heaven will look even to him that is poor, and of a contrite heart, and trembleth at my words. These promises are general, and therefore we must look to be quickened by them. For the Lord saith, that though Eternity be his place, yet will he come to them that be of a contrite heart: so that since the Lord hath made this promise, we must by Faith use it: Come unto me, saith Christ, all that labor and are loaden. Behold another general promise, which we must apply to ourselves by Faith, making this argument without selves; Lord thou hast promised this, whosoever is weary and heavy loaden, shall of thee be refreshed. Lord I am weary and heavy loaden, Lord therefore help me according to thy promise. I came not, saith our Savior in another place, to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance. We see that these general precepts must be believed, and we must crave God's spirit, that we may be quickened and receive life by them. For though they be general to all, yet we must understand, that every man is to apply them severally unto himself. Howbeit we must first believe the general promises, and then by prayer, we are to crave a special use of them, as of them wherein we believe.

—• **Verse. 108. - O Lord I beseech thee accept the free offering of my mouth, and teach me thy judgments.**

Now the Prophet prayeth for the clearer understanding of God's word. This is then his principal: which here is set down more plain. The meaning therefore of this verse is: that I may thus be quickened, clear my judgment, that I may see how thou dealest with thy servants, that I may have comfort in thy promises. As the air being troubled, the weather is darkened; so the mind of man being troubled with ignorance, storms, mists, and clouds of

temptations, is much distempered. Wherefore he prayeth against these, port. 17:7. Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes. Where we may see how afflictions had hidden as it were the countenance of God; showing also, that the face and favor of God appeareth in nothing so much, as in the true understanding of his word. And port. 8:8. The earth O Lord is full of thy mercies, teach me thy statutes. Port. 2, verse 4. Blessed art thou O Lord, teach me thy statutes. Whereas God is good, he revealeth it in nothing more than in this pure understanding.

Teach me thy judgments, &c. As if the man of God should say, This is one thing, whereunto I will give over myself, even to see how thou doest punish the wicked, and conductest thy children. So that we must learn, that as it is necessary to understand the law and the Gospel, so is it requisite to discern God's judgments. For as we cannot learn the one without observing of God's mercy; so we cannot attain to the other, without marking his vengeance. We must see always by the peculiar teaching of God's spirit, how the Lord punisheth in justice, and yet in mercy; in wrath, and yet in love; in rigor and hatred of our sin, humbling us with one hand; in pity and compassion to our salvation, comforting us with the other hand. We see then how the Prophet prayeth, both to see them, and to mark them: we need teach this often, because we dream so much of fatal necessity, and of the connections of natural causes, or else because we cannot discern between the crosses of the godly and the ungodly: so that as the wise man saith, Eccl. 9:2. All things come alike to all men: and the same condition is to the just and to the wicked: to the good, and to the pure, and to the polluted, and to him that sacrificeth, and to him that sacrificeth not: as is the good, so is the sinner, he that sweareth, as he that feareth or reverenceth an oath. This is

then a singular gift of God to discern, how by the self-same means the Lord both humbleth the good, and overthroweth the wicked.

The meaning then of the man of God briefly is: O Lord give me a right judgment in thy judgments, that I may see how thou savest thy children, and punishest thine enemies, otherwise I shall never discern this. Accept the free offerings, &c.

We must mark how these things are joined together, this is the thing, for which I sacrifice, the thing I wish, I desire and pray for, and therefore O Lord accept it. The man of God alludeth here to sacrifices, and showeth, that the Lord is delighted with no sacrifice more, than with prayer and thanks-giving. For all other sacrifices in the time of the law, as the slaying of goats, and killing of bullocks, tended to these two, as appeareth. Psal. 50:14. Offer unto God praise, and pay thy vow to the most high: and in the 22nd verse. He that offereth unto me praise. shall glorify me, &c. In which places the Lord showeth, that he had ordained the other sacrifices, as temporal means to the eternal use of thanksgiving: for so the Lord dealt with them, as with children, leading them as it were by the hand, by temporal things to eternal. Psal. 14:1,2; the Prophet saith: Let my prayer be directed in thy sight, as incense, and the lifting up of mine hand, as an evening sacrifice. Where he showeth, alluding to the sacrifices, that as a sweet smell is pleasant unto man: so is the sacrifice of prayer fragrant unto the Lord. This is the sacrifice every day to be offered, mentioned in Malachi 1:11, where the Prophet, or rather the Lord, rebuking the Priests for their corrupt offerings, saith: From the rising up of the Sun, to the going down of the same, my Name is great among the Gentiles, and in every place, incense shall be offered unto my Name, and a pure offering, &c. Here by the Altar and sacrifice, the Prophet meaneth the spiritual service of God, which

should be under the gospel, when an end should be made to all the legal ceremonies, by Christ's only sacrifice. Therefore Heb. 13:15. Let us by him offer the sacrifice of praise always to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, which confess his Name, &c. It is good to note this praise and thanksgiving, which as it is the end of sacrifices, which being joined with doing good, is the only offering left to Christians, and only is pleasing unto God. For as our fathers might know, that their sacrifices were not accepted, but as the Lord showed favor; so our prayer is not accepted, but as the Lord in free mercy doth graciously receive it. Wherefore it is said, Gen. 4. The Lord hath regard to Abel and his oblation, that is, he accepted favorably the sacrifice of Abel. Thus we also use to deal in our suites to noble persons, if it please you to accept my service, or if you will vouchsafe to receive my suite, and to consider of my supplication: so here the man of God saith in effect; Look upon this my prayer with a pitiful eye, and a merciful countenance, We are then to know, how we by our prayers, get no credit with the Lord; but the Lord giveth credit to our prayers. If then God be not delighted with our prayers, which are our best things, how much less then will he be pleased with other things? The Papists then are carnal, and as our Savior Christ said of Peter, whom they follow in faults, and not in graces) they savor not of the things of the spirit. Well we are to learn, that if God so dealeth in our prayers, he will so deal in all other things, which are the better by them.

The free will offering, &c. We are here also taught, to give unto the Lord a free offering, for he loveth a cheerful giver, and cannot abide us to come unto him by constraint. The Lord in the old time would have the fattest of the flocks, and the purest, and why? Because he would thereby try his people, whether his people would offer cheerfully and willingly or no; and

by so much it was unto him more acceptable, by how much it was offered more freely. So Abel, Gen. 4 offered of the fat of the flock, that is, of the best. A man's sacrifice may be refused, because of his corruption in him, and there is no grace in man, without Faith in Christ, which may stand him in stead, to make his sacrifice acceptable before God. We must then pray unto God, that we may offer our prayers freely, that they may not be customable, but that there may be in us a lust, a spirit, a desire to pray, remembering this saying of the Prophet, accept the free will offering of my lips. His meaning then of his words briefly, is this much, I do not this O Lord constrainedly, or against my will, but with a free good will, and cheerful heart, I make my prayer unto thee. We see then our dullness and weariness in our prayer, which we must bewail in ourselves, as that which hindereth us from the favor of God. Would we deal so with a Prince, as to offer unto him the evil things, as saith Malachi, chap. 1:8. And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And if ye offer the lame, and sick, is it not evil? Offer it now unto thy Prince, will he be content with thee, or accept thy person? Saith the Lord of hosts. If we had a supplication to our Prince, would we come so sluggishly, so unreverently, so carelessly, as we come to pray? Not remembering his Majesty, neither feeling our wants, nor desiring our requests, nor fearing the repulse, would we not shake off all this sluggishness, and deadness? Then let us translate this to the seeing of God by Faith, and coming before his presence by prayer, do we come before his Majesty, as pricked with a fear thereof? Are we pressed with feeling our wants? Do we fear the repulse? Oh let us crave by prayer, that we may not come in fashion, but in fear, not on custom, but of conscience, and with a free spirit. If the spirit make us free (saith John) then are we free indeed: we are so captivated of ourselves, that we cannot be free, but by the

spirit. When then we see us in this dullness, and custom in hearing, reading, or praying, we must pray with David, Psal. 51:10. Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a right spirit within me. 12. Restore to me the joy of thy salvation, and stablish me with thy free spirit. Where he having lost as it were, the freedom of the spirit, the cleanness of his heart, and the joy of his mind, prayeth to have them all restored again. And thus much for our admonition. Now for our comforts. (Heb. 11:4-5, Zach. 12:10)

I am sore afflicted, accept my free offerings. How could he before afflicted, and yet free? When he desired to be quickened, he felt not this freedom: Nevertheless, he ceased not to offer his sacrifice: whereby we are taught to offer our prayers to God, although through perplexity of the spirit, we know not how to pray, nor what to say, but speak sighing and groaning; for this is a sacrifice acceptable to the Lord. For though we cannot pray with comfort, yet we must crave of the Lord, even by mourning and complaining of our own estate, and bewailing our case, this also is an acceptable sacrifice. For a sacrifice of sacrifices, is a contrite heart, saith the Prophet. And as we said before out of the last of Isaiah, to a humble heart will I look, saith the Lord.

When we cannot then find free joy, let us come with free sorrow, and when we know not how to pray, God's Spirit will teach us how to crave, how to sigh, and how to pray, and the Lord will know the meaning of his own Spirit crying in us. The meaning of the man of God in effect is, I pour out my prayer in the abundance of my grief, and from a full heart; we see when a man wanteth a thing, though he cannot entreat his friend to obtain it of him, yet he may freely mourn and lament his estate. Let us then, when we cannot pray, not cease to mourn and to make a noise, as Hezekiah, who chattered like a Crane or Swallow: wherein he showeth, that he was so

pressed with sorrow, that he could do nothing but sigh and groan. When we grow therefore in languishing griefs, this is not the thing which pleaseth the Lord, but it nourisheth still in us mistrust We may see in the word of God, the unperfect speeches of God's children, and dearest Saints, uttering in their grief their pathological affections. For what was the remedy in this confusion, but even to pour out freely before the Lord their griefs and in opening them to their friends; yea, and when they could do neither of both, yet would they reveal their sorrows to the trees of the field. (Rom. 8:16-17)

His offering we see were his griefs. The Lord is God, and not an Idol, he will hear thee, when thou criest unto him. It may be thou art ashamed to confess thy faults before man, thou needest not be ashamed to confess thy sin before God. Man may cast thee in the teeth with thine infirmities, the Lord will never upbraid thee. Man will not keep counsel, neither can give thee counsel: the Lord will both keep, and give thee counsel. Man may prescribe some means of deliverance: but the Lord will both tell thee the means of thy deliverance and will deliver thee. So the Prophet in his own example, Psalm 42:3, offereth his grief unto the Lord in tears, for when one wave went over another, and his reason and his soul had made a tumult within himself, yet he said, Why art thou cast down my soul, and unquiet within me? Wait on God, &c. Let us then consider of the promise made Rom. 8:26. The spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what to pray as we ought, but the spirit itself maketh request for us, with sighs, which cannot be expressed. Let us then, though we know not how to pray in freedom of joy, pray in freedom of sorrow. Let us begin to offer in sorrow, and in time we shall offer in joy. For Psal 30:5. Though weeping may abide at evening, yet joy cometh in the morning. And Psal. 126:5. Though we shall sow in tears, yet we shall reap in joy.

—• Verse. 109. - **My soul is continually in mine hand: yet do I not forget thy law.**

—• Verse. 110. - **The wicked have laid a snare for me: but I swerved not from thy precepts.**

By this phrase is meant that he was at the point of death, as it may be seen by other places of the Scriptures: as when the Ephraimites were angry with Jephtha because he went to war without them, he answered, I put my life in my hand, &c. The Witch likewise which spake to Saul, useth the same speech, and I have put my soul in my hand, &c. And Job saith, why should I rent my flesh with my teeth, or carry my soul thus in my hand, &c. Where he meaneth that he was at deaths door. My soul sainteth, mine eyes fail, I wither like a bottle, and such speeches declare his misery.

This great danger wherein he is, he useth as a third reason, to move the Lord to hear his prayer: for by this means it came to pass that his prayer was more earnest. The greatness of his grief he amplifieth in the 109th, and 110th verses.

And in this extremity of grief, we shall see that he had good cause to pray earnestly, if we do consider the reasons which flesh and blood would put in to his mind. For first when he saw that he was in such straits, that he could not see means or ways to be delivered, then his reason would persuade him to leave the light of the word, as a thing that in this case showed no light, and to use policy for to help himself. This is a great temptation, and if God had not assisted him, he might have fallen hereby. For we see that Saul, when the Lord gave him no answer, by Urim and Thummim, nor other ordinary means, he thought good in policy to ask counsel of a Witch; which he before time had punished with death. Thus would corrupted judgment have carried him to use policy and unlawful means, and to have forsaken

the lantern of the word, if the Lord had not stayed him: and therefore this was one cause to move him most earnestly to pray.

Secondly, if he looked to his affections, he should find them as corrupt: for they would have carried him to revenge, when he saw himself to be unreasonably and unconscionably dealt withal: and therefore to restrain the headstrong affection of revenge, it was very needful that he should pray fervently. For we see that when Nabal dealt churlishly and uncourteously with him, because he wanted this help of prayer to keep under his affection, therefore he straightaways sware he would kill him, and would have done so, had not Abigail stayed him, and pacified his wrath: whereas at other times, when Saul dealt injuriously with him, and the Lord might seem to have given him into David's hand, yet because he had prepared his heart by prayer, he abstained from revenge, and committed vengeance to the Lord. This then might be a second reason to move him to pray.

Thirdly, when he saw all means taken away, that he must use no means of his own, neither yet revenge himself: then would the devil be busy to drive him to despair of help and safety: therefore great need he had to pray that the lantern of the word might light him against the darkness of despair.

As man cannot bear too much prosperity, so he cannot bear too much adversity: and not only extreme prosperity and adversity; but even some little affliction, or prosperity, will cause our corruption to break out. We are then to accuse ourselves of unbelief, that do break out in little things, more than this man in his great troubles. And to remedy this, we must set this and such examples before us, to strengthen us, that as God helped others, so he will help us.

If God dealt so with them, that had not such spiritual promises as we, nor so clear light of the Gospel as we; and they so many ways pleased God, and

we have so many ways sinned; and they had so plentiful promises of this life, and we have spiritual: then we must not think to escape troubles, but must correct our womanish affection.

—• **Verse. 111. - Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage forever: for they are the joy of mine heart.**

This is the amplifying of the first verse. This is a true sign that he loved the word, because he loved it as well in trouble as in prosperity. This is a rare sign of faith: for many are like Job's wife, who in trouble forget the commandments and slided from them: but the contrary was in Job.

We shall not then have a sure trial of our faith, before our troubles try us, yea and sore troubles, that our soul is in our hand. But if in the greatest we can say the Lord is our strength, our faith is strong: but if little troubles make us fail, our strength is weak. Therefore we must meditate of these things before they come, that we may stand when they come. If this man in trouble forsook not God's word, how ought we to be ashamed, that in prosperity cannot stand steadfast? Yea we may fear his judgments because that, seeing we be led away with vanity now, when trouble cometh we shall fail away. For the continuance of sin doth either brawn the hearts, or work sore grief to them that have it.

Then must we look to the benefits we have received: for they are not otherwise good but as they are sanctified by the word, prayer, &c. and when we seek the glory of God, and the profit of our brethren. He first protesteth his love to the word, in that he maketh it his inheritance, which he proveth because his heart is set on it: for where the heart is, there is his treasure.

By testimonies is meant the covenant between God, and his people; wherein he bindeth himself to them, and them to him. Some think that the excellency of the word is here set out by many names: but we must look to

the propriety of every word: as before by judgments, so by this word testimonies, is meant the covenant: not the commandments, because they cannot be our inheritance, for they cannot comfort us, because we cannot fulfill them, but fail in them; and cannot therefore take comfort, but it is rather a killing letter. It is the Gospel that bringeth peace and comfort. The law when it is taken generally, containeth all the word; particularly, the commandments: so the word generally both law and Gospel: but particularly, the promises: as Rom. 10. So likewise by the testimonies, when they are opposed to the law, is meant the promises of the covenant: as Isaiah 8, and this testimony is confirmed to us by the Sacraments, as to them by sacrifices.

The covenant is called an inheritance. First, because it is excellent. Secondly, because it is proper to them. Thirdly, because it cannot be lost, but by their own default.

It is his: first, because God hath promised to write his law in his heart. Secondly, because he hath promised to him life. Thirdly, because God will perform his promise.

This covenant is excellent, because hereby we are made the sons of God, and having our sins forgiven us, we shall be enabled in some measure to keep the law, and that trouble and grief where with many are destroyed, yet shall turn to our good. Again, it is excellent, because it is permanent, 1 Pet. 1, where it is called incorruptible.

All things compared with this, are vile: I count all things but dung, saith Paul. Men will in danger make shipwreck of all, that they may save their lives: so Paul did even willingly part with all things, and counted them but dung for this, Phil. 3:8, 9.

We must examine whether we make this account of our salvation, and of the word, which is called milk, meat, silver, and all things, that we should seek all things in it.

This inheritance is proper to the elect; as Jam. 4, Rom. 12, and John saith, that This is our privilege to be the sons of God. For riches are common to the good and evil, so is glory, &c. for both have these things, therefore they are no true inheritance, because they are common to many: and these things cannot get us heaven, nor deliver us from hell.

It cannot be lost but by our own default: for that, that some lose their inheritance without default, is the corruption of the world; but forgiveness of sins, and such like, which are our inheritance, cannot be lost: for though Princes may be driven from their kingdoms, yet cannot the gates of hell prevail against us; so that, though the mighty can take away our life, yet they cannot take away the love, providence and good will of God.

The things, and inheritance are most esteemed, which are of longest continuance and have longest endured; as to esteem leases better than to be tenants at will, copies better than leases, heritages better than copies, because there is no collusion and cavil of law can take it from us. This is most excellent: and such is our inheritance: for we were elected thereto before all worlds, and look to go the same way, that all the faithful before us have gone: and have it confirmed with the Law, Prophets, and Gospel, and with the godly death and holy life of his servants. This word bringeth to us the things that eye cannot see, &c.

This is the chiefest of all, that it cannot be taken from us: for all heresies and sects are discerned by the word truly understood, by this, I say, that the word truly understood, giveth faith, whereby we are surely persuaded of the life to come and of the resurrection, Paul saith, Act. 20, knowing the

resurrection he preacheth, where he noteth that without faith in the resurrection there is no religion: so is it said John. 6, and Phil. 2.

Therefore Heresy, Papistry, and Paganism can give no true inheritance, because they cannot assure us of our salvation. Again, the truth giveth us not imaginary good things, but good things in truth; and assureth us truly that we shall be saved, and they have not these, they therefore have no true inheritance.

He doth not only confess that he made the Lord his inheritance; but also he saith that he maketh the testimonies of God his inheritance; both because they are the means whereby we come to have inheritance in heaven, and also because they are assurances of the same. For the word is, as it were, the deed of gift, and the Sacraments are as it were seals of the same.

Almost all men will confess that the word is to be had in this singular account: but yet few do attribute this dignity to the Sacraments. And yet as the indenture, when the seal is taken away, is nothing worth; so if we take power from the Sacraments, then can we not have our assurance good. If we cannot come to make this account of the word and Sacraments, yet as David did, let us be sorry that we cannot. He when he was driven out of his kingdom, and banished from the Temple, said, this will I require, that I may behold the fair beauty of the Lord, &c. He had now lost his kingdom, wife, children, and all, yet these if they might be restored, could not satisfy him, unless he might also be in the house of the Lord. Then let us labor to have this desire, that if we cannot with joy find it, we may with sorrow labor after it.

—• **Verse. 112. - I have applied mine heart to fulfill thy statutes always, even unto the end.**

In the former verse he showed his faith, and his joy which came thereof; now he showeth that here in this joy he will keep the commandments: whereby he showeth that this was a true joy, because it wrought a care to do good. For if we believe the promises truly, then we also love the commandments, otherwise faith is vain; a care to live a godly life, nourisheth faith in God's promises. Here is the cause then why many regard not the word and Sacraments; or if they do a little, it is to no purpose, because they labor not to keep the commandments. For unless they have care to do this, the word of God to them cannot be profitable, nor the Sacraments sacred.

He further showeth that this was a true care, in that it began at his heart: for here is the beginning of all goodness, here is the root of religion, and here the foundation of our faith must be laid. It is not the refraining from outward actions, it is not the restraining of the outward man: but it is the heart that we must travel about, and take care for. Hereof it came to pass, that many of the Kings and people in the books of Chronicles continued in godliness, and kept an even and equal course, because they prepared their hearts; as Hezekiah, Josiah, and others: and hereof it came to pass that many fell from the faith, because they sought not God in their hearts; as the Scribes and Pharisees, which cleansed the outward actions only It must then be our lesson which we must study on, to take care to our hearts above all things, and to make the beginning there. For the cleanness of that pleaseth God, and the filth of that displeaseth him.

But when he saith, I have inclined, doth he mean that of himself he could apply his heart as he listed? No, no, he meant nothing less. For he was conceived in sin; and how then were the preparations of his heart in his own hand? Again, he prayeth, portion 5. Incline mine heart unto, &c. where he

doth plainly show, that it was God that turned his heart at his good pleasure. And no marvel truly, for the heart of man can no further be tried out, or spied, than the Lord doth gage and open it, that we may see thereinto, Jer. 17:9. And again, the hardness of man's heart is such, that it will sooner break than bend; and may sooner be applied unto anything, than unto goodness. Where in the folly of Papists, and other heretics is more than manifest, which by this and such like places, would prove the freewill of man, and that he can incline himself to goodness; seeing that here is nothing else meant, than that men do then incline their hearts, when God doth incline them; so that the Lord he worketh all, and yet is it attributed to men, when they receive and pursue the working of God: so the heart is free if God maketh it free, not else. If we presume of our free will, when we have it not, we shall purpose, and God will otherwise dispose: for hereof cometh it that so many fall from their purposes.

God is not pleased, but with voluntary offering, therefore he applieth his heart; and we must beware of servile service.

The constantness of his purpose to continue in this obedience, he showeth, when he saith, he will do it forever and ever, and that at all times, not only at a communion, or at a fast, or in sickness, but at all times.

PORTION. 15.

—• **Verse. 113. - I hate vain inventions: but thy law do I love.**

He showed in the last words of the former part, that he means to be constant to the end; now he showeth four reasons thereof: the first reason is the hatred that he had of all wickedness, in this first verse He hath used many arguments to prove to his heart that he loved God, and to commend it to others by his example, as Paul doth. This was one, the love that he had to

God's law: secondly, his trust in the word: thirdly, his care to keep it, &c. and therefore he often prayeth for it. He showeth his love of it, in that he preferreth it to all other things: as in the eighth portion, The earth is full of thy goodness, teach me thy statutes; he maketh it sweeter than honey, and better and more precious than silver His desire that he had to keep it, and the prayers that he maketh for it, are to be seen almost in every portion. Here he useth a proof, drawn from the contraries, which is a true and sensible kind of reason; he loveth the law, because he hated all the ways of false hood, either in doctrine or life. Our reason will teach us, that there is no agreement between fire and water, between light and darkness; and so if we go through all the course of nature, we shall see that there is no agreement between contraries.

This argument is often used in the Scriptures, as Psalm. 145. Do not I hate them, &c. Zachar. 2, Tit. 2:1, and most plainly 1 Cor. 6, What fellowship is between light and darkness: &c.

This is needful for men to know, that they learn to hate superstition and heresy, and to root it out, least whilst with Saul they spare wicked Agag, they persecute righteous David.

If a man hate false religion, he shall never be infected with it: for if they be persuaded that it will hurt them, then they will keep themselves far from it. A man when he seeth a toad, or any other hurtful beast, he will be sure to keep him far from it: neither will we ever receive for meat that we know to be poison: so if we believe that Popery and Heresy are poison, then we will not receive them.

But if men think favorably of Heretics, and call them honest men, and well dealing men, then it is very easy to entangle such a one.

Herein doth the coldness of the love of God's law in us appear, in that we do so coldly hate the false.

Because love setteth the price on things, and hatred maketh us far from them, therefore if we will continue in the truth, we must love it: and if we will avoid the false, we must hate it.

And we must not be deceived by the outward show of an honest life, for if comparison be made between God's children and Heretics when they are both in prosperity, or both in adversity, then we shall see the difference between them: for otherwise, there is no comparison to be made, when they are one in prosperity, and another under the cross. When the children of God are in trouble, and in affliction, the graces of God do manifestly appear in them: for first they have such spiritual wisdom, and understanding, that even poor and simple souls in the country are able to answer the great and learned men of the University: so that they be not able to withstand the Spirit that speaketh in them. Again, their boldness and courage in the truth is such, as that they be not ashamed to speak, even before Kings, and the mightiest of their enemies. But Heretics how far are they from this wisdom, when they come to answer, they either say nothing at all, or else their reasons are so blockish, and without sense, that a child would marvel at their folly: and though they set some face and show upon them, yet if they be unripped, and then referred to their heads, they are but vanity. As for their boldness and courage, it is nothing: for if they speak to some simple man, or in some secret place, then will they be bold to speak their pleasure: but call then to the place of judgment, or before them that are able to call them to accounts, then their answers are to seek. And here of it cometh, that they are perjured, unfaithful, not men of their word, but dastards and cowards, and such as will not stand to the truth.

In suffering there is a great diversity between them: for if the child of God come to suffer, he is neither effeminate to account the pain too painful, neither yet blockish without sense and feeling in suffering: but he feeleth the smart and bitterness of it, and yet feeling God's favor he overcometh it. And this is true patience indeed, when men feel the pain to be grievous, and yet through the hope and feeling of God's favor do overcome it: and in suffering they can pray for their persecutors, and can be contented to shed their blood for the conversion of those that seek their subversion and overthrow. Deale Heretics thus? Or do they not clean contrary? Yes: for in their suffering they are either as men without sense, bereaved of their wits; so they are rather blocks and stones, than men, and their suffering is blockishness, and not patience: or else they are effeminate and womanish, to howl and cry out in their pains, and to die with cursing and banning and all kind of railing. Thus they deal. This experience have we seen of both, even within our days.

If you compare them together when they are both of them in prosperity, and if you then consider their lives, you shall also see that there is great difference. For the children of God, whilst they love the word, the Sacraments, and discipline, they cannot long lie and continue in any sin: for the word will rebuke them, the Sacraments will admonish them, and discipline will also help to bring them from it: but the wicked live and lie as in a dead sleep in sin in prosperity, and will not be wakened.

He doth not only speak of corruption in doctrine, but also in manners: as in every commandment, we cannot love the good, but we must also hate the contrary: as in lust, adultery, &c. as Joseph hated his Mistress, when he once perceived that she was unclean. Then whilst men are given to vanity on the Sabbath, they love not the Sabbath: for if they did, they would either

take heed of such; or if they fell into them, they would recover themselves. Then we cannot love the Sabbath, unless we delight in it, and hate the contrary. Then if we will try whether we love the word, let us try it by the hatred of naughtiness in us, and this if we feel, we may be comforted, for God will work by this.

The word (thoughts) is a metaphor from the crooked boughs of a tree, and signifieth, that as the trees have their boughs spread abroad crookedly, so do thoughts grow out of men. And his meaning is, that he hated these overthwart thoughts. Therefore he labored not only for the outward hatred, but even the imaginations that are contrary thereto, as the thoughts of idolatry, uncleanness, &c. and to these all he biddeth battle, that he may love the law. This is a good thing for us: for though we come not to idolatry, murder, adultery, &c. yet the evil thoughts come into our minds; and these we must not suffer to be settled, but at the first we must hate them, and drive them out.

Thoughts are not free, therefore neither it is enough to love in show, but we must also love in thought: for if we favor them, we may by little and little be carried away. For hereof it cometh that men are brought to revenge, and other evils, because they make not conscience of the thoughts. Thus we see that men have thoughts of heresy, anger, &c. and yet they are not at defiance with them, and therefore they fall into the sin. Hereof men fall into adultery, become enemies to God, his Ministers, and religion: for whilst they make no conscience of thoughts, they fall into the sins. It is true then, that we must first fight against reason, when we will fight against sin, as a man fighteth not against swearing, because not against anger; and not against anger, because not against reason.

—• **Verse. 114. - Thou art my refuge and shield, and I trust in thy word.**

Because the Prophet could not persuade himself of any other safety, than of the safeguard which he had under the Lord, he showeth that so long as he put his trust in God's promises, he feared nothing. And surely this ought to be the principal thing among Christians, to look for none other defense, than that which is to be looked for out of the promises of God. For what is the cause, why when we are in danger, in poverty, in any distress, we have so many by-paths, and can invent unlawful means and shifts so for our deliverance, but only because the Lord and his word is not our refuge and our shield? For if we were once persuaded, that God were our tower to defend us, and our shield to cover us, we should be stayed. If we then call on God in our need, we must know, that Psal. 33, verse 18. The eye of the Lord is upon them, that fear him, and upon them that trust in his mercies. And that Psal. 145:18. He will fulfill the desire of them, that fear him, he also will hear their cry, and will save them. And our cause being good, we need not to doubt of him: for he hath promised to be our shield and buckler. So our Savior Christ being tempted of Satan to turn the stones into bread, was moved by him to distrust God's providence: What (saith he) doest thou think, that if thou wert the Son of God, thou shouldest be left in such wants? Make some shift therefore for thyself. But Christ knowing God to be the author of his need, was assured that he would secretly nourish him, until he had received ordinary means again, and so strengthened himself in God's promises. Likewise, when we are in need or in peril, Satan will cause us to use one shift or other: but we must answer him, The Lord is my shield and tower, I am sure enough; and therefore I hate all ill inventions; I put my trust in the Lord. (Matt. 4)

We acknowledge this with our tongue, yet it is a hard thing to be practiced, to put our trust in God's word. For howsoever we will grant indeed, that we must put our trust in God; yet we hardly yield unto this, that we must trust in his word: but we must here correct this unbelief, and learn that if we seek for help at God, we must trust in his word. Doth God's word threaten his justice, and can we find in our lives, that if we use evil means, we shall be punished? Doth God's word assure us, that God is merciful, and do we believe that Jesus Christ came to save sinners, although we were the greatest, and that he came to call sinners, and not the righteous to repentance, and that Jesus Christ came to save that which was lost, and to refresh all that are weary and heavy laden? Thus the man of God saith, portion 8:1. O Lord, thou art my portion, I have determined to keep thy law. And portion 14:6. Thy testimonies have I taken, as a heritage forever, for they are the very joy of my heart. Thus he showeth, that we must seek for that in God's word, which we seek for of him. For his word is a conduit or waterpipe, whereby the Lord conveying his mercies unto us; will have them run through unto us. Do we believe then the promises that God will provide for us? Then let us beware of all wicked shifts, and trust only in his word. For if we believe God to be our tower, we must look to God's word. The Heathen men and the profane worldlings, will speak gloriously of the goodness, of the strength, and of the mercy of God: but when they come to see it in the word, they will err altogether out of the way; whereby they show how they utter more in their tongues, than they perform in truth. For the Lord hath laid that help on his word, which he would have us to seek for at his hand: so Christ by the word put the devil to flight, with these words in effect, Thou wouldest have me, Satan, to mistrust my Fathers providence, and to give myself to be taught of thee: but I know he will keep me in all

my necessities, and why? Because he hath said, Man liveth not by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God: the Lord hath provided ordinary means to nourish me, and hath not commanded that stones should be made bread, and why then should I use unlawful means? Wherefore I will stay myself upon my Fathers providence. We see, he might have said, that God is almighty and strong, or that by his mighty power he might have put off Satan; but he reciteth the words of Moses, which he used, when the Lord so wonderfully had preserved his people the Israelites in the wilderness, without ordinary means. We must in like manner, when Satan shall set upon us in time of need, say, it is written, The Lord is just and true in all his promises. It is written, The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry, nothing wanteth to them that fear him. The Lions do lack and suffer hunger: but they which seek the Lord, shall want nothing which is good. It is written, Rom. 8, verse 35. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? When we are tempted then with doubting in ourselves, that we shall not escape, we must know that it is written, Rom. 8:31. If God be on our side, who can be against us? 32. Who spared not his own Son, but gave him for us all to death: how shall he not with him give us all things also? If we be tempted to steal, we must say, as it is written, Man liveth not by bread only, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God, knowing that God is able to preserve us without ordinary means.

—• **Verse. 115. - Away from me ye wicked, for I will keep the commandments of my God.**

The cause why the man of God could not so stay himself on the Lord, was, because what way soever he turned himself, he could see no man that

would help him. He had no help of the world, every man provided for himself, some shifted this way, another that way, he could see no good example of any, which either believed God's promises to be true, or were ready to obey his commandments. Wherefore it is manifest, that they were impediments rather than furtherance's unto him. For else why should he say, Away from me ye wicked, &c?

Were there so many impediments in his days, and shall we think there are not so many in ours? Or was that age wherein he lived more wicked, than the age wherein we live? First, we are nothing like him in good things, he had greater graces of God than we have, he had gone further in holiness than we; we live in more wicked days than he did. For whom shall we have to follow? Some follow this religion, some follow that; some give themselves to this shift, some to that: so that we have no examples to build us upon, but a multitude to bring us from the right way. Seeing then we are far worse than the Prophet, and our days worse than his times let us say, Away from me ye wicked: that is, seeing we cannot avoid our dwelling and living among the wicked; yet Lord, let us be kept from the corrupt example of the wicked, and grant that we may eschew all familiarity with them. And as in harvest, if in every place of the lands, where we reap or mow, were Snakes, we would be very wary lest we were stung or empoisoned: so had we need in these dangerous and plentiful days of sin, to be circumspect, lest we be either empoisoned with false doctrine, or stung with an evil conscience. And as a man being a mere stranger in goodness, living in the company of godly men, hearing them, seeing them, and conferring with them in good things, would by God's grace so be converted: so a good man falling into the familiarity, and like affections, speeches, and actions of the wicked, shall easily be corrupted. We shall see sooner that we are infected

and hurt, than we shall espy how we are infected and hurt, and though presently we see it not, yet hereafter we shall. And as it is the mercy of God to be good by the communion of Saints: so it is the just judgment of God to be wicked, with the company of the ungodly. Neither must we think, that here is meant to go out of the world, to avoid the evil (for we live all under one Sun, which is above us, we tread all on one earth which is under us, we use all one water for our necessities, we have like callings with them, we join in the same towns with them, yea and often dwell in one house with them) but we must beware we have no fellowship with them in their sin, we must away with their devices to mistrust God's mercy, we must hate their imaginations, wherewith they displease God, we must not draw in their yoke with them.

If then thou hast a wicked father, or if thou hast a wicked son, or ungodly servant, or an evil companion, thou must not have familiarity, or draw in a line with them, thou must not be a fellow or a companion in sin with them, so shall we keep ourselves unspotted. For as the evil men, if they purpose to be obstinate in sin, will take no profit by the company of the godly: so the good men, if they will fear and suspect the ungodliness of the wicked, and look unto their ways, shall by the Lord be preserved from their evil. For we see, that as the evil men are not the better for the godly, with whom they are joined in the same town or house with them, because they are so shy of goodness; so, if we be as shy of their wickedness, we shall be freed from much ungodliness. Wherefore we must not be like affected, we must not think as they think, speak as they speak, do as they do, nor use their calling as they do. Otherwise we see, that as the evil by the godly are bettered, so the good are made worse by the ungodly. Thus we have heard, that as the man of God in the first showed himself to have an hatred to the secret

devices of man's imaginations: so in the second he setteth down a reason of the same, where we declared, that we could never be brought to the true hatred of evil inventions, until we be thoroughly persuaded of God's providence; whereof when we be once truly persuaded, we shall not need to swerve this way or that way, because in all assaults we have a sufficient refuge in God.

In that he putteth his trust in God's word, we must learn, that we must never sever faith and God's promises, whereby we must be stayed, and lean to his providence: otherwise we shall have but vain speculations of his providence, until we know out of the word, to whom the promises do appertain, and what he requireth of them, to whom they are made. On which word of God, whilst we take hold, even as a shield safeguardeth us from the blow of the adversary, so the promises of God are a sufficient buckler to defend us from the darts of our enemy. So that, if we have the Lord for our tower against Satan, if we be in poverty, we shall see the Lord our shield and wealth; if we be in sickness, he shall be our castle and health. The Israelites had proof hereof, who, so long, as they made the Lord their shield and refuge, were not once touched of their enemies. If this faith be in us, then shall we be persuaded, that the hearing of the word, and time which we spend in prayer to the Lord, will not hinder our calling, nor hurt our profit: but so long as we walk in our ways, joining with our calling the hearing of God's word, and prayer, he will be our defense and tower, and either save us from damage, or turn all our evils to our good. We must see all this out of the word of God. For our Savior Christ (as we said before) did not rest in the omnipotency of God to put away Satan being an evil spirit, and therefore having nothing to do with him, but withstood him with this, It is written, still alleging the word of God: showing, that whilst he had bread:

he should use it as an ordinary mean, and when he had none, he should not make bread of stones, but stay upon the blessing of God which is above all means. Thus we see how the promises of God in his word did stay him.

And here see how the faith of God's children differeth from the loose imaginations of the wicked, who, though they give great titles to the Lord of his mercy, justice, love, and providence, never look for this in his word. But if we will obey the Lord, and wait upon his promises, we must do it by the word, which is as a pipe, through which do flow God's graces towards us, and as a chariot to bring his will unto us. We are not then to look into the air, or elsewhere for God's will, then in his word; but trusting still on God, we must look for help in his promises.

That the man of God might do this the better, he severed himself from the wicked, giving us to understand, that he could not go forward, in that he saw so few examples of good, and so many examples of evil, whereby so many by paths are ministered unto him to step out of the right way, in seeing the corruptions of that generation. When we see then out of the word how we should believe, what we should do, what we should eschew, and look into the world, we shall find so many wicked ones, that which way soever a man would turn himself, although he would search the world with a candle, he shall find many evil to corrupt him, but few good to guide him. And seeing our times are worse, than the times wherein the Prophet lived, and we are easier and readier to take harm by evil examples, than he was; we must know, that whosoever will be truly taught to hate vain inventions, and love the word of God, he must learn that which is written in the first Psalm, that is, that we walk not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the way of sinners. Away then with them that say, the Preacher indeed speaketh well, and teacheth the truth aright, but who doth it? And rather let

us bid the evil away from us, let us follow them that do well, so far as they follow Christ and his word, let us be heedful to look to our ways, and be the more careful, because in former ages the Lord hath set before us so many examples of falling. We may communicate with them in our calling, we may be knit to them by consanguinity we may be joined with them in affinity, and as neighbors dwell together, we cannot in these things be well free from them: yet we must not deal with them as they be wicked, we must not draw in the yoke with them, we must not be given to the like studies, to the like endeavors, and enterprises with them. Concerning their calling in the world, we may use them, but not according to their corrupt dealing with the world. We see the Prophet his meaning is, Away from me ye wicked, ye weaken my faith in God's promises by your inventions, you enkindle mistrust in me, I will not yield to you, I will not consent to you, nor take part in any of your inventions: for I trust in my God, he is my shield, and my refuge.

Here we may also learn, how to discern between their persons, wherein they bear the image of God and their callings, which are the ordinance of God, and between their lives, which are full of corruptions. If we look but into the first commandment, we shall see how hard a thing it is to keep God's law, unless we sequester ourselves from the society of sin How shall we believe among unbelievers, or pray to the Lord among profane persons, or trust in the Lord among such shifters? For as evil men continuing in the company of godly men, shall suddenly at one time or other be colored with their good things: so the godly abiding in the meetings of the wicked, unless they be very circumspect, and suspect their own weakness, will suddenly be taken. We know that Joseph being in Pharaohs Court, began to be colored with the Egyptians corruptions. If then we have any just cause of meeting

with the wicked, we must not avoid their company; but we must dislike their manners, we must rebuke, reprove, and cry against their sins; we must fear ourselves, and in everything suspect them. But let us see how dangerous a thing it is to be with the wicked, and what means there be with them for our destruction: Whether we be friends, and in league with them, or foes and at defiance with them, all is one. For if we be at defiance with them, how will they bring our persons in contempt, and raise many calumnious speeches against us, and affray us with injuries? If we be in friendship with them, in what danger are we least they should inveigle us, allure us, and take us slyly away from a good conscience. If we be at defiance with them, they will dismay us with threatening's: if we be in friendship with them, we cannot deal so roughly against their sins, we can hardly gainsay them in their wickedness, we are drawn away by them, and wax cold by little and little in those things wherein we have been zealous. Oh here then appeareth the wonderful and unspeakable mercy of God to his children in this world to keep them as sheep among wolves, and to save them from the infection of sin, in the midst of a wicked and sinful generation.

It followeth in this verse, That I may keep the commandments of my God. As if he should have said, he is not your God, because you put not your trust in him, but follow your own inventions: he is my God I love him; I fear him, I put my trust in him; I love his word, because his promises are sweet to me; I fear to sin, because his threatening's prove true; I trust in him, because of his word: he is none of your God, neither can you assure yourselves of him. For as Portion 20:3 Salvation is far from the wicked, because they seek not thy statutes. No, no, God is grieved and displeased

with you, though for a while he spare you, he shall one day punish you, he is my protector and defender.

This is a notable thing, and worthy to be observed. The man of God recovereth himself, because God hath promised in his word, that he will defend his as with a shield, but he will put to flight the armies of their adversaries. He reasoneth therefore thus with himself. The Lord hath promised to be a tower and buckler for them, that put their trust in him, and believe his word: I believe this to be true, I see it shall come to pass according to his word: therefore he is my God, my shield, and my refuge.

Let us learn in time of trouble, thus to recover ourselves. For do we not see, how nowadays some take this way, and some take that way, some use this shift, and some have that policy, do their dealings show, that God is on their side, or that he will take their part? Nay rather that he is far from then. We must everyone frame this reason, which the Prophet useth, that every man may say, I trust in God's word, I hate the vain shifts of the wicked, God is my God. My God: we must here mark, that we give not God sufficient honor, until we cleave wholly unto him, as he requireth of us in his first commandment. For we then have him to be our only God when we only fear him, when we only love him, when we only obey him, when we put our trust in him alone. So that we deny him his honor, until we leaving all other fetches and devises of loving, fearing, obeying and trusting in him; and love, fear, obey, and trust in him, as we are only and wholly taught in his word. Excellent is that place of the Prophet, Psalm 73, where the man of God, seeing the evil men in number many, in power great; and good men in number few, and ability weak, began to be in a dangerous estate, in thinking almost wickedly of God's providence, and began to be moved, and to dispute as it were with God about the prosperity of the wicked, and poverty

of the godly, until he came to look into the glass of God's word, where he found, that though the wicked seemed to have an happy time for a while, yet through God's secret curse, they had a fearful end, and though God's children were tried with many troubles, yet through God's secret blessings they had happy issues.

Thus saith he, Was I so foolish and ignorant, and as a beast before thee, whiles by mine own wit and reason I would go about to search out thy secret judgments. Yet saith he, I was always with thee, thou hast holden me by my right hand, and howsoever it went with the wicked, my faith in thy providence did assure me, that thou diddest watch over me, and wouldest not finally forsake me. Whom have I in heaven but thee, and I have desired none in the earth but thee. Though my flesh should pine away, and I should consume, yet am I persuaded that thou wilt not forsake me, they go a whoring, and thou destroyest them; but as for me, it is good that I trust in thee: that is, let all the world fall from thee, yet I see their end shall be fearful, and therefore I will still trust, and stay on thee. Mark what word he useth to paint forth mistrust in God, he calleth it to go a whoring; we know what a grievous thing it is for a woman to prostitute herself to a baud; so monstrous a thing it is to give our trust to any but to God. Wherefore we must fight against the corruptions of the world, not by the sight of reason, but by looking into the glass of God's word.

Let us search then, which be the promises of God, to stir us up to do good, which be his threatening's to make us afraid of sin, what examples we have of good men, that we may follow them, what examples of evil to avoid them. For here be the pictures of good men, here be the lively anatomies of the godly, here we may take delight in beholding them. Let us discern by the word who are true worshippers, who are Idolaters. Let us look what

rules the Lord doth give in his word, to know the truth, and in whom it is; to discern heresies, and in whom they be. Then we shall see, that this man is sound in religion, and careful of a good life, the Lord is his God, this man is void of true knowledge, and breaketh the law of the Lord, therefore undoubtedly God is far from him. This man though his knowledge be imperfect, yet he loveth to learn the truth, this man is a good companion for me; that man is an unbeliever, and trusteth not in God, I will not therefore meddle with him. Well now we have learned, that we never cleave wholly unto God, until all the corruptions of the world be not able to dismay us, but rather being stayed and established on the word of God we know assuredly, that the Lord will not be among the wicked. We have been taught that if we will truly believe in God, we must believe in him according to his word, otherwise he is but an Idol unto us, or a false God framed unto us after the imagination of our own hearts. And if we will truly discern between good men and evil, we must not judge them by our own reason, the common opinion of men, or according to their prosperity and adversity: for so the world cannot perceive who be God's children, because the wicked often flourish, and God's children are vexed: but we must look into the word and see there, how God setteth himself against the wicked, and promiseth to be near at hand to his saints.

This may commend unto us what a necessary thing the study of the Scriptures is, which teach us to know God and his true worshippers: for otherwise we shall judge heretics to be true worshippers, and count wicked men honest.

—• **Verse. 116. - Stablish me according to thy free promise, that I may live, and let me not be disappointed of mine hope.**

Here the man of God desireth, that the Lord would keep him safe and sure, and that he would confirm him and strengthen him in his word: where we see he prayeth for a thing mentioned before. Faith is not a sleeping thing, lying dead in us, but it is quick and is nourished by the word. For God's children do not so believe, but that they are often troubled with unbelief: yea the Lord doth often suffer them to see their unbelief in themselves to strive against it.

We see here, how the man of God felt some wavering in himself, he was not always in one estate, his faith was not ever at one stay, his belief had some unbelief with it, and believing he was afraid of himself. Thus we know, God's children are such, as do not presume, but they suspect themselves, and think humbly of themselves, which maketh them often to pray, that they may be confirmed to persevere. For when we begin to be secure, and to think too well of ourselves, then we cast off prayer, and lay aside all trust in God's word, so that God casteth us off for our pride, and Satan is ready to beguile us. We must not then satisfy ourselves, if we believe, but our faith must make us to grow in fear, and to be more careful to please, and more grieved to displease God; we must desire of God to have his promises confirmed and ratified in us, because we are in a very slippery estate. For as a man walking on slippery ice, and not heedful to his steps, nor fearing himself, is most ready to fall; so we in this world, unless we look very circumspectly to ourselves, are in great danger of sliding down. So fickle and frail is the world, that in every place we may take a fall: and as they which are on a high hill and steep, are in peril of falling down; so in the world, which hath such a downfall, unless we be very wary, and stay ourselves on God's word, we are most ready to slip.

We may see in former times, how the dear Saints of God have fallen through security, and for want of this fear of themselves. Noah though a man preserved from the corruptions of the old world, was beguiled of Satan for presuming in his own strength. Lot also through his corruption and Satan's policy, was deceived, not suspecting himself. When David had not this fear, but hoped that he was sure as he thought, Psal. 30, he should never be removed, he fell foully, and yet so deceitful, that he could not see his fall in the space of a whole year. We see then how hard a thing it is to keep on our course in this world, and that it is the mighty power of God, as witnesseth Peter in his former Epistle, that we are kept in the faith. We are not our own guardians, we are not able to take the government of ourselves; nay, our Savior Christ said, that if it were possible, the very elect should be deceived; so great is the power of the world, the subtlety of the flesh, and guilefulness of the devil. But, because they be humble, they fear themselves, they seek the Lord by prayer, and are desirous to be established in the promises of God, they are as strong as Mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but remaineth forever, Psalm 125:1. Though then we be weak, yet our Christ is strong, though we have many enemies, yet the Lord hath promised to be our stay against them all. Let us know that perseverance is as well the gift of God, as to come at first to God. We know what a free gift of God it was, that we came to him. He sought us, when we desired him not; he found us, when we sought him not. We see how before our calling, we closed our eyes, and would not see him, we stopped our ears, and would not hear him, we drew back, and refused to go to him, and the Lord was fain to draw us out; so that our beginning came of God, who reformed our judgments, and renewed our affections: now to be established in seeing, hearing, and willingly drawing near unto God, is his only gift also. Well, we

must be afraid of ourselves, and suspect ourselves. For why do we slip often into such gross sins? Why are we carried away with our own affections? Why do so many good motions die and perish in us, but only because of our security, we are not careful to please God, we are not afraid to offend God? Well, if we see that security hath been the cause of our woe, let us labor to be careful, which is the cause of our good: if security hath been the cause we feared not, let us now be careful, that we may be afraid of our frailty, and trust in God's word. Otherwise if we be quiet with ourselves, and yield to presumption, God will suffer us to fall. This is the cause, why our sins break out often to God's dishonor, and to the grief of our own consciences, because we do not more carefully to look our thoughts, and watch over our words.

It is added in this verse, that I may live. So he saith, Portion 10:4. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live. We see here, that the children of God think they have no life, if they live not in God's life. For, if we think we are alive, because we see, so do the brute beasts; if we think we are alive, because we hear, so do the cattle; if we think we are alive, because we eat and drink, or sleep, so do beasts; if we think we live, because we do reason and confer, so do the Heathen. The life of God's children, is the death of sin; for where sin is alive, there that part is dead unto God. Art thou then given to malice, to swearing, to cursing, to breaking of the Sabbath, to adultery, to filthiness, to stealing, or slandering? Surely then art thou dead, and if God should take away thy life from thee whilst thou art in this estate, thy soul should go sooner to hell, than thy body to the grave. We now see, that God's children, finding themselves dull and slow to good things, when they cannot either rejoice in the promises of God, or find their inward man delighted with the law of God, think themselves to be dead.

The Prophets meaning is this: I am even as a lump of flesh, I am like an image, or like an idol of God's child, I bear the face of his child, but I am as dead, and as a block, or a stock, or an idol. For as an idol hath eyes and seeth not; ears, and heareth not; mouth and speaketh not; feet and goeth not: even so have I eyes, but I see not the glory of my God; I have ears, but I hear not the word of God; I have a mouth, but I show not forth the judgments of God; I have feet, but I walk not in the law of my God. The just shall live by faith, Hab. 2, Rom. 1. Now I live no more, but Christ liveth in me, saith the Apostle. Oh that men would consider this, that they are dead otherwise than their life is hidden in the promise, and they have no life but in Christ, and from his spirit. If the Prophet said this of himself, where is the faith of our protestants, where is the life of the godly, where is their hope of a better life, where is their practice of repentance, where is the peace of conscience, that passeth all understanding, where is the joy of Christians, where is the care of mortification, where is the quickness of sanctification; where are all these become? They are few and dead to good works, they live in sin, they be but Christians in name, they are very idols: There is no life but in the word, which we must find by experience in ourselves. When God's children find this life of God in them, then are they merry and glad; but when they feel, that God withdraweth his spirit from them, then they see how they are dead, dull, and careless, as they were wont to be before they were regenerate. Shall not this make us more careful and zealous of good works, and to be more jealous of ourselves? Let us consider this, that it is a joy to have a life: and that even the life of God, the life of Angels, the life of Christ, when we contemn this life: when we are zealous of good works, when we feel spiritual joys, when we look for a crown of glory, when we labor to be renewed to the image of Christ. This is a

heavenly life, and though we will sweat, and eat, and drink, this is common with the beasts of the field, and having no experience of faith in us, we are either dangerously sick, or altogether dead. If we think it a hard matter, to restore nature in a consumption, how hard a thing is it to restore grace and salvation in a consumption of the soul? If we are without hope, when a man is in a languishing disease, when he hath no delight to eat, when he cannot brook his meat, and his sleep is gone from him, he cannot labor, and Physicians dare not meddle with him: what hope is there when we are in such a consumption, that the word which we hear doth us no good, the Sacraments which we receive do us no comfort, prayer doth us no good, and when we cannot abide to labor in good works? Surely it is a token we are almost languished to death, if we be not already dead we are in extreme danger. The Lord indeed is gracious and would not our death, but if we be consuming and see it not, if God's life be going from us, and Satan's life is coming to us, if God's graces be languishing in us, surely we are as dead. Let us then search our own corruption, that we may see how near we are to life, or how near we are to death, whether we grow or consume, whether for the one we are to fear and pray to God, or for the other to rejoice and praise God.

Thus we have heard, that the faith of God's children are not so firm, as that it is never shaken, they are not always in the tenor, and as the Lord giveth them of his grace in measure, so he giveth them at sometimes more, at sometimes less: he often humbleth them with incredulity, to exercise them in prayer, and to confirm them the more by his Spirit, whereof they have had a pledge in his word. We have learned, that the Prophet thought himself to have no life, but as he had the feeling of the life of the Son of God, to be conveyed to him by the spirit of God, through the working of the

word of God: and that as we breathe, eat, play, and labor, we have nothing differing from brute beasts; as we have five wits to discourse of things, we have nothing more than the heathen, than the Turks, than the ungodly infidels. The Scriptures show that all that live in ignorance and sin are dead: for they that live in ignorance, sit in darkness, and in the shadow of death, as it is in the song of Zechariah: and if we live in sin, the Apostle witnesseth, we are but dead, Ephes. 2:1. The death of sin, is the life of a man: and the life of sin, is the death of a man; sin then I mean to live in us, when we give over ourselves to sin with pleasure, and lie in our sin with delight. (Rom. 6:2)

And yet here is a further thing, for the man of God speaketh of the experience of God's children, who when they feel delight in prayer, and their inward man delighted with the word of God, they think they are alive, and that so long they walk in the land of the living; but when they fall into some sin, and become unthankful or pensive, there comes a dullness and deadness of heart, they are not able to see any difference between themselves and the reprobates, and finding in themselves such an heap of ill inclinations, they think themselves to be dead.

It followeth in the verse: And disappoint me not of mine hope. As if he should say: O Lord, even as I trust in thy word, so my hope is that thy word shall be accomplished. As faith is the mother of hope, so hope is the daughter and nurse of faith: for faith breedeth hope, and hope nourisheth faith: faith assureth us of the truth of God's word, hope waiteth for the accomplishment of it. His meaning then is: Lord as I trust in thy word, so strengthen my faith and disappoint me not of my hope, for howsoever the wicked continue for a while, I believe that I shall have a glorious end, I believe it is not lost labor to serve the Lord, O Lord I hope to see them

trodden down, that break thy statutes. Thus we see how God's children fear their unbelief, and nourish their faith with prayer: so the true Minister of God cannot but be zealous to stir up his people to fervent and frequent prayer. We see the one half of this Psalm to be prayer; and that in every portion, two or three or four verses be prayers. And the man of God, being willing to bring his knowledge to feeling, hath still this prayer, Stay me in thy word: teach me thy statutes: disappoint me not of my hope: establish thy promises to thy servant. For as reading, hearing, and conferring, do more increase knowledge than feeling; so meditating, praying, and singing do more nourish feeling than knowledge. Had he that had such a faith in God's word, such joy, such delight, such life in the spirit, need so often and fervently to pray? Then I beseech you let us pray, pray, pray.

—• **Verse. 117. - Stay thou me, and I shall be safe, and I will delight continually in thy statutes.**

This agreeth with that in the verse going before, stablish me according to thy promise. Hadst thou need David to be stayed? Didst thou waver? Oh how need we to be stayed, and to pray against our wavering? He meaneth here thus much: although I am well minded, and delight in thy law, yet I am so brittle and so slippery, that if thou stay me not, I shall fall, I am gone. Oh man of God, feeling his own wants and infirmities! I shall be safe, that is, If I be not stayed by thine hand I shall be at the last cast. Psal. 30:6, he said, he should never be removed: here is another spirit, where he saith, he should be safe. But here woeful experience taught him, that he durst not be stayed on himself: whereby he declareth, that as without God's word, he could not be safe: so come what come would, befall what danger could befall, in the Lord's word he was stayed sufficiently. Then we are to learn, that the promises of God must engender in us a care and fear of ourselves;

for if we begin once to be quiet with ourselves, when we begin to be secure and presumptuous, let us assure ourselves, that we are not far from sin. But if we fear that we are staggering and reeling persons, and that we are very slippery, is there not cause of humbling, that this humbleness should breed carefulness; carefulness should cause watchfulness; watchfulness should use the means; and the means should be sanctified by prayer? Then come hell, come the devil, come the world, come the flesh, if the Lord stay us, we shall live and not die, we shall surely not miscarry. And I will delight continually in thy statutes. We see here that there is no free will, for he prayeth likewise Port. 5:1. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes. Neither did he promise of himself before, but did hope in the Lord. Such brittleness is in the world, such sleights in the flesh, such slyness in Satan, such corrupt examples in the world, that unless the Lord stay us, we are so far off from delight in good, that we are ready to fall into great sins. Every man therefore is to search his own heart, and by the cause we may come to the effects, and by the tree may conjecture of the fruit: so by the effects we may judge of the cause, and by the fruit we may judge of the tree. Where is now this delight, when we hear the word, we hear it with such coldness? Therefore it is a manifest proof we are not stayed in the Lord. For whosoever doth not delight in the word, he may deceive his own soul: but surely as yet he is not stayed on God. If we are not delighted, then are we stayed on our own selves, but if the Lord work in us, then shall we feel delight. This is a grief of my soul, that I see no delight in the Lord's Day, all things are done for fashion, but the power of godliness is not among us. The cause is the want of private exercises; the want of private reading, and praying, and this bringeth a secret curse of public exercises, and therefore I cannot but so often urge private prayer, and meditation.

—• **Verse. 118. - Thou hast trodden down all them, that depart from thy statutes, for their deceit is vain.**

Among all things to be spoken of, I think nothing more necessary than this, that God will one day come a righteous judge to men, that are so slow to keep a good conscience. All men are at quiet with themselves, and cry peace, peace, our long enjoying of the Gospel, our tranquility and peace, our abundance of the things of the earth, make us drunken with the love of this life, and cause every man to think thus with himself: I am none of the worst, when troubles arise, I hope to shift for one: but in whom (I pray you) is the Lord delighted? Even in him that hath a contrite heart, Isaiah 66, and in such as tremble at his word. The Prophet saith in the verse following a little after, that he trembled for fear of God's judgments, what had he a more tormented conscience than others? No, he had such a continual feeling of his own corruptions, that it made him afraid For as the best flesh is most tender, and where it is most corrupt, there it is most hard; and where the flesh is nearest to healing, there it will more speedily, and more freshly bleed: so the nearer we are to God, the more fearful we are; the more precious our consciences be, the more tender they are; and those things which being used in greater measure, will nothing fray a wicked man being urged, but a little will dismay the conscience of the godly. The mind of the prophet is this, thou hast done away the wicked, thou hast trodden them down, and swept them away, I am as brittle as they, and as ready to fall unless thou uphold me Portion 16:6, he saith, It is time for thee Lord to work, for they have destroyed thy law: where he complaineth as it were, that the Lord deferreth his judgments, because the wicked had brought all things to such a confusion. And in the 7th portion, 4 verse he saith: I remembered thy judgments of old O Lord, and have been comforted, as if

he should say, though thy children be had in contempt, though thy Church be kept under, and the wicked are set aloft; yet I remember how in old time thou hast been a just judge, and hast punished sin. This comforteth me, both because of thy mercy, which thou wilt show to me, and because of thy justice whereby thou wilt confound the wicked, and also makest me to fear myself: for both thou canst do as thou hast done, and thou wilt do as thou canst do. We must learn then in these two verses, thus much. That what judgment soever the Lord hath written down in his word, and we have either credibly heard reported the like with our ears, or seen them with our eyes, they ought to be unto us examples, and ratify to us the truth of God's judgments, that as he hath promised to punish, and indeed hath punished such and such sins; so he would do it in us for the like, and as sometime he hath even enwrapped his children in the like judgments, though not to that end, for which he punished the wicked; but as they have been partakers of the sin in part, so they have sustained the punishment in part: so we must know that he will punish the same sins, even in us, or spare us, if we be without them. Howbeit, the godly shall not have the like judgment with the ungodly. He will not consume us as dross, but will try us as silver, he will not trample us under his feet, but humble us under his hand. Wherefore as in the sweet promises of God, there is a reverent fear: so in our infirmities, we must learn with David to fear much more. Gen. 10. We read, how God trode down the pride of them, that built the tower of Babel. When Pharaoh was advancing himself over the people of God, the Lord trampled him down with ten plagues, and trode him under foot in the red Sea. Exod 14, when Chorah, Dathan, and Abiram rebelled against God, and rose so insolently against Moses and Aaron his ministers; the Lord trode them down, even into the earth, which opened her mouth and swallowed them up

quick. The whole world for their ripeness of sin, did he destroy from the face of the earth, and scoured it with a purging water. The Lord pursued the land of the Sodomites, until it lay at his foot, which before was as a Paradise. The Lord swept away the Israelites, that they could not come to that plentiful and promised land. How often do the histories record, how God trode down many with wars, and swept away others with plagues? For as the Goldsmith purgeth the dross from the gold, and the potter treadeth the unprofitable clay to mire; even so the Lord purgeth and treadeth down his enemies. This must make us to fear, for many men dangerously pervert their souls, and Satan beguileth them with many shifts. But heretics and profane men say, The judgments of God indeed in times past have been great, but what is that to us? We confess they were wonderful in the time of the Law; but we hear not of them in the New Testament, what appertain they then unto us? But Christ hath taught us this general doctrine, Luk. 13:1, where certain men came to our Savior Christ, and showed him of the Galileans, whose blood Pilate had mingled with their own sacrifices: but Christ answered them on this sort, Suppose ye that these Galileans were greater sinners than the other Galileans, because they have suffered such things? I tell you, no: but unless ye repent your lives, you shall all likewise perish. Thus he also spake of them, unto these Jews, which took occasion to condemn those men for their punishments, upon whom the tower in Siloam fell. Every man will yield to this, that the plagues are great, but no man will apply them to himself. But our Savior Christ before teacheth us, rather to fear and suspect our own estates, than to condemn others. Indeed all punishment shall not fall upon one man, nor one punishment shall light upon all. Though the flood sweepeth them not away, though Serpents devour them not, though they be not deprived of the promised land, yet

surely the Son of God Jesus Christ hath spoken it, and though heaven and earth pass, yet one iota of his word shall not pass, that unless we repent, we shall all perish: if not in these, yet in some of these; if not in some of these, yet in some other like to these. For the Lord hath many and diverse judgments, whereby he would tread down his enemies. Beside the Apostle saith, Eph. 5:6, Col. 3:6, speaking of fornicators, covetous men, adulterers, idolaters, and wantons, Let no man deceive you with vain words: for, for such things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience. This is spoken to God's children, that they should not mock at the menaces and judgments of God: for if they will not obey, the judgments of God undoubtedly will fall; but if they will tremble at God's word, they shall be children of obedience, and not be subject to this wrath of God. Thus Christ also reasoneth, Matth. 24:37, Luk. 17:18. As the days of Noah were, so likewise shall the coming of the Son of man be. 38. For as in the days before the flood, they did eat and drink, marry and gave in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the Ark. 39. And knew nothing till the flood came, and took all away: so shall the coming of the Son of man be. Luke 17:28. Likewise also it was in the days of Lot, when in Sodom the Sun shined in the morning, and all was well, even then came the wrath of God from heaven. When the old world was making mirth, and thought of nothing less than of drowning, until Noah went into the Ark, suddenly the waters came upon them. Likewise is our estate, we know nothing now, we see the world is as it was, we provide for our posterity. Thus we see our Savior Christ reasoned much like to David. In the peculiar judgment, it shall be like with us as with Sodom, that City was destroyed suddenly, and so shall we be. In the general Judgment, it shall be as in the days of Noah,

the water swept them away at unawares; so the fire shall purge us when we think not of it.

Thou hast (saith David) trodden down in times past, thou wilt tread down again. 2 Pet. 2:4. If God spared not his Angels that had sinned, but cast them down into hell, nor the old world, nor Sodom. &c. Thus our Savior Christ, and with him his Apostles, teach by precepts and confirm by examples, and so must all the godly Ministers approve and teach this doctrine, that the godly may have their faith established in God's promises, and to leave the wicked excuse less against the day of judgment. They have left us a president to follow, whereby we must be awaked from slumber, that God's children may stoop, and the rest be committed to the righteous judgment of God. We see how we may profit by examining several judgments for several sins, hath not God appointed in his word, and executed from heaven a several punishment for several sins? Doth God say that Idolaters, Heretics, and profane professors should be swept away with plagues and wars, and hath he not swept away the Egyptians in the red sea, Exod. 14? Did the Lord threaten the breach of the Sabbath with death? And did he not strike the man, that did but in that day gather sticks, Num. 15? Whose sin though men spared on earth, yet the Lord punished it from heaven. Nehemiah taught his people this doctrine, saying, Did not the wrath of God fall on our fathers for our example? Yet there is to be noted, that evermore the Lord hath done, and doth fatherly correct and admonish, before he utterly sweepeth away. Shall we think that the Lord is altered? His long suffering did not presently punish, neither after he had threatened, but he gave term to repent: he hath dealt so graciously with countries, nations, and people, that he hath not so trodden them down, as they have trodden down his glory, but by benefits hath allured them, by chastisements

driven them, and by examples persuaded them to repent before his plague came. The Lord hath appointed for disobedient children death, Deut. 21:18. If any man hath a son stubborn and disobedient, which will not hearken unto the voice of his Father, nor the voice of his Mother, and they have chastened him, and he would not obey them, and after complaint made to the Elders of the City, all the men of the City shall stone him with stones unto death. And Prov. 20:20. He that curseth his father or his mother, his light shall be put out in obscure darkness. There is among other, one wicked generation, even a generation that curseth his father, and blesseth not his mother; but of such a one, let the Eagle put out his eyes. Hath God so threatened, and will he not punish? 2 King. 2. Little children, who for their age, we would think to be spared, for mocking the Prophet of God Elisha, who cried for vengeance by the secret motion of God's spirit, were by two Bears devoured. Did the Lord punish scorers then, and will he spare them now? For fornication we know twenty-four thousand fell on one day, and were swept away with the plague, and shall fornication now be unpunished? We stand but by grace, we are but petitioners, we must fear least living in these and such like sins, we be swept away with these and such like judgments. This must make us to fear ourselves, to love and believe the word, to grow in repentance, and make our schooling in the judgments of God, some in one, and some in another. We have heard now, how the cause of the Prophets prayer, was the sight of his infirmities: this must stir us up also to private prayer. For though we have received never so many and excellent graces of God, yet without prayer shall we not be able to stir up ourselves by them. We must see how the man of God, seeing the severe judgments of God, was moved to prayer, that he should not be trodden down and swept away with the wicked. We are likewise to swear to this

practice, both to make us cleave faster to the word, and also to make us the more to fear ourselves. For it is a visible judgment of God, when we see the judgments of God, and are not stayed in fixed faith in the Lord, and a reverent fear of ourselves. We have been taught, because we are given to think that the judgments of God appertain not to us, that the long suffering of the Lord, is to leave the wicked inexcusable, and not to have one of his unsaved, and still calleth some, and doth not execute his judgments, until the measure of sin be fulfilled to the brim, Gen. 6. So that he spareth to call his to repentance, to leave the wicked without excuse, who would neither be moved with his promises, nor feared with his judgments. And although it seem an easy doctrine, that God will by one way or other punish sin, and think that we have learned this before it be taught: yet we shall find ourselves ignorant of the practice of it, which if we knew, it would be a key of the whole Scriptures unto us. And thus much of the general doctrine, now of the particular; For their deceit is vain. As if the Prophet should say, notwithstanding all their high imaginations thou hast destroyed them, for they have but deceived themselves in false religion and vanity of life. Thus then let us consider of it, that whether our vanity be in religion or life, it is but deceit. Heresy and Idolatry carry a great sway, under a color of godly life: but when God's judgments sweep them away, they seem vain, that neither their Idols can help them, nor their opinions comfort them.

This then may commend unto us the word of God, that it only maketh us safe, and stayeth us in all troubles, wherefore it is said, port. 12:4. Except thy law had been my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction. So the Prophet Jonah hath a notable sentence worthy to be written in letters of gold, and of all men to be remembered, Jonah. 2:18. They that wait upon lying vanities, forsake their own mercy. Whereby he showeth that they

which depend on anything, save on God alone, refuse their own felicity, and that goodness, which otherwise they should receive of God. So that the Prophet himself in not going to Nineveh waited on vanity, and could find no comfort in himself. We may for a time trust to Idolatry or ungodliness, but when the touch-stone and trial of God's law comes, they cannot stay us, nor save us, for they will deceive all users of them, as false and vain. 1 Sam. 12:21. Samuel exhorting the people to repentance willeth them to follow the Lord, and not to turn back, saying also, If ye turn back, that should be after vain things, which cannot profit you, nor deliver you, for they are but vanity. Where he teacheth us, that when miseries come, our delights are but vain, and therefore cannot help us. The Scriptures also apply this to ill manners, as Ephes. 5, the Apostle setting down a bed-row of many sins addeth this, Let no man deceive you, &c. where because some think, that for such sins God would be entreated, he saith, nay not so, be not deceived, unless ye repent, God will not be entreated. Likewise Gal. 5, the Apostle having taught them to provide temporal things for them, that minister spiritual, saith, be not deceived, where he hath this sense: ye may have many reasons with yourselves, against this doctrine, but when God cometh to tread down the wicked; then your reasons will not stand before his majesty, for the truth only there prevaieth; do not deceive yourselves, your hope will abuse you. And here all flattering of ourselves in sin will prove deceivable, we walk in a net, and deceive our own consciences, but this must make us fear, we must not reckon without our host, nor make our account without our auditor: for if we do, we will beguile ourselves, or flatter ourselves.

Let every man therefore look to the sleights of sin in himself, and to the deceit of his own conscience, and he shall see that all the ways of man are

evil, but the Lord is forever true.

We must thus examine ourselves: Good Lord, will this thing stay me in the day of trouble, will this thing comfort me in the hour of death? Then it is a sure thing, then it is comfortable, otherwise it is vain and cannot stay me, it is deceitful, and will not comfort me. Now if we trust in the word, we shall in death know that it is no imagination, howsoever the world would now persuade us that we live too precisely, and Satan lieth to get us at a bay, we shall then know our labor was not lost, and when the Lord cometh to judgment, if we have laid a good foundation, when the tempests arise, the winds arise, and the rain fall, we shall be sure, and not beguile ourselves, that we shall be on the rock of God's word, and built in faith, we shall be sure as mount Zion, and safe as Jerusalem, when the floods of vengeance come.

—• **Verse. 119 - Thou hast taken away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.**

Mark the propriety of the word, he saith not thy statutes do I love, but thy testimonies, he saith here thus much: seeing O God, thou hast summoned the wicked, I will embrace more joyfully the record and covenant of my salvation, made unto me in thy word. For when we see God's judgments on the ungodly, this ought wonderfully to commend God's mercy in free saving us from the like, that whereas we were in the like condition of sin, he might have measured the like to us, and yet vouchsafed to make his covenant in force unto us. Was it not a great mercy to save Noah and his, when all the world besides was washed away with water? Did it not wonderfully commend the goodness of God, that in the great destruction of Sodom he should deliver Lot? What a thing is this, that the Lord will make a covenant with us as with Noah, that if we shall trust in Christ, we shall never be

confounded? Again, when the man of God seeth the wicked deceived, because they trusted not in the word, this maketh him to love the word, and assureth him, that there is an end of all perfection, but the law of God is exceeding large, that it never fails in trouble, nor deceiveth any in death. Wherefore this must make us to love it also. And if we compared this word with other vanities of the world, and felt in it such joys, and most specially in death and in troubles, and that when all fails, this doth minister sufficient comfort; surely the persuasion hereof would move us pathetically to express our minds, and say with the Prophet, Oh how love I thy law it is my meditation continually.

Then when our strength shall fail, our breath draw short, our friends depart, our goods, country, and life shall forsake us; the word will be so sweet, so dear, and so precious, that when all these are gone, this will yield us great comfort. We have also learned here a further thing in the mind of the Prophet, who reasoneth thus: Seeing thou hast trodden down the wicked as earth, and scoured them as dross, therefore will I embrace thy covenants, and records of thy judgments, therefore the evidence of thy covenant which thou hast made to me, is most holy and precious. For when the judgments of God were so severe against others, was it not the great mercy of God to make a covenant with him? Was it not a wonderful grace of God, that being conceived and born in sin like unto the other, he should escape God's judgment? Was not it a great mercy, that when all flesh should perish, Noah and his family should escape? Was it not the great goodness of God, when Sodom was consumed, to save Lot? When the Lord had left all to ignorance, was it not his great mercy to preserve Abraham? When the Lord overthrew the Egyptians, was it not free mercy to save the Israelites? Was it not the great grace of God to lead forward Caleb and Joshua into the

promised land, when to so many he had denied it? Our Savior Christ gave thanks to his Father, as for a special mercy of God, that he had revealed those things to babes and little ones, which he had concealed from many mighty of the world. If we consider how many are left in ignorance, given over to superstition, and remain under the heavy hand of God, what a mercy of God is it to give us his truth, to enrich us with his Gospel, and to bless us with such abundance of temporal things? Oh that this were known of us! Oh that every man would say: Oh Lord, what am I that thou shouldest show me such mercy? To give me the enjoying of thy word and Gospel more than any other, and giving it to me, makest me to understand it above many: oh what am I that thou shouldest offer to me this goodness! I was born and conceived in sin, I have multiplied and enlarged my corruptions both before and since my calling, my unthankfulness is great, my unworthiness therefore greater, and yet thou hast not ceased to prefer me in mercies before many. If we consider the fearful judgments of God in consuming all hypocrites, who will not say, that many have been called, and few chosen? When we shall see (I say) in the day of the Lord, his severe judgments to tread down these hypocrites, and cause them to go from his presence to hell, oh how will we esteem that we are in Christ, and say, Oh how love I thy law! For I see thy judgments are equal, and thou dealest not with me in justice, but in mercy; not in anger, but in love; not in wrath, but in pity: therefore thy covenant is sweet, because I have deserved thy judgments, and thou hast spared me.

—• **Verse. 120. - My flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.**

Here may seem at the first to be some contrariety between fear and love, since love causeth not, but casteth out fear. For he had said in the verse

going before, that he loved the testimonies of the Lord; and here he saith, that his flesh trembled for fear. Wherefore at the first sight here is some show of contrariety, but indeed there is none. For he saith, My flesh trembleth, &c. whereby he showeth, that as he loved the law of God in his inward man, and with his part regenerate: so it is the outward and old man, and the part unrenewed, which is full of corruption, that did fear. So that as he had God's spirit to renew his mind, he had this witness in him, that he did love the promises of God: but because his flesh rebelleth against the Spirit, and he found many corruptions of nature remaining in him, and threatening him, that after he was like to fall again, if the Lord, yea but a little should leave him: he saith, I am afraid, least for my unthankfulness, and unworthy refusing of thy mercy, thou shouldest leave me to myself, and so shouldest make a way to thy judgments. Thus there is an harmony in the Prophet: for because as the flesh hath a trembling fear, so the spirit rejoiceth.

Thus, as we have often heard, God's children find to their comfort in themselves faith in God's promises, and a delight in his word, and sometime they are grieved for the absence of this sweetness of faith in the same. For as the presence of God's spirit bringeth joy, so the absence thereof fear; as faith breedeth a love of God's promises, so infidelity maketh us afraid of his judgments. Although Noah had great cause to love the promises of God for his wonderful deliverance: so he had great cause to fear himself, that he might have fallen afterward. Lot also having good cause to believe and embrace the covenant of God for his safeguard, had just occasion also to have suspected himself, that he was subject to falling. It is said, Prov. 28:14. Blessed is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into evil For where fear is not, there is security; security breedeth

hardness of heart, and hardness of heart bringeth God's wrath. Wherefore the Apostle writing to the Philippians, showing that God worketh in us both the will and the deed of doing good, lest hereby they should draw to themselves security, addeth, that they must fill the course of their salvation, in fear and trembling. For if we do only well by God's grace working in us, we are much to fear the absence of it. Wherefore we see how the man of God did justly fear his part unregenerate.

This fear of God's children differeth much from the fear of the wicked: for it bringeth us to the Lord, and driveth us not from the Lord; it helpeth, and hindereth not our prayers; it hurteth not, but furthereth our duties. For it maketh us to fear lest we should lose God's grace, it causeth us to wait more and more to have it, and having it, moveth us by prayer to continue it. When Noah had God's favor he feared, and being warned of God (as Heb. 11:7,) of the things which were as yet not seen, moved with reverence prepared the Ark, &c. So Habakkuk hearing of the judgment of God, which should fall upon the faithful by the Chaldeans, saith, Hab. 3:16. My belly trembled, my lips shook at the voice: rottenness entered into my bones, and I trembled in myself Paul said he preached with fear and trembling. Thus we see how the good Saints of God did fear, because they knew, that if the Lord should enter into judgment with us, no flesh should be saved, and that there was nothing in them, but of mercy: and therefore they acknowledge their weakness, unworthiness, and wretchedness.

We see also that God's children have diverse affects, according to their diverse estates, and though sometimes they are quickened through faith, other times they are most ready to sin, if they do not sin. No marvel then though the children of God fear, when they see that God restraineth their will, and the greater their feelings are, yet are they mixed with a reverent

fear of God's majesty, and sight of their own corruptions, least they should not abide his glory, and least they should not continue in their good things

We see moreover that this fear humbled Noah, that the Prophets and Apostles spake in fear, which the Lord gave unto them, either to prepare them to some grace which they should receive, or else more zealously to keep some grace which already they have received. And where it might be objected, that love casteth out fear, we must understand, of that servile and excessive fear, which driveth us away from God. And seeing though we feel God's love by faith, we will fear, then much more had we need so to do, when by infidelity we feel not this love. So we must have both fear to prepare us to grace, and we must have love to continue us in this grace. And surely only they, with whom this thing hath been familiar, do know how love and fear do dwell together. For as blessed experience hath taught some, that by this fear they have attained to special graces, and continued in them by the same: so also by woeful experience some have found, that for want of this, they either have not tasted of the grace of God, or else not continued in the same.

PORTION. 16.

—• **Verse. 121. - I have executed judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.**

The Prophet goeth on, praying for the increase and continuance of God's favor, using two arguments: the first, by showing his afflictions, which he suffered: the second, by declaring his affection to the word; whereunto is added a reason drawn from the nature of God, that it is his time to help in affliction. His general desire then is, to have a further love of God's word, to this end he showeth his miseries and afflictions, and with what affection he

longed for help, trusting that God would now come to do right. His prayer is, that the Lord would not suffer him to be overcome with over-much afflictions, but that as it is Psal. 125:3, that the rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous put their hands unto wickedness, and that the hands of the oppressors should not prevail. God then giveth us this liberty, that we may pray against our and his enemies, but we must withal consider these two reasons.

[I have executed.] As if the Prophet said, Thou hast promised to help all them, that hold causes and maintain them well through thy grace; I have used a good cause well; perform therefore, oh Lord, thy promise in me. So the Prophet prayeth, Psal. 41. Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness, &c. where he showeth, that as God doth promise to help in afflictions, so he requireth of our parts, that we should suffer as welldoers, and as doing well in a good cause, as if he had expressed his mind in these words: O God, the cause which I maintain is just, and I have maintained it well, let them fall then that have an ill cause against me, who having so righteous a cause.

As we have to learn, that we shall not be without oppressors, if we do well: so must we learn how to behave ourselves therein. It seemeth monstrous to some, that we should by well-doing purchase such enemies, as if when ye do well, ye suffer wrong, and take it patiently, this is acceptable to God: 1 Pet. 3:13. Who is it that will harm you, if you follow that which is good? Yet it is a thing in the secret judgment of God, either to the trial of the faith of his children, or the fulfilling of the sins of the wicked. Who would think a man should have enemies, but by desert. True it is, if the world were aright: but because we live in such a world, wherein Christ himself executing judgment and righteousness did suffer, because it hated him, much more must we look for it, as Christ himself hath also fore warned, because the servant must not be above his master; and because we labor and cease not to hinder the kingdom of Satan, he enarmeth the world with hatred against us also. We must not think that we can be here quiet. For although we be sometimes troubled because we have not done somewhat, which we ought: yet often we must be oppressed as righteous doers, although not so, as our enemies finally shall prevail against us.

We see the Prophet desireth God to be the patron of a righteous cause, and of a righteous cause rightly handled; we must then, if we will assure ourselves of God's protection, first consider if our cause be just, and having such a cause, whether we have rightly dealt in it. Let us therefore when we are oppressed, search our cause; if we feel that our conscience be guilty, then no marvel though we suffer, because the Lord correcteth either our evil cause, or our ill handling of a good cause. We must see that in the equity of our request, our cause be just and true, and being good, that our dealing therein be also just and right. Let us see this now in particulars.

Our Savior Christ saith, he came to put dissension between the father and the son, the mother and the daughter, and that the father in law should be against his son in law, and the son in law against his father in law. True it is, if it be for the Gospels sake, and we withal have done our duties and obedience, which nature and our callings require, that we be hated; yet must we not be dismayed, although we have the enemies of our own family, of them which by nature are joined to us, we are not to be discouraged, if it be righteousness, which we must maintain, and unrighteousness which they maintain: if then our cause being good: we use all obedience, love, and duty, and yet be grieved, we must recover ourselves with that which Christ hath said: but if our cause be ill, or being right, we showed not ourselves humble and dutiful in the defense of it; then we have deserved justly to be evil entreated of them. If we shall observe this to happen either among Magistrates to their subjects, or Landlords to their tenants, or any other governors to their inferiors, when they shall deal ill with us in debts, fines, and exactions, we must consider, that if we have done righteously, we have the liberty to comfort our souls in prayer: Lord, I have done the part of a faithful subject, or the duty of a good tenant; Lord, help me against this

man, which oppresseth me wrongfully. But if we have discouraged their hearts either simply by ill doing, or in a good thing by ill dealing, we must know, that the Lord by them doth take some good thing from us, who from them did take some good duties. We must see then whether we have done our duties in love or not, this will keep us from fuming, and will make us rest in prayer.

The ignorance of this doctrine maketh us fret and fume, who never consider whether our cause be good, or whether in a good cause we have used good dealing or no. If God's children look thus into their consciences, it will humble them: as surely I did not well to him, God suffereth him to do the like to me again, and meeteth out unto me the like measure with mine own meet-yard. Where we must learn that God's children never deal so earnestly with their enemies, as with their God. And as this holdeth in superiors so must we mark this doctrine in all troubles with our inferiors or equals. Now if our servants or our children do not deal dutifully with us, we must enter into ourselves on this sort: Lord, I have brought up these sons or servants in thy nurture and fear, I have instructed them, and prayed for them, I have used all means whereby I might bring them to good: yet for all this, they deal ill with me, and in this case we must know that God will hear our prayers. But if we have not done our parts in clothing, feeding, or teaching them, or in praying for them, it is the judgment of God, in that we have not done the duty of godly parents, and Christian householders in making them the children of God, and servants of the Lord: neither can we say, Lord release me in this case. Wherefore Job said, chap. 31:13, that if he did contemn the judgment of his servant, or of his maid, when they did think themselves evil entreated by him, What shall I do when God standeth up? And when he shall visit me, what shall I answer? He that made me in

the womb, hath he not made him, hath he not alone fashioned us in the womb?

—• **Verse. 122. - Answer for thy servant in that which is good, and let not the proud oppress me.**

[Answer.] That is, be surety for me. So, though his cause was good, yet he thought himself not so wise as to answer his enemies, nor so strong as to prevail against them in that which is good: he knew that God would not take his part in any evil cause, which must make us, if we look for God to be our help, to provide that our cause be good. His mind then is: if my cause Lord were evil, I durst not crave thy help, but it is good: therefore speak for me. We therefore, if our cause be ill, are rather to crave of God, to have our sin pardoned, because the righteous God is not a defender of an unrighteous cause. Again, though our cause be good, we must not therefore think that we ourselves can answer it, because the man of God saith, portion 20:2. Plead my cause and deliver me: that is, Lord put an answer into my mouth, take my cause into thine own hand, mine enemies are too wise and strong for me.

Thus the Saints of God having good causes, would not trust in them. What is then the cause why oftentimes in good causes we prevail no more? Even because we would shoulder them out with our own strength, and say not, Lord put wisdom into my mouth, Lord put a weapon into my hand. Then our good causes must never be severed from our God, for otherwise we shall never have good issue of them. So we must beware, that we make not God a revenger of our affections, but pray that we may be harnessed with a righteous cause, and with a right handling of it from God.

True it is then, that in trouble we may pray not to be overcome, yet we see the man of God confessed, how he behaved himself well in affliction, and

as by the fire the gold is both tried good, and purged from the dross; so the Lord proved in him the gold of his graces, and scoured him from corrupt affections; he scoured him from the love of this world, to stir up in him the love of the world to come; he scoured him from the works of the flesh, and quickened in him the works of the Spirit; he stirred up his gifts to serve God's glory, and scoured him from the love of himself. So by his fatherly chastisements, the Lord quickeneth us in good things, and delivereth us from evil. So we have heard also how in our defense we must pray for God's graces, because for want of wisdom and patience we cannot answer our own cause. For as in our suites at law, we get pleaders and Proctors to speak for us; so we must know that in the court of heaven, we cannot plead for ourselves, but must open our suites to Christ, which must plead it for us. Now in that he saith, Let not the proud oppress me: he noteth that they were such as did flatter themselves for graces received, as though they should be controllers unto him. No marvel then, though we reproach men, when we reproach God's mercy and majesty. We may learn here, that we can never deal mercifully with men, which will not deal mercifully with ourselves. For our sins must humble us before God, before we will be humbled with man, otherwise we shall grow so proud, that we shall not be far from oppression.

—• **Verse. 123. - Mine eyes have failed in waiting for thy salvation, and for thy just promise.**

Here is a further thing that the man of God requireth, not looking to be helped at the first brunt, but never to leave off his suite unto the very failing of his eyes, according to that of the Apostle, 1 Pet. 3:10. If any man long after life, &c. 11. Let him eschew evil and do good, let him seek peace, and follow after it. So this man of God had long endured trouble, which many

will be content happily to sustain for a while: but if it be anything long, they fall from judgment and justice. We must not think then to deal ill with them, that deal ill with us: neither must we deal well but for a time, because we must persevere. For when we slip too much, we never show, that we did truly execute judgment and justice.

If the man of God here so resisted the devil and wicked men, which are as the instruments of Satan, breathing for our destruction; we must also fight against them after his example, although his soul fainted, his eyes failed, his flesh parched, his natural powers melted. This we may also see, how the Saints of God mourned in their prayer. Away then with this common saying, which proceeds from inconstancy: I have born injuries long, I have taken much at his hand, and put up many wrongs, should I suffer him still to abuse me, and let myself be undone? Surely even to the failing of our eyes the Prophet showeth us, we must maintain a good cause, and seeing the Lord hath the issues of all things in his hand, and helpeth desperate cases, he will undoubtedly help us, if we leave not our case. Then we see, though he had devoured many evils, yet he executed judgment and justice: so we must swallow up many injuries, and yet neither depart from the Lord, nor cease from our cause.

And though we would cry in our prayers, to be heard to the clouds, and send forth loud shrieks, though we would roar as a cannon gun, yet what is it that seasoneth our prayers; even the mourning of our hearts, the failing of our eyes, and when we pray with unspeakable sighs, which cannot be expressed. For they be not loud, eloquent, and well set prayers, which are acceptable to the Lord, but our staying ourselves on the Lord, and our continuing in well doing, and our maintaining of a good cause to the utmost; so that a man might sooner pull the eyes out of our heads, and the

heart out of our bodies, and bereave us of our lives, than make us leave righteousness; and though troubles shall come, we will still follow our cause to the failing of our eyes, fainting of our hearts, and melting of our powers.

Herein then appeared the true virtue of the faith of this man of God; because, whilst no wickedness is offered, many will do well; but after often trial with injuries, they execute neither judgment nor justice; so that where this faith wanteth, there is no true love of judgment and justice: besides here we are to mark, that that is a true prayer, which cometh from the true feeling, and deep sense of his heart; and without this, well set, long, and loud prayers prevail not. For such prayers cry loud in the Lord's ears, which make a noise with the feeling of our wants, and when, though they continue to the failing of our eyes, yet we mistrust not God. For many either pray coldly, or praying zealously, they become so dull, that they cease to put their trust in the Lord. So that the corruption of our nature, is either not to feel our wants, or if we feel them, to despair.

[For thy just promise.] Here we see how the Prophet prayeth, not according to his own fantasy, but according to the will of God revealed in his word. When we desire anything of God, we must do it according to his promise. For when we pray not according to the promise of the Lord, we wait upon our own fantasies, and seek after our own imaginations. Many break in their prayers into heady and rash conceits, who have not in the meantime the word in their hearts; but they obtain nothing: neither shall we obtain, if we be like affected unto them. Ye know, saith S. John, ye shall obtain, if ye ask according to the will of God.

And whereas he saith, I waited for thy just promise, he showeth that the Lord is no more liberal in promising, than faithful in performing: for if we

wait for his promise, surely he will perform it. Every man will peradventure confess this to be a truth at the first, but the self-same thing being in this Psalm so often repeated, berateth our incredulity and hardness of belief of it. We can allege indeed generally, that God's promises be true, but we will fall in the particular applying of them to ourselves, in saying, They are true unto me, I have felt the truth of them by experience in myself.

The Prophet useth oft to give this Epithet to God's word, as verse. 106. I will keep thy righteous judgments. 137. Righteous art thou O Lord, and just are thy judgments. 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. Why would the spirit of God repeat this one word so often, but because it is a singular work of faith to believe the word, and a thing much incident to our nature, not to believe. Wherefore Paul useth often this Preface as a prerogative: This is a true saying, and of all men worthy to be received, or this is a faithful saying. So that the holy Ghost prepareth such words to purchase credit to the word of God, because flesh and blood is so ready to mistrust, and Satan so subtle to discredit the truth. This may happily soon seem true: but put case a man being troubled had prayed, till his eyes failed, his heart fainted, and his flesh were parched, and still trusteth to God's promises; this man indeed hath a true faith. This then commendeth the Prophet, that when he was at the last cast, he continued in his strength. His sense and meaning is this, although I be not as yet helped, yet I shall be in God's good time; which thing if we also could truly say, we should never be overcome of temptation.

—• **Verse. 124. - Deal with thy servant according to thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.**

Here the Prophet is desirous to be further taught in the word. Here we see the man of God complaineth not of the word, though as yet the promise was

not performed, but of his own faith. Here is then a difference between the faith of the godly, and the presumption of the ungodly, that, when the Lord suspendeth his truth for a while, the godly suspect not the truth of the word, but the unbelief of themselves, and pray against the same. If then when God's promises are suspended, we be through Satan's policy and our frailty tempted to mistrust, we can say, Thy word O Lord doth not fail; but we are dull in faith, we are wavering, we are full of unbelief, good Lord, increase our faith, take from us these mists and clouds of mistrust, by shining upon us with the bright beams of thy spirit, and though Satan would weaken our hope to discredit thy truth, yet strengthen us: and though we have failed in many particular points of thy commandments, yet we beseech thee to forgive the secret errors of our life: we have believed thy word, but if we failed in faith, then reveal thy covenants unto us, that we may recover.

Two things, as we have often heard, sustain God's children in trouble, the one is the testimony of a good conscience; the other is faith in God's promises, both which are here set down in the verses going before; for in that he executed judgment and justice, he had the testimony of a good conscience; in that his eyes failed by waiting on the promises of God, his faith most plainly appeareth. This faith breedeth a good conscience, and this good conscience doth nourish faith. For whosoever will execute judgment and justice, must believe the promises of God, and that the covenant of Christ is a sure covenant ratified in their hearts, which when they feel, they are urged by love to keep a good conscience. For the place to lay up the treasure of faith in is a good conscience. Here then the man of God prayeth for both these things, and if we will seek still after knowledge without feeling, we will judge this prayer to be barren: but if we will look into our own incredulity, and enter with a single eye into our own hearts (for such

Christians are we, as we then shall be found to be) and shall enter into the particular troubles of body and soul, we shall find our mass of unbelief, and we shall see, that we may labor often in the meditation of this Psalm, and find sufficient matter all our life long.

For the man of God said before, I have executed judgment and justice; and yet here he saith, teach me judgment and justice: he meant not, that he had judgment and justice fully, perfectly, and absolutely, but that it was according to the grace which he had received, yet he thought not himself therefore justified, though he was not conscious in himself.

His meaning then is: Lord thou searchest the heart, corrupt is my heart, and blind is my mind; if I have fallen, Lord grant me to recover myself; if I fail in unbelief, Lord increase my faith, that I may daily grow in executing judgment and justice. So far off was he from being weary in upright dealing, that he prayed still for the continuance of it.

Then if we be not weary in our calling, and could come to say with this man of God, and with the Apostle Paul, that we are not conscious in ourselves, yet we must further proceed and say, that we are not hereby justified; because the largeness of the law cannot be concluded in the narrow compass of our brain, we must pray for the increase both of our knowledge and faith.

According to thy mercy. He saith not give judgment, because I have done well, but deal with thy servant according to thy mercy. He doth not mean here as the Papists, he assureth himself of nothing of desert, but though he showed mercy unto others, yet with God he sueth for mercy, and not for merit. If then he had failed in nothing, he would not have pleaded so for mercy, as Paul reasoneth in the fourth to the Romans, verse 4. To him that worketh, the wages is not counted by favor, but by debt. And here we see

that he doth not glory, that his executing of judgment and justice was his own work, but acknowledgeth it to be the gift of God, and bringing nothing of his own, he craveth pardon. It is a hard matter, when we have thus done, not to have our patience broken, and to do the things which we have done before. For, for this cause, in that the wicked loaded him with such evils, and they oppressed, and set themselves both against his cause, and his person, and his corruption was great, he prayed for perseverance.

And teach me thy statutes. That is, if thou wilt show this favor upon thy servant, so it is; if not, in the meantime, Lord teach me the true understanding of thy word. We crave often God's mercy and help, but we think not, that his mercy of all other were the greatest, as the Prophet saith, I desire thy favor; but this is my greatest desire, even to be instructed further in thy word. Let us then look on this man, who being in trouble, desireth nothing more than the word, and wisheth not so much the ease of the flesh, as he desired to be delivered from unbelief. We must therefore above all pray for this. As in the greatest harvest we lose none occasion, but if we want opportunity we crave it by prayer, and strive the more by labor to recompense the loss of time passed; then in our spiritual harvest, which so far passeth the other, as the soul the body, how much need have we to see, whether we have this carking care to pretermitt none occasion of God's word, and to recompense that at one time, which we lose at another. And though he saith, Deale with thy servant; he doth not here boast of his service, but pleadeth for mercy. If a Nobleman should take us as vagabonds and rogues, or should rescue us out of prison, when we had any suite, we would crave mercy and favor, and not speak of our service, here is no presumption: so likewise, we being taken as stray sheep, and rescued from the prison of hell, if we cry, Lord deal with thy servant according to thy

mercy, we do show no presumption, but plead for mercy, and say, Seeing thou hast vouchsafed Lord to take me to thy service, consider with what enemies I have been oppressed, though I am not in all things a skillful servant, yet I am faithful to thee in affection, Lord therefore help me. The Papists then are destitute of God's Spirit, they see not this metaphor, that it is of such servants, who when they have done all things they can, yet think themselves unprofitable servants. His meaning then is: O Lord defend me from mine enemies, for my cause is in thy service.

—• **Verse. 125 - I am thy servant: grant me therefore understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.**

We see the Prophet of God never calleth into question the promises of God, although they were long suspended, but rather his own incredulity and unbelief, because he either did not so execute justice and judgment, as he ought to have done; or else believed not so thoroughly the covenants of God, and therefore desireth he to be taught in the statutes of the Lord, that he may further believe his covenants. For albeit he had executed judgment and justice, yet he was oppressed; though he waited on God's promises, yet they were not fulfilled: therefore he might have shrinked, had not the Lord taught him his statutes to strengthen his obedience, and exercised him in his covenants to confirm his faith.

His prayer is the selfsame, which in effect Christ taught his Disciples, commanding them to pray, Lord increase our faith; that is, Lord increase our faith in the assurance of our justification, according to thy statutes, in the feeling of our sanctification: according to thy covenants. So we see now, that as the man of God prayed before, for a further understanding of the statutes of the Lord, so here he prayeth for a further understanding of his testimonies. The Saints of God did never so brag of their gifts of knowledge

and faith, but that they still acknowledged and lamented in themselves the remnants of ignorance and incredulity, and desired the remedy of them by prayer.

This ought to be for our instruction, that though we be not conscious in ourselves of any gross disobedience, or palpable unbelief; yet we must pray for a further sight of the law, and finding our unbelief, we must crave of God that we may be more stayed in his promises. Perseverance is an excellent thing, especially when God's promises are delayed, and we in greatest danger, then is the sure trial both of our knowledge and faith. We are also taught here, that whatsoever good things we have, we have them not, as to lock them up in our possession, but seeing we may shrink away and make shipwreck both of faith and a good conscience, we must pray to have a greater knowledge of the statutes of the Lord, and a greater faith in his promises. And here is to be noted, how the Prophet desiring a greater knowledge of God's testimonies: he doth not so much desire any corporal relief against his enemies, as spiritual resistance against his unbelief, teaching us, that in peril we should especially crave the true understanding of God's will, that having gotten that, we may have all other things, as it shall please the Lord. Here we see a great difference betwixt the faith of God's children, and the presumption of the wicked: flesh and blood after long trial either cast off all well-doing, and persevering in obedience, or else labor to weaken our faith; but in God his children it must not so prevail, either to the staying of their obedience, or hindering of their faith. For flesh and blood in all troubles seek to be released from them, but God's children are taught to possess their souls in patience, and above all, crave that faith, which pleaseth God, and that obedience, which is most acceptable unto him.

This then is a token of a reverent faith in the testimonies of our God, when we call into question rather our obedience and faith, than God's promises and statutes, and when our consciences tell us, that we do not so much desire to be rid from our troubles, as that the rod of the wicked may not light upon us, either in rebelling against God's law, or in mistrusting his covenants. For as we have said, flesh and blood would rather be exempted from outward miseries, than to feel the comfort of God's promises. But we must have a jealousy of ourselves, and suspect our want of care herein, as they do, who never can content themselves in carking and caring, when they are to bring in the fruits of the whole year in their harvest.

Many would think, that this prayer of the man of God is superfluous, but if they truly knew their own decays of faith, and shrinking in obedience, they would not suspect this Psalm of any needless repetition, but would acknowledge, that it is the wonderful wisdom and goodness of God's Spirit, so to provide for our unbelief and disobedience. And as the holy ghost doth here set down the glass of regeneration, and teacheth us how to pray for the continuance of our obedience, and strength of faith: so we must so behold our corruptions therein, as from henceforth we may have a greater jealousy of ourselves in them both.

We learned in these two prayers, how contrary to the doctrine of the Sophisters, he craved knowledge not of desert or merit, but of grace and mercy. Where we are to remember, that when we are to crave of God any new mercy to be received, or perseverance in some mercy already received, we must say with the man of God, Deale with thy servant according unto thy mercy.

Now in that he doubled (as we may see) his request, he showeth the great necessity of it, and that the mystery of faith is great. This is a thing that

much deceiveth many, when we think that we have eyes, and can see into matters as far as other men; we have ears, and can hear as much as another man can do; we have as good wits and reason; we can conceive and judge of a thing as soon and as well as other men commonly do; Here is a great judgment of God, that we cannot acknowledge our dullness and deadness, and that we cannot attain unto the mighty power of the word as we ought to do; for want of this we become so fruitless in reading, and in hearing, because we cannot truly understand what we read or hear; we gather one thing here, and another thing there; we gather many things falsely, and often find fault with the delivery of the word, when the fault is in ourselves, in that we never suspect ourselves, our reason, nor judgment. The children of God must be jealous over their own affections, and must know that there is no such natural thing in them, but that all is the gift of God. We are here then to learn continually to pray, that our judgment may be enlightened with the true understanding of the word, and our affections renewed into the due obedience of the same. If we should see in how many things our reason erreth, and our affections waver in us, we should surely acknowledge, that there are no superfluities in this Psalm. For until we be fully acquainted with the dullness of our hearts, we shall not see our necessity in using the like prayers: but he that seeth the blindness of his mind, and corruptions of his heart, and desireth nothing more than to become a new man in Jesus Christ, and to learn nothing more than Jesus Christ crucified, howsoever others persuade themselves of more mystical knowledge, (without this, in truth, knowing nothing) he will count all other knowledge but loathsome, and as dung, in respect of the doctrine of regeneration: whereby he is become a new man in Christ. For it is a greater blessing where this knowledge doth abound, and other gifts are in less measure, than where this

is but small, though in many other gifts we do abound. For every man must not be learned, every man is not to travel in the profound mysteries of the Scriptures, but everyone had need to be humbled; and we being all destitute of grace, had need to be taught of God as children, that being spiritual we may judge ourselves, that the Lord will not judge us; and howsoever we think of ourselves now, when the Lord shall take from us the darkness of our hearts, and the mists of our affections, we shall espy our dullness and blindness to be very great.

—• **Verse. 126. - It is time for thee Lord to work: for they have destroyed thy law.**

After the man of God in the verses going before had prayed for himself, now he cometh to pray against his enemies, and after he had prayed for ease of his trouble, which he had amongst his enemies, when he himself in the meantime had deserved well of them, and had prayed that his knowledge might be ratified both in the law and Gospel of God; he now cometh, and showeth a reason why he would the Lord should so do with him, even because of the general flood of iniquity, and universal corruption both in religion and manners, as knowing that it was now high time to keep, and to be taught the statutes and testimonies of the Lord, to be confirmed both in obedience and faith, because happy were they that now could believe the law, and keep the covenants, when on no side one might find examples of the one or of the other. His meaning then briefly is this: O Lord, seeing there is no further place left for prayer for them, seeing I have executed judgment and justice even to the failing of mine eyes, seeing for all that I can do or say, they wax worse and worse, and whereas before they had some reverence of thy judgments, and now they are grown to the contempt and confounding of thy law, seeing mercy will not prevail with them, but

the longer thou bearest with them, the more they are hardened, but judgment must be used, it is time O Lord, to put to thy helping hand. The man of God we see breaketh not out suddenly into this prayer, but upon the great need which urged him thereunto.

We are here to learn first, that though at all seasons it be needful to pray, to be guided in the true understanding, and due obedience of God's word: yet then especially, when through the general floods of iniquity all without y t especial grace of God, all are like to be carried away. For as common and universal floods sweep all away before them with their swift and violent course: so in the common floods of corrupt religion and manners, every man thinks that the best religion, which most men do hold, and that those things are most lawful, which are most usual. But this is a peculiar and special grace of God, to be exempted from that general corruption, as was Enoch, who was preserved to walk before the Lord in that corrupt age; Noah reserved, when all flesh had corrupted his ways; and Lot who lived a just man even among the filthy Sodomites. If then we shall be preserved from corrupt religion, when religion is used but of custom, and not of conscience, when it is used coldly, and there is no heat in it; if when men's manners are generally become corrupt, so that there is no humility, no mercy, no pity, no chastity, no purity, no righteousness, no true dealing, no care of our neighbors credit; we can walk in the love of God, and obedience of his will, doubtless this is a special grace of God. In this sense the Prophet prayed on this sort: Therefore have I doubled my prayer, because I see so little help among men. I cannot see any good example to edify me, Lord help me: It is time for thee O Lord to work, for men have destroyed thy law. We see then how well this dependeth on that which goeth before. For in the

beginning of this Portion he prayed, that he might not be oppressed of his enemies, now he prayeth that his enemies might be suppressed.

At the first sight this would seem not to be a charitable kind of dealing, to pray against enemies, because love requireth that we should pray for our enemies: how then doth this agree with the rule of love? Or shall we think that the man of God did anything here against the law of charity? We have showed, that the children of God were never enkindled with wrath for their own cause, but for the breach of the law of God: so this man of God had no respect of himself, but of God's law: his cause was good, his persecutors cause was evil, he hurt them not, but labored by all means to overcome them with good, he did not for a while, but continued long in it; he was not weary of his well doing, but went forward, even to the very failing of his eyes, yea his eyes, as he saith in the last verse of Port. 7, gush out with tears, because their sins were so great; he sought peace, and ensued it, and yet he saw no amendment, but that they were worse and worse: wherefore, seeing their sin was past recovery, and that there was no ordinary help on earth, he prayeth God to deal with them from heaven. Neither doth he pray here for their confusion and utter perdition, as some may falsely think, but rather showeth, that it is now time, that the Lord should use some chastisement, that they may know that there was a God, and that they had broken the laws of God, that they might come to a sight and feeling of their sins, that they might be punished, if it were so the will of God, to their conversion, or at the least, that they might be no more a plague to the world, and a reproach to the word.

When our affections are mingled with our cause, we are to suspect ourselves; but otherwise when we have a good cause, and see that we have persevered in executing judgment and justice, and yet the iniquity of our

adversaries layeth itself so open, that it groweth desperate, then we may desire the Lord to take his cause into his own hand.

And here we are to observe, the Prophet saith, They have &c. where he noteth not any particular person, nor maketh mention of the destruction of any singular man, but useth a general rule; wherefore for our instruction, these rules are more diligently to be observed. First, we are to look that our cause be good, and our adversaries cause be evil. Secondly, that we be not incensed with anger, because we are contemned, but because God's word is despised, that is, that the cause why we pray against them be God's, and not ours. Thirdly, that we keep ourselves in well doing, and thereby heap coals of fire upon their head, that we bear them, even to the breaking of our backs. Fourthly, then, when we have used courteous admonitions, and by the ministry of the word, or Magistracy, if the matter so require, and may be obtained, have sought to turn them. Fifthly, when we have prayed for their amendment, and wept for their sins, and yet all these things will not serve, we may say as in a last refuge, Lord take the rod into thine hand, spare them not; always providing this, that we pray not against any particular person, but leave them to God's secret judgment. Thus we see here is no breach of charity.

But nowadays we may hereby see, men revenge rather their own affections, than defend God's glory. Wherefore when we have prayed ill against them, for whom we never prayed for good, I say to them, tremble and fear: for this is not the zeal of Elijah; this is not the zeal of David; it is a zeal of the flesh and not of the spirit, it will work their singular woe, unless they repent.

[It is time.] That man of God here teacheth God's children, that when God's law is destroyed, it is time for the Lord to wake. This every man may

confess: but blessed are they that can say in a good conscience, I have lived justly, I have used no ill against mine enemies, I have prayed for them, I have devoured many injuries at their hands, I never revenged.

Secondly, we are here to learn, that when the law of God is once brought into contempt, whether it be in a nation, in a country, in a city, or particular person, let that nation, country, city, or particular person know, that the wrath of God is not far off either to their amendment, or to their further and more speedy destruction. If we go through the doctrine of the Prophets, we shall see this to be true As first we may see in the first, second, third, sixth, seventh, and eight of Isaiah, the Prophet of God threateneth the Israelites, that because they came to worship of a custom, but lay still in their sins, because they were rebellious, given to pleasure, and contemners of the word, they should be led captive of the Assyrians, and denounceth many plagues against them, which all came to pass in the days of Ahaz, they were carried away captive, and were no more a people of seventy years after, as may appear Isaiah 6. And although God's children have their infirmities, and even they which are God's children by calling, may fall into gross sins: yet because there is in them no general falling from honesty, but they have in them a special care and fear of God's word, so that they love nothing more, they fear and tremble at nothing more than at it, though it may be in the mean time they fall into sin, yet they will not fall from sin to sin; surely the Lord will in time draw them out of their sins, and spare them from the common destruction, as he did here David, who though not this general contempt of the word, yet some sin he had. This is then in the children of God truly called, that although sometime more carnal than spiritual, and slide into many wants and infirmities, yet they fall not from one sin to another sin; but they tremble being rebuked by the word, they esteem

reverently of the prayers of the faithful, they think highly of the Sacraments used in the congregation, and are obedient to all discipline of the Church: in these there is great hope that they shall be reclaimed from sin, and exempted from the punishment of the same. But when we join sin with sin, and draw sin to us as it were with cart-ropes, when we contemn true religion, when we pray in custom, and care not for the Sacraments, when we make no account of the discipline of the Church, then the Lord will surely punish us.

Let us now look into particular examples: we shall see in many places of the Scriptures, that the Lord rendereth this reason of his coming to vengeance, even because his word was forlorn. As Gen. 6, where we may see that after they had begun to corrupt religion, as in the last verse of the fourth chapter of Genesis appeareth, and thereby they begun to mix themselves in corrupt marriage, and after sin had grown to such perfection, when not a few, but almost all men; not in a few things, but in all things; not at one time, but at all times, even then in this general flood of iniquity, the Lord threatened to send a general flood of destruction. And as this is apparent in the whole world, now let us see it in more particular places and persons. The Lord complaineth, Genesis 18, that the sins of Sodom and Gomorrah cried out to heaven for judgment, where sin was so high, that there was no difference between Magistrate and subject, like people like priest, all were defiled, then came fire and brimstone from heaven.

To come yet to more particular judgments, if we look into the commonwealths of Judah and Israel, whether when they lived under their Judges, or under their Kings, we shall find that before they were punished, mention is made either of their idolatry and corrupting of religion, or of their unthankfulness and like corrupt manners. When the land was divided

into Judah and Israel, we shall read, 2 King. 17, that notwithstanding the Lord testified to Judah and to Israel, by all the Prophets, and by all the Seers, that they should turn from their Idolatry, and keep his statutes, they, for the contempt of the word, were taken prisoners of the Assyrians. Likewise 2 Chron. 36:17, we may read, that though Israel fell, yet Judah was not amended, and though the Lord showed compassion upon it in sending his Prophets, yet Judah contemned their admonitions, and when there could be no remedy, the wrath of the Lord waxed hot against them, and they were carried captive to Babel: so that we see ere the Lord purposeth a general sweeping away, he setteth not down simple sins, one or two sins, but linked and chained sins, the contempt of his religion, the mocking of his Prophets and Preachers. As this is true in the destruction of societies, so is it also true in the overthrow of private persons. And although we may see out of the word several denunciations of several plagues to several persons, yet we may learn it even in our common proverb; There is no goodness in him, he will come to naught; he is a common malefactor, he will come to some shame; he is so common and usual a sinner, that there will some plague light on him. The servants of Nabal told Abigail their Mistress that he railed on them, and they added, that evil luck would come upon their master, and upon all his family: for he was so wicked that a man could not speak to him, and indeed he lived not long after. So if we look into Pharaoh, or into Saul, 1 Chron. 10, we shall see the pride of their sins went before the height of their punishments.

This doctrine is seen easily in other men and confessed of all, but in the meantime, few profit little by it in themselves. We have great eyes to see other men's sins, but we scarce will see our own at all. We have many eyes to spy a hole in another man's coat, but we can hardly have an eye to see

them in our own. We can see the mote in another man's eyes, but we leave beams in our own: we make mountains of other men's faults, but we think our own scarcely to be molehills. But God's children are most studious in judging themselves, although all the world besides lay nothing to their charge: but this thing much deceiveth us, we think we are not the worse kind of people, and think there are worse than we are, because as yet we are unspied and spared. But shall we think that the whole world, that Sodom, Judah and Israel, that Saul and Pharaoh were at the first at the height of their sins, but that rather they grew by little and little as by degrees, and after one sin followed many sins, and after few sins a great number of sins, which being joined with the rest moved the Lord to vengeance. This then deceiveth us, that we compare ourselves with the worst, and herein appeareth our madness, and we show ourselves to be brainsick, that we do not perceive our sins at the first, but by falling from one sin to many, from small to great, at the length we become hardened. It may be thou doest not dispraise the word of God: but thou esteemest not so reverently of it, as thou shouldest do: thou wilt not speak ill of the Sacraments, but thou hast little care whether thou use them or no: thou wilt not despise the Prayers of the Church, but thou makest no conscience of them: thou darest not speak against discipline, but thou doest lightly esteem it: thou art not yet at the height of sin, but thou canst commit one sin after another, and yet not be grieved. But let us know, that they were not at the first in the highest degree of sin, but stepped from few sins to make no conscience of many sins, and from petty sins, they brast out into gross sins: Wherefore God's children judge themselves severely, and secretly; they have rather particular sins than universal; they strive against their sins, they love religion, and maintain the favorers of it; they hope to recover themselves by grace in

Christ. But if by security the love of God's word, the liking of prayer, the delighting in the Sacraments, the care of discipline be stolen out of our hearts; if we can now swear, that could sometimes not suffer an oath; if we can now be content to hear the word with sleeping, which were wont to receive it with tears; if we can now profane the Sabbath, which could not abide to break it: if these degrees creep into us, let us fear ourselves, sin will deceive us, and deceiving us will harden us; sin will make fat our hearts that we shall not perceive it, it will blind our minds, that we cannot see it. This is then the wisdom of God's children, not to tarry whilst their sins be great, but to strive against the least, to esteem of the word as of the ordinance of God to salvation, to think of the house of God as of their paradise or inheritance, which if we could feel, undoubtedly the Lord would give greater blessings upon the preachers, and greater graces to the hearers. But if we pray of custom, without a feeling of our wants, and sorrow of our sins, if we have no love of the Sacraments, no care of discipline, if our hearts be hardened, all is not well either some judgment of God is at hand, or else we are to fear to be cast into some heresy or such like evil.

I find that after Isaiah had prophesied a long time, The Lord God who would not have his name blasphemed, seeing no amendment in his people comes with a greater majesty, and bids the prophet Isaiah 6, to tell them that they should hear, but not understand, they should plainly see, but not perceive: he commandeth him moreover, to make their hearts fat, to make their ears heavy, and to shut their eyes, least they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears and understand with their hearts: And because they would not make the word of God the savor of life unto life, it should be unto them the savor of death unto death. As this is especially meant of the ungodly: yet surely the godly escaped not but by repentance. It is the

wisdom of God to use all means, and then to use destruction when his word will not serve. We may be comforted even at this day: that the Lord yet giveth a scattering of his people, and giveth us some good ministers and magistrates: but if we consider of the Lord's long suffering of us, of the peace, abundance and many other graces bestowed on us, and yet so small amendment; we trust for the remnants sake, that the general judgment of God shall not as yet come upon us: yet this sore saying should make us afraid, it is time for thee Lord, to put to thine hand, &c. This may be much for the comfort of God's children, and for the discomfort of the wicked.

—• **Verse. 127. - Therefore love I thy commandments above gold, yea, above most fine gold.**

Mark here the spirit of the man of God. Do we not see that this is a common rate, the less religion is esteemed, the less it is of the most regarded; the greater the corruption of manners is, the greater is the folly: then this is a rare blessing of God, when religion is in every place hated, even then to love religion; when manners are everywhere corrupted, even then to be of good conversation. When in our time then we see so many kinds of religion, as papistry, the sect of the Jesuits, the family of love, Anabaptists and such like, it is a singular grace of God, to be established in the love of true religion: When we look into their manners, whether we turn us to Magistrates or subjects, we shall neither find zealous government, nor faithful obedience. If we lived in a heaven among Angels, or in a paradise with Saints, and would defile ourselves with sin, we were worthy to be cast out of Paradise with Adam, and out of the Church with Cain. But to live with Noah uprightly, and to walk before God with him, when all flesh hath corrupted his ways; or to live justly with Lot in the midst of filthy Sodomites; or to keep a pure religion or worship of God with Elias, when

not one can be found that hath not bowed to Baal; or to live in keeping judgment and justice with David, where are so many oppressors of the truth: to have in this case an heart upright both in religion and manners, oh consider this to be an especial work of grace.

This we may also see both by natural and civil reason: we see the more general and contagious a disease is, the greater care we use to watch over our health; and the greater mercy of God we count it if we be not infected with the rest: and shall we not judge the same in spiritual and more heavenly matters, that the more hot sin groweth to be, and like to overrun all, shall we not grow the more zealous of the salvation of our souls, and think it the rarer grace of God, if we being subject to the common sins are preserved from them? In civil matters do we not see, that now deceit in buying and selling, unfaithfulness in bargaining is so great, every man is circumspect to discern ill dealings, every man almost is become a lawyer, no man is ignorant of the common shifts of the world; yet this maketh not men therefore to give over their deeds, but they make their deeds more sure: neither doth deceitful dealing keep them the more from markets and fairs, but men are more careful in their bargaining. Do we love the Church then, though there be so many corruptions of religion, and so many corruptions of manners? Let us be more afraid of ourselves, and more careful of the word, and heedy in our lives, than we have been: let us listen to the word, before the Lord hath sealed up the prophecy, lest the wicked prevail, and the just man make himself a pray. Now is the time to repent, it may be that the Lord will mitigate his judgments, when they fall, and will make his punishment particular and easier. For then we truly fear the public judgments of God, when we fear the cause of them in ourselves, when we carry not for the height of sin, but submit ourselves with reverence to all means of true

religion and godly life, and speedily judge ourselves for not looking to the least occasion of sin, watching over our souls, that we become not remiss, or with looser conscience of prayer, the word, sacraments, or discipline. And as it is a secret judgment of God to pass from one sin to another, without any remorse of conscience, until we come to the contempt of the word: so it is a special grace of God to be grieved with sin in the beginning. And surely that so many are given to ill works and so few to good, it is a manifest token, seeing the word will not move us to be zealous that the Lord will shortly send a judgment upon us, if not general, yet at the least particular.

This then is worthy noting in the man of God; that the more religion decayed, the more religious was he; the more godliness departed, the more godly was he: which is a thing far contrary to our practices, who allow that which most do; and love that least, which most do like, making other men's examples placards for our sins. For many will say: how I pray, liveth such a man, how doth he? Doth not he live an honest life? Can I follow a better man? We must not do as other men do, but as the Lord commandeth by his word.

Let this then be a sure rule whereby every man may examine himself: if the more religion and manners decay, thou art the more religious and godly, thou shalt not be carried away with the common destruction: but if thy zeal and care of godliness be the less, then fear, unless thou repent, as thou art wrapped in the common sin, thou shalt also be taken in the common reward of sin.

Now that corruptions may not prevail against us, we must think there is as great contrariety between us and others, as is between light and darkness, God and the devil. But if we begin to be in mammering of Religion, and

know not what to hold, but waver in all, it is to be doubted, that we shall be partakers of the common punishment.

Let us learn then to shut up our faith within the compass of Noah his Ark, and not commit it to the broad waters of the wicked world. To this end said our Savior Christ, When the Son of man shall come, where shall he find faith in the earth? As though he should say, it would be a hard matter to find faith amongst men. We see in this man of God, if we will esteem aright of the law of God, we must love it above gold.

—• **Verse. 128. - I esteem all thy precepts most just, and hate all false ways.**

He showeth, that there is no sound love of good things, where there is not a hatred of evil. We shall see this by experience, he that loveth to keep the Sabbath, he will hate a profane breaker of the Sabbath: he that loveth chastity will abhor adultery; he that loveth true dealing, hateth all unrighteousness; and surely if we do not in truth love good and hate evil, but be found to halt in hypocrisy, we shall in time be discovered, and one day taken in a trip. In that he useth emphatically, I esteem all thy precepts, he declareth that he loved not one or two, but all the commandments. His meaning then is this: O Lord, there is not one of the least of thy commandments, but I esteem it: there is not one way of falsehood but I abhor it. Now we are to learn not to esteem well of one commandment, which our nature best liketh, and to dispense with another, but true Christianity esteemeth all alike, and even that most, which by nature we are most ready to break.

PORTION. 17.

—• **Verse. 129. - Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them.**

The self-same argument is here continued, which he used before. For he partly prayeth for graces, and partly showeth what graces he hath received: in the first, second, third and last verses of this Portion, he showeth his graces, in the other he prayeth for graces. As we see the self-same argument, so we see a new reason. Thy testimonies (saith he) are wonderful; i.e., thy law hath in it such mysteries, as natural men cannot reach them, and therefore love I thy law. As if he should have said: Lord, what is the cause, that men do so basely esteem of the greatness of thy covenants, why do men so little regard it? Because they never tasted the excellency of it, they never felt the wonderful and powerful majesty thereof. Why do I lay them up as my soul? Because in my soul I have felt by thy word such wisdom, as eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, nor reason able to conceive. And why I pray you, in our times do so few conceive, or conceiving, do keep and so esteem of the word of God? Because the wise men of the world think it a thing very easy, and they can conceive it when they list, and the more common sort of people make no more account of it, than to give it the hearing, and that with their natural wit, and reason only.

Some men may think I speak much against men's wits, but all men may see, that that is a mystery which cannot be conceived by reason, and that if it be a thing which by wit and reason may be conceived and attained, that it is no mystery. This is the reason why coming to the word, we must have new eyes to see spiritually, new ears to discern, new hearts to conceive.

—• **Verse. 130. - The entrance into thy word showeth light, and giveth understanding to the simple.**

This is no painted wisdom, yet the simplicity of the word is of more glory and pomp, than all the wisdom of the world besides. Wherefore Paul, Ephes. 3, prayed that the Ephesians might according to the riches of God's glory, receive strength by his spirit in the inner man, to comprehend the breadth and height and length and depth of this our Savior Christ speaking to Peter of this mystery attained to by faith, saith, Flesh and blood hath not revealed this unto thee, but the Spirit. And in Matth. 13:11, where our Savior Christ spake in Parables, he said, Because it is given to you to know the secrets of the kingdom of Heaven, but to them it is not given. Many may have the word of God strike their ears, they may have an human conceiving of it, but few have the right and spiritual understanding of it.

When we come then in fear and trembling to hear the word, as knowing that of ourselves we can never understand the word, but must crave of God by prayer, to be given us by his holy Spirit, who as he was the author in giving it, so he is also the causer of conceiving it, we are sure we shall understand. There is a hearing of the letter and a hearing of the Spirit. Why then have we so little judgment and cold affections in hearing and reading, but because we hear and read so malapertly, and are not thoroughly and truly persuaded of the majesty thereof? The Lord is delighted with the soul that is humbled, and refuseth the purpose of the proud. For what is the cause that so many run into heresy; but because they are proud in their own conceits? On the contrary, if we had this humbled mind, we should not be so senseless in conceiving, nor so soon carried away with the floods and tempests of corrupt doctrine.

In that he saith, My soul doth keep them, his meaning is, that therefore he laid up the precepts of God in his heart, that he might have them in a

readiness when he should practice them, as he saith portion 2:3. I have hid thy promise in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.

The soul is the seat of affections, for he saith, that he had the statutes of the Lord in his affections. The seat of divinity is the heart, wherefore the Scriptures use so often to say, the heart of man is corrupt, the Lord searcheth the heart, the foolish man hath said in his heart. For though the Philosophers said, that the mind was the seat of knowledge, yet they could never see, that the heart is the seat of Christian religion. Which if it were in our mind, we should surely be puffed up with it, as we are with knowledge. Here is then a trial of our hearts. I see many labor after knowledge, but few after affections. This in temptation will not help, until both knowledge and affections be on our sides to resist, so that which we have in knowledge, may also be in affections. For though we may learn it, and commend it for a while; yet surely we shall have no profit by it in temptation. When we have none other seat for divinity, but our heart, and do not place it in our brain, and when we have thoroughly set our affections on it, our life though it should be taken from us, yet our soul would stick to the thing whereon our affections are so earnestly set. So Jonathan's heart was said to be knit to David: wherefore let us labor to say with the Virgin Mary, My soul doth magnify the Lord, my spirit rejoiceth in God my Savior.

Thy testimonies are wonderful: Hereof say the Papists that the word of God being mystical, should not be taught to the common sort of people, and the common people say themselves: what will ye have us do with the word of God? What should simple men meddle with it? We are not like the learned, it is for you, it is for you that are learned, not for us. The holy ghost here most fitly provideth against the Papists and the common people Let us know then this, that a simple man of the country, though at the first he be

not so capable, yet offering and submitting his heart and whole reason to the Lord, and his word, he shall afterward attain to great knowledge.

They are wonderful then to human wit, and reason not sanctified, and the more wise men wander in the skies, and hover aloft in vain conceits, and yet have not learned Christ Jesus crucified, have nothing in them, when as poor simple people desirous to be taught, do understand wonderful things. The Prophet saith, Psalm 78. Hear my word O my people, &c. I will open my mouth in a parable &c. and he addeth afterward, we will not hide them from their children. He calleth them high speeches, and dark sentences to man's capacity; but God's people can understand them: they are hidden to them that trust too much to their own reason and are revealed unto them that renounce their own reason.

Mark here he saith: the very entrance into thy statutes. Will then the beginning give understanding? What will it do to them that are gone forward in it? What hindereth us, why we go forward no more? But even the too much trusting to our own wits. What? Have we such wits in outward matters, and are so gross in matters concerning our salvation? Oh hypocrites saith our Savior Christ, you can discern the outward seasons, &c. What meaneth then this dullness and deadness in heavenly things, but that men deceive their own souls. For if their wits were sanctified, they would as well conceive spiritual things, as corporal. To do ill, saith Jeremie, this people is wise, but to do good they have no wit. What a curse of God upon our wits is this, that we are so quick in worldly things, and so dull in heavenly things? Surely, it is the punishment of the Lord, for the pride of man's reason.

The meaning then of this place is not, that they which are altogether bereaved of discretion, have such a light in the word; but it is understood of

them, who being lowly in their own eyes, abase their pride of wit to the pure wisdom of God's spirit; so that neither the simplicity of the baser sort is any hindrance to the gospel, neither the wisdom of the mighty anything availeth thereunto, unless it be sanctified, howsoever men brag of a holy foolishness. For Joseph, Job, David and Daniel had good wits, but sanctified, and subject by God's spirit to the word.

We are then to learn by the things which we have spoken, that no man hateth sin with a godly zeal in another, but he first hated it in himself: we must cast the first stone at ourselves. True it is, that we cannot avoid all ill ways, yet we must hate one evil way as well as another, and though we cannot do all good things, yet we must love one commandment as well as another. This then is that which the Lord requireth, even to hear all his commandments alike.

Again, so much we profit by the word the more, when we must esteem of those things, against which our reason doth most resist, and our affections most fight. We showed also out of the 129th verse, that the Prophets meaning was not, that there were some profound mysteries in the word; but that all were mysteries, what thing soever therein contained. We showed that the man of God did not place the word in his understanding only, but also in his heart and affections. We must labor to join judgment and affection, for in trouble, if affection be not joined with judgment, judgment will not help, because affections rebel, and we shall find such a conflict, that we will say we have labored too much in judgment, and too little in affections. When then in temptation we shall not only have judgment, but also affection on our side, we shall be able the better to encounter with it. In things commanded a special mean to embrace them is, to travail as well with affection as with judgment: in things forbidden these two joined

together, will make us the better to avoid them. Wherefore it is good for a man thus to try himself: Lord give me a sight of my former estate, why did I not according to knowledge? Why did I so little profit, either in particular duties, or in particular troubles? Surely I never labored so after my affections, as after judgments, I laid up thy word more in my mind, than in my heart.

—• **Verse. 131. - I opened my mouth and panted because I loved thy commandments.**

Some would think this zeal to be madness, because they had never such feelings nor affections. But what saith this man of God more of himself? He saith, that with his feet he walked in the law of God, his eyes look to it, his hands were lift up, his spirit panted, and as a man being weary gapeth to take breath, and swalloweth up the air: so the Prophet in the weariness of his troubles, swallowed up the word of God. O hungry soul which the Lord did satisfy, and with his word alone could comfort. The metaphor is taken from wearied and panting Hinds, which after long pursuing and chasing was very dry through heat, and desire nothing more than the water brooks. So that as he chased Hart longeth after the waters, so his thirsty soul desired nothing more than to be satisfied with the word.

This Psalm is given us by God's blessing to remove us from our dullness, and to teach us that we should not labor more after knowledge, that after affection; why then profit we no more in the word? There is little hunger in us; much prejudice doth hurt us, we examine not ourselves at midnight, we are not humbled, we thirst not, we pant not. All God's promises are chiefly made to them that hunger after them it is said, Pro. 2:4. It thou seekest knowledge as silver, and searchest for her as for treasure. 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, &c. Here we see the holy ghost calleth the

word a treasure, that is hid and showeth how we must seek and search for it. Awake then your affections, awake your affections, behold here the blessing of God, he will bless idiots, and satisfy the hungry souls. The Lord requireth nothing of us, but to mistrust our reason: and to suspect our affections but to be teachable in spirit, to hunger in heart, and thirstingly to long after his word, which if we shall do, we shall receive increase of knowledge, and amendment of life. For to them, that as meek scholars will be taught of God's spirit, and submit their reason to the simplicity of the word, the Lord saith, Matth. 5. Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that hunger and thirst for righteousness for they shall be filled.

But here may seem to man's reason a great repugnance, to the verse a foregoing. The entrance into thy word showeth light and giveth understanding to the simple. For he had showed in the verse going before, that the testimonies of the Lord were wonderful, not in part; but meaning that all therein was mystical: and here he saith that the very entrance into God's word giveth light, and understanding to the simple. We answer that the law, or especially the second table of it may be conceived by reason: but it is nothing so in the doctrine of faith, which is here meant in this word testimonies, which we showed to be taken for the covenants of God. The doctors of reason, I mean the papists, say the word is not to be taught to the common people, because it is mystical; but they never knew, not by good experience felt, that the Scriptures of God were easy to them, that would submit themselves to them, and use them familiarly. Others indeed may read, see, and hear them: but they shall be as Parables and enigmatical unto them. If then we did see this aright, that that which the wisest man cannot conceive, the simplest souls may attain to, if they will be taught of God,

would it not take up our affections? This made our Savior Christ say: I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so O Father, was it thy good will and pleasure: As if our Savior Christ should have said, O Lord, I see the wise men have great conceiving's, and yet they attain not to thy word; yet to them that are humble and poor of spirit, I see thou makest it known. Did our Savior Christ give thanks for this thing, and shall not we for whose example these things were done? We can give thanks for our wits, and for our memories: but what is that to the purpose? Our wit may rather hinder us, than further us in the true knowledge of the Lord, unless it be humbled and subject to God's spirit. But here is a great cause of thankfulness, that the simple shall understand these mysteries, not as we showed before, such as have no conceiving at all, but such as acknowledge their simplicity, and hunger after the word: even as we also grant, that wisemen shall have this understanding, if they will deny their reason, and stir up affection. For as all wise men shall not be debarred from this privilege; so all simple men shall not be preferred thereunto. For neither wisdom in itself, nor simplicity in its own nature, do either further or hinder hereunto But alas, I see how loath men would be, to lose their worldly wit, and how they seek after praise and commendation for the same; but few, either with like affection desire spiritual understanding; or sorrow, in any like measure, when they have it not. Deut. 4:6. That is your understanding and wisdom in the sight of the people saith A Moses, That the Lord permitteth you so near to approach to him, and to be taught his ordinances and laws. What then mean these speeches of them, that hunt so much after worldly wit? Why, do you think I am a fool? Do you think I am an asse, and have no wit to conceive what things be, as well as other men?

Do you count me but a dull head? Surely they are too proud, and too much blinded in their own conceits. Wherefore the Prophet doth show us, that as the mysteries of God's word are revealed to them that are simple of understanding; so are they to them that are zealous in affection. The cause then why we do no more profit by the word, is because we do not deny our reason, we have not affections that hunger after it, nor love to make us pant for it, which things if we did, we should surely be satisfied.

Indeed the Lord giveth understanding to whom he pleaseth, and where he purposeth to bestow so great a blessing, he giveth grace also more abundantly to subdue their reason. And as simplicity cannot of itself be a cause of spiritual understanding, but as it sooner bringeth us to a sight of our wants, and maketh us the more to long after God's word; so wisdom is no cause of hindrance, but as we resting too much in the fear of reason, cannot easily be brought to the simplicity of God's word. And if the entrance, rudiments and principles of religion give such knowledge, and the very catechisms yield such understanding, what is to be hoped for, when we attain to riper knowledge, when we have more understanding, when we have more affections? Well, let us then examine our own hearts herein: when we begun, were we delighted with understanding, and did our understanding move in us such affections, and in our proceedings, is our understanding less, and our affections fewer, or do we not think still of our ignorance, and desire to have our judgment clearer? We are in a dangerous estate, we must suspect ourselves. Satan will bewitch us, and tell us that this is a paradox, that after so long hearing and reading we should still be ignorant, and that still we have need to hunger after the word. It is therefore the great mercy of God, that to the receiving of so singular a benefit, he requireth nothing of us, but the acknowledging of our ignorance, and

bewailing of our wants. He would, that we should still put ourselves in mind of this one thing, that though we have not this understanding in the highest degree, or in a hundred-fold; yet we must have it in some degrees, either in threescore fold, or in thirty-fold: we must vex, grieve and trouble ourselves for this affection. For where it is, the heart is a liberal and free ruler of our affections; and where it is not, we must learn to lay violent hands even on our affections. We are to show that which we omitted in the latter end of the verse going before; Because I loved thy law, &c. Here the prophet showeth, that the love which he did bear to God's law, was so great, that it could not satisfy him, but still he thirsted after it, and thirsting, did pant.

Love, as we say, always setteth a price of things, nothing is too dear, no travail is too much, no pain seemeth too great, for the thing which we love; we set a great price on things which are loved.

So then, if we make our love of the word, and make our price on it, we shall think no pains sufficient, no travel enough to attain unto it: and on the contrary, if our love be little and small to the word, we shall find it to be the cause, why we set so little a price on it. For if our love be in any measure, it will draw on our affections; but when we have lost our love, no marvel though we have so barren feelings. If then we will have any true trial of our love, let us see, if with the man of God, we can open our mouth and pant. Now, if we think, that in others it is reproveable, that they have lost their former heat, and broken their first love; and we see the holy Ghost reprehendeth the Nicolaitans, and that they be fault worthy, who neither be hot nor cold, whom the Lord protesteth to spew out of his mouth, as he threateneth the Laodiceans; and shall we think the self-same things not too reproveable, or blame worthy in ourselves? Wherefore when we feel such

coldness in affection, such luke-warmness in love, we must earnestly strive and labor in prayer against them. For where there is no fervency, there is no love in truth: and if we do anything drowsily, it is an argument our love is cooled, and we are to suspect the deadness and dullness of our affections. So that this may be the brief sense of the man of God; Because I desired to have my love satisfied, I panted.

If we look into that heavenly and spiritual Song of Solomon, wherein is set down both the pure love of Christ to his Church, and the ardent affection of the Church to Christ her spouse, we shall be ashamed of the want of our affections, the want whereof doth breed the want of love.

—• **Verse. 132. - Look upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.**

Here the man of God continueth to show his love, in that nothing can satisfy him, in making his petitions, saying: O Lord regard me, look upon me thy servant, not according to thy justice, but in dealing mercifully with thy servant. We are peradventure accustomed to this prayer, and we sometime happily have this affection, yet we do it not with the Prophet, to the panting of our hearts, or opening of our mouths. We desire the Lord to be good and merciful to us, because we are in some misery and distress, not that we have any desire to see the glory of God advanced, in the accomplishment of his promises Let us see then whether we have this affection of the Prophet in us or no. Why do we pray for favor and mercy at the hand of God? Because of his promise. This is something; but we ought to do it, because we love the word: If our prayers, as we have said before, could pierce the skies with their shrillness, if they were so eloquent, as all men were delighted with them; yet they find no grace nor favor before the throne of God, unless they being grounded on the promises of God, grow

from a love of his word. Thus we see, how first he proved his love to the word, in that he opened his mouth and panted, and after he desireth, that his love might be satisfied.

We must first see this in judgment, and after be ashamed of ourselves. We marvel why we go on in love and affection so little; why we pray so much, and obtain so little; we think, we persuade ourselves, to have asked much of the Lord; yea, but not aright. For we must so crave of the Lord to look upon us, that if he should look from us, we should hold ourselves to be most miserable. The young Ravens crave of the Lord when they are hungry, the Lions yell and roar for food, and both the croaking of the Ravens, and yelling of the Lions is satisfied with meat. If the Lord so dealeth with these, which are more inferior creatures than man, much more will he do it to us, if we with like affection shall crave it. If the Lord then look not on us, and be merciful unto us, we are gone, and then we are to show our longing to his mercy, and to ease our hearts with prayer, according to the example prescribed unto us of the Prophet.

When then we have griefs, we languish away with them, and martyr ourselves; we bite upon the hard bridle; but here we must have our remedy, even by laying ourselves open, in God his bosom: we are not to pine and consume away with them, but to lay them down in the lap of the Lord.

Why do so few good motions come unto us? Or when they come, why fleet they so soon away? Even because we cherish them not, nor give them good entertainment, because we change not our motions into prayer, but put them to silence, and smother them by other roving cogitations.

[And be merciful unto me.] We see the man of God still desireth mercy. This is all that he esteemeth of, this is the thing which we must always

covet, and coveting this, we may leave all other things according to God's pleasure.

[As to them that love thy name, &c.] It might seem that he had merited, and by desert might have challenged the grant of his prayer: but he still cried for mercy, and craves nothing of merits. We see then the papists are carnal having proud spirits, for although the Prophet had executed judgment and justice, he sueth for mercy. He desireth the Lord to renew his graces in him, that he might also renew his mercy towards him.

This doctrine is manifest in the second commandment, where the Lord saith; I will have mercy upon thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments: Mark, he saith not, that he will reward them that are truly zealous in the worshipping of him, but he saith, that he will show mercy unto them. For it is both the mercy of God, that we have grace to do the will of God in our first beginnings; it is the mercy of God, that we have grace to continue in doing his will in our after proceedings.

This is a comfortable doctrine, when we remember that the rarest and dearest servants of God did renew the mercies of the Lord towards them, by craving that his graces might be renewed in them. Mercy it is that moveth God, to begin any grace in us, it is mercy to continue us in grace, it is mercy that he crowneth his gifts in us. When the Lord then will bestow any merciful thing upon us, he preventeth us by bestowing also some grace upon us. For if we respect ourselves, we are so far from any right challenging of any new grace or mercy to be given us, that we are most worthy to be deprived of the old graces already received.

[As thou usest to do to them that love thy name, &c.] The words in their proper tongue signify thus much: According to thy judgements, which thou doest execute to them that love thy name, according to that in the fourth

verse of the seventh portion. I remember thy judgments of old O Lord, and have been comforted. His meaning therefore in these former words, is not fully expressed. Here we may learn, the necessary use of this word, and how needful a thing it is, and how special a gift it is of God his wisdom, rightly to discern and distinguish the words.

Judgments as we have often foreshowed, is taken either for executing the threatening's of the Lord denounced in wrath and in desert: or else for the performance of his promises, made in compassion and of mercy. His meaning briefly is: be merciful in judging me, as thou art wont to judge thy servants, let me have judgment in mercy, and enter not into the judgment of my sins, for no flesh then shall be saved, and deal with me, as with thy dear servant. If we be guilty of our own crosses, we must acknowledge our sins, as the just causes thereof, for never any of the children of God obtained mercy without this. We are then in trouble to look to the promises of God, if we by faith can find the like testimony of a good conscience: but when we see our sins to be the cause of our troubles, or that it is the Lord his hand of justice upon us, we cannot in truth use this prayer of the Prophet. There is a judgment in righteousness, and there is a judgment in mercy. Of the first the man of God speaketh when he saith, Enter not into judgment, &c. the judgment in righteousness: of the second the Prophet Jeremiah speaketh, Correct me, O Lord, yet in judgment. that is, in the judgment of mercy and fatherly correction. And because we fail for the most part, either in our outward actions or inward affections, we had need to pray, that the Lord would deal with us according to his merciful judgment. True it is, that the Saints of God do say, O God of my righteousness, O God of my salvation: but that is to be understood in respect of men, and not in respect of God: but they that come with their case to be judged and pleaded before God, must

needs say, Lord be merciful to thy servants. We must never draw near then in prayer before the Lord, without this clause, that the Lord would accept us, in Christ his obedience, and that we doubt not of mercy, when the Lord judgeth us in his Christ. (Mic. 7:7)

Here we are to observe, how the Prophet maketh an experience of the Lord his dealing, and thus reasoneth with him: I see thou Lord dealest mercifully with them that love thee: but I love thee: therefore Lord deal mercifully with me. This deceiveth many: we read not the word of God for imitation, or as thinking that those affections which we read to have been in the children of God are to be required in and of us also; but let us know, that whatsoever have been the strangest and rarest affections of God his children, they are for us to follow. For though we cannot attain to them in the like measure that this man of God, because we will not deny, that he had a greater measure of God's spirit than we have; yet we must by using the like means attain to some measure, if not a hundred-fold, yet threescore and thirty-fold. Now we see, that he having obtained the like graces with God his people, craveth here the like mercies with them. For his sense is evident: as thou diddest not make a covenant with thy servants after their sins, but according to thy mercy, even so Lord deal with me. Here is no special thing mentioned, but he setteth down that, which hath been, and may be in the children of God. He prayeth not for any special mercy then, but for that mercy, which by experience he hath seen ratified in others: likewise he speaketh not here of any extraordinary graces of God his holy spirit, but of them which are ordinary and incident to any one of God his children as to another, although not in like measure. And surely we have not the like mercies with them, because we have not the like graces that they had. To love the word of God as gold, to gape after it, to breath and pant for it, are

singular gifts of God, but given to none in that time, with such special prerogative, as they may not in some measure be given to the Saints of God in our time, if we so loved the Lord. For that which the Apostle Peter said of them, that feared the Lord, to wit the Lord hath no respect of persons, but they that feared the Lord are accepted: the same the Prophet speaketh here in effect of them that love the Lord. For when the promises are general in pronouncing, we must make them particular by a several applying of then to ourselves. Let us then be ashamed of ourselves for our wants of love. The Lord hath not granted unto others, nor denied unto us any special privileges, as they thought among the Papists, who in their readings had wont to admire much at the Saints of God, and to follow them but little. The Lord's hand is not shortened, that he can less help us, than he hath in times past our forefathers; neither is his mercy less, that he will not help us: for his is the kingdom, his is the power, his is the glory forever: but our sins, as saith the Prophet, have made a partition, and a divorcement between the Lord and us, our love is less, our sins are greater, than they were in our forefathers. Let this comfort us, the man of God here prayeth not for any extraordinary mercy. For as the love of God to us ward is common with other of his children, in like manner our love to God's word must be common with them, and if we have the like graces with them we shall obtain the like mercies with them. For in the substance of salvation, if we have faith, the Lord will deal with us according as he dealt with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the Prophets and Apostles. Wherefore the Lord, as we said a little before, hath set down his promises in general words, which we must derive by faith, as particular and proper to ourselves. Now if we had this sealed in our hearts, that they were never confounded nor deceived which put their trust in the Lord, we should be assured, that his arm is not

shortened, he is as able to reach it out unto us as ever he was before, if only, we will believe and say with the Prophet of God, Amen.

We must take heed, that we suffer not as ill doers, and that the Lord find us not lying in some sins: for then we cannot in truth use the Prophets prayer for the like mercies, in that we have not with the Prophet the like graces. If we then fall in unbelief, or in time of trouble possess not our souls in patience, let us not hope for this mercy: but if in a right cause, we have walked uprightly under hope of the like grace, we may pray for the like mercy.

[That love thy name.] Whatsoever love he had to God, he would not express it by showing it to the Lord, but by testifying it to his word. The name of every person or thing serveth especially as we know, to make them known to us, and to discern them from other in that kind. So is it in the name of the Lord, whose name is set down to us Exod. 33, and 34, by the Lord himself speaking to Moses, The Lord passed before his face, and cried, the Lord, the Lord, strong, merciful and gracious, &c. We see what is the name of the Lord, the eternity, wisdom, power, strength, and goodness of the Lord: for all these things abide in him, and spring from him to his creatures as from a fountain.

Now, in that these things cannot be known but by the word, whatsoever love we show to God, we must testify it by obedience to his word. For in that he is in all these things so infinite, he showeth us in the second Commandment, that no Idol can express his wisdom, power, love and justice, but his word alone, which is the glass wherein alone whilst we are in this life we see the face of the Lord. Seeing then the word doth make his name so known unto us, we then love his name when we love his word, which showeth us his love, power, eternity, and goodness. Wherefore the

Prophet in this same Psalm saith: Thy testimonies are mine heritage forever, expressing by the word his love to the Lord: according to that Psal. 16:5. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance. Then he said he loved the Lord, when he loveth his law.

Here then we see that Heretics love not the Lord, brag they thereof never so much, and call themselves the Family of love, because they love not the word. We must then try our love to God by our love to his word, and since the love of God is not pure in Heretics, let us love the word, which is a sound trial of our love of God: for look what love he would have done to him, he requireth to have it showed to his word. (Joh. 14:23)

Thus we see they love God's name, which love his mercy, justice, strength and power: but because we cannot know them, nor be endued with them, but as the Lord by the ministry of his word, and working of his Spirit communicateth them unto us, we must show that love to the word, which we would show to the Lord. As we therefore are desirous of the reading, hearing, and meditating of the word of God, as we delight to be conferring of it, as we rejoyce when we see it observed and kept in ourselves, and in others, as we are grieved to see this broken in ourselves and others; even such is our love to God his word.

—• **Verse. 133. - Direct my steps in thy word, and let none iniquity have dominion ever me.**

When the man of God said before, that he opened his mouth and panted, and that he saw the word of God was wonderful, and that the very entrance into it gave light and understanding unto the simple, he now prayeth for continuance in this his love. The end then of this his prayer is perseverance, and showeth, that though he loved the word, yet he is still ready to go out of the way, and so unless the Lord stay and establish him, iniquity should get

the upper hand, Thus we see how he feared and suspected himself: for had he not feared; this had been an unnecessary prayer. The man of God had not that opinion of himself, which men have nowadays, in thinking so highly of their own strength, but prayeth to the Lord that he may not go astray: which thing he thought he might of himself easily do, and that if it were so that he slipped somewhat awry, yet that he might not go too far, least that iniquity should have the upper hand of him. Thus we see that in this Psalm is set down unto us a mirror of godliness, wherein a man may come to the sight of his corruptions, and to a feeling of his need, in having his steps numbered, and his paths guided by the word. If we were truly persuaded of this same, it would pull us on our knees, and humble us, it would make us make much of the means, whereby we might help these infirmities. But we suspect no such danger, and therefore we are not so careful in our singular actions to watch over ourselves, and that by degrees we may fall away, and start out of the way or ere we beware.

In that this followeth so immediately his former prayer, that God would look upon him, and be merciful to him, he showeth that there was never any man but he was in danger and most ready to fall, unless God looked on him, and were the more merciful unto him. So that with the gift of perseverance he prayeth for mercy, declaring that unless the Lord would bestow such grace on him, he was not able to continue.

This must stay the pestilent doctrine of the Papists, who foolishly dream, that a man having freewill, may hold forth his course in the right way, and may promise to himself safe passage. True it is, God's children may assure themselves of strength, because the Lord is on their right hand, but so, as they are still to fear their own frailness, and to pray for final perseverance. This verse is all one in effect with the first verse, portion 14. Thy word is a

lantern to my feet, and a light unto my paths. In both which places he showeth, that as he that goeth in a dark place or in the night, cannot go on right step, but as he receiveth light from the lantern to see his way, and when he is in never so little darkness, he is in danger and ready to stumble: so we, if we march forward in ignorance and darkness, cannot guide ourselves one step to the kingdom of heaven, but as we may have light from the lantern of God's word, to beware how we tread, and when we swerve never so little from this light, we are in danger of making our conscience to stumble. This borrowed speech goeth then thus far: As he that is in darkness can go no further safely, than he is within the compass of the light of the candle: so according to the measure of our knowledge of God's word are we able to direct our affections happily, and no further.

In that he saith, Direct my steps, he noteth, that although we have the light of the word before us, yet unless the Lord open our eyes, it shall be as unprofitable and unable to guide us, as the light of a candle is to direct a man that is blind. Now therefore he teacheth us to pray, that though we have the word, yet the Lord would enlighten our understanding and affections by his Spirit, which may guide us in our journey. And seeing the man of God hath used this prayer before us, we are to learn, that in reading, hearing, meditating, and receiving of the word we are altogether unprofitable, until the Lord shall take the government of our steps into his own hand, and shall direct us by his Spirit.

[My steps.] Loe he prayeth here for affection and not for judgment, as he doth in a verse following, where he saith, Show the light of thy countenance upon me, and teach me thy statutes. Here the Prophet instructeth us as well to pray for affection to be moved by the word of God, as for judgment to understand it. For if this were not needful, then were this prayer but a vain

babbling, and often repeating of one and the self-same thing, contrary to that rule of our Savior Christ, Mat. 6:7. When ye pray, use no vain repetitions, as the Heathen: for they think to be heard for their much babbling. Why doth this man then use this repetition? Surely because it is another matter greater than we think of. He saw there was much blindness in our minds, there is much rebellion in our affections, and great sluggishness in our hearts, that without light we cannot tread in the right path; yea though we be delivered from by-paths, if the candle be obscured, and our way darkened, yet we return to them again. For as a man being in the dark, may easily go out of the way, and being out, cannot easily come in again, but is fain to wander in unknown and uncertain places: so if God guide us not by his word and Spirit, we shall hardly find the right way of knowledge, and if we find it, we can hardly continue in it, but may easily go out of it, and being out, we can hardly recover it again. Wherefore hitherto appertaineth the saying of our Savior Christ, Matth. 7:13. Enter in at the straight gate, &c. because the gate is straight, and the way narrow, that leadeth unto life: wherein as it is hard to continue; so to go on either side out of it, is most easy. We see then how he prayeth, that his paces might be guided by the word, and that the spirit of God might carry this lantern of the word before him, without whose guiding we cannot go three steps but we shall miss of our way, and lose the path, and being once out we may easily err, and once erring we shall not return aright. Many would think this ridiculous, but God's children know by experience that there is a necessary use of these things by reason of the blindness of our mind, and that it is a special grace of God to be guided by his spiritual grace.

[That no iniquity have dominion over me.] The simple sense of this verse is this: Lord, if thou doest not order my goings, surely iniquity will have

dominion over me. The end of his request (as we touched before) is, that he might not miscarry in his way. He acknowledgeth, that a man being out of the way, may be enforced to wander, and after wandering can hardly recover himself. Wherefore he prayeth to this effect: Lord, so keep me, that though I err, yet I may return: so guide me, that though I go out a little, yet suffer me not to wander altogether, least iniquity over run me. Thus we see Gods children fear themselves: and why? Because though the raging reign of sin be taken from them, yet the massive lump of natural corruption dwelleth in them, and the very dangerous of sin are very dangerous. Wherefore our Savior Christ taught us to pray, Lead us not into temptation: the meaning whereof is here of the Prophet plainly set down, which is, that though we cannot avoid the causes of temptation, which is our corrupt nature, yet that every man must resist, and not yield in willing consent unto sin, that it should get the dominion over us. It every Saint of God be commanded to say this in truth and not in hypocrisy of heart; then every Saint hath need of this prayer: for every man is subject to temptation and iniquity in him may have the upper hand.

True it is, there are many weaknesses and infirmities in God's children, as wrath and anger; yet by how much they be the more and the greater, the more and the oftener they are to watch over themselves. Shall they then give place and settle themselves in anger? Some man will say, we are full of corruption, we cannot but often fall. We answer, we must be the more wary of ourselves: for it is one thing to be tempted, and another thing to nourish and foster a temptation: for if a man being provoked to anger, and let the Sun go down in his wrath, can fall asleep in his anger, and can be angry still when he awaketh again, the spirit of God there hath not the chief rule, but iniquity hath dominion over him. Wherefore when temptation ariseth, let us

learn by prayer to prevent the raging of it. As thus: Lord, I will not thus much trust myself, that I can match with sin, Lord I have corruption in me, but cleanse thou me from my sin, and let it not utterly prevail against me.

The Saints of God dare not tarry until the dead blow cometh but they suspect the first strokes of sin, they tarry not to be stung to death, but they fear the least buzzing of sin, because they may easily be carried out of the way, through the deceivableness of sin, and the deceitfulness of sin may bring hardness of heart. Wherefore the Apostle (Heb. 3) exhorteth them to apply one another with exhortations whilst it is called today, least any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. And the holy Ghost saith, Psal. 95:8. Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. Wherefore the Saint of God thus prayeth, that if he should give a little room and small liberty to his affections, God's grace could not continue in him. Neither can the children of God being out of the way, easily recover themselves, as we may see in David, who thought himself after that he had sinned to be cast from the presence of God, to be forsaken of his holy Spirit, and unless the Lord would cast him into the womb again, unless the Lord would cast him into a new mold, there was no hope that he should recover himself. The violence of sin is so impetuous, that a man may soon slip and easily fall, but hardly rise again. Wherefore the Wiseman saith, Prov 28:14. Blessed is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into evil: that is, blessed is he that in every action examineth his heart, that he fall not.

Not without cause then have I this jealousy, that when men are ready to deceive themselves they are in danger of being hardened, because the man of God here so joineth both together, that he should have his steps directed, least that iniquity should have the dominion over him: for I take the whole

verse to be but one request. The sooner we meet with temptation the better we shall overcome it; the longer we continue and let it alone, the longer will be our conflict. If we begin betimes we shall easily conquer it; if we let it alone, we shall easily be conquered. For it will either get ground of us, overreach us, and get the vantage, or else we must get ground and vantage of it: if it overcome us, we shall hardly recover our paces.

This is then the wisdom of God his spirit in his children, which men call preciseness, to set a wary and heedy watch over every affection that we think, over every word which we speak, over every deed we do, least we be deceived, and through deceit be hardened, and so iniquity get the dominion over us. Thus we see the Prophet desireth the gift of perseverance, acknowledging, that to continue is God's gift, as well as to begin. And in that he desireth special mercy to persevere, he declareth that many begin well; but afterward iniquity getteth the upper hand, and they fall away: so that it is a peculiar mercy of God to preserve his to the end. And in praying as well here for the reformation of his affections, as he did before for the direction of his judgment, he giveth us to understand, that if we purpose to persevere, we must no less look to our affections, than to our judgment. This then is a double grace of God on whomsoever: first to have our judgment enlightened, and then to have our affections touched.

[Direct my feet, &c.] As our feet carry our bodies, so our affections support our actions. It is a good thing to stay our affections, when our outward actions are rightly ordered; and for this cause mention is made so often in the book of God of lifting up our eyes, of holding up our hands, of walking with our feet. As then we will have our affections truly touched: for we must not contemn this outward government.

Now, whereas he prayeth, that the secret mass of corruption which lieth in him, may not break out in him, he noteth, that they who are careless of their final perseverance, make little conscience of their former corruptions. But such are greatly to fear, least that in the latter end of their regeneration, they be cast out of Paradise with Adam, and thrown out of the Church with Cain. For if Adam sinned in Paradise, whilst as yet he was perfect, how easily may we fall, which are in the days wherein iniquity doth reign, and are full of imperfections? Again as we touched briefly before, God his children do not tarry so long as to labor for life, and strive for breath in temptations: but in the beginning they espy their errors; whereby they see how they might sail further, were it not that God's spirit mightily did preserve them. And surely every man by experience shall find, that the sooner we begin to resist sin, the more speedily and easily we shall prevail against it; whether it be that we are tempted to leave good things undone, or to do things not to be done. For let a man once leave the searching of his heart, and upon some great necessity cease from the ransacking and rifling of his conscience, when he hath not happily slipped notoriously: we may see, we may find our recovery to our exercises again: But if we have omitted these exercises a long time and often, when we should come to practice them, and put them in practice again; what a strange thing will this seem to us? How hardly shall we get our hearts to yield to it? Our flesh is unwilling, this thing is so uncome unto us, that we are fain to sweat again, for those practices of prayer and private examination, which by using we had with ease; and by not using we had almost lost.

Wherefore as proof maketh evident; like as in a tree though the roots be somewhat mangled, yet there will sprout buds, which with a small instrument, by daily resorting to them, and keeping under, may be kept

from much growing, and yet afterward by negligence and permission, as with a hatchet they will hardly be hewn down; And as in a great concourse of waters, though the fountain be stopped, yet the rivers remain open, which being taken in time with a flood-gate, may be stayed, and losing long opportunity, by great banks from overflowing cannot be restrained: even so a man in the beginning of his temptation, whilst as yet it is but in the sprout, and having a little course is unable to make any great breach, by prayer and the spirit of God may be kept under and stayed: but if it be left alone, not looked to as before, the extraordinary spirit of the Preacher, or the extraordinary travel of a man in prayer and fasting, will not be able to remedy it.

Well many there be, that charm the charmer never so wisely, they will not hear, that they might prevent the rage of sin. If when we shall use all means to subdue sin, all is too little, if we give it any liberty, how great is the danger? If a man in using a sparing diet, moderate apparel, and little sleep, shall still find in himself a self-love and liking of sin; how much more when he frameth himself to all the guises and fashions of the world, shall he see self-love prevail against him? When we are justified in Christ, and engrafted into him by faith, and yet have not the roots of sin thoroughly pulled out, not the rivers of iniquity dried up, but only the spring-head is stayed. I know there be many, who think it a preciseness, to be so much afraid of our own weakness, and to be watchful and wary of our own affections; yea, and oftentimes in those things, which to judgment are lawful, yet abstaineth in life and in our practice: but blessed be that fear, and happy is that preciseness, which is so careful over our own infirmities, and so much suspecteth our own wants and weakness. Wherefore the man of God still prayeth for perseverance.

[In thy word.] In that he maketh the word of God his means of persevering, he teacheth us, that though we have profited never so much, yet unless the word of God enlighten our judgments, and reform our affections, we may easily err out of the way. We know but in part, our heart is reformed but in part, our knowledge is bettered but in part; and that which we have, is given of God by the preaching of the word, and working of his spirit: and that we may yet be delivered from those affections which in us remain corrupt, we had need to pray for the use of the word.

Again, in that he would be grieved by the word, the man of God showeth us, that unless the Lord teach us, it is unprofitable. We must join to the ministry of the word, the direction of God's spirit. What is the cause, why we have a general liking of the word, and yet have not a particular misliking of our deserts? Even because we have not the particular guiding and government of God's spirit.

Mark here, the Prophet prayeth not the Lord to direct him, either by fantastical revelations, whereof heretics dream so much, nor by vain superstitions, which blind the Papists, nor by civil policies, wherein wicked worldlings so abound, but only by his word. Neither in truth is there anything that can purify our hearts, or cleanse our affections, but only the word; which also is unfruitful, unless the Lord guide us. For it is an hard thing to get in to the way, but it is harder being once in the way, to continue in it, and hardest of all, when we are out of the way, to come in again. For seeing the way to be so strict, that sometimes we go on this hand, and sometimes on that, it is a grace of graces, either to be kept in the way, or being out, quickly to be brought in again.

[And let none iniquity have dominion over me, &c.] Iniquity, as we taught before, hath dominion over them, where it breaketh out without

controlment, and in whom it beareth a sway with delight, to the hindrance of God's glory, to the breaking the peace of their own consciences, and to the evil example of others.

He prayeth not we see, to be without sin, for that he know he could not be in this life; but that sin might not rule and reign in him. No more doth our Savior Christ teach us to pray, that we might be without sin, but that our sins might be forgiven; not that we should be void of all temptations, (for of all temptations, not to be tempted is the greatest) but not to be overcome of temptations; not to be freed from all sins, but that Satan the author of evil might not prevail against us. Wherefore the Prophet saith, Psal. 19:13. Keep thy servant from presumptuous sins, let them not reign over me: Where he meaneth, Let not the errors which are so rife in me, grow too presumptuous; but give thy servant grace to espy and foresee them, which agreeth with his sense in this place: Lord, though I see this heap of corruption is still in me, and lurketh still in my body, and is buried in my flesh; yet let it not break out to thy dishonor, or to the grief of mine own soul. Now as we are indeed to beware of the great security and carelessness of many professors in our time, so must we beware of the presumptuous pride of heretics. For if either God's commandment or promises had permitted him to pray for a full deliverance from sin, then he had been remiss or slack in so doing, he should have showed himself not to have believed the promise of God, but disobedient to his Law, and to have flattered himself in sin, and to have had some love-liking thereof.

Seeing then the scriptures of God allow this kind of prayer, that seeing we know not the manifold errors of this life, we might crave that we break not into presumptions: no marvel though the fantastical heretics be blown so high, that they imagine they cannot sin. If Adam in his perfection and in

paradise, sinned against the Lord; if Noah who an hundred years continued a just man, fell in the Ark; if Moses the meekest man in the earth, was overcome by impatience; if David a man after God's own heart in his latter days began to number his people; if Hezekiah a good ruler of the Lords people, one time, did break out to vain-glory, in showing of his treasure; if that peerless King Josiah who in all things was wont to ask counsel of the Lord, did not ask counsel, at what time he was to fight against the King of Egypt, though sin did never reign, nor had dominion over any of them, and yet after abundance of God's graces which they had received, sin took hold on them: then what a hellish pride of heretics is that to dream of such perfection? And again, here we must beware of the contrary extremity that we give not ourselves to much liberty. For though for God's children, which through infirmities have slided, this is a comfort, yet for them that give the bridle to sin, to lead them as it listeth, it is nothing appertaining. For it is easier to slip with God's children, then when we have slipped to recover ourselves with them again; it is easier to fall, then to rise again with them; and many have their sins, which have neither their repentance, nor the remission of sins with them. It is said, Ezek. 18:14. If the righteous turn away from his righteousness, and commit iniquity, and doth according to all the abominations, that the wicked do: shall he live? All the righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned, but in his transgressions that he hath committed, and in his sin, that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. We must not think he speaketh here of any particular breach, but of general backslidings, when iniquity hath gotten the upper hand.

But here is a common objection now a days, used almost in every man's mouth: what sir? What do you tell us of sin? And make so much ado about it? Is there not sin in you as well as there is in me? Why speak you so much

of sin? Is it not in other preachers, and in other hearers, as it is in me? Why do you charge me so sir? We answer, is there no difference between dimness of sight and blindness? Is there no difference between numbness and senselessness? Between slumbering and dead sleeping? Between a little slip and a dead fall? If there be a distinction to be made of these things, shall we not also put difference between infirmities, and leaving of some good things? And gross sins, and running headlong to ungodliness? Is there no difference between the error and ignorance which is in God's children, with grief and with a desire to be freed from them; and the errors and ignorance of the wicked, wherein they gladly lie still, and whereof they have no care to be rid? No difference between the frailty and infirmity of God's children, and the sin and iniquity of the wicked? Is there no difference between infirmity and presumptuous frailty, and rebellion? Between motion and action? Is there no difference between two steppes of a long ladder to the skies, and two steppes at the bottom? And between him that travaileth, though he attaineth not to the highest steppes, and him that still tarrieth at the ladders foot? Thus we see, they are willingly blind.

Where God's children step into someone sin, and being admonished are therefore sorrowful, and labor to recover themselves, and the wicked wallow in so many sins, and by no admonition can be brought either to a godly sorrowing, or forsaking of their sin: is there no difference between these? Judas and Peter sinned both, and both against their Master: was there no difference, or like danger in their sins? Is it not one thing for a man to betray his own Master for covetousness of a little money, and another for fear and infirmity to deny him? Is it not one thing to purpose well doing, and yet to fall for fear, and another thing willingly to suffer the devil to carry him from action to action, to have the purse delivered him, to be

forewarned of it, to take the soppe of him whom he should betray, and yet to persevere in his wickedness? Is there no difference betwixt him, who when he had sinned, wept and pined away for sorrow; and another, that after he had sinned, having an hellish desperation, took vengeance of himself? Thus we see, that there is a manifest difference between the sins of the godly, and of the wicked; the sin of the one, was not a purposed sin; the sin of the other was fore-purposed; the one when he heard of his sin, strived to get out of it, the other being admonished was careless. Finally, the one renewed himself by Faith in Jesus Christ: the other having sinned, utterly despaired. For saith the Lord. 2 King. 15:5. David did right, &c: save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite: did not David else sin? We know he numbered his people; he would have killed Nabal; he had conceived an evil of Mephibosheth; howbeit the holy Ghost counteth not as it were of these sins, as being done of infirmity, but saith the spirit of God, this was a soul sin. For the other sins the Lord would not deal with them, but passed them over as it were; but this sin must needs be punished. And wherein did this sin become so great above the rest? Did he not first sin with his eye, wherewith he had before almost made a covenant? Was he not an hypocrite in desiring to hide his sin? When this could not be done, he still was deceived by Satan, and when he saw the fact must needs out, and should come to light, when it should now be known, and the woman must be examined, what did he then? Although he had neither hatred to the man Uriah, who had deserved well of him, nor earnest love to the woman: yet sendeth he a Captain with his letters: and whereas in the wars they use to set forlorn persons in the forefront of the first hand, he had appointed Uriah to be the man in that battle, and still he persuaded himself, that he killed him not; and after, to avoid public infamy, he took home the woman to him.

Thus was David deceived of Satan, both subtly and dangerously: and yet not so; but that there is a difference betwixt him and another, that should make an occupation of adultery, and still bathe himself in filthy love. But the Prophet Nathan comes no sooner to him, and telleth him but closely and slenderly of his sin; but see, he is stricken to the heart; he controls him not though he were a King: but he admitteth him unto him, and receiveth him humbly. He had sinned before, but he did not see it before: we see here no presumption, for he flatly accused, and not excused himself, saving: I have sinned against the Lord. Where are they now, that will make the sins of others placards for their sins? Where are they that will make such gross presidences for sinning, because there are some infirmities and ignorance's in God's children? Let them consider rightly of these differences of sins. We see then the plain meaning of the man of God: he prayeth not to have no sin within him, but that he might not lie in sin.

There is then a difference between affectate ignorance and devilish presumption, and the weak ignorance and infirmities of God his children; there is a difference between sinning in few things, and sinning in many; between sin committed and repented of, and sin committed without any repentance: between infirmities and presumptions. Wherefore the Apostle saith: Let not sin reign in your mortal bodies: and yet the same man saith, Rom. 7, that sin dwelt in him, and that he was sold unto sin. There is a difference between permitting a Prince as our lawful governor to rule and reign over us, and to yield obedience to him willingly, and a grievous Tyrant whom we resist, and perform no obedience to him, because he cometh with usurped authority, who would enforce us whether we will or no, and carrieth us violently to prison. So the meaning of the Apostle when he saith, let not sin reign, is this: acknowledge not sin to be your King, delight not in

it, and if he do come, let him come like a tyrant, and as one that would haul you into prison, and that you may show yourselves not to be willingly drawn into his servitude: cry out, Oh mortal man that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin and death? Is there not then a difference between him, who when he hath sinned, is afraid to pray to God, trembleth to come before God, feareth even to go on the earth: and another, who when he hath sinned, is merry, and pleaseth himself in it, and maketh but a delight, a pastime, and an occupation of it? Is there not a difference between him that fighteth boldly, and him that will not fight at all against sin? Wherefore though God's children have such infirmities, yet they use all means to resist them, and account much of hearing, praying, meditating, and conferring of the word, that thereby iniquity might not have the upper hand of them.

Thus we see, how the children of God are violently hailed to sin: the wicked are voluntarily carried headlong into sin: the godly recover themselves; the wicked fall from sin to sin: the godly yield to admonitions, the ungodly thereby are worse and worse.

—• **Verse. 134. - Deliver me from the oppression of men, and I will keep thy precepts.**

As we have oft declared, it is the lot of God's children to be troubled with the ungodly, and therefore this man setteth himself down as a pattern therein, and seeing the Lord Jesus hath made himself a chief example in the house of example, who is our head; it is mere that we who are his members should also suffer troubles, that we may be made like unto him. What is the cause then, why we are so much at quiet with ourselves, both Minister and Magistrate, people and subject; but because we do not so much resist Satan, fight against the world, and strive against ourselves. For we beginning to

rebuke the world of sin, the world cannot away with us; and when we stir up ourselves against the devil, he setteth himself and all his imps against us, and when we check and control ourselves, we can never find quiet. True it is, that sometimes we shall have quiet; but this is but a breathing time; yet that must be fulfilled in the members, which was begun in the head, that we being like to him in suffering, may also be like to him in glory, remembering always that which is in Psalm 125. The rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the righteous. So that the man of God prayeth here, that his affliction might not hinder his glory. And no marvel, for his enemies first labored to daunt his faith, then they went about to load him with injuries, either subtly to circumvent him, or openly to oppress him: when these things would not serve, they strived to bring his person to contempt, and his cause to discredit, as also they went about to bring themselves into estimation, and their cause into credit. No marvel then though he thus prayed, least that they resisting him too long, he should be overmatched. Wherein we are to learn, that we must not overcome ill with ill, subtlety with subtlety, violence by violence, but by prayer. And seeing the Lord's ears are open to the prayers of the just, and his eyes upon them that fear him, seeing his ears are shut to the wicked, and he will not look upon them in mercy, but his face is set against them, the Lord undoubtedly will hear us, and look upon us, and will confound our enemies.

And I will keep thy testimonies. Behold, the man of God promiseth thankfulness, and if it pleaseth the Lord to free him from these evils, he would keep his law, not that we must think, that he before did break them: but though the proud had him exceedingly in derision, Psal. 51, though the bands of the wicked had robbed him, 61. though the proud had imagined a lie against him, 69. though they had dealt wickedly and falsely with him,

78. though they had almost consumed him upon the earth, 87. and he was like the bottle in the smoke; so that he was wonderfully distracted in his calling: yet if the Lord would vouchsafe to free him from these evils, as before in part; so now in whole, he would bestow his life on the Lord.

We are then to learn, that in trouble we are to desire to none other end to be delivered, than the better and more freely to serve the Lord, and that when we have made so solemn a promise to the Lord, we thoroughly purpose in truth to perform it. For though affliction of itself helpeth us nothing unto godliness, but is rather some hindrance why in our calling we are less profitable; yet as it is sanctified in Christ, and receiveth a blessing from God to work in us, it keepeth us from evil, and provoketh us the more to do good. But we, if we be in adversity, if we have trouble or loss of goods, or loss of friends, oppression of enemies, or such like, make large vows and plentiful promises, and cry: Oh if I might be delivered from this sickness, if I might be freed from this trouble, if I might be unburdened of this evil; I would surely serve the Lord, I would become a new man, I would change my life, and enter the ways of repentance: but we look not to performance.

This thankfulness of heart made the Prophet, Psal. 116:12, to cry out, What shall I render to the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord: I will pay my vows unto the Lord, even now in the sight of all his people: Where we see, that it was the custom of God's people, to stir up themselves after their deliverance unto thankfulness. We shall see now by examining ourselves how it is so in us. Oh (say we) that I were recovered of my health; oh that the Lord would restore those things to me again which I have lost; then doubtless would I wholly give myself to the Lord. But let us see if in all

these things we be not vow-breakers, and are rather grown worse than we were: so greatly are we to fear ourselves. God hath delivered us from our enemies, freed us from wars, saved us from scarcity, penury, poverty, plagues and sickness, and hath blessed us with peace, abundance, plenty, health, and all other blessings, let us see how we use these things. We know the times have been such, when we could not have this liberty, to read and hear the word of God; but we are now freed from such misery, and set in great liberty; whether do we use this time to God's glory, and increase of our knowledge, and building up of our faith, or not? We know that there is a vicissitude in all things, and one thing succeedeth another; and as the Lord hath long time vexed other nations with trouble, and granted to us a long time of liberty and quietness: so our course must come by the order and change of things to be vexed with troubles, and others shall be set at some liberty. Are we the better then for this benefit? If we be, all is well: if not, will it not, think we, be laid to our charge, that what time the Lord had given us, wherein we might reform ourselves, we have abused in being so little reformed, what our time hath been to set forth God's glory, how little glory the Lord hath gained by us.

We have often heard, that our two principal props in trouble are faith in the promises of God, and a testimony of a good conscience, which we see often to be in this Prophet. Wherefore what doth fasten and comfort faith? Even a good conscience: what doth make it wither and waver? Even because we have been fruitless, and have not done good works. This then must be our comfort in trouble, that we suffer not as ill doers, that we may look for God's promises. But if our sins accuse us, and we suffer as ill doers, we shall not be able to feel any comfort in God his promises.

Then let us see the fruit of this prayer. The Saints of God and dear Martyrs of Christ made this prayer before us, the fruit and effect whereof is grown unto us. For their sufferings were our prosperity, their loss our gain, their imprisonment our liberty, their death our life: as true as old is that saying proved, The blood of the Martyrs is the seed of the Church. For their blood hath cried up to heaven, with the blood of Abel, for our comfort, and brought down vengeance on our enemies, and obtained mercy for us. They did sow in tears, and we have entered into their harvest with joy, let us beware least we sow evil to ourselves, and for others: they sowed comfort for their posterity, let us take heed that we sow not discomfort for them that shall come after us. And as their death hath stayed the wrath of God from heaven, that it is not fallen upon the vine, and seeing many years he hath planted among us a vineyard, seeing he hath hedged it, and gathered out the stones of it, and hath planted it with the best plants, and hath built a tower in the midst thereof, and made a wine-press therein, and hath looked it should bring forth grapes, but it hath brought forth wild grapes: so our sins so enkindle the wrath of God, that he will take away the hedge thereof, and his vineyard shall be eaten up; he will break the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; he will lay it waste, and the wild bores shall enter into it. What a thing is this, that the dear Saints and Martyrs of God should deserve so well of us, and we should deserve so ill of ourselves and of our posterities? Seeing then God's mercy hath been showed by so many blessings, and we eat of their sweet of the harvest, who never have tasted of the cold of the winter, nor heat of the summer; let us fear, least for our unthankfulness, the Lord doth come to punish us, and both for our want of religion, and ungodly life cause the Lord to remove the candlestick, take away the Gospel, and bereave us of our talents. Wherefore we have great

need to pray to be reformed in our judgment, and renewed in our affections, that our thankfulness may appear in love of sound religion, and obedience of godly life to the glory of our good God. (Isa. 5)

Thus we see it is not a strange thing for God's children to suffer in this world, although God giveth us sometime a breathing time, and maketh us as children of the wedding; who, so long as the Bridegroom is with them, do not lament nor mourn. And seeing everyone that will live godly in Christ Jesus must suffer persecution, and for a good conscience, Minister, Magistrate, and master of a household shall find trouble in his own flesh, hatred of the world, and persecution of Satan; it is certain that we often purchase too much quietness to ourselves, because we do not so labor for the mortifying of our flesh, for reprovng of sin, and the beating down of the kingdom of Satan, as we ought to do. Thus we see, the Prophet groundeth himself on God's promises, who hath said, that the rod of the wicked shall not rest on the lot of the godly: showing us that no temptation shall come to us, but we shall have either strength to bear it, or else the Lord will remove the force of it: so that if he remove the violent force of it, we shall need but little strength to bear it; if our trouble be great, the Lord will give us great strength. Neither (as some do) doth the man of God use forgery for forgery, and deceit for deceit, but stayeth himself only and wholly upon prayer. For God's children have no such spirit as the worldlings have, who for the most part requite evil for evil, subtlety with subtlety, evil language with evil language: but by prayer only they labor for help at God's hand.

We have heard, that insomuch as he protesteth to keep the testimonies of the Lord, he meaneth that he will more thoroughly keep them than before. We have further learned, that it is our corruption to be godly in time of

trouble, but afterward the case with us is altered. Wherefore our godliness then is to be suspected, and he is very ungodly, that at such times will not be godly. But herein is the difference between the regenerate and unregenerate, that the regenerate after their visitations are more godly, after sickness they have a greater zeal, after their deliverance a further care of glorifying God, which is nothing with the unregenerate. Now, seeing the Lord hath heaped benefit upon benefit, year after year, mercy upon mercy, whether hath God won some special glory, or our brethren some special benefit by us or no? And as the Lord heard the moans of his Martyrs, their tears and their blood, and gave them mercy: so let us fear, lest our sins cry for vengeance unto him. All afflictions of themselves are tags of God's vengeance, yet being sanctified in Christ to God his children, they be turned into blessings, as all outward blessings, not blessed of God, are turned to curses to the wicked. For as sickness and adversity, by the Lord sanctifying them, are turned to blessings to God's children: so health, peace, and prosperity, are turned to ill to the ungodly, because of their abuse.

—• **Verse. 135. - Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes.**

Until his deliverance came, the Prophet of God prayeth to be taught in the statutes of the Lord, whereby he might learn to behave himself well in the time of trouble. For affliction is so violent a storm, and carrieth away a man so headlong, that unless the Lord guide us, we may soon take hurt. But what desire we most? If we in sickness delight most in the sweet face and gracious countenance of the Lord, it is happiness: if not, we are truly in misery. For this is the cause why many go from evil to worse in their trouble, and become so dull, because they never pray to see the cause of their affliction, and that they might profit thereby.

The sense of the man of God is: If Lord, thou wilt deliver me, I shall obey thee more; if not, Lord give me strength to glorify thee by patience. Away then with the violence of flesh and blood, which maketh us to some out these and such like speeches: Who could away with such pangs as I suffer? Who could suffer such pains as I am in? Surely even they that pray to God to profit by them, they have God's spirit: as for the wicked they cannot profit thereby. If then we be delivered out of adversity, we must obey the word; if not, we must crave wisdom to see the will of God, constancy to abide in it, patience meekly and thankfully to suffer whatsoever the Lord shall lay upon us. I care not (saith the man of God) so much for my liberty, as I might thereby praise thy name, and obey thy commandments. This is a usual thing in the book of God, to pray for the Lord's countenance: Psal. 4:6. Many say, who will show us any good? But Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us. And Psal. 67:1. God be merciful unto us, and bless us, and show us the light of his countenance, and be merciful unto us. And Psal. 80:3,7,19, Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, that we may be saved.

This verse is read three times in this Psalm, which showeth us that this ought to be the sum, the heap, and the chief of all our requests, namely, that in what estate soever we are, we may be assured that we have the testimony of God's favor; if we be in affliction, that the Lord is not angry with us; if we be in prosperity (because the Sun shineth on the just and unjust) that we may see withal the mercies of God, and his loving favor in Christ given unto us. We see where God's spirit is, there we are thankful in prosperity and patient in adversity: where God his spirit is not, there we are proud in prosperity, and murmurers in adversity. Many (saith the Prophet, Psal. 4:6.) say, who will show us any good? See how the man of God setteth down the

terms of his companions, and showeth how he coveted only God's loving countenance. The sick desire health, the imprisoned liberty, the poor desire riches: but few desire God's countenance in the forgiveness of sin, in the beholding of us in Christ, in giving the graces of his holy spirit, which are the pledges of his love.

Many worlds are nothing worth: it is a good heart which the Lord requireth. Sanctification, holiness, and the blessing of God's spirit are true riches, which we must crave and obtain with sighs, groans, and tears. For if we can sigh, if we can groan, if we can sorrow, when we are but in sickness of body, or some outward calamity; what a shame is it, if we cannot sigh, sorrow, and groan for the inward wants and necessities of the soul? But if men knew what it were to have the inward peace of conscience, which passeth all understanding, they would surely desire it more.

That I might keep thy statutes. So, many would have God's favor to shine unto them in liberty, in health, or in riches: but he craveth God his favor in his word, which if we can get, let the Lord deal with other things, which concern us, as pleaseth him best, Will we know then when we have a true love to God his word? It is when we especially desire it, and nothing above it. For as the greatest light that ever came to the world is the light of the Sun: so the most precious thing that can come to the world, is the light of God's word, that we may see the light in God his light, and behold the countenance of the Lord: Otherwise, if we be in prosperity, we will think ourselves to be well; when we are in adversity, we think ourselves ill Here we may see, that as there is clearness when the Sun shineth, and that there is darkness in the mists and cloudiness; so there is a vicissitude of God's children, whilst sometime their understanding is cleared by the comfort of the word, other sometimes it is darkened by the mists of ignorance; which

cometh to pass, that we might the more reverently and lovingly esteem the word. For as the Lord hath the dispensation of the Sun in heaven, so hath he the disposing of his countenance to us on earth.

—• **Verse. 136. - Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water, because they keep not thy Law.**

Mine eyes gush out with water: He doth here show a cause why he did so earnestly pray for God's loving countenance in his word; for he was greatly grieved, and sore afflicted, and trouble compassed him on every side. The speech is not a false or feigned speech, but such as showeth the greatness of his grief, by that which is greater: and it is as much as if he had said, I weep bitterly and often, because men keep not thy Law. And this is the note of true zeal, which easeth itself with tears, and not with revenge or anger: and this is godly zeal, when we cannot help a thing, then by tears to commit it to God, who alone is able to save men.

This was not for private injury, but because God's law is broken. This then is true zeal, when we can devour private injuries, and be zealous in God's cause: for fleshly men are hot in their own causes, and cold in the cause of the Lord. A man cannot thus be sorrowful for another, unless he be sorrowful for himself; and then are we truly sorrowful for ourselves, when we can mourn for others. As Marie loved much, and therefore wept much, because much was forgiven her. And hereof it cometh, that most notorious sinners, being converted, are most truly zealous, and have greatest compassion over sinners; for they have felt God's goodness so greatly to them, that they desire that others should be partakers thereof. As Paul more zealous than the rest, because more notorious than the rest of the Apostles.

PORTION. 18.

—• Verse. 137. - **Righteous art thou O Lord, and just are thy judgments.**

As in the latter end of the former Portion, the Prophet showed, that his eyes gushed out with rivers of waters, because of the general backsliding and falling to iniquity; so here he showeth, that he had almost pined away, and consumed to nothing, to see the ripeness of iniquities in them, which were his enemies. And whereas this might have been a great temptation, that notwithstanding there were made so many promises to the godly, and such judgments threatened to the wicked; yet the godly sustained so hard things, and the wicked were in so good a case, he confirmeth his faith, by staying his whole confidence on God, and trusteth in God, because he is righteous, and acknowledgeth him to be a righteous God, because every part of his word is righteous, and whatsoever the Lord hath said, either concerning his promises to his servants, or threatening's to his enemies, is most just and true.

The self-same must also stay us, when we are in the like temptations, when we shall be counted as precise fools, and unquiet spirits, because we weep and lament for the sins of others; or when we, seeing the wicked live in such pleasures, begin to marvel how it cometh to pass, that the godly are so ill dealt withal, and when the godly live with tears, and the ungodly pass their time in joy.

Wherefore the man of God raiseth up himself with this meditation: howsoever those things seem to be confounded and cast together, yet thou O Lord, art God, and governest all: thou art a righteous God, and thy judgments are righteous; yea every word of thy word O Lord is righteous and true; thy promises which in time thou shalt perform, will not fall away; nor thy judgments which thou wilt one day execute, shall not fail. Behold

how we also must strengthen our faith in the like assaults. This was a notable example of faith, which so yielded to the due obedience of the word of God, for our instruction: when we are in such distress, our eyes must not be set on any visible or earthly things, but only on things invisible and heavenly, even on the word of God, on his promises, which he will perform; on his justice, which he will execute: we must I say have our eyes lifted up further than the scope of heaven, and the circuits of the Sun; we must look to heaven, where God's promises shall be fully performed and accomplished; we must look to hell, where his judgments shall be finished and fully executed. For though both God's promises may on earth be performed, and his vengeance may here be executed; yet all his promises are not showed to any, nor many of them showed to all, but there may be some wanting of them; and the wicked may have a great torment of mind, and hell of conscience, and yet all have them not, neither have any all, because many are glorious in their life, and pompous in their death. What then shall we say to this, but with the Prophet, Righteous art thou O Lord, and righteous are thy judgments.

Although then the promises of God are not at all times by and by performed, nor his judgments presently executed; but the godly do often groan under miseries, and the ungodly wallow in their delights; yet the Lord after death will show, that he is righteous, when he will erect and magnify his justice before his glorious throne. This thing appeareth to be manifest, by that history Luke 16, of the rich man and Lazarus, who (that the Lord might make known his justice (died both together: but as their life was altogether diverse, so their death did altogether differ. For the rich man lived delicately, and fared daintily; but Lazarus lying sore and hungry at his gate, found more courtesy at his dogs, which licked him, than at his hands

which should have relieved him. Well, when they were both dead, it is said, that the rich man being in hell in torments, lifting up his eyes, and seeing Lazarus a far oft in Abraham's bosom, cried, Father Abraham, send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool his tongue: but Abraham answered, Thou art far deceived and disappointed, my son, the places are far distant between thee and us, so that the inhabitants must keep their places. And my son, consider of the equity of God's justice herein, for thou in thy life time didst live in health, in pleasure and prosperity, and didst not glorify God thereby, therefore it is meet and right with God, that thou shouldest now have pain and torments; and this man having poverty, sickness and misery, desired God's glory: wherefore it standeth with the righteous promise of the Lord, that he should now receive joy and comfort. So Christ also teacheth us, though at the first, the Lord regardeth not all good at the at the full, yet he that rewardeth one, will reward all; and he that punisheth one, will surely in time punish all, either here or in some other; place either now or at some other time. We must then be content to have our lives hidden in Christ, that it may appear with Christ at his coming. Now as this doctrine seemeth profitable for comfort, so is it necessary also for terror. For if a man shall lie in sin, and yet through impunity, because neither the hand of God is upon him, nor the authority of the Magistrate taketh hold on him, shall not repent: and because as the wise man saith, Eccles. 8:11. Sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the children of men is fully set in them to do evil; as we may see in profane persons, in abusers of the name of God, in breakers of the Sabbath, in disobedient persons, murderers, adulterers, thieves, and back biters: let him beware, and not flatter himself in iniquity; and though God doth not, at the very instant, when sin is committed, punish all, nor the

Magistrate presently apprehend all; if a man begin to be hot, and would have all men like himself, and is offended because there is no present execution of judgment, yet God is righteous, he will not justify the sinner, but he hath his fierce wrath, vengeance and indignation laid up in store to fall suddenly and fearfully upon the ungodly. For assure thyself, O man, whosoever thou art, he that hath said, that no whoremonger, nor adulterer, nor covetous person shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, and he that hath promised in this life, to try those that be his, will surely, if thou be the child of God, punish thee here, that thou mayest not be condemned with the wicked; if thou be not, he will both in this life, and in the world to come plague thee eternally.

If thou art not presently punished for thy sins, the Lord calleth thee to repentance; if that will not serve, the Lord will undoubtedly break thy neck, and press thee down with further judgments.

Thus we see, how needful it is to urge this doctrine to the abusers of the Lord's long suffering, and contemners of his righteous judgments. Psal. 89, the man of God showeth, that albeit the Lord had made a covenant of mercy with his people, yet if their children did forsake his laws, and walk not in his judgments, if they did break his statutes, and kept not his commandments; he would 32., visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with strokes. And surely, if we will not be removed by the word calling us from our security, we shall taste indeed of the Lord's heavy scourges and fearful strokes. Wherefore in time let us humble ourselves under the loving hand of God, and learn to deny ourselves.

—• **Verse. 138. - Thou hast commanded justice by thy testimonies and truth especially.**

He showeth that in all the holy writings, the Lord had set down special mercies and special judgments, and that the justice and truth which the Lord hath taught in his word is a special justice, and a special truth, and every part thereof is just and true, yea and if there could be degrees therein, they are most just and most true according to that Psal. 19:9. The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. So that without exception, all the threatening's of the Lord are just, and all his promises true.

Sure it is then, that he will perform his wrath threatened, and fulfill his covenants promised, for there is nothing in the word, which is not truth and justice itself.

Thus we must learn when we are in trouble, to look to God his word, and to know that every title thereof is righteous and true, and though heaven and earth do pass, yet not one iota of it shall fail. This is necessary for us to believe, for from hence springeth faith. Wherefore the Prophet seeing that this would hardly be believed, and that even God's children sometime, are slack in faith, hope and love, and are not so soon persuaded that every man must perform this, but rather that it was a special thing: the Prophet (I say) reciteth this word five times in the compass of eight verses, being but one portion. So much doth he show incredulity to reign in God's children, and declareth it the more vehemently because the wicked will not be brought to believe this. For what is the cause of sin, either in failing of doing those things which are to be done, or in failing to do those things, which ought not to be done, in omitting of good things or committing of evil, but only incredulity? Could we believe the word of God? Oh happy were we! Can we not believe? Oh cursed are we! We shall see, as the wicked in all things, so God's children in many things discredit the word of God: as the wicked believe not at all; so the godly believe but in part, and see but in a glass.

And doubtless they want the comfort which they should have, in that although they consent generally to the truth, yet when they come to particulars, they reason this with themselves: How can this be? By what means possible should this be so? And therefore the Lord suffereth them to miscarry in judgment, and punisheth them in their affections.

Thus we see, how the man of God doth strengthen him and us by faith, in believing that God is righteous, and his judgments to be righteous, and that every part of them is most righteous, just, and true: wherefore our Savior Christ in his holy Gospel useth so often, Doest thou believe? Believe and thou shalt be made whole: according to thy faith be it done unto thee: which he doth to show us our incredulity. Wherefore we must pray, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief: Lord increase my faith, that believing thy judgments, I may fear thee; believing thy mercies and promises, I may be comforted; believing the things thou commandest, I may do them; believing the things which thou forbiddest, I may avoid them.

—• **Verse. 139. - My zeal hath even consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word.**

Let us here try our faith, which persuade ourselves to have such faith, behold here is a trial. True it is, that to all is not given the like measure of faith: unto some are given ten talents, unto some five, unto some two: neither have all grounds like measure of seed, nor render again like measure of increase: for some ground according as it hath received, bringeth fourth one a hundredth fold, some sixty, some thirty-fold, according to the good will and wisdom of our God. Neither must we think that it is required of us, that we cannot otherwise be faithful and zealous, unless we even consume away, or our eyes gush out with rivers of waters: for we must not think that it was so in the Prophet himself, as though rivers of tears were in his head,

or that he was utterly pined away: but rather they are figurative speeches, to show some rare zeal, and notable kind of sorrowing in him.

Now whatsoever exhortation is to be drawn from hence, it will little avail us, unless we believe that there is no one thing here in this Psalm, but in some measure it is to be performed of every Christian. For politic men cannot profit by such things, because they do not think that it containeth any general doctrine, but rather that it is a particular doctrine. But seeing this Psalm is the type and image of a regenerate man, and no one treatise so fully and wholly (though peradventure some whole book may do it) expresseth the same; and yet so, that neither the man of God as with a trumpet doth blow forth his own praise, nor womanishly painteth fourth his own miseries by moans and complaints; but advanceth God's glory, and putteth us in mind, what graces of God should be in us, and humbleth himself and showeth us what infirmities reign in us. What then (will some say) mean these speeches? My soul fainteth, mine eyes failed, mine heart breaketh, my soul cleaveth to the ground; my soul melteth, mine eyes gush out with rivers of water. What (say they) appertaineth it to us, that he saith: Seven times a day do I praise thee, I prevented the morning light and cried: mine eyes prevented the night watches: I opened my mouth and panted: how sweet are thy promises to my mouth; yea more than honey unto my mouth: I am like a bottle in the smoke, I have remembered thy name in the night: the law of thy mouth is better unto me, than thousands of gold and silver; I have had as great delight in thy testimonies as in all manner of riches; I love thy commandments above gold, yea above most fine gold: I rejoyce at thy word, as one that findeth a great spoil: These were extraordinary things, and we have not to deal with them. To answer these we may see the same doctrine in other persons, and in other places of the

book of God. Job. 33. Elihu there declareth, that the Lord speaketh diverse times unto men, but they see it not; if they profit not by the word, he sendeth them afflictions; if they profit not thereby, he will send one among a thousand to show his mercies unto them. Psal. 14. God speaketh once or twice and one seeth it not, &c. 23. If there be a messenger with him or an interpreter, one of a thousand to declare unto man his righteousness, then will he have mercy upon him, and will say, Deliver him, that he go not down into the pit; for I have received a reconciliation, then shall his flesh be as fresh as a child's, and shall return as in the days of his youth. And though the Lord punished not gross sins in Job, yet he punished incredulity, impatience, self-love and vain glory in him; for though Job were a good man, yet he stood in some need of greater mortification. The Apostle Paul showeth, that the wrath of God should fall on the Corinthians, if they presumed without due examination of themselves to eat the body and blood of Christ, and that from thence came sudden deaths, and unnatural deaths, languishing and pining diseases. 1 Cor. 11. For this cause (saith the Apostle) many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep, for if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged: So he speaketh this of the Corinthians, which were learned men; who had great knowledge and excelled in many good gifts, as he himself reporteth of them, and yet he showeth them this truth. Neither do these things especially and only come for sin, but more particularly for the trying of faith, proving and perfecting of patience, although afterward it may be, for punishing of sins by degrees (for even in the trial of faith, and proving of patience, is also a secret punishing of sin.) Wherefore we must not suffer for a while, but even to the shedding of our blood and spending of our lives, as witnesseth the author to the Heb. chap. 12, where the Apostle having set down in the chapter going before a register

of the fathers in the old Church, and of their works, (whereof some may also seem to be extraordinary, although indeed they be alleged but as fruits of their faith) inferreth in the 12th chapter this exhortation, Heb. 12:1. Wherefore let us also, seeing that we are compassed with so great a cloud of witnesses, cast away everything that presseth down, let us run with patience the race that is set before us; 2. looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith: Who for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame, &c. 4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin, and ye have forgotten the consolation, which speaketh unto you as unto children, &c.

Here the Lord showeth the faith and gifts of his Saints, declaring that he would bestow on us the like graces according to that proportion which he thinketh good. In that they are called witnesses, it was because they gave witness to the truth of God's promises, and to show how the Lord would enable sinful flesh, thus to believe, and thus to do. And mark here the wisdom of the spirit of God, setting down the strength of his Saints; for flesh and blood might have objected: what tell you us of these extraordinary and privileged men? But behold, he calleth them (as we said before) witnesses, testifying that if we would call for, and crave the like graces, we should receive them sufficiently: then he biddeth us to look to Christ the author and finisher of our faith. For what were they? This is he from whom all the Fathers received their strength. Strive (saith he) death is not yet come, ye have not resisted unto blood. What? Must every man be a martyr? No, the meaning of the holy Ghost is, that though we have suffered the scoffing of the wicked, the hissing, the nodding of the head, the mocking of the people; yet it is not sufficient, if the Lord will have us also for his sake imprisoned, our blood shed, and though he give us no remission, yet we

must not faint herein, but even offer our lives to the Lord's pleasure also. What can seem more rare in this man of God his faith, than his notable diligence and delight which he had in the word, in that (as we showed before) he prevented the morning light, and the evening watches with his meditations? But shall we not find this commended unto us in other places of the Scriptures? That we might also in some measure seek these practices in ourselves. Look Prov. 2:1. My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments within thee, &c. 4. If thou seekest wisdom, as silver, and searchest for her as for treasure, 5. Then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. And Psalm 19:10. The judgements of the Lord are more to be desired than gold, yea than much fine gold: what do we now see here in this man of God, which the Scriptures do not teach us in other places? So that here is set down but a pattern of practice of things taught in the word; and why doth the man of God set down himself here as a type to be followed? Surely to show that like as he was a man subject to the like affections that we are: so we may labor for the like graces as he had. And if we will be like unto him in his sins, why should we not be like unto him in his graces? And as albeit we are not like unto him in his greatest sins, and yet in some sins; so must we though not in the highest measure of his graces, yet in some proportion of his graces be like also unto him. It may also seem extraordinary in him, that he was wiser than his enemies, wiser than his teachers, wiser than the aged: but we must know this also appertaineth to us, because in showing his reason, how he obtained this grace, he allegeth not the cause to be any extraordinary or new revelations, but that he attained through the word: for he was wiser than his enemies, in that he opposed not subtlety with subtlety, craft with craft, forgery with forgery, and in all his affaires asked not

counsel of flesh and blood, but of the word, as he also testifieth of himself, Port. 3:7,8 verse. Princes also did sit and speak against me, but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes: Also, thy testimonies are my delight and my counselors. As if he should say, when the mighty states used their policy and wisdom against me, though I had an heavy heart, yet I asked counsel of thy word. Likewise, Port. 21:1. Princes have persecuted me without cause, but mine heart stood in awe of thy word: That is, the great men persecuted me, I durst not strive with them in policy, for so I was afraid I should have sinned against thee; but rested in thy word, and then I gate as great victory, as they which get spoils. We see now, whosoever (as Saint James exhorteth us) shall ask wisdom, when he wanteth it, of the Lord and of his word, shall with David be wiser than his enemies; not that we must imagine him so to be in all his particular actions, but that he excelled them in as great measure as might be, by giving himself to be governed by the word. Is this then proper to the dearest Saints of God alone? No, for Moses the man of God saith, Deut. 4:6. Only this people is wise, and of understanding. He speaketh not of the rarest Jews, and of the Magistrates alone, but of the common people, and telleth them, if they wanted wisdom, the Lord was at hand to teach them. And so the meanest people by the word of God were wiser than the mighty Princes, and the great Princes were more doltish than the common people, when they asked not counsel of the Lord. The promise which our Savior Christ useth, Matth. 10:19. When they deliver you up, take no thought how not what ye shall speak, for it shall be given you in that hour what ye shall say. This promise is not made only to the Evangelists, Apostles, Disciples, Doctors or Magistrates; but to all whomsoever the Lord shall call, to give such testimony of his name. And we know by experience, how this was not only performed in the Primitive

Church, but also in the dear Saints and Martyrs of God of late memory in Queen Mary's reign, who did strive against sin, to the shedding of their blood; who all as we see, were wiser than their enemies. Neither was there any other cause, why he was wiser than his teachers, but that by meditation he not resting in the book cases and general doctrine of his teachers, applied their general rules to his particular state. Likewise we, if we do not stay ourselves in the general things, which we hear or read; but bring the general things into particulars, singulars and practices, shall be wiser, though happily not learned, than our teachers. Thirdly, he was wiser than the ancient, in that they made shipwreck of faith, and of a good conscience, notwithstanding their knowledge: whereas he labored to bring his good learning to good living, and his knowledge to a good conscience. We see at this day, how old ancient Protestants grow not in spiritual understanding, because they put not in practice the things which they have known. On the other side, we are not to go far, but may observe in our age, how young men, unto whom the Lord hath made old men as glasses and examples of our infirmities least they fall, coming with reverence and desire to practice that which they hear, are far wiser in heavenly things, and are more able to instruct the ignorant, and to comfort them that are in sorrow, than the aged. Whosoever then will labor to bring the rules into life which he receiveth by precepts, he shall be at the least wiser, if not more learned, than the ancient grey hairs.

My zeal hath even consumed me, &c. This among the rest might seem to be more proper and peculiar to the Prophet: but it is (as we have declared) an excessive speech much used of the learned to express some matter of importance, and the same being used in a false or light matter, may be an intolerable lie. As then is meant by rivers of tears gushing out of his eyes, a

shedding of many tears, and his consuming away with zeal, his earnest affection: so we must labor to find these exercises in us, according to that measure and proportion, which the Lord for his glory shall vouchsafe to bestow on us. We read also Psal. 69:9. The zeal of thine house hath eaten me, and the rebuke of them that rebuked thee, are fallen upon me. The Prophet here showeth, how he was as much tormented for these things, whereby God's glory was impaired, as if he had been laden with infamy himself. This we see maketh as well for our imitation as for our instruction.

The self-same thing is repeated Rom. 15. The rebuke of them that rebuked thee, &c. where the Apostle inferreth this exhortation, Let the same mind be in you which was in Christ, &c. as if he should say; you must know, that the selfsame affection, though not in the selfsame measure, must be in you, which was in Christ or in David: for as Christ had it in infinite measure, and David in great abundance, that must you also have in some measure. This was indeed hereditary to Jesus Christ, and to David beneficiary, and that which David speaketh of actively, as well done of himself or of Christ, that the Apostle speaketh of passively, as he requireth it to be done of others. For as David did suffer the injuries, reproaches, and ignominies which came to God's name, as his own: so Paul speaketh passively, wisheth that we should suffer these things with Christ, even as though we ourselves had done the injuries, deserved the reproaches, or were guilty of the ignominies. But we must always show ourselves guiltless in using all means to set forth God's glory, and in bewailing the sins of the people with tears and with prayer.

Notable is that place, Ezek. 9:4, where the Lord speaketh to the man clothed with linen, which had the writers inkhorn, saying: Go through the midst of the city, even through the midst of Jerusalem and set a mark upon

the foreheads of them that mourn and are sorrowful for all the abominations that are done in the midst thereof. But the other was commanded to follow after, and to destroy every mothers son of them which mourned not. This then is no strange thing when God's glory and image is defaced, to be grieved as much as if it were for ourselves. 1 Cor. 5. The Apostle rebuketh the Corinthians, because they rested and rejoiced at the sin committed amongst them, contrary to the rule of love, which willeth us not to rejoice in iniquity, and telleth them that they had not mourned, and showeth how they had laughed at him, when they should rather have mourned. Where he declareth in his own example, who was so grieved, that where he had preached the Gospel, one should fall into so great a sin, how all faithful Ministers, godly Magistrates, and Christian householders may and ought to mourn, when some of the charge committed to them, fall into some notorious sin. And though for a while he was sorrowful that he had made them so heavy, yet afterward 2 Cor. 7, he telleth them that he was not sorry: For (faith he) though I made you sorrowful, I repent not: for behold this thing, that ye have been godly sorrowful, what great care it hath wrought in you? Yea what clearing of ourselves? Yea, what indignation? Yea what fear? Yea what great desire? Yea what a zeal? Yea what punishment? In all things you have showed yourselves, that ye are pure in this matter. As if he should say; Before ye rejoiced, and then were ye guilty of his blood: but now that ye have mourned and prayed for him, it shall not be laid to your charge. Thus we see the Church was not clear, until they had mourned for this one man's sin; no more was the whole army of the Israelites, until they had humbled themselves in prayer and fasting for the sin of Achan. Wherefore every man must labor in some measure, to find the same affection in himself which was in Christ, that we may differ from the hypocrites, who

esteem their own credit more than the credit of the word. So that we always remember this to be a property of true zeal, that as we are zealous against the sin, so we must have a commiseration of the person, as knowing that we ourselves may fall into the like offense.

Well, to go forward, we see how this verse is inferred after them that go before. For having showed that the Lord was righteous, and that his judgments were righteous, and that every part of his testimonies contained special Truths, this was the thing that made him so to love the word, and loving it to have so fervent a zeal unto it. His meaning then is thus much: Seeing the word of God hath in it such exquisite goodness, such wonderful truth, such rare perfection, such Eternity, such efficacy, that in the time of trouble, when all other comforts forsake a man, this will be a special comfort to him, and giveth even life to a man half dead, and without it I see a man is but as a beast. I cannot but love, and bear a hearty zeal unto it, and when I enter into the consideration hereof, I am even pined away, and grief even eateth me up, when I see it is not esteemed, and that the word of God can have no more honor. And seeing the word of God was so exquisite, so unchangeable, so glorious, and so comfortable, what a grief was it to the man of God, that men should be so carried away, some to the pleasures of the flesh, some to the profit of the world, some to vain superstitions, and in the meantime the Word little regarded. This was it that pricked him at the heart, this touched him at the quick. He teacheth us then thus much: If the glory of God be dear to us, the contempt of it will surely grieve us: if the salvation of our brethren be precious to us, we will be grieved for the contrary. Now let us see what true zeal is.

I find here the Tractate of Zeal, 2nd part was last to be enlarged, and therefore (good Reader) I would not deprive thee of this benefit.

Heb. 10:27 The nature of it is set down, where the Apostle heavily threateneth them, that willingly give over themselves to sin, and there is named in the proper tongue, the zeal of fire. For as fire is not without it heat, but oft bursteth forth into a flame: so zeal is hot, and cannot long be held in. It is described also by contraries, Revel. 3, where the holy Ghost reproveth the church of Laodicea, because they were neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm, such as the Lord would spew out of his mouth: and afterward is added, be zealous and amend. Where we see how zeal is opposed to luke-warmness, which is too temperate a warmness for the profession of the Gospel. We must not then only renounce coldness far from us, and put away luke-warmness, but we must be very hot and fervent in the profession of the truth.

Again, 1 Cor. 14:1, that which our common translation hath, Follow after love, and covet gifts, but especially prophecy: the natural Text hath, be zealous after the more excellent gifts. And Rom. 12. Be fervent to the spirit, that is, let God's spirit enkindle in you a fire, which may cause you to flame with a zeal of God's glory, and with a love of mankind.

Now there are diverse kinds of zeal: there is a zeal of the world, there is a zeal of the flesh; there is a zeal of false religion; there is a zeal of heresy, and there is a zeal of the true word of God. First, we see the zeal of the world maketh men to labor day and night to get a transitory thing. The zeal of the flesh tormenteth men's minds early and late for a momentary pleasure. The zeal of heresy maketh men travail and compass Sea and Land, for the maintaining and increasing of these opinion. Thus we see every man is eaten with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whoremonger is spent with his whoredom, the Heretic is eaten with heresies: oh how ought this to make us ashamed, who are so

little eaten, spent, and consumed, with the zeal of the word! And so much the rather, because godly zeal leaveth in us an advantage, and a recompense, which the worldly and carnally zealous men have not. For when they have spent all the strength of their bodies, and powers of their mind, they have no gain, nor comfort left, but torment of conscience; and when they are outwardly spent, they are inwardly never the better: whereas the godly being consumed for a good thing, and eaten up with the zeal of God's glory, have this notable privilege and profit, that howsoever their outward man perisheth and decayeth, yet their inward man is still refreshed and nourished to everlasting life. Oh what a benefit it is to be eaten with the love and zeal of a good thing.

Leaving now the carnal and worldly zeal, we know how zealous Idolaters were, that they would even offer their children in the fire. We know the zeal of the Jews, Math. 13, who would compass Sea and Land to make a man a Proselyte. Heretics, as we see, spare no labor, and let not for any cost to maintain their Heresies: but these are not good. The true zeal is that whereof the Apostle speaketh, 1 Cor. 11. I am jealous over you with a holy jealousy. Rom. 10, the Apostle saith, the Jews had the zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.

Wherefore to show some properties of true zeal, whereby we may try ourselves, let us first know that our zeal must be grounded on knowledge: for otherwise it will carry us further to destruction, as it did them who oppressed the truth, and persecuted the dear servants of God, and yet thought that they did well. Wherefore in true zeal it is requisite, to have knowledge going before. We see the zeal of the Prophet did arise here of the contempt of the law of God. For seeing it to be so exquisite, perfect, everlasting, powerful, and comfortable, it is a manifest argument that he

was well grounded on the word. This zeal then (that we may the less be deceived with the contrary) hath these few rules: first, as we have already said, it must be agreeable wholly with the word of God, to begin where it beginneth to end, where it endeth. Therefore we may thus try our true zeal: If first, and especially, we make conscience of the principal matters of the word, as of prayer, of the Sacraments, of discipline, of charity: and then of the less things that are commanded, if we will do them; if any be forbidden, we also avoid them, yet ever tolerating through love, little things, as they that would not trouble the Church of God. Wherefore the Apostle saith, 1 Cor. 11:10. If any man lust to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the Churches of God: as if he should say, If any man will strive about matters of less importance, we, according to the order of the Church, will not strive with them, but rather will bear many things in love, and yet so, as still we use this caveat, That we account nothing small or little which is God's word.

This doctrine may be manifested by familiar examples. If a man shall steal things of great weight, or some great sum of money, which deserveth hanging, and the cutting off of life, we will abhor him: but when it cometh out that they may steal less things, as wood, and corn, and that not of necessity, but even of greediness of mind, thinking it not to be subject to so high a punishment, they will make no conscience of it. But if Adam was cast out of Paradise for the biting of an apple, we must not think anything that the word commandeth or forbiddeth to be little, or that the doing or not doing is but a trifling sin, least that through the just judgments of God, we falling by little and little by degrees, fall into great and monstrous sins. And as this is in life, so is it much more in the worship of God. It is a great fault that we will make a scruple in matters of small importance, and will not

stick to be dissolute in things of greater weight. Indeed it must needs be confessed, that our grand zeal must be in great things, and yet we must not lightly esteem of anything in the glorious word of God.

The second rule of true zeal is, that we must look to the things which are within, as well as to the things which are without. This also our Savior Christ teacheth us by reprehending the Pharisees, in telling them that they made clean the outside of the platters, but left the inside foul: showing, that their lives outwardly was without reproof, but inwardly they were full of secret pride, disdain, self-love and hatred. Our zeal must begin within, and in time appear outwardly: and as we will not sin outwardly, so we must be as loath to sin inwardly.

Wherefore here also are two things to be observed: the first is, that we fear no more to do ill before men, then we do by ourselves. For we be given to be loath to be accounted ill, and yet make no such conscience to be ill: we see thieves, whores, and ill-doers are loath to be so accounted, and yet in the mean season, if they can do this secretly, they make no care of it. We outwardly are careful to maintain our credit, and to travail with ourselves, yet secretly we can commit sin greedily. What is this but to be painted sepulchers, and dishes clean without, but foul within? Wherefore we are to beware of this, and so much the rather, because the Lord hath plagued them that in outward show have born a great countenance of religion, whose lives privily were filthy, whose cases and vizards when the Lord hath taken from them, and hath revealed their corruptions, they have appeared hypocrites.

The second observation is, that we look to the privy corruptions of nature lurking in our hearts, which contain such a bottomless pit of corruption, that it is the special grace of God's spirit, to gage them to the depth. We must therefore learn to search our hearts, for it is the fearful judgment of God,

when we make no conscience of sin secretly, to have our sin break forth publicly. As when we have no care to pilfer secretly, we shall be brought to steal openly by the secret wrath of God: whereby also secret lusts, malice and hatred, nourished in the heart and affections are permitted to break out in time even into our outward actions. This is a plague to them, who rather would seem to be, than in truth desire to be godly. Covetous men have this property, that they rather would be rich than be accounted rich: such ought our affections to be, that we should indeed rather be godly, than desire to be so accounted of. Let us labor to do well secretly, howsoever for a while it be hidden from the world, that God which seeth our doing in secret, will reward it openly, and in his good time will give us grace to do well publicly.

But peradventure the wicked will say: what ground? What intent? What cause have you to labor so much about the disclosing of the secret corruptions of our heart? But yet alas they are ignorant of this, that because they know not the secret corruptions, they fall the more violently to gross sins, and every man shall try this to be true in himself, that he that maketh conscience of his thoughts, will undoubtedly make conscience of his words, and deeds; and he that maketh no conscience of his thoughts, he may come to make no conscience of his words and deeds. Besides, he that beginneth to reform his heart, hath this promise in the word, that he shall not be confounded, as Psal. 119:6. Then shall I not be confounded when I have respect to all thy commandments. And Port. 10:8. Let my heart be upright in thy statutes, that I be not ashamed. Wherefore if we will be truly zealous, we may add another rule, that we have none other end of our zeal, than how we may glorify our God; whether it be in prosperity, or adversity.

This then is the third rule, that we keep a right course and tenor of zeal in both estates. We must especially look to that, whereunto we are most ready,

that is, whether we be more zealous in prosperity, and fall away in adversity; or whether we are more fervent in affliction, and overwhelmed in abundance: whether by the one we are not puffed up with security and secret pride; or whether with the other we be not too far humbled and abased. For many in time of peace are religious, who seeing persecution to follow the Gospel, slide back and fly from it. Job's wife whiles her husband was in prosperity could worship God, and show herself in outward things as zealous as Job himself: but when affliction came, she was ready to curse God. We know in prosperous times, many were very forward in religion, who in time of trouble shrunk from the truth: some so long as they may have credit by giving countenance to the Gospel, go far; but when discredit comes they will leave all. But the Prophet saith, I am small and despised, yet do I not forget thy word. Other on the contrary part, so long as God exerciseth them with any cross, are zealous professors, who being set aloft and coming once above, begin to be secure. We see many in time of their misery to be much humbled; and whilst they want livings and preferments, we see both preachers and people very godly, who when they have gotten them some living, and obtained that which they sought for, have their zeal choked. Do not many pray for the continuance of the peace of the Gospel, that they themselves might continue in peace and prosperity? Do not many mourn in the adversity of the Gospel, because they mourn for their own adversity? Oh great corruption of our hearts! Oh bottomless pit of hypocrisy! If we were ashamed that we are no more grounded on the word, and that we can be no more holy and upright in our hearts, surely the Lord would so govern us, that he would not suffer either prosperity to quench and carry away our zeal, to be buried in the grave of security; or adversity too much to dismay and discourage us.

This is then our trial herein: if when we are in greatest prosperity, we can mourn with them that mourn in the Lord, and when we are in greatest adversity, if we can rejoice with them that rejoice in Christ. This is a sure token we love not the Gospel, nor favor the word, because we have a love to prosperity; neither are zealous to see the word contemned, because we have an hatred of adversity.

Daniel concerning outward things was a happy man as being near to the Crown: and yet when he saw the God of Israel his glory to be defaced, and an abominable Idol to be erected, he could content himself with nothing so much, as with weeping, fasting, and prayer. And Paul being in bonds for the testimony of Jesus Christ, and concerning his outward man in a miserable case, rejoiced greatly, and as it were revived, when he heard that the Gospel prospered; and howsoever he was in bands, he never felt them grievous unto him, for the joy which he had, that the Gospel was at liberty. If this zeal were in us, that the word of God were so exact, pure, and holy in our eyes, that when we are most aloft, we could be sorrowful, if the word of God hath a fall; and when we were in our greatest downfall, yet we could be glad that the word of God were set aloft: then surely we would labor to sanctify the creatures of God which we use, with the word and by prayer, and at the least give the tenth part of the day to the worship of the Lord. But if we cannot bestow on him the tithe, it is a token that we labor more for the body than for the soul. And if our souls be far more precious than our bodies, and it is an harder thing to provide well for the soul than for the body, we must divide our times the better, that daily we may bestow some part of our time in the word and prayer: if we would truly espy our thriving's and proceedings in our several callings, and take a diligent view of ourselves in our vocations, we should undoubtedly see the plentiful

blessing of God, when in truth we use the word and prayer, and his fearful curse to be upon it, when we use it not.

The fourth rule is, that if we will labor for true zeal, we must be patient in our own causes, and devour many private injuries, that the Lord's cause may be the better provided for, and that his glory may go the better forward. For we see, how soon and how grievously we are moved for our own causes, and how soon we are cold in defending God's cause. This then is true Christian zeal, to deny our own reason and private commodities, and especially to seek God's glory, though it be with our danger. This would so stop the mouth of the adversary, that howsoever for a while he thinketh us to be choleric and mad men, and esteemeth of us as revengers of our own affections; yet one day he will confess, that we did not seek either our own commodity or our own revenge, but that whatsoever we did, we did it for God's glory and in the defense of a good cause.

The seeking to revenge our private evils doth much hurt, and bringeth great injury to this godly zeal: for if we could speak with the tongues of Angels, and could speak never so gloriously to the delight of all men, and have not love, even to our very enemies, all were nothing, all were abomination in the sight of the Lord. Contrariwise, if we can be content to forsake ourselves, and to be accounted as nothing, we shall be more acceptable to the Lord, and find less trouble to ourselves.

True it is, that God his children even in their best actions are troubled, whiles they survey their inward affections, and gage their hearts before the Lord, whether they have not done their things in self-love rather than for love of God: whether in vain glory, rather than for the glory of God: without which exercise we shall never see, whether our actions be pure, or whether they be impure, or whether they be mixed; whether they be in respect of

God, or in respect of ourselves. Many can rejoice at good things in themselves, and repine to see them in others: many can be grieved with evils in themselves, which will rejoice to see it in others. Wherefore we are greatly to suspect ourselves and our zeal, when we are thus affected, because it is a manifest token, that we are not pleased with that which is good for God's glory, but for self-love; neither do we repine for God's dishonor, but at our own discredit.

But we are to learn, howsoever the good is done, to rejoice; and howsoever evil is committed, to be sorrowful. We see the Prophet here was not grieved so much because they were his enemies, as because they were the enemies of God. For if he had thought then to have been God's children, whatsoever private injury he had received, he could have swallowed it up, and more have rejoiced in them, as they had been the children of God, than have been grieved because they injured him.

Here then we must learn to bear with the infirmities one with another, but especially with the frailties of the children of God: neither are we so heinously to be offended with the infirmities of the godly, as with the presumptuous sins of the ungodly and obstinate. True it is indeed, that our zeal must cause us most to be grieved for the sins of the godly, by how much they were come nearer to the image of God, than others. Howbeit it must always be with a fellow feeling and pitiful sympathy towards them, as the Apostle exhorteth us, Rom. 15, that the same mind should be in us, which was in Christ Jesus, of which place we have spoken often before.

Wherefore we must make God's friends our friends, without any respect of persons, howsoever they be otherwise far distant from us, either by place, or familiarity, or nature, or howsoever: and on the contrary, whosoever is

God's enemy, must also be ours, howsoever we are joined together, yea, though we lie both together in one womb.

This would seem a hard doctrine to flesh and blood, and yet our Savior Christ hath manifestly and plainly taught it us, Matth. 10:37, and 16:14. Luke 14:26. If 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, he cannot be my disciple: What? Would he have us to cast off all natural affection? And so the Scripture should repugn; whereas it is set as a note of them that should come in the last perilous times, 2 Tim. 3:3. That they should be void of natural love and affection: and might be contrary to that Exod. 20. Honor thy father and thy mother, &c. No, he meaneth nothing less; but he meaneth, that we should so be joined in natural love, as he speaketh of himself, Who is my mother? Who is my brother? Even he that heareth the word. So that though we be never so far asunder, we must love them that love God; and though that we be never so near, we must hate them that hate God: yea, and so far as our friends would pull us from God and from his truth, we must shake off all natural affections; not because they be joined to us in the flesh, but because by no means they will be joined with us in the spirit.

Yet in the mean time we must remember, that we do all duties of love, and obedience to them, as in admonishing them, in praying for them, and mourning for them: and then if nothing will serve, but we must either cleave to them and forsake God, or forsake them and cleave to God; we must separate ourselves from their corruptions, knowing always, that we must obey the first Table before the second, and piety must go before charity, and we must serve God before we serve man, and nature must give place to godliness.

The fifth rule is, that we must be stricter to ourselves, than to any others in some things, and we must offer more liberty to others than to ourselves: If we complain of sin, let us be at most defiance with our own corruptions; so when we fight against the corruptions of others, we shall not fight against their persons, but against their sins.

This is the doctrine which our Savior Christ also taught us, that if we would see well to pull out the more of sin in another man, we should first labor to take away the beam of sins in ourselves. Why calleth he it a beam in us, and more in others? Because our own corruptions are or ought to be far better known to us, than the corruptions of other men, we should be best acquainted with our own infirmities, and know that there is in us a bottomless pit of corruptions. Which Paul saw when he said, that of all sinners, he was the chiefest: that is, he had the greatest light of his own wants, and was most familiar with his own corruptions.

Wherefore we must first judge ourselves, and cast the first stone at ourselves, we must labor to remove this mountain of sin in ourselves: so finding how ugly a thing sin is, and that by experience in ourselves, we shall neither flatter others in their sin, nor yet rebuke them too rigorously. For he that doth so travail with his own heart, shall love that good thing in another which he liketh in himself, and shall be grieved for that sin in another, which he hath found grieving before in himself. For as we having been in sickness and are recovered, can by the smart which we have felt, pity the smart of another, and can tell how comfortable health is to another, which we have found comfortable to us: even so we can show compassion to them, which are stung with sin, as feeling the burden thereof in ourselves, and can rejoice at the liberty of conscience and peace of mind in

others, which we have rejoiced at in ourselves, because in suffering misery, we have learned to offer mercy: let us see this doctrine more plainly.

We shall see some very wary in using a ceremony, and peradventure not without cause, because it is not necessary to edification in the Church of God: and although it may be that they think it lawful in respect of the thing, and in respect of themselves; yet because it is not expedient they willingly refuse it, and will not meddle with it: and then if others do not so, but think it lawful to be worn, and therefore use it, here through love the matter being about a thing indifferent, they must learn to bear with them. Others there be who unwilling to use it themselves, judge straight all others as heinous offenders, that use it.

Let us learn this of Abraham, who refused to take so much of the Egyptians himself, as a shoe-latcher; and yet to others that would take, he would not deny the law of arms. He confesseth that he refused for his nephews sake, and therefore gave liberty to others to do as they would. See this good father was more straight to himself, than to others; and gave more liberty to others, than to himself. So Paul seeing that in some places he could not so conveniently live of other men's charges, as at Corinth, and Thessalonica, although at Colossae he received somewhat, where they were more able to bestow on him, refused to take anything; would he that all men should be tied to his example to do the like? Surely no, for what one thing doth he labor about more than this, that Ministers ought sufficiently to be provided for? For we see he was strict to himself in many things, yet evermore he left liberty unto others: as we may see Rom. 14, 1 Cor 8, and 10, where he entreateth of the use of things indifferent. Wherefore he would have Christians of this mind, that they might say thus with themselves: I can do this by Christian liberty, but if it be any hindrance or offense to my

brother or any slander to the Gospel, I will not do it: if they do it not, so they make conscience of other good things, I will not in this wage war with them, I will not oppose battle against them, but to join with them in greater and better matters, through love I will pardon the less. We must now most straitly deal with ourselves, both for these reasons alleged, as also because we know what mercies of God we have received more than others: we must give liberty unto others, because we know not whether they have received the like gifts, graces, and mercies of God, as we have. If this had been used long ago, what unity had there been established in the Church of God: for want of this, what troubles have risen therein? Here we must beware that we flatter not a man, no not in the least sin, that is far from the nature of love whereof we speak; but we must so tolerate, as we purpose not to let any man lie in sin, but labor to reclaim it; yet always with the zeal of God's glory, and the hatred of his sin, and with the spirit of meekness, and pity of his person.

Wherefore here doth fitly come in the sixth rule, which is, that then we shall most surely know when our zeal is right; when we are much moved, when God is much grieved; and we are much grieved, because our brother hath so offended.

Here is an excellent and infallible difference between godly zeal and fleshly anger. When the grief of our brothers falling meeteth and is mixed with the anger of his sinning against God, our anger shall not feed itself upon the party because of our wrath, but of his sin, because of our zeal. In pure zeal therefore there must be anger for offending God, and grief because our brother hath offended. When our Savior Christ went about to heal the man that had the withered had, the Pharisees that stood by murmured, because he would heal on the Sabbath day, it is said that he

looked about him angrily, and yet it is added that he sorrowed for the blindness of their hearts. Mark here in this notable example, how anger and sorrow meet together. Anger, that men should have so little knowledge of God and love of their brother: sorrow, that through ignorance, they were so foully overseen. So likewise in zeal of his father Christ looked on Jerusalem with a hatred to their sin, and yet with a pity to their misery, which was at hand, he wept over it. Mark this in all the Prophets from time to time, whether it hath not been so in them. Look on Isaiah, on Jeremiah, on Ezekial, on Daniel, on the heaviness of spirit they did not utter their words; and when they most threatened the people for their sins, they were most grieved and feared, lest they should fall upon them.

This is a blessed temperature, thus to mingle grief with zeal. But that it is an overreaching zeal, where our zeal feedeth more of the person, than of the sin. Wherefore we must crave this special grace at the hand of God by prayer, to be governed by a right zeal, and that we may truly discern the difference between fretting anger, and pining zeal. Samuel spares not Saul in his sin, but notwithstanding his great authority in zeal of God's glory, he telleth him flatly, that he is a sinner; and yet always was he bent to lament for Saul, and to pray for him. If we keep this golden mixture, we shall stop the mouth of the adversaries, who accuse us to be too full of rancor and malice, if we be angry as enemies to their sin, but are grieved, in that for sin they are become enemies to God. If then we admonish others, and be angry with them, not as seeking any revenge of ourselves, but as doing it of necessity, because otherwise we shall be guilty of dishonoring God, and showing ourselves to be angry against our will, and that we do it only for God's cause, and therewithal remember ourselves to be but men, subject to the same, we shall admonish them with that affection, wherewith we of

them in the like case would be admonished; and yet as we also remember to be admonished of them, as though we were admonished of God. Doest thou love God's glory? Then wilt thou surely admonish thy brother of sin. Doest thou love thy brother? Then wilt thou admonish him with compassion. See here is that, which teacheth all wisdom.

I must be grieved for sin, because it is that that casts all mankind from the Lord, because it is such a thing as thrust Adam out of Paradise: it is so grievous a thing that it overwhelmed the old world with waters; it consumed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire; it crucified Jesus Christ the Son of God; it is such a thing, as is an enemy to God the Father, an enemy to God the Son, and an enemy to God the holy Ghost: and therefore I must needs be an enemy unto it; yet I must be grieved, as putting myself in the like case, that the offender is. Wherefore many faithful Ministers of God, when they are most hot, they have most heaviness in their souls, lest the curse which they must needs threaten, do turn to the confusion of the persons whom they threaten. Thus we see, this zeal will teach us, neither to rebuke sin too coldly, nor yet too hotly. For we shall not so love God, as we shall abuse man the image of God, neither shall we so love man, as we shall hinder or impair the glory of God: for if we be sorrowful that God is offended, and that man hath offended, we shall be sure to make a holy medley.

—• **Verse. 140. - Thy word is proved must pure, and thy servant loveth it.**

Here the Prophet showing his love to be the cause of his zeal, repeateth in effect, that which he said before. It may seem strange why the man of God should make mention of this so oft, that the word of God is true. But we must know, that he did it to strengthen his faith, in the time of trouble, and

that then he might not faint. We think not, that there is such need of faith, because we feel not the like temptations. For they that have no sight of their corruptions, know not their unbelief, and they that feel not their unbelief, feel not the necessity of this strengthening of their faith. And as they that know not their unbelief, know nothing: so they that believe, and see their unbelief, know this to be necessary. They then that have a true trial of their unbelief, know this faith to be a rare gift of God. So that the Prophet commendeth the word of God here of experience: for he saith, Thy word is proved most pure. His meaning is this: This is the cause why I am so zealous, even because I love thy word; and therefore, O Lord I love thy word, because I find it by proof to be so pure.

That we then may make this our rule for examination, why are we so cold in zeal? Even because we are cold in the love of the word. For as our love increaseth, so increase also our delight and grief: our delight to see the thing loved to have happy proceedings; our grief, to see the thing which we love, to be despised.

This we see to be in every kind of love. For a man that truly loveth his wife, cannot abide to see his wife contemned and discredited: nor the woman that truly loveth her husband can abide to see him rejected and despised. When we love our friend, we are grieved to see any contempt offered unto him. This then we see in the nature of true love, to rejoice to see the person loved, advanced, or the thing which we love, esteemed; and grieved, to see either the person or thing so loved, to be cast down and contemned. It was a grief even to the Heathenish Philosophers to see their doctrine not regarded: were they so moved for the small regard of that earthly doctrine, which had no exact truth in it, but was mingled with infinite errors and untruths, and shall not we much more be moved, to see

the word of God, which hath so exact a truth, and no untruth, contemned and little set by? Wherefore when we have not this godly grief in us, it is a manifest argument, that our love is very cold. For as our love is the greater, so undoubtedly our grief will be the greater; and so as our love is the less, so will our grief to see the thing defaced, be also the less. When we have much delight in anything, we are much grieved, and who are more grieved to see the word of God trodden down, than the godly? Because of all other, their delight is most in it. Not without cause then is this love commended unto us, to be a token of our zeal, and therefore we see Psalm 67, the Church praiseth and provoketh all the world to praise God, when the word had free success: such is the love of it to the word of God. O let thy people praise thee O God, yea let all the people praise thee. Oh let the nations rejoice and be glad, &c. As then the children of God think themselves in joy and prosperity, when the word of God is in prosperity; so it being in any trouble, death is not troublesome to them, so that by their death and suffering they may anything confirm the truth, and give countenance to it.

The Prophet of God showeth his love to the word, saying: All my springs O Lord are in it: meaning that all his joy, his delight and affections, were wholly set on the word of God. Wherefore if there be such joy in having it, there must needs be great grief in wanting it. We are herein greatly to condemn ourselves, that we are no more thankful; for our unthankfulness bringeth this secret curse, that we are no more zealous, and because many can hardly judge between fleshly anger, and spiritual zeal (such is the rare feeling of this true zeal) they are ready to imagine, that if one be godly zealous, they are straightway carnally angry.

How necessary a thing therefore it is to know godly zeal, all men may see: for as we have said, that the Lord threateneth, Rev. 3, that unless the

Laodiceans would be more zealous and amend, he would spew them out, that is, he would have no delight in them. For surely the Lord would as leave have us of another religion, as to be so luke-warm in his true religion. For as a stomach is easily brought to provoke a vomit by receiving somewhat that is lukewarm: so the Lord spueth as it were out of his stomach luke-warm professors, as them whom by no means he can brook, which is a most fearful thing. We know that the good father Eli, 1 Sam. 3, although otherwise no doubt he was the dear servant of God, was grieved for the sins of his sons, and mourned when the Ark of God was taken, was reproved by the holy Ghost, that he should love the glory of his sons more than the glory of God; because he did not more severely, and more zealously rebuke his sons, and in that there wanted in him that fervency of spirit, whereby he should have cut off his sons from their office; wherefore the hand of God did cut off his life, and deprived all his posterity of the Priesthood. Although this good man was offended, and grieved with the evils of his sons; yet his coldness in zeal brought upon him this plague.

Elias (whose zeal as much pleased the Lord, as the coldness of Eli displeased him) was of a fervent spirit; for when the Lord asked him where he had been, he answered: I have been zealous for the Lord God of Hosts sake, and when he complained, that he could find none which had not bowed unto Baal, the Lord vouchsafeth to comfort him, and telleth him, there be 7000, which never bowed their knees to him. Well, because he continued zealous in beating down Idolatry, the Lord came down visibly with a fiery Chariot, and fetched Elijah from earth to heaven.

We need not here speak of the great zeal of Moses, Phinehas, and other of the servants of God. We see and know the cause of this love in the man of God, was the pureness of the word. We heard in the first verse, that the

judgments of the Lord were righteous, we have heard in the second verse, that the testimonies of the Lord contained a special righteousness, we shall hear in the sixth verse, that the righteousness of the Lord is an everlasting righteousness, we may see in the seventh verse, that it made him delight in trouble, and in the eighth verse, that the righteousness of the Lord is everlasting. Wherefore doth he this? As we have already said to strengthen his Faith: for after he had said, that the rivers of tears through zeal and grief burst out of his eyes, he addeth and rehearseth these things. What shall we say, they are vain repetitions? Nay, we know the holy Ghost reproveth them Math. 6. We see then that in so oft commending the word of God, the Prophet showeth to us our unbelief, which he felt so much in himself. When do idle repetitions so much displease the Lord? Surely, when our tongues walk idly, and in our prayers we speak we know not what. But when a man's heart is full of sorrow, and fraught with grief of his sins, or earnestly longeth after a thing, then let us cry, Lord have mercy upon me, then let us pour out our spirits, and say: Son of David have mercy upon me: Lord I believe, help my unbelief. Thus when the heart is loath to be overcome of unbelief, and when it desireth to show forth his sorrow, or when God's children would exercise their Faith, or feel in themselves any rare joy, which they would gladly express, then they use many repetitions, as we may see both in the book of Chronicles and the Psalms, Praise ye the Lord, because he is good, for his mercy endureth forever: where we shall see in 26 verses this still repeated: for his mercy endureth forever. What shall we say now, that here is any needless repetition? No: well, we see here then, that we must not speak simply against repetitions, but in great wisdom of the Spirit, because the heart of the godly cannot satisfy itself with Faith and

feeling of God's promises, unless it breaketh forth as a fire into many speeches.

Hereby we know now, that the man of God here expresseth his faith, and we are to learn, that without some lively feeling of faith, of joy, or of grief, we are not to use oft repetitions, unless happily they be used to stir us up the more to these or such like. So cried the woman of Canaan, O Son of David have mercy upon me; and being rebuked, she still cried, O Son of David have mercy upon me. We would think it somewhat strange, and as a great matter, to see a poor body shoot out so many prayers at once, when they speak out of the abundance of their heart, which is stuffed with so many griefs and troubles.

[Thy word (saith the Prophet) is proved true.] It hath no changeable goodness, but hath in it an everlasting righteousness, serving for all ages, for all persons, and for all times. Men's opinions fail, the wisdom, strength and authority of man in time hath an end; but this Word is exceeding large, and never hath end.

[Thy word is proved pure.] Many would think this to be but a small commendation for the word of God: but come to a man when his mind is much troubled, and tell him of the word, and what pureness, what comfort will he find in it? Surely he will be as one that hath no taste in it, and as one that feeleth no more sweetness, than a sick man doth taste in a chip. And notwithstanding all that the word shall do to him, he will still follow his own ways, and go on forward in the devices of his own head. Do men then feel such infinite comfort in the word? So much is their comfort as is their faith: and so little is their faith, as little is their comfort.

Look into God's children, how greatly they lament their unbelief; look into David, look on Job; look on the late and blessed Martyr of God

Bradford, who almost in all his books, and in every meditation complaineth of his unbelief; notwithstanding that he was a man so rich in the graces of God, so thoroughly mortified to the world, so stayed in faith; and yet the nearer he came daily to Christ, the more he still crieth against unbelief. Wherefore Paul seeing this to be a common disease among all men, saith, This is a faithful thing, and worthy of all men to be remembered, That Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners: this is a faithful saying, with such like speeches, which the Apostle useth as preparatives to stir up our faith.

The pureness of the word is mentioned of the Prophet, when after he had lamented the miserable estate of the godly, and the great decay of godliness, he crieth out to the Lord, speedily to assist his children, saying. Help Lord (Psal. 12:4) for there is not a godly man left &c. and by and by he addeth verse 6. The words of the Lord are pure words, as the silver tried in a furnace of earth fined seven-fold. If we should imagine the purest silver, that is often tried, and serveth in the court for Princes, even so pure must we believe the word of God to be, which not seven times alone, but seventy times seven times hath been tried in the fire of adversity, and still hath remained most pure, and never could any corruption be found in it. We have seen good men as it were confounded, and yet comforted, and being tried are found to be pure.

The meaning of the man of God in that place is, try the word, as you do try the purest metals, with persecution, with torment, with contempt, or howsoever, I tell you the word is true, and this is mine only comfort, O Lord, that though the wicked rage, thy promise forever is unchangeable.

[Proved true.] What could deceive it? Could the Serpent in Paradise? No. What could wash it away? Could all the flood in the deluge? No. What

could consume it? Could all the fiery furnace of Gomorrah, of Egypt and of Babylon? No. Look from the first father of all, Adam unto this day, and how many servants the Lord hath died and sound pure; so many examples we have of the pureness of the word. This then we see is a word pure by proof. We esteem greatly of armor of proof, which neither the spear could pierce, nor the shot of gun batter, nor dart in any battle could bruise? Oh how hath the word encountered with Satan, and with all his adherents? How many darts of the worldlings hath it sustained, and never yielded? But as a sword of proof hath not only stricken off the heads of Satan, and of all heresies and schisms, but also hath mightily prevailed against powers, and authorities, and principalities in heavenly things. When we have an approved medicine, we think it a thing of great price, being such a one as never failed; but wheresoever it was laid, it wrought the seat: so, here is a tried medicine for the soul, which never did deceive any that use it a right. This is a most rare medicine and sovereign salve. For never sore was so great in man's soul, never malady so grievous, never corruption of sin so far gone, never was there any wound of conscience so desperate, which either this did not cure being used, or might have cured if it had been used.

This hath been tried, and is approved by all the sick souls that ever were, since the beginning of the world to this day, whereof some were delivered from many sores of their conscience, and many even rescued from the depth of their sorrows. We count him a tried friend and approved, which in no troubles that ever did befall us shrunk from us, and failed us, but stood us in all stead possible: but whom, I pray you, hath the Lord ever deceived us, that put their trust in him? Or in whom hath the word of the Lord ever failed? Which will stick with us to the end, which will save us from all evils, accompany us in all dangers, recover us in all infirmities, pity and

relieve us in all miseries, which will save us from hell, and will speak for us before the Judge, and plead our cause, and even whilst life lasteth, will still stand us instead. Wherefore seeing the word of God hath in it such excellency, that it taketh up all the delights of God's children, and the contempt thereof taketh up all the sorrows of the Saints of God; seeing for being eaten up with the zeal of God's word, whatsoever we lose in the outward man, we gain and are recompensed for it in the inward man; contrary to the eating zeal in all other things whatsoever, seeing the nearer we come to God in his word, and the further we go from ourselves, though we were thrown to the ground, we should be reedified; seeing, if we were tried in the furnace, we should find such an happy exchange, that as the gold we should lose no weight, but become more pure; seeing it only reneweth us in trouble, and we cannot more discredit the word of God, than ever to suffer it to be contemned, or not sufficiently esteemed, as becometh a thing of such perfection, glory, eternity, and exact righteousness; seeing it is such an armor of proof, so tried a medicine, so approved a friend: let us crave of God that he would open our eyes, and clear our understanding, that we loving it for these causes, may zealously be set on fire, and truly be grieved to see it contemned.

Thus we see how exact, how pure, how comfortable, how everlasting the word is. Thy righteousness (saith the Prophet) is an everlasting righteousness, Psal. 11, thou hast, O Lord, set down a perfect righteousness, which hath been, is, and shall be forever, one, and most constant, thine is the kingdom, the power, and the glory forever: thy hand is not shortened more than it hath been, thy word never could be accused, only let us say, Lord increase our faith: let us say, Lord give us the like faith of thy

servants, and we shall have like graces with them, though not in so large measure as they had.

—• **Verse. 141. - I am small and despised: yet do I not forget thy precepts.**

His meaning briefly is this: Lord, seeing thy word is so pure, I love it for its own cause, though nothing come withal; if thou wilt bestow anything else of thy servant, I thank thee; if not, I love it still; yea though I should suffer discredit for it, I am content. For I love thy word, because it is a pure word, and worthy to be loved, with what cross soever it be accompanied.

As the common proverb is; Truth may be blamed, but truth can never be ashamed, and iniquity may be covered for a time, but yet iniquity one day shall be discovered. It cannot be denied, that it is a singular blessing, which is said of our Savior Christ, to grow in favor with God and man, and to be loved of both, as it is reported of Samuel: because as it is, Eccles 7:3. A good name is better than a good ointment, and Prov. 22:1, is to be chosen above great riches, and loving favor is above silver, and above gold: neither can there come a more grievous cross to a liberal nature and stout person, than want of it. Howbeit, to search out the cause of discredit, we must always enter into it, whether our conscience telleth us that we suffer as well doers, not as ill doers. For even the very Heathen said; that a man's conscience is as a theater in the world. Wherefore if we suffer discredit justly because of sin, it is to be lamented: but when we have faith in God's promises, and a good conscience flowing from our faith, though we never so much be discredited, it is a small thing. Great is the love of ourselves, and great is the care which we have to maintain our credit. For many will be content to hazard their lives, which cannot be content to endanger their good name. For if a man live bereft of his good name, he had almost as live

be bereft of his life. And therefore Heretics, as the Family of love, give in precept: that they should rather die, than suffer the credit of their sect to fall. And no marvel: for they see no better life, neither do they feel any true comfort of God in their prosperity, neither can they truly call upon him in their trouble. Thus we see how a name is esteemed in the world.

This then is a true argument of zeal, even when we are despised and suffer discredit, still to bear good affection to the word. For many are lively and quick, whilst they are contented and well pleased, and whilst things have that success which they look for, who when they suffer discredit, are utterly cast down.

We see here the man of God is content to lose his credit, so God be not dishonored, and is ready to buy glory to the name of God with the loss of his own name. For he resteth in this, that though he may be misdeemed, and of the world ill-judged of, yet he hath a warrant in his conscience from the Lord, that he will depose for him; and howsoever for a time he beareth the reproach as an evil doer, yet the Lord will one day draw out his righteous dealing, and make it known to all men, Wherefore the Prophet saith, Psalm. 37. Fret not thyself, because of the wicked men, neither be envious for the evil doers, &c. And then he addeth, verse. 5. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and trust in him, and he shall bring it to pass, 6. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as a light, and thy judgment as the noon day. As if he should say, wait still on the Lord, and possess thy soul in patience, the Lord in time will put away the cloudy mists of ill reports, and will cause thy righteousness one day to shine as brightly as the Sun in the midday.

If we should consider the discredit of Noah, how he was accounted as a gazing stock to the old world; if we should think how Enoch was despised in his time, or how Lot was discredited among the Sodomites, or what

contempt Elijah suffered among the Idolaters in the age wherein he lived, with many other holy men, we would think it wonderful. Nay, if we would but consider but how this man of God David suffered reproach, contempt and discredit, we should much marvel. First, when he had the rarest gifts of all his brethren, and excelled them in the gifts of God, he was set to keep sheep in the field, when the rest were sent to advance themselves in the wars. Then, when he had slain the Bear, and was come among his brethren, where he saw the uncircumcised Philistine breathing out blasphemy against the Lord, and his people, and through Faith in God's promises and zeal of the spirit, could not abide him so to blaspheme the living God, marveling, that his brethren without great indignation should sustain it, he setteth upon the great Goliath, which when his brethren saw, in contempt they asked what that prin-cocke could do, and tell him, that it were more fit for him to deal with his sheep-hook, then to attempt to fight for so noble a victory. Besides, when as afterwards by his singular dexterity which he had, by playing on the Harp, he had appeased Saul's furious spirit, they could not cease to despise him, and opprobriously said of him, Is not this the son of Jesse? Then being offered one of Saul's daughters in marriage, they mocked him, by disappointing her of her dowry: afterwards, when he should have had the second daughter, who had her dowry appointed and allotted, every claw-back scorned him; yea Doeg (that was the herdsman) was suffered to slay the children of God: So David was fain to flee for succor to the Heathen kings, his own men contemning and forsaking him. And yet still he saith, I am small and despised, yet do I not forget thy word. Well, let us see, did not the Lord promote him, after he had thus continued in patience? We know the Lord made his righteousness glorious, and his good name to shine abroad, and his innocence to appear to all men after the death of Saul By

faith (saith the Apostle, Heb. 11:2.) our Elders were well reported of: whereof some are there said to be tried by mocking's and scourging's, verse. 36. We suppose (saith Paul) we are made a gazing stock, and the off-scouring of the world: yet he fainted not, because he knew that howsoever vile he was in the eyes of the world, yet the Lord delighted in him, the Angels of God in heaven, the Church of God's Saints on earth rejoiced in him, his own conscience felt joy and peace, through that patience wherein he possessed his soul. Wherefore our Savior Christ said to his Disciples, Matth 5. Blessed are ye, when men revile you, persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you for my sake falsely, &c. Wherefore let us learn that we are to fight daily against self-love, and love of our credit, and let us be as contented to give our names to the Lord, as we are to give him our goods, our lives and our countries. Let us offer all that we have to the Lord, of whom we have received it, and of whom in his good time we shall receive it again. Abraham gave Isaac his son to the Lord in sacrifice, and yet he received him again. So let us give our names to the Lord by what means soever he pleaseth to receive them. For many would be content to do so, if they might lease their name, because they have been famous in war, or have come by it by some noble sufferings: but to suffer discredit wrongfully, and as traitors, or rebels, and to have most false indictments in the face of the world proceed against us, so that people clap their hands at us, as notable malefactors or heretics, is a thing very difficult. But if our Savior Christ be contemned as a destroyer of the Temple, and Steven be accused to speak blasphemy against Moses, let us be content to lease our name as welldoers also, knowing that the Lord in time will take away the cloud which Satan as a vail doth put before us, who would persuade us, that when our name is gone, God seeth not, nor regardeth our righteousness. But

he that draweth the light to shine out of darkness, he can also in time deliver our names out of discredit. Do the wicked then think to obscure the glory of God's Martyrs? Noah, Lot, Elijah. and all the Saints and Martyrs of the Lord are most glorious, the Lord hath glorified them, we still praise them, and daily they are commended in the Church of God. Alexander the great, in all his royalty, nor Pompey, nor Caesar, nor Tully, have ever received such commendations in their greatest pomps, as have the dear Martyrs of God. And although with the Papists, we make them not as half God's to pray unto them, or as Angels to praise them, yet we praise God for them. Let us learn therefore to give our names freely to the Lord. Some men's sins, saith the Apostle, go before to judgment, and some men's follow after. Some men's sins go before, and the godly Magistrate seeth them, and punisheth them. Some men's sins come after, and shall be in time remembered and revenged, if they be not pardoned in the death of Jesus Christ.

Truth is the daughter of time, and in time all shall be revealed, whether it be good or ill; and all ill either in this world or in the world to come, shall be remembered, and come to reckoning, unless it be buried in Christ his passion. All good things either in this life with the Saints of God, or in the life to come among the Angels, shall have their praise and commendation.

For our trial then this is a true argument, that a man doth not love the word for riches sake, because if he were the poorest man in the world, he would love it still, and whilst he is rich, thinketh the word of God to be his greatest riches. This is an undoubted token that a man doth love the word for liberties sake, because if he were in captivity and imprisoned, he would still love the word, as well as if he were in the greatest liberty. This is a sure sign, that a man loveth not the word, because thereby he hath credit, when

he can be content to suffer discredit for the word, and yet love it as dearly, as if he had the credit and countenance of the whole world. We see it come to pass in all things; the better we mean, the worse we are thought of; yet if we still continue patient, it is a token that we love the word, because it is the word, and we love God, because he is God; we love Christ, because he is Christ. For if we can love the word, though we be in sickness, though we be in poverty, and suffer discredit, we love the word for the word his sake, and not for anything else whatsoever. If it cometh to us alone, it is welcome; if it come accompanied with other things, it is also welcome: as Eccles. 7, that wisdom is good with an inheritance, and excellent to them that see the Sun. For a man may then have indeed great occasion of well doing; yet wisdom will deliver the soul, and giveth life to the possessors thereof. So as though riches and inheritance will help well, being joined with godliness, to give testimony of a good conscience, yet though the man be an heir, it will not deliver his soul; this only the word of God can do, all the other things cannot do it. And therefore this is an unspeakable blessing of the word.

Thus we see how the Prophet loved not the truth for any outward respect, but for the approved pureness of it. We must likewise labor to deny ourselves and our good names, the too much love whereof is a great enemy to godliness.

Wherefore when we are discouraged to continue our love to the word, for fear of discredit, we are greatly to suspect our love. Many Princes and the chief Governors would follow our Savior Christ, but they were loath to lose their credit. Wherefore if in credit, prosperity and health, we love the word; and forsake it in discredit in time of adversity and sickness: it is a manifest token we loved it for our credits sake, for our prosperity, and for our health;

not for itself and the pureness of it; which was the only cause, why this man of God did love it.

—• **Verse. 142. - Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is truth.**

The brief meaning whereof is: Truth it is, that flesh and blood may think, that when contempt cometh for thy names sake, there were sufficient cause to forsake thy word: but Lord thy righteousness is not changeable, it is not one at one time, and another at another time, but it hath been, is, and shall be one and the same; and as there is one constant righteousness with thee, so the rule thereof is set down in thy word, which showeth us what righteousness thou requirest.

Here the man of God teacheth us, how to refell our own reason, which is as ready to be deceived, as Satan is ready to deceive it. For in trouble the devil will be ready to put this into our heads: this is, think you, the true righteousness, which you do profess? Do you not rather deceive yourself? See how you are in trouble: see what loss ye must sustain by your profession? Thus he would delude us, and make us as them that are in a burning ague, who having lost their taste, and their senses troubled, think sweet things sour, and sour things sweet. For such is the estate of God's children in trouble, who in stronger temptations cannot judge, and therefore the devil troubleth and oppresseth the weakness of their sense; as seeing reason most ready to be deceived, and will make them believe, that white is black, and black white; that sweet is sour, and sour sweet; good ill, and ill good.

Loe, here is then a remedy, in the sense of these words: Thou art not, O Lord, as man, who upon new occasions, maketh new laws; and upon evil disorders, maketh new orders: but thy righteousness is everlasting, which

was with thee from the beginning, which to this time hath been revealed, and shall be ever hereafter; therefore I will not yield to this temptation: for though I suffer for thy truth, yet it is the truth; neither can all the subtleties of Satan, or violence of man make it mutable. O rare gift of God to believe and acknowledge our immutable righteousness, and not to depend on men's devises or shifts, whereby they deceive themselves, as being too shadowish, fading and momentary. They are, laith the Prophet, plausible, but there is no solidity in them; they ebb and they flow: but thy righteousness (O Lord) is everlasting. Now whereas the devil himself, the Turk and Pope with other heretics cannot deny, but will confess and grant, that there is one only righteousness, constant and everlasting, that herein Christians differ from them, in that they say with the Prophet, Thy Law is truth. Thou hast set down an exact rule of all righteousness wholly in thy Law, concerning all things that thou commandest; and as I believe therefore thy righteousness to be everlasting, so I look for it in thy word; because that righteousness which is all one with thee, is made known and revealed to us, in thy written word.

We must then rest in this, that as in substance there is one righteousness; so God hath left his word, against the which heretics cannot prevail; because as God's righteousness is pure, everlasting and unchangeable, so his word hath set it down to us; which is as pure, everlasting and unchangeable. This is no small comfort in temptation, whereby we may be stayed: and whereas it may seem to some that in accessions and additions there was not one government both of the Jews and Christians; we must know, that they had one rule of regiment unto Christ, wherewith our last addition in substance is all one; so that when Satan and the men of the world will pull us from it, we may say, Thy righteousness is everlasting; and if they ask us how we know it, we answer, Thy word is truth.

This is then the thing wherein we differ much from heretics, for though they give as great and glorious titles to God's righteousness as we do; yet they will not with us acknowledge that God's word is truth. For as we see many men, that will come, and are driven to subscribe to these general speeches. That the righteousness of the Lord is everlasting, so they will easily be brought to discredit the word, whereunto they will not stand. For the Turk cleaveth to his dreams, the Pope to his traditions, the heretics to their revelations, the heathen to their fantasies, the worldlings to their policies.

[Thy word is truth.] 1. As there is one sure and never changing righteousness: so I will not clime up to heaven to seek for it there, I will not go down to the low places of the earth to seek it out there, neither will I descend into hell for it, but I will look for it in thy word, according to that, Deut. 30:11-14. This commandment which I command thee this day, is not hid from thee, neither is it far off: it is not in heaven that thou shouldest say who should go from us to heaven; neither is it beyond the sea &c. And Rom. 10:6. Say not in thine heart, who shall ascend into heaven who shall descend into the depth, &c.

Here then is the difference, between the heretics and Christians: Idolaters will have God's word, but joined with their traditions; heretics will have the word, but with their revelations: But we say, that it is all perfect, it is a through truth, and all truth, having nothing too much, nor anything too little. For it were a disgrace to add or detract from it, to ascribe excess or defect to it. So the Prophet his sense is this: Seeing I go not to the right hand or to the left, though I am contemned; yet herein I stay myself, because thou hast one righteousness, which thou hast certainly set down in thy word, how thy children shall be governed by it?

Here we may also see the infinite wisdom and goodness of God, because otherwise, what misery should we have been in, seeing so many heads, there would have been so many religions? Wherefore the Lord hath set down one perfect rule to govern all, wherein nothing is either abounding or wanting. Our Savior Christ saith John 17. Father, sanctify them, thy word is truth. Father sanctify them, and sever them out being thine, with the word; it is true. Saint James saith, We are begotten by the pure word: this is that sword of the spirit, which heretics cannot abide, and putteth Satan to flight, and giveth us an happy issue, and speedy out-gate in all our troubles and temptations if we stay upon it.

This doctrine is as necessary also for manners: every wicked man will confess the word to be true, yet if we come to examine their life they will fail: for if they were persuaded that the word were truth, how durst they live so profane, such swearers, such murderers, such adulterers, such thieves, and such slanderers? So that we must needs confess that the word for doctrine preserveth us from heresies, and for life saveth us from many corruptions. We must then labor that the word may have a credit in our consciences, that we may not only confess God to be true, merciful, just and righteous, which every offscouring of the world may do, but let us believe, that all is truth, mercy, justice and righteousness, is sufficiently set down in the word, which word the Lord hath set down for all us to believe and to obey.

—• **Verse. 143. - Trouble and anguish are come upon me: yet are thy commandments my delight.**

See here is a further thing. The sense then of the words is this. Seeing thy righteousness is constant, and there is one constant rule of it; therefore, where besides my contemning I feel also trouble. I do not only forget thy

word, but also much delight in it. See a rare gift in the man of God: for this is a singular gift of God, not only in anguish to be heavily troubled, but also to be comforted; not to do good heavily, but to do it cheerfully.

In that he useth as it were a doubling of the word trouble and sorrow, he showeth his grief to be the greater. It is a hard matter not to forget God in trouble, but a far greater matter then to have a delight and a pleasure in the word, yet so it is that if we can come near the one, we shall also come near the other. Here is our strength, if we forget not the word, and nourish not unbelief, joy and delight will come after; because it is the mercy of the Lord inwardly to recompense that which outwardly he detracteth from us.

Thy word is my delight, or my delight is in thy word. This is the same that the Apostle reporteth of himself, Rom. 7:22. I delight in the law of God concerning mine inner man. The way to come to this, is to fight against unbelief, and to believe the word is most pure and holy. It is a singular comfort to us, though our mind be troubled, when we should do good; yet to do it, since after we have done it, it leaveth a pleasure behind in contrariwise how sweet soever sin is in committing, the pleasure will depart, but the sting of sin remaineth with us still. And surely it is a great quickening to a man when he doth do well. True it is that this quickening cometh from the peace of conscience: But when we cannot only rejoice in the forgiveness of sins, but feel a special comfort arise when we do well, this is a double quickening. For what can be more comfortable, then to be fruitful in good works in time of trouble? When did faith, love, patience, constancy, meekness, and boldness, more abundantly flourish in the Church than in trouble? In prosperity we defer and delay from day today, from tomorrow to next day to do well; but when the hand of the Lord is upon us, it setteth us forward to the work This then must mitigate our grief in time of

trouble, and make us jealous of our prosperity, because we are fuller of the exercise of well-doing in trouble than otherwise. Besides a preacher may better persuade good things in time of trouble, than in prosperity. Well, as it is a general rule in all things that a good beginning is as good as half done: so as it is in all godliness, likewise is it in this part of godliness. What is the cause, why men cannot come to this joy in trouble, even because in the very entrance of it, they straight forget the word, and so they either despair, or use unlawful means. This is a thing needful to be considered of. For if a man be in trouble, and hath nothing to overmatch it, then his trouble will over-quell him. For why do men in trouble lay violent hands on themselves, but because they have nothing in their minds to comfort them, and therefore they fall to desperate means, Wherefore God's children should soon despair, were it not, that they felt comfort in the remission of sins, and stay themselves on a godly security in God his promises and providence, and in a holy courage to be delighted in well-doing. For the godly, whose only stays in trouble, are faith and a good conscience, are brought by their affliction to a sight of their sin, to a desire to have them pardoned, to a feeling of God his mercy in hearing their prayers, to a hatred of their sins. Thus if we can support our faith in God's promises, we shall rejoice in trouble. When heretics suffer for their illusions, and being taught of man, they quickly shrink: but when Satan deludeth them with strange fantasies, they are ready to suffer much. Do we know that heretics will suffer for their illusions, and shall not we much rather suffer for the truth? And yet we see the Lord maketh a distinction between their sufferings and our martyrdoms: For Christians through faith can sing Psalms in the midst of the flame, heretics by their roaring show they have no such joy. It stands therefore upon us even now to be jealous of our prosperity, and to bestow the time

which we have, in well-doing, and strive against sin. For we shall break the first wall by this, and so come with joy to the other. And as the word is a comfort in trouble, so is it a bridle from sin in prosperity. For as it doth not let us fall in trouble, so also it bridleth us from sin in prosperity. For to this end we read and hear the word, that in prosperity it should subdue sin, and in adversity it should minister comfort. But what is the judgment of God upon them that know not the word? If they be in health, they seek for nothing but for pleasures, for profit, and for gain, and think whatsoever they do to be lawful; yea admonish a man of his covetousness by the word, yet will he not repent, until either thieves, or fire, or some other judgment of God utterly consume him; but he will object, why should I not get riches? Why should I not maintain my gain? Admonish a thief at his liberty of his theft, and it prevaieth no more than if ye should tell him a story, until woeful experience teach him the truth of it by the prison or by the halter.

There is no hope to any profit to persuade the adulterer, until some plague of God have wrought upon him. So we see, when fire is on our houses, when we must go to prison, or yield to any other calamity, men wring their hands, tear their hair, and rent their clothes, crying for woe to themselves and saying they cannot live, they will not be seen in the world, they are ashamed to look their friends in the face, and why? Because they have no feeling of the joys of the life to come, they have no stay on God's providence, they feel no comfort in his promises; but they curse, they moil and pine away with sorrow. If we see then the great mercy of God in staying us from sin in time of prosperity, and in adversity telling us, that he doth not punish us in wrath, but in love: and as a father doth teach us the contempt of this world, the desire of the world to come, faith in his promises, patience and repentance: let us reverently esteem the word.

—• **Verse. 144. - The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting, grant me understanding, and I shall live.**

In repeating the same again, which he had said before, the man of God here useth two words, the righteousness of thy testimonies: whereas before he useth this one word: thy righteousness: so that he meaneth here nothing else, but the righteousness of God revealed to us in his word. For they be called testimonies, both in respect that they be records of God's love towards us, as also they are testimonials of our obedience towards God. So the words may bear this sense: true it is Lord, that that part of thy word, where in thou hast comforted us with thy promises, is everlasting; and that part of thy word, wherein thou hast set down our duties, is also everlasting.

[And I shall live.] That is, what do men desire but life? That I may live therefore in godly pleasure, Lord teach me to understand thy testimonies. See the man of God doth rest his life in this understanding of the word. They then that are ignorant are dead in sin, Ephes 2. They sit in the shadow of death, Luk. 1, they are bound in the chains of sin, as Paul witnesseth of the widows that live delicately. For as we call him a man of death, on whom not the Judge, but the law, or not the law but the fact hath already given judgment: so they are subject to the spiritual death, on whom not God but his word, or not the word, but the sin hath pronounced guilty. What is then life? Surely this was life, the estate wherein Adam lived before he fell, his other life afterward, which now is common to us, is a death, and we in him are all dead. For when there was no sin, there was no shame: when there was no shame, there was no trouble, when no trouble, no death. Wherefore sin bringeth in shame, trouble, and death, and hath left us dead spiritually, by cutting us off from God. For as a civil life is when we are obedient to the civil laws; so we live in God, when we live according to his law. And as he

is dead civilly, that by transgressing the laws of the realm, hath cut off himself from the common people: so we are spiritually dead, when sin hath cut us off from God.

The Prophet Habakkuk saith chap. 2:4. He that lifteth up himself, his mind is not right in him. Where the Prophet showeth, that though a man for a time swell, not having an upright heart, yet afterward he suddenly vanisheth away, as a bubble of water: for as a bladder with the wind is soon drawn out; so the ungodly with conceit of his reason seemeth to be puffed up, but all is but inconstancy.

The just man saith the Prophet shall live by faith, not by works (as some would dream) for all the shift of them that will be righteous in themselves, will be as a bubble of water; but the just man believing the forgiveness of sin, looking for everlasting life, staying himself on the promises and providence of God, hath true soundness in him. He shall live, saith the Prophet, noting perpetuity of time. So the man of God his meaning is, I shall live. i.e., perpetually and forever. We see then the great mercy of God, that cometh by the knowledge of the Word, in that we find how he delivereth us from wrath, and taketh us into his favor: he rescueth us from sin, and clotheth us with righteousness: he taketh from us death, and restoreth to us life. But mark who speaketh these words; doth this man of God attain to such an heroic spirit, as to cry, grant me understanding? And shall we think ourselves sufficiently rich, well sighted, and that we are so well clothed, that we need no such prayer? We are like the Laodiceans, who hearing the word were neither hot nor cold: Seeing then we are rather Laodiceans, than David's; we must cry, Lord give us understanding, that we may live.

Then let us learn by other men's harms, which is a princely and heroical kind of teaching. For as Princes children are taught themselves in their own persons, but are not beaten, seeing rather others beaten before them: so the Lord preacheth to our persons, but punisheth other persons round about us, sparing us, that we by their sins and stripes may learn to amend and to repent in prayer.

There is a winter after harvest, after heat cold, and it is usual with the Lord to temper his blessings most sweet, with some crossings most sour. Wherefore let us pray with our Prophet for the understanding of God his word, not only to be bettered in our minds, but also reformed in our lives. Then no devil, no hell, no plague, no pestilence, shall hurt us; yea those troublesome trials, which unto others are testimonies of God his wrath; shall be unto us seals of his love: which although the world cannot discern, yet by faith we shall both find it and feel it.

PORTION. 19.

—• **Verse. 145. - I have cried with mine whole heart: hear me, O Lord, and I will keep thy statutes**

—• **Verse. 146. - I called upon thee: save me, and I will keep thy testimonies.**

In the last verse of the former part he set down the righteousness of Gods law, he prayed therefore that he might have understanding and live; and therefore they that are ignorant have no life in them, because life is only revealed in the word. Sinners then having not received the word, are dead: for the life of sin is the death of man. And our first father was dead when he had sinned, and they who lived in pleasure, and all other sinners are dead; though they for a while prolong their life on earth, yet at death the soul

goeth to hell, and waiteth there for the body: and this curse waiteth on all,
Cursed are all that continue not in all things, &c. and after God's great
suffering they shall be cut off.

He knew that the beginning of this life was in the word, and he also knew that the continuance of it, was in the word, by the grace of God; and therefore he labored to have it increased by the word, because he was convinced by his infirmity that he might lose it, as Adam did: and therefore he seeketh to finish the course of his salvation with fear.

If David whose zeal had consumed him did yet in this sort pray, how much more ought we, which for every light trouble are discouraged in our duty.

He prayeth for the understanding of the word, because the devil will be ready to allure us from the word, if we be inclined thereto: as he dealt with Christ, when he laid our scripture against it. And yet he liketh not of those that rest in the literal sense, but he craveth the spirit to teach him according to the word: for the spirit quickeneth, and flesh and blood doth not reveal these things; and all that are of God, must be taught of God, Isa. 54, yet always agreeable to the word.

Now in this part he prayeth that he may have understanding and ease from his trouble: this request he groundeth on these reasons: first, of his earnestness, in the four first verses: secondly, in respect of his enemies, in the sixth verse: and thirdly, in respect of God's mercies, in the fifth, seventh and eight verses.

In the four first verses he setteth down his earnest desire and zeal that he had, and he prayeth that he may have a good conscience, in the first verse; and faith in the promises, in the second verse: teaching that these two were all the comfort that he had in trouble, when he suffered for well-doing, and had his sins forgiven, and had the favor of God.

Then if we will stand in trouble, let us labor to be grounded on the promises of forgiveness of sins, of a new life, of his fatherly providence;

and let this purge us from sin: and if we can do this, then nothing shall separate us from God, as Paul saith Rom. 8, and again he saith, there is no condemnation to them that are in Christ, for they have his spirit to purge them from sin, and to strengthen their faith.

The want of these causeth men to step back, and the weakness of our faith and the carelessness of these causeth such fear in God's children, and such shrinking: for the devil layeth their sins to their charge, which they see not discharged, and their faith is weak, and therefore they are diving up and down. And surely trouble must come to all, for so it is ordained, though to some less than others: and therefore when it cometh, we are faint, if we have not been careful to keep a good conscience, and to strengthen our faith. But if we have done thus, then shall death be pleasant unto us, for we shall be blessed, Apoc. 12, and our works shall follow us, that is, our faith and the fruits of our faith.

Again if we suffer for our sins &c. then we want faith and a good conscience, and therefore we murmur and cry out, yea and go to witches and wizards. Yea God's children, though they come not to this gross sinning, yet they inwardly grudge, and they have secret murmurings, because they have failed in strengthening their faith, and keeping a good conscience: but the children of God that make Christ all in all, they say the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh, this is the patience of God's children. And Job did not fail, till his faith failed: and though his three learned adversaries reasoned against him to prove him a hypocrite, yet his conscience sustained him, and therefore reckoneth up his virtues, chapter 28, and 31. And he also confessed his faith, I know that my Redeemer liveth: this was his faith, and this was his conscience that in his trouble sustained him.

These things have no less fruit in prosperity; for the want of them cause men to lift up themselves on high, but the word represseth pride, lust, and love of worldly things; so that they are humble in prosperity: for the worldlings seek after the things of this world, because they never felt the peace of conscience; they seek their own glory, because they never felt what the glory of God was, and never seek knowledge; because they know not what the soul is. Yea the children of God, because they labor not continually to keep a good conscience, and to strengthen their faith, they are carried away with the love of earthly things, after the example of the wicked: for prosperity is as a flood which carrieth all things with it, and as well good as bad; and therefore they are often carried away with the love of these outward things.

But the children of God which do diligently labor after these things, they behave themselves so, as that God may be glorified by their prosperity and adversity: for in prosperity they chiefly set by the forgiveness of sins, and everlasting life, and if these be once sure then for other things if they have them, they take them as overplus of his favor, and confess that wisdom is good with an inheritance: yet if these things come not, the fear of God and his word is never the less acceptable, and can be content to say with Jacob, if I may have meat and drink and clothe, then will I be content, as Paul commandeth. And if they have abundance, then they are in the house of mourning, knowing that those things may be taken away, Eccles. 7. And thus we see Job walked warily even in the midst of prosperity. Though men know this, yet because they do not practice it, therefore it ought to be often repeated, and this shall take excuse from the wicked, and it is safe for the children of God.

In the four first verses are generally set down his care and zeal: first, his zeal and fervency: secondly, his truth without hypocrisy: thirdly that he desired nothing, but agreeing to God's will, that he might keep God's commandments: fourthly, his perseverance: fifthly, his faith, his patience, and hope: sixthly, the means to confirm his faith: seventhly, the meditation of God's judgments to confirm his faith.

He devoured not his griefs, nor nourished his unbelief, but sought the remedy thereof by the promises of God. And this often cometh to pass that men have wants, and yet bite on the bridle, and therefore they obtain not, because they have not faith to pray, Jam. 1, as the Israelites did long bite on the bridle, and at last cried and were helped: therefore it is a great grace, when we can make our wants known by prayer.

These properties of prayer are necessary, for certain Heretics, which reason, either God will give, or not give; and if he will, we need not ask; if he will not, it is vain to ask. But we might answer, that then the prayers of God's children in the Scriptures, and the precepts of prayer are not in vain. Again, the promises of God were in vain, which are made to our prayers: or else they might be fed without bread, and do other things without means. But God hath appointed us to pray, that he might try our obedience, and that he might give his blessing to us: so that we must use that, if we will attain his mercy.

His fervency is noted by crying, which noted the earnestness of the affection, not the loudness of the voice. The voice is loud when it cometh to God, as Anna and Samuel are said to cry, and yet they speak not: so the blood of Abel cried. Paul Rom. 8 teacheth what this crying is, namely, the earnest desire of the heart, which is the prayer in the spirit: Ephes. 6, and 1 Thes. 1, he prayeth for the spirit, as the most secret part of their heart, as

Mary: My soul rejoiced, and my spirit &c. And thus it ought to be, because God is a spirit. James in the last chapter noteth it by ferventness, which is commended Rom. 12, then we must labor that our most secret parts may be occupied, when we pray to God. Then he rebuketh coldness of prayer: for all men do know that God is the giver of all things, and therefore all pray, yea Heretics and worldly men will pray, yet many prayers are customary and of fashion.

This zeal may be come to, if we crave of God the feeling of our wants; as the want of meat causeth the stomach to desire meat; and hereof cometh fervency (Rom. 8.) and our wants must be considered in respect of ourselves, or of others: and not only in affliction, but also in prosperity, whose baits have caused God's children to take as great wounds at Satan, as ever they did in adversity. And prosperity will make a man careless and proud, and vainglorious; as adversity doth make a man despair; and a man is in as great danger in prosperity, as in adversity. Therefore we have as great need to complain in prosperity, as in adversity. And therefore though some of great judgment have thought, that O Lord have mercy on us, and make haste to help us, and such like prayers, being made in the adversity of the church, ought not to be used now in this prosperity. Yet I dare not discredit the judgment of the ancient in this respect, seeing that it may at all times be made with profit, if there be understanding; for there is ever need to make this prayer, and therefore it may with profit be made.

Our wants must be considered either in ourselves, or in others: and in ourselves, either in respect of faults in us, or of good things which we want: and in others, either in respect of the whole state, or of some particular persons. And for our sins we have ever great need to pray, and the great barrenness of good things ought to force us unto prayer. And the great

wants which we see in ourselves, as the emptiness of good things: and again, the great danger of the temptation of the flesh, the world and the devil. And therefore when Christ had taught his Disciples to pray for the forgiveness of sins, in the next words he biddeth them pray for the deliverance from temptation. Now our Creed teacheth us to believe that our sins are forgiven us; and we have need to pray, Lead us not into temptation: therefore even after we believe the forgiveness of sins, we may be tempted to evil: and so Peter, so soon as he had confessed Christ to be the son of God, was tempted to dehort his Master from suffering; yea, to deny him, as he did indeed. And therefore whilst they have not looked to this, the children of God, when they have most flourished, have foully fallen: as Noah, when he had been delivered from the flood by the Ark, yet fell into drunkenness. So Adam, Lot, Peter, and others. Therefore these manifold infirmities of our souls ought to move us to pray. And as the soul hath in it the root of all sin, so the body hath in it the root of all diseases: and therefore to pray against sudden death, which hath sometime reigned in the Church, though now we be free from it, and manifold diseases, which now we are subject to; these things seeing they are in ourselves, therefore in respect of ourselves we have need to pray.

Again, the manifold necessities and wants of the Church both in spiritual and temporal graces, the wants of our wives, whom we have received of God, so we must yield to God again: also the wants of our children, and such like, ought to move us continually to pray. But those covetous men which live and die to themselves, shall once see what need they had to pray, and feel the want of their prayers.

Again, if we had no need at all to pray, yet where is our zeal to God's glory? How should we be moved, when we see God dishonored by the

wicked lives of many, and also by the heresies which do greatly flourish?

Also the dullness of our wit, and weakness of memory, and other gifts of the mind, which are often greatly weakened, and often taken away: these ought to move us to pray that they may be continued with us.

Also in prosperity, for then the devil doth move us to presume, as he moveth to despair in adversity: and he prevaleth by accusation of sin in adversity, against none, but those which have presumed in prosperity.

Again, in our goods, the danger of fire, thieves, &c: that we are in. And if we think that we can by wisdom be wary, then we deceive ourselves: for the most wary have been deceived.

Also in our journeys, the danger that we are in: likewise in our names, we have great cause to be careful: for that an ill name commonly followeth the profession of the Gospel: and therefore in the Psalmist they often pray against false tongues, especially that God may be glorified by their good names.

Also the want of wives, children, servants, and every man in that calling wherein he is, as the Minister in his calling, as Paul: who is sorry and I am not sorry? And the Magistrates in their circuits, when either they are sluggish themselves, or for want of laws, cannot do what they would.

Also the untowardness of our kindred, whereby we are often discredited.

Likewise, when we have enemies, we have need to pray that we be not circumvented by them, and also we must pray for them.

Then in the Church we shall see such scarceness of Preachers, such a company of Heretics, and other wants, as if the communion of Saints be dear to us, must needs move us to pray.

The Common-wealth also, being subject to privy conspiracy, and for rain war whereby it might be overthrown: these, if men be lovers of their

country, will teach them what need they have to pray.

Then if we see these wants, we must pray that God will touch us with the feeling of them, and also that he would make us thankful for turning so many judgments from us, and so many mercies to us.

With my whole heart. That is, without hypocrisy he laid it out before the Lord, that he might receive help from him. And this the Lord requireth in our prayers. For though many do pray and yell, yet because they pray with great corruption, and have not poured out their heart, therefore they have not been heard. The heart of man is most unsearchable, and no man can find it out, but the Lord discloseth it. And therefore neither we, nor others can see it, Jer. 17:9.

This may appear by those that immediately upon the fact, or when punishment is upon them, will be sorry: but a little after, when the shame and punishment is past, then are they no more touched with it. So when we are sick, when we are in danger of any loss, we seem to pray with our whole hearts: yet after we remember not our vows, which showeth that we examined not our hearts.

As the Lord doth search the heart, so doth his word: for all things are open to it, and it revealeth the secret corners and hypocrisy of our hearts, if we will apply it to us, and not think that the word is spoken to others. As we cannot see our face but in a glass: so we cannot see our hearts without the word. And if in the word we will see our hearts, then must we bring them to the presence of God: for he hateth hypocrisy, and will be worshipped in truth, and therefore we must be true Israelites. For, seeing that we have to do with God, we must come in fear and truth: for the Angels cover their faces, Isaiah 6, and God's people even when they had joyful messages yet feared, and said they should die; because they had seen the Lord; as we see

in Daniel, Zacharie, Mary, &c. at the presence of an Angel, much more of God. A natural subject feareth when he seeth his Prince, especially when he hath made a fault: so we if we bring ourselves to God's presence, we shall be greatly humbled; as the man of God doth Psalm. 139, which is most notable for this purpose. And this counsel giveth David to his enemies, Psal. 4. Tremble and sin not. And 1 Cor. 5. Paul approveth himself to God in all things, because all must appear before God. And Act. 23, he believeth that the Lord will come to judge the quick and dead, and therefore he laboreth to keep a good conscience. And surely if we could do this, to set God before us in all our thoughts, words, and deeds, with fear, as he is a glorious God; and with love, as he is our God in Christ: we should fly from sin, because if we should sin, it would be revealed unto us, and we should also be in some measure prepared to perform the good, and avoid ill.

When he prayeth that he may keep God's statutes, he showeth that he desireth nothing but that which is agreeable to God's will. So must we in our prayers first desire the things that are for the glory of God, and those things that are good for us; according to his good pleasure, whether it be to receive mercy, or to have punishment turned from us.

This is the cause why we obtain not, because we ask amiss. Jam. 4. Many ask things not agreeable to God's will, and yet have them; as heretics, idolaters, witches, thieves, &c. yet they obtain not these things in mercy, but to their further condemnation; which he granteth to his children for their good. Thus he gave quail to the Israelites, yet he sent leanness to their souls, which turned to their destruction. And thus have heretics, &c. their evil requests granted. This is the greatest sign of God's wrath, when by these things he prepareth them to their just destruction. This then is no argument

that we should ask things contrary to his will. As their faith is evil, so they have according to their faith.

—• **Verse. 147 & 148. - I prevented the morning Light and cried, &c. Mine eyes prevent the night-watches, &c.**

We may note his great diligence in resorting often to prayer, and his sundry times frequenting of it. In which diligence, for our instruction, let us observe three things. First, often asking. Secondly, Wisdom in this often asking. Thirdly, cheerfulness in asking.

First, we know, they that are diligent in prayer, will ask often, and can hardly satisfy themselves in their desires, as we may note in the Prophet, by these former and such like speeches: where we must learn thus much. We must not be content to use one sigh, or one groan, and away, or a few words, and then think we have prayed well, but we must be importunate with God.

That this holy importunity is to be used, we may see by our Savior Christ's words, Luk. 21:36. Watch and pray continually: and by the Apostles exhortation. 1 Thess. 5. Pray continually; in which places the holy Ghost commendeth assiduity in prayer. Wherefore God often denieth us our requests, because we use not to pursue and prosecute them with servant prayer. For if we have prayed twice or thrice for one thing, and yet are not heard, but receive as it were the repulse, we straightway surcease, and leave off our prayers: contrary to the practice of this man of God; who would not suffer any repulse, but still continued his prayer both morning and evening. So that we are to know, that if we will obtain mercy, God will sometime defer his grant to try us, whether we ask carefully or no, whether we truly and reverently esteem of the thing prayed for, whether we believe thoroughly his mercies and promises, and whether we will as thankfully use

it, when we have it, as we did carefully pray for it, before we had it. (Luk. 18:1,2)

The Lord cannot away with our cold asking, and when we give but one sigh, and there comes sometime one tear, which is as the tear of an harlot; he seeth that we feel not our wants thoroughly; we esteem not of his mercies reverently; we make not our request earnestly; and therefore he sendeth us often as empty away as we came.

We must then give the Lord no leisure to be free, but prosecute our prayers with importunity, as did the Widow mentioned in the Gospel.

But we must remember in our often prayer, to use the wisdom of the spirit, which was the second thing observed in diligent prayer.

For some use prayer often, who wanting heavenly discretion, turn it to their own discommodity. For some have perverted most wickedly these places before alleged, through too strict a consideration of the assiduity of prayer, and thought that they might give over all their callings in an active and cruel life, and wholly and continually bestow all time on prayer. But this was too preposterous a diligence, which that we may avoid, it shall be true wisdom, so to divide the times and seasons, as we may impart those times on prayer, which most may make for God's glory, and which best make for our calling. And for those places of our Savior Christ and the Apostle, wherein we are commanded to pray continually: the meaning is, that we should always be ready and affected to pray, in prosperity and adversity, and at all seasons fit for prayer, that is, when the Lord doth call us to it, and our estate doth require it.

This doctrine is easy to be heard, but hard to be practiced. Well; then this is true wisdom to choose the Sabbath wholly to be spent in the word and prayer from morning to night: and so to divide the seasons in the other days

of the week, as with David and Daniel, we may pray at morning, noontide, and evening, and that therewith we have a special care to bestow the rest of our time in walking in our calling. For as there is a time of hearing, so there is a time of putting that in use which we have heard: as there is a Sabbath for God's own worship; so there is six days for us to labor in: and as there is a time of praying; so there is also a time of practicing. Neither would the Lord have us always reading, hearing, or praying; but after we have read, heard, and prayed, to show forth the fruit of them in our conversation to his glory. And as heretics in the primitive Church, and since that time Monks and Friars have labored to teach a continual praying; so even at this day Satan bewitched the hearts of many with that persuasion; wherefore we must know, that the Lord will have obedience, rather than sacrifice, and mercy more than burnt offerings. For why do we hear, but to learn obedience? And why do we pray, but to put our prayer in practice? Or why have we knowledge, but to use it to God's glory? Neither doth that saying of our Savior Christ to Martha withstand this doctrine, although many heretics have both objected and perverted this place, to make it serve their purpose; who falsely allege the place, saying, Mary hath chosen the better part; whereas the true words are, Mary hath chosen the good part: in which place Martha was not reprov'd in that she was a good housewife, or for that she entertained Christ; but for overmuch laboring in her housewifery and entertainment, at such time as she should have been better occupied. Neither was Mary commended for that she did nothing but hear and pray; but for her wisdom, in hearing Christ carefully at that time when he preached; and in that she knew, that Christ did less care, and would be better satisfied, though her provision was more slender, than that to more solemn preparation, they should neglect the doctrine, which was the food of

their souls. Otherwise it must be supposed, that Mary was as careful an housewife as Martha, for else undoubtedly our Savior Christ would not have so commended her for wisely discerning the times, especially seeing the holy Scriptures count them worse than infidels, which will not provide for their families.

But this doctrine is sweet to them that maintain it, that thereby they might avoid all laborious callings, and all crosses which commonly accompany the same. For it is the subtle policy of Satan, when he cannot get us to neglect prayer, to endeavor to bring us preposterously to use and frequent prayer, by causing us to lay aside our callings; which according to God's holy ordinance we had professed: wherefore let us labor in this wisdom of the spirit wholly to take up the Sabbath to the Lord, and so divide our other times, as we may still persevere in our callings, which if we do, we shall have better motions, and not incur so dangerous opinions as we should do, if we gave ourselves to continual reading and praying. But shall we speak of this doctrine in this our age, which rather needeth a spur than a bridle? Wherein many pray but obtain not, because they are not diligent: many hear but are fruitless, because they use no diligence. For besides that they want this wisdom of the Sabbath, that that is appointed for the growing of their souls, is spent in worldly cares. These kind of men have their souls very barren, who neither use the Sabbath, nor redeem other times of their callings, to bestow anything in hearing or praying: or if happily they do hear, they rather make it a matter to carpe at, than to be instructed by it. These men as they will hear no true things, so they will hear false; and though they will mark no good things, yet they will mark ill things: not that there is anything false or ill in the word; but in that as to an humble spirited man the Lord maketh the word the savor of life unto life: so unto them that

are ill minded, the Lord maketh it the savor of death unto death, and giveth them over in the pride of their hearts unto Satan, that he may delude them; by deceivable colors For many will be ready in hearing to snatch at this and that, if anything may make to cloak their licentiousness; who as they have itching ears, and greedy minds to hunt after evil: so by the just judgment of God, they fall into the misunderstanding of the word. And to speak the truth, do we think that the devil like a roaring Lion compasseth us about, the flesh daily rebelleth against the spirit, the world continually fighteth against us, are we truly conscious of that ignorance which ouerwhelmeth us, and guilty of those manifold temptations which daily overcome us, and shall we not think that there is great need to use the means to withstand these, which is the word and prayer? Nay, God's children notwithstanding they use prayer fervently, and accustom themselves to the word diligently, feel the devil so strong, the flesh so subtle, the world so deceivable, that they think not the Sabbath sufficient; but redeem all time possible, to bestow in the means to withstand their assaults. Besides, if we must needs eat every day to preserve natural life, needs must we give ourselves to the word and prayer every day, to preserve that life which we have in Christ Jesus. Two sermons on the Sabbath are not sufficient for a man to feed on all the week after, if he be well acquainted with his own wants, if he truly consider of his dangers.

Our Savior Christ willeth us, if we will obtain, to ask earnestly, if we will find, to seek diligently, if we will enter, to knock continually. Furthermore, this wisdom of the spirit must teach us to bestow that time in God's worship, which is most fit in respect of God's glory, and our own estate: wherefore the children of God will not omit the morning, as being the fittest time for all good things.

Human wisdom teacheth, that in all things, wherein is any commendation and excellency, the morning time especially is to be spent. The student for his study, the worldling for his devising counteth this time again. Yea the drunkard, saith the Prophet riseth early to be filled with wine. Wherefore if the word and prayer be our chiefest pleasures; if the belly and the meat shall perish in time, but the word will make our souls continue forever, seeing without it our souls cannot live, and in respect of it all other things are but hang-byes and accessories: then true wisdom to attain to it, will make the best choice of the morning. And if in things which are agreeable to nature, we serve morning as a help to bring things to pass in, much more had we need to use such helps in those things which are less agreeable to nature, above nature, yea contrary to nature; as is prayer, and the spiritual understanding of the word.

Nature and experience teach us, that our memory is quickest, our senses are readiest, our natural powers ablest in the morning for meditation, because our mind is then free from ill, vain, and worldly thoughts; our memory is renewed and hath recovered far greater strength; our senses are not inveigled with any outward things; our natural powers being revived, have then their greatest liberty. Wherefore seeing by nature we are not capable of the word; but it goeth with nature as against the stream or against the hair: how necessary is it in the morning that the first thing to come to our eyes should be the temple of the Lord; the first thing to our ears, his word, and to season our minds with meditation of the same: so that we may walk with Elijah all the day after, in the strength of those things, which out of the word of God we have heard or read. And although no time is unfit for the word and prayer: yet now we speak not simply what time is fit, but what time rather is most fit herein to be used.

On the contrary, when we have been travailing in our worldly business, many things have occupied our senses, and after much travail, we provoke our appetite to receive meat; and after much laboring, and much eating joined with weariness, much dullness creepeth upon us, which hardly will admit us with any good profit to hear the word of God. For even God's children though they strive by all means, that they become not oppressed with meat and drink; and yet they feel after their repast, a natural heaviness and dullness, which maketh them less able and fit to receive the word with readiness and reverence. For to the receiving of the word and prayer, two things especially are necessary: that is, a prepared mind before we begin; and an examination, that meditation with ourselves after we have ended: else, if we come hand over head, as good never a whit as never the better. True it is indeed, that as a man going continually in the sun shall in time have a black hew: so in oft hearing a man may attain to some knowledge, but he shall never without this true preparation and examination of his heart attain to the soundness of judgment. Most needful it is with prepared minds to come to the word and prayer; because when we hear the word, the Lord cometh down into the Church as it were among us; and when we pray, we mount up as it were to heaven among the Angels: wherefore we are not to come to so high a banquet with unwashed hands, nor to draw near to the marriage, without our wedding garment; but we must take heed, with what foot we enter into the house of the Lord, lest happily we offer the sacrifice of fools. For fools think they have done well, when they have given their bodily presence, when they have heard and prayed as others do, never preparing their hearts, or examining their own wants. But we must learn truly to search ourselves, and according to our necessities we must pray that

the ministers mouth may be opened, who in preaching is the mouth of God speaking to us, and in praying is our mouth speaking to God for us.

And surely as for the hearty desire of the godly, even evil men have sometimes their mouths opened to speak some good things; Even so for want of this affection in the hearers, the good minister doth not speak so plentifully and fruitfully as were to be wished. Wherefore, standest thou in need to be comforted? Standest thou in need to be humbled? Standest thou in need to be exhorted? Pray that thine heart may be prepared to conceive those things which especially concern thine estate, and that thy pastor may open his mouth to thy profit. For, for the prayers of the godly, the mouth of the ungodly shall utter profitable things: Balaam shall bless for Israel's sake, and the Lord will be unto them as a Unicorns horn, against Balaam's cursing: and Caiaphas shall prophecy good things of Christ. On the contrary, because the people are ill, David shall number them, and the Lord shall make dry and barren the graces of God in the minister, when the hearts of the hearers are not prepared. And as this preparing of ourselves is necessary; so also meditation, and applying that to ourselves which we have heard and prayed for, that we may see how the word belongeth to us, and what event our prayers have. For alas, what precious seed is cast in the high ways side, because by meditation it is not laid up, but the devil is suffered to come and steal it from us? To what end is the word, if we hue not according to that which we have learned? If every man shall enter thus into himself, O Lord, how many sermons have I heard, but how little have I profited by them? How long have thy ministers preached? But how slenderly have I practiced? Then should he see what comfort he had in the life of Jesus Christ, when so many pearls have been cast to swine, and such holy things have been given to dogs. Likewise as needful is this

examination of ourselves in prayer; if that, after I have prayed I have obtained, mine heart may be enlarged to thanksgiving: if I have not received, I may search the cause in mine own conscience, and think, that the Lord would have me still to continue my prayers unto him. Wherefore, seeing we must thus prepare our minds before, and examine our hearts after, and we are unapt to hear or pray, after we are refreshed, because our minds are laden and our bodies are heavy, it shall be good in the morning so soon as we awake, to meditate of God our Creator, to call to mind the glory of the Appearing of Christ, to consider of the day of the Resurrection, and to muse of our rising to Judgment. Thus doing, we shall see as in a present view, all the graces of God set as it were before our eyes, and many comfortable things of God's spirit coming to our minds. This we see was the practice of the man of God in this place, I prevented (saith he) the morning light. (Num. 13:22-23)

Again, if in the night, we will but give a good sigh when we awake, although I mean not to take away all natural refection, we shall find great comfort in it. Thus if we spend the morning in the word and prayer, we shall so walk in the strength of those things which we hear and pray for all the day long, as we shall use this World, as though we used it not; we shall no further use our callings, then they be helps to a better country: we shall have our direction out of the word, what to do, and what to leave undone, we shall do all things the better to God's glory, and to the possessing of our souls continually in peace and patience.

If yet this doctrine be not sufficient to persuade us, the very Idolaters will teach us it, who will rise early and break their sleeps to go to the mass: when Aaron had yielded to the people for making of a calf, it is said, The people did rise early in the morning. If then Idolaters for their superstitions

can cut off their sleep that in the morning they might leave in them the deeper impressions, why should we be slack to bestow this time in the musing of the word, that we may feel the more effectual operation of it all the day following? What shall I speak of that, Act. 2. That the holy Ghost came down on the Apostles in the morning: as may be gathered by the sermon of Peter, when as he telleth them, that it was but the third hour of the day. Where it may appear, that they before being occupied in prayer and ministering of the Word, the holy Ghost came down upon them. Thus we see the fittest time to receive the holy Ghost is in the morning. In every place almost of the Prophecies it is said, the Lord stretched out his Arm early by the Prophets, to teach us that this should be the aptest time, both to deliver and to receive the word. (Jer. 7:13, Joh. 8:2, Matt. 21:18)

If then students, worldlings, Epicures, and idolaters have made their gain of the morning; if the holy Ghost was then sent down, and the Prophets at that time would teach: let us with the Prophet of God prevent the Morning light, and take up the first part of the day, in wisdom of the spirit to the Lord's behalf.

The third thing which we noted was cheerfulness, whereby we should cherish, feed and support our diligence, without which we can do nothing diligently long, but we must also do it painfully. Wherefore the man of God saith, Psalm 42:4. I went with the multitude, and led them into the house of God, with the voice of singing and praise, as a multitude that keepeth a feast. This spirit of cheerfulness (oh that it were in us) that we might say one to another when the bell tolleth, as though the Lord calleth us, come, let us go together to the house of God, let us go cheerfully: for we go to a feast, we go to hear God speak unto us, and to be partakers of the banquet of his word. Well, there is not any one sin that will more sit upon the conscience

of God's children, then their negligence in prayer, and want of cheerfulness in hearing the word, which is the only means to make us fruitful in good things, and to withdraw us from evil.

Thus to support diligence, we must use cheerfulness, without the which, diligence languisheth, fainteth, and faileth. Therefore the Prophet saith, Psalm. 95. Come, let us rejoyce, let us sing aloud, let us come before his face with praise, let us sing aloud unto him with Psalms. Neither must women here shake off their duties, as though they were to excuse themselves from coming: for in many places of the scriptures we read of the zeal of women, which overpassed the zeal of many men. Luk. 8. We read how certain women came and followed our Savior Christ, and were healed of their infirmities. Mary is commended for her wisdom, in choosing and discerning the times aright. Mary, and Mary Magdalene are set down in the Gospel, for coming early to the sepulcher of our Savior Christ, who first appeared unto them, because they first sought him, Math. 28, we read also, Act. 16, that certain women came to Philippi, to hear Paul and Timothy and that a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, attended to the things which Paul spake, who therefore had her heart opened before other men. Well, in love there is no lack, in cheerfulness there is no negligence, in good will there is no want. And surely, if we were more cheerful in these things, we should see such good success, that we should be grieved with ourselves in that we used it not before.

The next thing we observe in prayer was Faith, for that we might thus be diligent, it is needful we should believe, and be confident; for as we must be thrown down with the feeling of our wants, so must we be raised up again, with faith in the promises; because as need pulls us upon our knees, so Faith brings us to true prayer, having a sure persuasion thereby, that we shall

obtain. This faith appeareth here in the man of God, saying, I waited on thy word, which he did, because he believed, that the Lord would give unto him whatsoever he did ask. Wherefore our Savior Christ oft useth these speeches, Thy Faith hath made thee whole: according to thy faith, be it unto thee. James saith, 5:15. The prayer of the faithful, shall save the sick. Rom. 10. How shall they pray to him in whom they have not believed? Jam. 1:6. Let him that wanteth wisdom ask in Faith, and waver not, for he that wandereth, is like a wave of the sea, tossed of the wind and carried away. Neither let that man think he shall receive anything of the Lord. So that it is the sure persuasion of God's mercy towards us, that lifteth us up hands and eyes, even as the feeling of our wants draweth out sighs and groans. So that if we believe, that God feedeth the young ravens that call upon him, and giveth food to the Lions, we must much more believe that his ears are open to the prayers of his children, and his eyes are over the righteous, which call upon him faithfully. Hitherto saith Christ, have ye asked nothing of my Father, ask now in my Name, and ye shall obtain. And the Author to the Heb. 4:16, exhorteth us, saying, Let us go boldly to the Throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy. For nothing more grieveth the Lord than incredulity, and they that will come to God must believe God's promises, and that they shall find him favorable to them. Howbeit, we must always remember this, that all the promises of God are in Christ, yea, and amen. 2 Cor. 2. For never are the promises effectual without faith, and no Faith without believing in God, through Jesus Christ.

Now that Faith may be the more strengthened, we must join there unto patience. For that we may be faithful, it is needful to wait on God's leisure, in tarrying by patience, to have our prayers granted, according to those promises, wherein by Faith we believed. We see, the man of God his Faith

was not here cut off at the first brunt, as being discouraged or ready to break his faith, for he saith, I wait on thy word. Likewise he saith, Psal. 135. I have waited on the Lord, my soul hath waited, and I have trusted in his word 6. My soul waiteth on the Lord, more than the morning watch watcheth for the morning. 7. Let Israel wait on the Lord, &c. Behold, after he made mention of the mercy of the Lord, he speaketh three times of his patience in waiting on him; so that we see this to be the property of God's children, first undoubtedly to take hold of his promises, and then to support their faith by patience, in waiting for the accomplishment of his promises.

Wherefore it is said, Psalm 147:10. The Lord hath no pleasure in the strength of a horse, neither delighteth he in the legs of man. 11. But the Lord delighteth in them that fear him, and attend upon his mercy, that is, on them that tarry on God's leisure for their succor. And when our Savior Christ would have us persevere, he saith, Apocal. ult. I come quickly. Whereby, as he would incite us to attend the more patiently upon his coming: So we must know, that the cause why he yet cometh not, is, because we are not yet ready to receive him. To conclude, Hab. 2. I will stand upon my watch, and set me upon the Tower, &c. saith the Prophet; and the Lord answered him and said, 2. Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it. 3. For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the last it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait, or it shall surely come, and shall not stay. He will tarry long to the judgment of flesh and blood, when he seemeth not to hear us, but he will come quickly; that is, so soon as we are prepared.

They may see the fruit of this doctrine, which are most given unto prayer. Now, we are not to prescribe the Lord his time in hearing our prayers, or granting our requests, that we must tarry God's appointed time, wherein we

shalt see the mighty wonders of the Lord. That we may thus be patient and not faint, but be constant, we must feed our minds with the meditation of God's promises, whereby we have showed, the Prophet of God here supporteth himself, neither is anything more necessary than this. For when to prove our patience and try our Faith, there is often a great distance of time between the making and obtaining of our requests, we must have the Word still recouring in our mind, until the promised time come. For want of which meditation, together with the not observing the event of our prayers, and the want of musing, and diligent examining our unbelief, we often fail in obtaining our requests, and faint in tarrying of the Lord's leisure.

We see what the man of God his meaning is, when he saith, Mine eye prevented the night watches; in that he declareth, that they which watched were not so diligent in their watching, as he was in tarrying to see God's promises accomplished.

We see then, how needful a thing it is, to meditate on God's promises, at such time, as our suit hangeth still at the Throne of grace, without grant and effect.

—• **Verse. 149. - Hear my voice according to thy loving kindness: O Lord, quicken me according to thy custom.**

The last property which we are to observe, is, to be acquainted with the dealings of God, either in recompensing his Saints, or revenging his enemies, either in ourselves observed, or in others. Whereof the Prophet maketh mention when he saith, quicken me according to thy judgment: that is, according to thy custom, or as thou art wont to deal with thy people in affliction, and as thou hast done before, both to me, and also to other of thy servants.

That this observation of the judgment of God hath been at other times practiced, we may see, Psal. 22, where, after the man of God had complained of his manifold extremities, and had rehearsed his grievous sorrows, wherewith he was vexed, he recovereth himself, and groweth in hope saying: 4. Our fathers trusted in thee, they trusted, and thou diddest deliver them. 5. They called upon thee, and were delivered, they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. As if he should have said: Lord thou art wont to deal otherwise in time of old with our forefathers, that feared thy name: wherefore seeing thou art now the same God, I will not be out of hope, because I trust thou wilt deal mercifully also with me.

We have often showed, how judgment in this Psalm is taken either for the accomplishment of God's promises unto his children, or the executing of his wrath on his enemies; so that there is a judgment of mercy, and there is a judgment of severity; the first whereof is understood in this place, as we may gather by the words going before, Hear my voice, O Lord, according to thy loving kindness: of which covenant of mercy he also maketh mention in the next portion verse. 7. Consider, O Lord, how I love thy precepts, quicken me according to thy loving kindness. This is that covenant of grace wherein the Lord hath promised to pardon our sins, and to hear our prayers; wherefore though in respect of God's wrath and our sins, we dare not appear before his Majesty, yet in comparing our cause, which is the Lord's cause, with the cause of our adversaries, who are also the adversaries of God, and in respect of his mercy in defending his own cause, and in preserving them that maintain a good cause, we may come with boldness unto him, and with an assured hope that our prayers shall be heard. Thus we may call to mind how God is accustomed to deal with his people, fearing before him in respect of ourselves, but recovering ourselves through hope in his sweet

promises, whereon we must so stay ourselves, as the remembrance of them may support us: and to do this the better, we must observe the accomplishment of them both in ourselves, and in others. Thus we may see what a great stay it is in trouble, to know that no other trouble overtaketh us, none other temptation hath invaded us, than such as have overtaken and invaded other of God's children, and wherein they have found deliverance.

Further, we may herein desire the Lord to afford sentence with us, when our cause is good though we be not so upright in defending it, as we ought to be, or when our good cause is well handled; and that not for ourselves, but in respect of our adversaries ill cause, he would deliver us. Wherefore when we will obtain our requests, we must endeavor as much as in us lieth, to offer a good cause unto the Lord, and well handled.

—• **Verse. 150. - They draw near, that follow after malice, and are far from thy law.**

—• **Verse. 151. - Thou art near, O Lord: for all thy commandments are true.**

We showed before, that the man of God to the obtaining of his request useth three especial arguments: the one drawn from his person in the first four verses: the other from the person of God in the fifth verse: the third and last from the person of his adversaries, contained in these two verses. The plain sense whereof briefly is thus much: They, O Lord, that have an ill cause, are ready to bring their wickedness to an end; and as they are ready to hurt me, so they are far from thy law: wilt thou then maintain such? They being so near my neck? No, they are no more near to hurt, than thou art near to deliver me; they are not nearer with malice, than thou art with deliverance. Thus he draweth away his consideration from the judgment of flesh and blood, and looketh down to his watch-tower, and to the Lord his

sanctuary. O Lord, saith he, I have cried, I have called upon thee, and that with mine whole heart; I prevented the morning light, and the night-watches; I waited on thy word, I mediated on thy word; I have observed thy judgments of old: when I am thus near, wilt thou forsake me? They are far from thy word, canst thou leave them unpunished? No, thou art near their punishment, and my deliverance. I know as they depart from thee, so they shall not escape unpunished in the end, because their sin is come to such ripeness, as thy justice can no longer suffer them.

It is a great temptation to God's children, which have walked uprightly and kept a good conscience, that the wicked should still be near their necks. Wherefore if any such thing hereafter happen to us, we must not be discomforted, or think it very strange, seeing we see this man of God was not without it: it is no new thing, we must be content seeing God hath so dealt aforesaid with many of his children. On what great cause of thanksgiving now have we, that having much more deserved to have our enemies trample upon us, than others of God's Saints, have notwithstanding so long time been delivered? And if it come to pass that in time we come to the like temptation, let us labor to be profitable in the like meditation. For flesh and blood think it strange, that wicked men should flourish in the defending an ill cause, and that good men should be trodden down for maintaining a good cause. This troubled Job, David, Jeremiah and Habakkuk, to see that God's people should be so tempted. Wherefore when we see the generation of God's children condemned, and the generation of the wicked justified, we must call to mind this or such like meditations: Seeing thou hast born with mine enemies so long, it is now the day time to punish. The cause now why the wicked flourish so long, and why the Lord deferreth to help his children is, that the wicked may either by his long

suffering come to repentance, or else be left excuseless: Yea after he often stayeth to pour forth his vengeance, because their sins are not accomplished, and their iniquity is not come to the full height, measure and number, and that his children might have their secret sins punished here, that is, to humble them, to allure them to obedience, to try their faith, to prove their patience, to work in them a contempt of this world, and a desire of the world to come: so that that which they suffer unjustly of men, justly they suffer of God. And when God's children do not thus profit, the Lord in mercy will let the rod still tarry upon them, until they have profited in some good measure.

Thus we see the justice of God will not suffer him to punish, until sin be come to the full, and the love of God will not leave to correct his, until there grow some profit; and yet so, as in the meantime the children of God sustain no loss, because whatsoever they outwardly lose, they inwardly gain. Wherefore seeing the Lord hath promised,) that the rod of the wicked shall not fall on the lot of the righteous: and that our temptation shall not be greater than we shall be able to bear; we must know, that when the godly once begin to faint, and the wicked think they are come to their height, even then it is due time with the Lord to send happy deliverance to the one, and a speedy overthrow of all the counsels of the other.

The man of God then having these effects in him, was near his deliverance: but the wicked being in their pride were near God's vengeance. How necessary this doctrine is, common practice may admonish us: for thus reasoneth flesh and blood in time of adversity: We have thus long kept a good conscience, neither have we done against the will of God; we have served the Lord this while, yet this is our gain, our cause is not heard, our enemies cruelty is nothing diminished, but much increased, as though the

Lord either heard us not, or hath forgotten us. But let us learn to reason with the Prophet on the contrary: Our enemies, O Lord, are near to hurt us: but thou art as near to deliver us: what do we but obey thee? What do they but disobey thee? Wilt thou then forsake the godly: and canst thou suffer the wicked to prosper? No, thou art the Judge of the whole world, it cannot be, for thy deliverance and salvation is ready and near for them, who labor to keep faith, and to join thereunto a good conscience. We see then when flesh and blood would persuade us, that all time of deliverance is past, even then faith beholdeth it to be near at hand: for when we think that we are at the last cast, then we see salvation and help is nearest.

As this doctrine serveth for our comfort, so we must learn for our instruction, that if happily we suffer the longer, yet we shall receive for our temporal evil, a spiritual recompense; remembering always the Apostles consolation, 1 Pet. 4, who would not have us discouraged when we suffer: for they which have done us evil, shall be judged of him, who will come to judge the quick and the dead.

Although we see not this by the judgment of the eye, and by the light of nature, yet although we should die, suffering as well-doers, cursed are they, that shall overlies us: Blessed shall we be, for we shall rest from our labors. God is the judge of the whole world, of the quick and of the dead: he will not forsake his, nor leave his enemies unrevengeed.

Well, although we persuade ourselves of this truth, yet it is to be feared, when the abomination of desolation shall be set up, we will notwithstanding all this, stand in aammering and doubting, what is truth, what is untruth; what is good, what is evil. But alas, if the Lord should be anything the longer from us in helping, no marvel seeing we were the longer from him in obeying. Experience will prove, that though we have never so many

outward gifts, never so glorious wisdom, yet unless we still depend on the word and promise, we shall stagger and falter in the time of temptation. For this was the only staff that upheld the man of God, at what time he was ready to stagger.

They are far from thy Law: that is, as if he should have said; Thou canst not O Lord, but punish them, for thou hast long suffered them, to see, if they will turn; but there is no hope that they will convert: therefore there is no cause of despair, that thou wilt not punish them. Oh true faith! O sound persuasion of God's mercy most needful in trouble! Yea, when the face of all things shall be changed, and things shall be turned upside down, we shall know the use of this doctrine to be above gold and silver. The like were the man of God his Meditations, as we may see Portion 11, when his eyes failed him, his heart fainted, his spirit panted, and was as the bottle in the smoke; The proud saith he digged pits for me, which is not after thy Law, all thy commandments are true, they persecute me falsely. Thus we see he useth two effectual reasons, the one drawn from his own person, who maintained a good cause: the other from his adversaries, who defended an ill cause.

—• **Verse. 152. - I have known long since, by thy testimonies, that thou hast established them forever.**

I Know O Lord, not of late, but long since, that thou ever hast been, and art the self-same God, thou art no changeling, thou doest not sometime maintain the cause of thy children, and some other time forsake them. I know now by the covenant and records of thy love, that thou doest defend thine even unto the end: I know that from the beginning thou hast hated and punished sin, thou hast loved and maintained righteous dealing; I am persuaded that thy judgments prove not true once or twice alone, but always. We see how needful it is to us, for us to have knowledge thoroughly

of the testimonies of the Lord. For this was an assured knowledge of the man of God. I have labored (saith the Prophet) in effect, to establish my knowledge; whereby I may know, that hereafter, which I know now; and that I must know that now, which I must know hereafter: yea, I have taken great pains to confirm this knowledge in me, not of late but of long time.

Thus we see how the man of God laboreth to fetch out many arguments to strengthen himself in time of temptation; wherein we also must imitate him: For if we shall store up great plenty of reasons, our enemies may push at us and shake us, but they shall never overthrow us.

PORTION. 20.

—• **Verse. 153. - Behold mine afflictions and deliver me, for I have not forgotten thy Law.**

The self-same argument and matter is here repeated, which was before, but after another manner. He saith portion 16:1. I have executed judgment and justice, leave me not to mine oppressors. The which in sense being all one with the other, and seeing we have delivered the doctrine at large before, here is not much to be spoken. Only we may observe this, he here layeth his misery open, and unfoldeth his estate before the Lord: Behold (saith he) O Lord, thine eyes are upon the righteous, thine ears are open to their prayers. Thou seest my case, let me see thy grace, that I may know for a truth, that thou lookest on me. The cause then, why we oftentimes are not helped, is, because we hide our troubles from the Lord.

True it is, that the Lord seeth all, although we should hide all; neither needeth he the displaying of our own miseries, but yet in all troubles he would have us to open and acknowledge our grief unto him, that he might the better make known to us, that he hath help laid up for us.

Wherefore we must beware, least at any time we smother our estate, or seek unlawful means, but in all things with prayer and supplication make our necessity known to the Lord. His reason joined herewith is this: For I have not forgotten thy Law: that is, although O Lord: there is great want of obedience in me, and I cannot, and have not exactly kept thy commandments; yet I am none of them that contemn thy Law; wherefore O Lord help me. Thus we see still that the man of God suffered as a well-doer, teaching us, that if we suffer as ill-doers, the rod of correction shall not depart from us, until in some measure it hath wrought in us repentance: but if we suffer with him as well-doers, we may boldly use this argument, and with this reason desire the Lord, that he would take his own cause which we maintain, into his own hand. And although he was a sinner, which here he doth not deny, and did forget many particular points of the Law; yet he purposeth rather to show, how he was no notorious sinner, or such a one as did foully and grossly forget the Law. So his meaning is thus much in effect; Although I have offended, yet have I not cast thy Law behind my back; I find and confess, how of frailty and infirmity I have offended, but not maliciously and obstinately.

Wherefore although we cannot be free from all sins, yet we must beware of presumptuous sins; and although we are weak, yet we must not willingly and wittingly depart from the law. What then is the cause, why oft it is so long ere we be delivered? Even because we lie in some secret sin. For we must plead our cause in a right plea, if we will plead with God; if we suffer as well-doers, we may pray to the Lord for defense: but if we suffer as evil-doers, we must labor to repent. Wherefore in all discredit, reproaches and ignominies, we must labor to say in the truth of our hearts: I have not forgotten thy Law.

—• Verse. 154. - **Plead my cause and deliver me, quicken me according to thy word.**

This agreeth also in the second place with the second verse of the 16 Port., whereof we spake before, Answer for thy servant in that which is good. The children of this world are wiser in their kind, than the children of God, and the man of God had such enemies, as in subtleties were wiser, in force stronger, and more valiant than he; which made him enforce his prayer to the Lord, that he would be his tower against their assaults, and his advocate against all their policies.

Thus we see he trusteth not to the equity of his own cause, but to the Lord: whereby we may gather, that the cause why our oppressors prevail oft against us, is, because we trust too much in our own wits, and lean too far upon our own inventions, opposing subtlety to subtlety, one evil device to another, matching and maintaining policy by policy, and not commit our cause to the Lord. Wherefore in such a case, we are to pray to the Lord, to put wisdom into our mouths, that we may be taught what to speak, and strength into our hands, that we may know how to fight.

Quicken me according to thy word: whether the Prophet desireth to be quickened corporally or spiritually: whether for that he was ready to be swallowed up of his adversaries, or for that he needed some inward comfort, or whether it were for both, it is not greatly material; but I think we may safely take it in both senses. For if he were quickened in the spirit, he knew that the other comfort would follow after: So that if we understand it spiritually, he prayeth that by faith and quickening grace, he might be encouraged to go on forward, and that he might no more faint hereafter than he had done heretofore. Without which grace supporting and renewing him he was like to quail under the burden. Thus we see God's children are often

at death's door in body and soul, and therefore had need to pray to be quickened.

In that he addeth, according to thy word: he giveth us to wit, that all our help is in the word of God, and that all our helps which proceed not from the word and promise of God in the end become vain. Although this doctrine seemeth at the first to be a common thing, yet the only cause why we so often faint under the cross, is, because we forget God's promises, or else we cannot believe that the truth of them particularly belongeth unto us. And this is that that maketh the very children of God, so often to stagger, the want whereof is great. Suppose ye saith our Savior Christ, that the Son of man when he cometh shall find faith on the earth? Whereby he noteth what a hard thing it is, to have true faith, which so is fixed in God, as nevertheless there is no faith, but in his word.

—• **Verse. 155. - Salvation it far from the wicked, because they seek not thy statutes.**

He said in the portion going before, they are far from thy law: here he saith, they seek not thy statutes: in which words he expresseth his meaning more plainly. In the former place he saith, they were far from the law; here he confesseth they sought it not at all. His meaning of this verse is thus much: I see their manners are wicked, I know they cannot prosper in them, for thou art the judge of the world, therefore they have no interest to salvation. And why? There is no coherence between wickedness and salvation. If we were in truth persuaded of this, we would not so lie in sin. For if we did surely believe that salvation pertaineth to none, but to them that keep a true faith, and therewith labor to join a good conscience, how durst we be so bold Idolaters, so profane swearers, so irreverent breakers of the Sabbath? If blasphemous mouths were thoroughly persuaded of this,

would they not tremble and quake, that now mock and scoff at the ministry, and ministers of the word? We see then how piercing words these are. They that depart from God, by going to wizards, they that go far from his word by changing his holy Sabbath, which is as a day of medicine for the soul, into a hurtful day, the Lord will also depart from them, the Lord will be far from their salvation. All sins wherein men lie and continue, put them far from salvation. But who then shall be saved? Even they that labor for faith and a good conscience. Who then shall be damned? They that are far from faith, and seek not God's law.

As this doctrine is to the terror of the wicked, so it maketh for the comfort of the godly. We see the ungodly prove very courageous, and thrive very notably in their sin, not being presently punished, because such is our corruption, that until we taste some outward smart, we become hardened. This declareth, in that we abstain from sin, only for punishments sake, and we would sin at riot were there no punishing, that we are but Hypocrites, and such from whom salvation is far off. Well if salvation be far from them, that seek not God's law; then may we gather on the contrary, that salvation is near them that seek his law: for like is the rule of contraries. If we then labor for faith and a good conscience, we may assure ourselves of salvation. Wherefore, wouldest thou have assurance to be saved? Let the word be near thee in thy mouth, and in thine heart, Rom. 10:8 Let it dwell plentifully in thee with all manner of wisdom, Col. 3:16. Here is also a good rule as we see, whereby we may discern who be good, and who be evil. Here the Lord hath set down one steadfast order, which is a touchstone to try all men, and howsoever we account of it, it is always the same, and like to itself, condemning sin, commending holiness. Oh to what extremities should we be brought in these latter days of sin and iniquity; wherein heresies have so

corrupted doctrine, and ungodliness hath so stained our lives, if we had not this constant rule of God's word among us! Oh what a treasure is it whereby we may see heresy and avoid it: whereby we may see truth and follow it. Which rule of equity, seeing willingly the wicked depart from, they are worthily plunged and plagued in their own sins.

—• **Verse. 156. - Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgments.**

That is: True it is, I am a sinner, O Lord, but yet I am not a desperate sinner, as mine enemies are; but such a one, as on whom thou wilt show thy mercies: therefore I hope, that thou wilt help. If thou shouldest simply deal with me according to my deserving's, I should be condemned: for who can stand in thy sight justified: but I compare not myself with thee, but with them who are become mine adversaries.

According to thy judgments. Such is thy fatherly mercy, which forgiveth my sins, and heareth my prayers, that thou wilt not reward me according to mine iniquities, but wilt favorably look upon me, according to the multitude of thy mercies.

—• **Verse. 157. - My persecutors and mine oppressors are many: yet do I not swerve from thy testimonies.**

This sentence is the same in effect with diverse other in diverse portions of this Psalm. As, The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: the proud have digged pits for me: the wicked have laid a snare for me, and such like.

Now in that he saith, my oppressors are many: he showeth that he had not to do with one man or two, but with many. It is a matter, as we have showed before, to be godly among the godly. but he is a devil, that is evil among Angels, and therefore was he worthily cast down into hell: and he is a

sinner, that will sin among Saints, and therefore justly was Adam thrown out of Paradise. If we live among the godly, what praise is it to be godly? Nay, what a horrible thing were it not to be godly? If the Church discipline were truly executed, it were a small commendation to do well, and to abstain from sin; yet now in this want, it is praise-worthy to abstain from sin for fear of God. But it maybe we taste not of such troubles, as the Prophet tasted of, because we live not so careful of godliness, as he did, which if in truth we did, we should have troubles as he had. Well, we are in this world as sheep among wolves, to try us, whether we will be corrupted with the evil examples of this world, or whether we will swerve from the Lord our God, whilst he proveth us.

Their carnal reasoning cometh to nothing, which say, the world is set on evil, the world was never so wicked, charity was never so cold, a man cannot now profess without taunts, scoffs, and troubles. For we see here, that the Prophet, in his time, had many and great persecutors, whom notwithstanding so manifold corruptions could nothing move. Wherefore we must learn, although sometime we are slandered, though sometime we are evil spoken of, taunted and troubled, our estate is not worse than our forefathers hath been, and the beloved Saints of God have had before us. So long as we are well entreated of God and man, we will keep the law: but when we suffer reproaches, taunts, injuries, loss or discredit we then run either to evil means, or to revengement, or to despair. Where many injuries have been offered, many have been rendered again: if they have not requited injury for injury with revenge, they have used some ill means to escape out of their trouble: if they have not used ill means, yet they have secretly begun to mistrust God his promises and providence, and have gone to wizards and witches: if they could do nothing in malice, they would do

something in policy; if they could prevail with neither, they would fall to despair.

But the Prophet of God useth here no unlawful means, he goeth not in his affliction to Sorcerers, he recompenceth not ill for ill, he did not despair in God his promises, he did not think with himself, that the Lord would defend his enemies cause, and forsake him; but hoped still in God, his good and appointed time to receive help: wherein the man of God is set before us for our imitation, in that neither his faith could be shaken, nor his obedience slaked nor daunted. And surely this is Satan's last refuge, and most dangerous assault to persuade us in affliction, that therefore the Lord doth plunge us in misery, because he hath no love towards us. But the man of God opposing his faith to all such temptations; saith, I know, O Lord, by the records of thy law, that thou hast laid up help for me, and that thou art my defender. How sweet and comfortable this is, they which are humbled, and well exercised by temptations know. What greater assault used the devil to our Savior Christ, than this: what saith he, doest thou think if thou werst God's child, thou shouldest want bread: it is not like, if thou werst the son of God, that he would or could suffer thee to be without food? Like are his temptations to us, art thou, thinkest thou the child of God? Then thou shouldest be helped, then thou shouldest not lie in this case. This was his last dart which he threw at Christ on the cross, if thou art the child of God, then we doubt there is nothing, but thou canst help thyself. Well, we see here, that the man of God neither mistrusteth God's promises, nor forsaketh his law. Neither surely is our faith sound, until we can believe in misery; neither is our obedience pure unless we continue, even when we are oppressed, not of a few, but of many. For then we may persuade ourselves to have true faith, when it is wrought in prosperity and tried in adversity,

and being void of all help of men, we still hope for help of God, that we may say: I will not be afraid often thousands of the people, that should beset me round about, Psalm 4:6. Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death I will fear no evil, for thou art with me, thy rod and thy staff do comfort me, Psalm 23:4. I am persuaded that neither life, nor death, nor Angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other thing shall be able to separate us from this love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

—• **Verse. 158. - I saw the transgressors and was grieved: because they kept not thy word.**

This also in substance we had before, where the Prophet saith, Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water, because they kept not thy law: my zeal hath even consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy word. The Prophets words in a word have this meaning: Lord, as for mine own things or private injuries, I am content to put them up, but when I saw they began to break thy law, this pinched me at the heart. Here we see he was not very nice and delicate, in the defense of his own case, but when it came to God's cause he was not smally moved. Whereby we must learn to translate our zeal to God's cause, and in defense of his glory, to have our heart blood wax hot, so that even a godly anger with grief be stirred up in us. For this is the difference, between a holy and spiritual anger, and profane and carnal anger: holy anger is with grief of the sin, and without revenge of the person: carnal anger is with revenge of the person, and without grief of the sin. Wherefore if we will have our anger holy, it must be tempered with grief, as we did speak before of zeal, wherein we taught, that our anger should feed upon the sin, and compassion should make us bleed with grief for the persons sinning. Well, we may learn, that if we will not swerve from God's

law, we must not only be grieved for our sins, but also for the sins of others. For this is the trial of a godly grief, when we are first grieved with our own, and then are grieved with the sins of others, because true grief beginneth first in ourselves, and from ourselves it passeth truly unto others.

On the contrary, we much bewray our hypocrisy, if we first wade upon other men's sins, and suffer our own to grow: and if we can fret angrily at a little sin in another, and can be no whit displeased with a great sin in ourselves.

This is a preposterous grief, to weep, to sorrow, to sigh for sins in others; and not to weep for the sins of our own souls: and this is want of the true love of God's word, To be grieved when we ourselves do sin, and to be nothing grieved for the sins of others. Wherefore if we be in place, where we want time and opportunity openly to rebuke sin and reform it, at the least let us labor to be grieved, which grief must sit so near our hearts, that when any time or opportunity serveth, we cease not, nor stay to utter it with our mouths. For they that are thoroughly grieved at the heart, will at one time or other burn, until they have uttered it with their mouth. Wherefore we must labor, whatsoever sin we mislike in judgment, to be grieved for the same in affection: for many can mislike sin, and it is an easy thing; but few are grieved for sin, for it is a hard matter. If ever we had need to mourn for the sins of others, we had need at this day, that our grief of sin in time of prosperity may show us, what faith we shall find in trouble. But no marvel though we be no more grieved with sins in others, because we are so little grieved with sin in ourselves. For if we were thoroughly and sincerely grieved with sins in ourselves, we should also be grieved with it in others, wheresoever we found it: Which grief we shall not truly have, until we can devour all private injuries. And seeing this is the joy of a true Christian, to

see the Gospel have free passage; and this is the sorrow and grief of the child of God, to see this Gospel hindered: they who rejoice not at the one, nor sorrow for the other, have either the love of the word cold in them, or altogether none.

And as it is an argument of God's child, to be grieved more for one breach of God's law, than for many private offenses; so it is an argument of self-love, to take to heart so grievously private evils, and little to be moved as key cold to see the contempt of God's glory. Wherefore it followeth in the next verse.

—• **Verse. 159. - Consider, O Lord, how I love thy precepts: quicken me according to thy loving kindness.**

Here is an argument of true love: Lord, saith the man of God, I love thy law in myself, I love it also in others; for look what good thing is in me, I wish the same in others: I hate sin in myself, I am sorry for it in others: For look what evil I dislike in myself, I am grieved for it in others.

That we may make this a rule, to examine our hearts by: do we love the law of God? How shall we know it? Even when we are as glad, that others do well, and fare well to their salvation, as we would be for ourselves; when we are as much grieved, when others do ill, as if we ourselves had done it. For many will come so far, as to dislike sin, and to speak vehemently against sin, but few come to be grieved for sin: wherefore seeing sin is so ripe, let us so be grieved for it as we may pray against it, and let us crave of God to have this godly grief stricken into us, that by that means we may be stirred up to prayer, and so we shall in time to come, either rejoice to see our prayers granted, and our mourning's effectual, or else we shall bear the testimony of a good conscience, and in as much as in us doth lie, we shall be guiltless of their sins. Neither in saying, Consider how I love thy

precepts, doth the man of God say out his good deeds, but humbly confesseth to the Lord his own graces received, as may appear by the words following, where he pleadeth mercy and not merit. This love wherewith he loved God came from that love wherewith God first loved him. For he seeing the great love wherewith God loved him, he was moved and enforced to love God again: so that his purpose is thus much: Thou seest Lord, that I am an enemy to sin in myself, for I forget not thy law; thou seest I am an enemy to sin in others, for I am grieved to see them transgress thy law: wherefore O Lord, quicken me, and let thy loving mercy whereby thou hast created me and redeemed me in Christ, whereby thou hast delivered me from so many troubles, and enriched me with so many, and continual benefits, renew, revive, quicken and restore me.

Thus we see it was not his deserts, but God's loving kindness, whereof he speaketh: which if we would often meditate of, in seeing how fearfully we are made, how graciously we are preserved, how mercifully we are redeemed, from how many sins we are delivered, what fearful judgments we have escaped, we should provoke ourselves the more to the love of God and his word.

Again, in that he saith, quicken me, we see he acknowledgeth no other life, but that which is from the word, and that we live by faith: and therefore he teacheth us, that we should crave our life both temporal and spiritual of God. And if without the word we are not able to live in the bodily life, much less without it are we able to live the spiritual life.

Whereas he repeateth this request three times in this one portion, we may know, that he felt great dullness and deadness in himself, which often creepeth even on the dearest Saints of God: but so as they struggle against it

still, and refer themselves to God's mercy, wherein consisteth our life both spiritual and corporal.

—• **Verse. 160. - The beginning of thy word is truth, and all the judgments of thy righteousness endure forever.**

As if he should say: I believe that thou wilt thus quicken men, because the very beginning of thy Word is most just and true; and when thou diddest first enter into covenant with me, I did find that thou diddest not deceive me, nor beguile me; and when by thy spirit thou madest me believe thy covenant, thou meanest truth, and I know that as thou diddest promise, thou wilt perform: for thou art no more liberal in promising, than faithful and just in performing, and thy judgment will be as righteous, as thy promise is true; wherefore as soon as thou speakest, truth proceedeth from thee; so I know that thou wilt defend and preserve me, that thy judgments may shine as righteous in thee. And as this was particular to him: so is it general to all for where the Lord doth in mercy promise, there in righteousness he will perform: and where the Lord in wrath doth threaten, there in judgment he will righteously execute. For where he promiseth, he showeth himself true; and when he performeth, he executeth righteousness and when the Lord threateneth, he manifesteth himself to be just; and when he executeth, he proveth himself to be righteous. So the speech of the man of God containeth thus much: Though all men be liars, I know thou, O Lord, art true; thou doest promise that thou wilt watch over thy children, and that no temptation shall overcome them; I know this promise is true, and therefore as thou diddest promise in truth in the beginning, so wilt thou perform in righteousness in the ending. For both in beginning and in ending, thou art alike and true. How injurious then are we to the Lord, who will doubt of God's promises, that in prosperity he will renew our hearts, and put into us a

good spirit? And why do we doubt of his providence in adversity, seeing his promise hath ever his issue in truth and verity? And seeing the Lord will not leave us, until every word that he hath spoken come to pass: for heaven and earth shall pass, but not one word of his mouth shall fail. And as the consideration hereof doth comfort us in his promises, so also must it humble us in his threatening's. Seeing then he hath pronounced, and given out his sentence, that no unrighteous persons, nor fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor wantons, nor buggerers, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor railers, nor extortioners, shall inherit then his kingdom: as this is truth, so it shall surely come to pass in his righteous judgment. So that they that have done these things, without special grace and singular repentance, shall surely be damned. For as true as the word of God is, so righteous are his judgments. He is true of his mouth, when the word passeth from him; he is just in his works, when he is righteous in performing.

Thus we see that to be soundly grounded in faith, we must couple with the promises of God his performance, with his threatening's his executions. Thus also must we fight against unbelief: so that if we will not discredit the Lord of untruth, we must wait for the accomplishment of his truth. Whether then concerning his mercy, his promise be of newness of life, of forgiveness of sins, of his providence, or of life everlasting: we must strengthen our faith with assurance, that as his word is true; so also his executing of it is righteous. So that the word of God shall certainly have an issue, either to humble us by profiting, or else to debar us of his kingdom in refusing it.

The sense then of the man of God is plain and evident, in showing whatsoever the Lord hath spoken for good in his promise, he will perform it to his children. Whatsoever he hath threatened for evil, he will execute it

upon the sinners: so that we may be assured of the full accomplishment of his promises, and of the righteous executing of his judgments.

PORTION. 21.

—• **Verse. 161. - Princes have persecuted me without cause: but mine heart stood in awe of thy word.**

As the man of God not long before showed, that he had many persecutors: so here she showeth they were no mean men, nor of the inferior sort, but mighty Princes; neither Princes of a profane people, but rulers of the chosen of God the Jews; and that he did not suffer for deserts as an ill-doer, but innocently as one that had neither presumptuously transgressed against the Majesty of God, neither disobediently done against their authority.

Doubtless this was no small temptation, in that Princes (who should have taken his part against his enemies, and by whom he should have received countenance in his cause, being good) should persecute him and go against him. For what a trial is it to have the rules to be our persecutors, who should be the governors of God's Church, in that he should be driven to think, that either the governors of the people were ill, or that his own cause was not good. Wherefore we must be prepared not to suffer of the common sort alone, but also of the Princes and rulers: according to that, Matt. 10:16. Behold I send you as sheep into the midst of wolves, &c. Beware of men, for they will deliver you up to the Councils, &c., and ye shall be brought to the governors, and king for my sake, &c. And then is added in the 28th verse following: Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, &c. In which place our Savior Christ showeth, not to his Apostles alone, but to all true professors of his Gospel, that it is common to the

whole Church, that we should not be afraid of the faces of Princes, nor fear them that can only like brute beasts seize upon the carcass, and devour the body, but yet have no commission to touch the soul. He addeth in that place further, ver. 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing, and one of them shall not fall on the ground without the Father. Yea, and all of the hairs of your head are numbered; fear ye not therefore, ye are more valuable than many sparrows. As if he should say: Nay, they cannot touch one hair of your head; if not one hair, much less your body; if happily the body, yet not the soul. You see the little bodies of feathered fowls, without God his permission, fall not into the hands of men, which are so little in value, that two of them are sold for a penny; how then can they have power upon your bodies, without leave of the Lord, seeing ye are far more precious in his sight, and he taketh a further care of your bodies? But if for my glory ye shall lay down your lives, they can revenge themselves but of your bodies, as for your soul they cannot touch it.

[But mine heart stood in awe of thy word, &c.] Here we see the greater fear overcame the less. If the faces of Princes be terrible, because their angry looks threaten evil, and their wrathful words menace deaths, because whatsoever they will do, they can do, and whatsoever they can do, they dare do; yet fear them not (saith Christ) but fear him who in his wrath can cast body and soul into hell. They can take and attack the body, but the good estate of the soul can they not hinder: but rather fear him who can arrest the body, and afterward can also attack the soul.

The meaning then of the prophet may be this: I was afraid to displease thee, O Lord, and therefore I labored not to please mine enemies, although they were mightier than I. Thus he showed how he was a conqueror, and that he persevered in the fear of God, without touch of his enemies. For

(saith he) though the fear of my mighty adversaries was great; yet, because of the fear of thee had seasoned mine heart, and had left such a deep impression in me, I still was afraid least that by infidelity I should mistrust thee, or by disobedience I should discredit thee. Wherefore the spiritual fear of thee overcame all corporal fear of them.

The remedy then against corporal fear are which so much daunteth the heart, is, to crave a greater fear of God's Majesty, the strength whereof may overmatch the less fear. When the Kings of Assyria had conspired against the people of God, the Prophet of God said unto them, Isa. 8:12. Say ye not, A confederacy to all them, to whom this people saith, a confederacy, neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid of them, 13. Sanctify the Lord of Hosts, and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And least we should think that this appertaineth not as well to all Christians as to the Jews; Let us hear what the Apostle Peter saith, 1 Pet. 3:14. Blessed are ye if ye suffer for righteousness sake: yea, fear not their fear, neither be troubled. 15. But sanctify the Lord in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason, of the hope that is in you. Where the blessed Apostle showeth, that we are not ready to make Confession of our hope, until we put away this fear, and sanctify the Lord in our hearts, glorifying his truth in promising, and his righteousness in performing. And to apply this to ourselves: if the Magistrate should bring us to the Rack or torture, to betray the good cause of God, or innocence of our brethren, let us rather fear to displease God for his threatening's, then man for his punishment.

And in particular example to apply this doctrine, we hear (Jer. 1:17) what the Lord saith to the Prophet: Say not, I am a child, &c. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the Lord. Here the Lord

addeth, ver. 17. Thou therefore truss up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto all that I command thee; be not afraid of their faces, lest I destroy thee before them. In which place the Lord setteth down a promise to assist him, and a threatening to punish him: both which did so prevail, that he durst speak boldly, and provoke the King to wrath. Acts 5, we read, that when the Priests and Sadducees, being full of indignation, laid hands on the Apostles, and put them in the common prison, Peter and the rest of the Apostles answered: We ought rather to obey God then men. Menace us (say they) as much as ye will, we care not for it, we fear to discredit the blessed promise, and lightly to pass over the heavy threatening's of our God, and we fear you not. Again, this fear was written in the heart of Paul, 1 Cor 9:16. Though I preach the Gospel, I have nothing to rejoice of: for necessity is laid upon me, and woe to unto me if I preach not the Gospel, &c. Howsoever we think this easy to be learned, it is doubtless most hard to be practiced. For, though Princes do not their duties, yet we must not therefore rebel against them: and though we be persecuted of rulers without a cause, yet we must stand in awe of God's word: and our Savior Christ hath pronounced, that whosoever striketh with the sword shall perish with the sword.

If then either our Princes shall be ungodly, or their under-officers unfaithful, we must not thereupon grudge to pay tribute, to give task, and to yield subsidy: but we must do them even with conscience, as to the ordinance appointed of God, knowing and acknowledging, that the hand of God's wrath in their corrupt Government, is justly laid upon us for some sin. Wherefore the holy Ghost saith, Eccl. 10:20. Curse not the King, no not in thy thought: neither curse the Rich in thy bed-chamber: for the fowl of the heaven shall carry the voice, and that which hath wings shall declare the matter. If then our Princes should use all their tribute to sensuality, or take

up all their taxes for pleasure, without either fear of God, or love of their Common-wealth; yet curse not the King, saith the Wiseman, no not in thy bed-chamber. So that if flesh and blood should move us to murmur, that we should be ready to think evil of them that are in authority, the holy Ghost here warneth us that we use no such speeches, and put away such thoughts, because, both our speeches and thoughts stand at the controlling of God his judgments: but we must humbly ascribe it to our sin, that he withdraweth his grace from them, and pulleth his wrath upon us. Wherefore if we think, as many worldly men do, that thoughts are free, and are not called into the Court, and that every man is a King in his privy chamber: the spirit of God chargeth our conscience here before the Court of heaven, and telleth us, that our chambers are the Lord's chambers also; and therefore as true Israelites, even in secret we should think no guile, for the Lord will reveal it, and punish it openly: yea, even the fowls of the air shall bewray our unfaithfulness.

To come lower to ourselves, because we must not think, that this affection must be in David and not in us, for so shall we make unprofitable whatsoever is taught: whereas the man of God did fear to offend, even when Princes are against him; we not only cannot sustain so great a trial in the fear of our God, but if the loss of any worldly pelf come to us, we are straight void of all fear, and cannot abide to be taught any good thought; we are unquiet until we have consulted with wizards and witches, not withstanding in awe of God's threatening's against that sin. Deu. 18:10 Let none be found among you that useth witchcraft. 11. Or that is a charmer, or that counselleth with spirits, or a soothsayer, or that asketh counsel at the dead. 12. For all that do such things are abomination to the Lord, &c. where the Lord counteth no otherwise of these things, then of the up-heap of sin.

Again, 1 Chron. 10:13, it is said, that Saul died for his transgression that he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, in that he sought and asked counsel of a Familiar spirit, 14. And asked not of the Lord, &c. where we see, that in reckoning Saul his sin, this is the last, and wrappeth up all the rest, in that he asked not counsel of the Lord, but went to a witch. So this was the heap of his sin, this filled the just measure of his iniquities, because when he should have repented of all other sins, he made this the full heap of his sins, and pulled consequently upon him the height of God's judgments, for he was cut off from the kingdom, and desperately ended his life, Isaiah 28, when the Lord reckoned up the sins of the people, as their infidelity, their obstinacy, he cometh at the last to their sorceries, saying, 19. When such shall say unto you, inquire of them that have a spirit of divination, and at the soothsayers, which whisper and murmur: should not a people inquire at their God? From the living to the dead, &c. Therefore the Lord denounceth plagues and punishments on every side to fall upon them.

Look into the destruction of the old cities, namely of the Egyptians, of the Moabites, of the Assyrians, and of the Philistines, and ye shall see how witchery was the most especial cause of their destruction. So shall we think now, that the fear of God doth touch their hearts, who for loss of so small pelf run to wizards? Well, we are here to learn, that as where the Lord's fear doth so rule our hearts, that we sanctify the Lord therein, we are free from the greatest temptations; So, where this reverent fear of God is wanting, there is no temptation, though never so vile and gross, but we will yield unto it.

The providence of the Lord being so rich, and his hand so wide and large, we must not be afraid of so small a loss of worldly goods. We know that

Zedekiah being a Prince, Jer. 37, when the fear of God was gone from him, feared that the very common people would mock him, so that he could not obey the Prophet. Again, we know that Jeremiah being the Prophet, having this reverent fear of God seasoning his heart, was nothing dismayed, with all that either Zedekiah or any other of the kings could do unto him. Among many places, excellent is that, Job. 31, where the man of God, partly to stop the mouths of his adversaries, partly to comfort his own soul, with the record of a good conscience, and partly to show the secret judgments of God, and that he did not suffer for his sins, as he was accused, but for some secret cause best known to the Lord; he testifieth how free he was from fornication, from adultery, from injuries, from unmercifulness, from cruelty with his servants, and from oppression; and showeth the cause why all these things were in him, because the Lord beheld all his ways, and told all his steps. First, for fornication, he made a covenant with his eyes, because there is no portion, no inheritance, from the Almighty, to the wicked, but destruction, and strange punishments to the workers of iniquity: and as of fornication, so also he speaketh, how he was preserved by the fear of God's judgments from adultery; 'and afterward coming to show his innocence in not cruelly dealing with his servants, he saith, If I should contemn the judgment of my servant, &c what then shall I do, when God standeth up? And when he shall visit me, what shall I answer?

Again, he professeth, that the cause why he did not oppress nor injury others, was, not that he refrained for fear of men, but for fear of God. For saith he, If I have lift up mine head against the fatherless, &c. I think my shoulder bones would go out of their sockets, God's judgments were fearful unto me, and I could not be delivered from his Highness, &c. And though he might by his great countenance which he did bear, have dealt roughly

with men, and might have made afraid a great multitude; Yet (saith he) the most contemptible of the families did not fear me. Yea, though the men were far less then he, yet he could not hide his sin as Adam, he could not conceal his iniquity in his bosom.

Whosoever then will be truly religious, and make a conscience of sin in sincerity, he must thus walk in the fear of God; and though he might so do, as no man could ever touch him for his outward conversation; though he did not run into the hand of the Magistrate; and no man though he would, could say, Black is his eye: he must submit himself to what peril soever, and overcome all fear of man's power, with fear of God's punishments. And we must know, that if there be some sin in us, on which the civil law can take no hold; yet the fear of the law of God must be instead unto us of all laws; knowing that though we escape the court of men, we cannot escape the judgments of God; who will judge us, not according to the law of man, but according to his own law. So that the children of God are so far off from flattering themselves in these sins, where man's laws fail, and which they do not punish, that they labor the more against them, fearing that God will punish those sins more grievously in the world to come, which by the law of man in this world he doth not correct: And because by man's punishing we are oft brought to repent of those sins, wherein now oft times we die without any repentance. So that we see how effectual an instrument of God this fear of his law is, against all kinds of sin whatsoever. For though in politic laws, there be no laws against swearing, breaking of the Sabbath, or filthy speaking; yet God's children are not for that cause such as cast off all fear; but such, as by so much the rather fear and suspect such sins.

Now in that the man of God saith, in awe of thy word: see, the man of God performeth that fear to God's word, which he oweth to God himself.

This is profitably to be considered of us. If any deal nowadays with a profane worldling, in things concerning the true knowledge of God, and the way of salvation, he will answer: What tell ye me of these things? Tell me what you can; I am sure of this, you can tell me no more than this: Love God above all, and thy neighbor as thyself, and I trust I shall love God as well as you, or the best learned. But here is their hypocrisy descried, in that they have so small love to the word. For our Savior Christ witnesseth, John 8. He that is of God heareth God's word: if ye were of God, ye would love his word: so one may say to this effect; if we fear God, we stand in awe of his word. Wherefore the man of God saith, Oh, how love I thy law! Protesting that love to the law: which he had to God. And as he saith, O Lord thou art my portion: so he saith also, thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage. Thus we must honor God in Christ, and Christ in his word. For look what honor God would have, he would have us show unto Christ, and look what honor Christ would have, he would have it done to his word. Wherefore the Apostles not reverencing our Savior Christ only for his person, but also for his word, said: Master, whither shall we go from thee, thou hast the word of spirit and life?

As this corrupt opinion of the fear of God is in the worldlings, so also is it in heretics, and in the family of love, who persuade themselves to love God, when they love heresies more than the word: but herein are those hypocrites and heretics descried, they will generally confess they love and fear God: but examine them in any particular, either of doctrine or of life, and they will bewray their want of love by heresy, and their want of fear by lying in some gross sin.

Here is then a touch stone for them that can say: I trust I fear God, if I feared not God, how should I hope to prosper, or how should I live? For if

their fear be tried by the word, and their fear of the word be tried by particular sins, they will soon bewray themselves. Again, many there be, who will say they fear God, whilst sickness, poverty, or some cross lieth upon them: but when affliction is passed over, and prosperity cometh, let the Lord strike upon their hearts never so hardly, and they will not fear. Wherefore the Prophet Isaiah saith, chap. 28:15. Because ye have said, we have made a covenant with death, and with hell we are at agreement, though a scourge run over us, and pass thorough, it shall not come at us. And 18. The covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand, when a scourge shall run over you, and pass thorough, then shall you be trodden under by it. And though sometimes we fear with Pharaoh the present tokens of God's wrath, as the thunder, the lightning, the earthquake, and such like: yet we make them scarcely as the wonders that last nine days, neither fear we the word of God. Instead of all the plagues whereof we read in the Old Testament, as of the opening of the earth, of the overflowing with waters, of fire coming down from heaven, we hear but one named in the New Testament, namely, that they that do such things, for which those plagues did come, shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven; which one doth so terrify God's children, that they had leaver bear all the afflictions of Job, and all the plagues of Egypt than that one; for all those are but forerunners of this one judgment, and this is the full heap of all other threatening's. In that he saith, my heart standeth in awe: he showeth his fear was not covertly as in the ungodly. For at one time or other the Lord may shake the vilest villain in the world with fear of his judgments, and sometimes to feel terror: but this kind of fear soon vanisheth away, and sinketh not into the heart, how much soever it be stricken into the head. For we see whilst God lieth sore upon us by some terrible judgment

of thunder, lightnings, or earthquakes, how every profane man can be content to pray, and for the time will be very godly and religious, so long as the plague lasteth; but when that is once over, their fear is also over. The most desperate fear; but it sitteth not, it dwelleth not long upon their hearts; but as a flash of Lightning suddenly striketh the face, and suddenly is gone: So a flashing sight of God's Majesty striketh their hearts, and suddenly is departed.

We must not then have an over-hearing of God's threatening's, nor an over-fearing of his judgments. For many will like the word, because they like it in judgment, or for that it increaseth their knowledge, but few love it in heart; because it reneweth their affections. For though our judgment be wrought upon, yet the heart is not wrought on, which is God's place: wherein if he by y e ministry of his word once take sure hold, it will forthwith go to the eye, ear, and hand, and the whole body, and will be effectual. Now what is a more effectual bridle against sin, then still to think that we are in the presence of God? For if all men in the world should bid a man do anything contrary to the will of God, though in doing he might be next the King, or in not doing with Daniel have his body given to the Lions, yet would he not do anything against God's laws. Neither did Daniel suffer all this, because he would not be an Idolater, but for that he would not deny the worship to the true God, but professed the same openly, in setting open his windows, and manifesting his true religion for the space of three days. And why did he thus? Even because the fear of God did so touch his heart, that the fear of man did nothing dismay him: so that neither the gain nor promotion which he might have had, by the King on the one side, nor the danger and loss which was laid unto him on the other side, could make him at all to displease God. And as the fear of God hath these effects in God his

children, that the poorest creature shall stand in great courage before the face of a King: so where this fear of God is wanting, the mighty Prince shall stand in awe of his poorest subject. 1 Sam. 15. When Saul had a flat commandment from the Lord, who from a mean stock and base parentage was advanced to the kingdom to destroy the King, he contrary to the Lord's commandment, saveth Agag, yea, and a great while stoutly justifieth his sin before Samuel: but when he had straitly charged his conscience, he added, the fear of the people moved me to do it: as if he should have said; I was afraid that the people in so doing would have gone from me, and have denied me the honor which they were wont to yield unto me. Thus we see a poor soul, and with God's fear, feareth not a Prince, and a mighty King without this fear feared the poor people.

This fear of God also keepeth the godly; that in all their distresses they dare not open their mouths to any foul speech, or corrupt language. When Job was spoiled of all he had, and wicked men had taken it from him, he saith in the humbleness of spirit, and fear of his God, the Lord giveth, and the Lord taketh blessed be the name of the Lord He durst not chase against the Chaldeans, although he was in this miserable perplexity: for the fear of God so gaged his heart, that he durst not nourish any evil thoughts, or break out into evil words to displease the Lord; Contrariwise, where this fear is not, we shall see great murmuring and grudging, because Lev. 20, the Lord saith: If any man turn after such, as work with spirits, and after soothsayers, then will I set my face against that person. Let him keep his sin as close as he will, and hide it as much as he can, yet I the Lord will find it out. In vain then we see do words fly out brutishly from worldly men, who say they fear and love God, when they neither believe his promises, nor fear his threatening's, nor love that which he commandeth, nor hate that which he

forbiddeth. Well, run they in the last day, whither they will, yell they never so much, to have the rocks to cover them, and the hills to hide them, the word will judge those worldlings, heretics, and scorners.

But they will thus say: we ask not counsel of the devil as you charge us: yea, but God his word so saith, that he that goeth to witches and wizards, goes to ask counsel of the devil. Again as we said before, for want of this fear, we see, how impudent sinners are in those things, which civil Laws do not restrain, fearing even punishment more than God's judgment. He that feareth God is no thief; why? Because man's law saith, that he that stealeth shall be hanged? No but because God's Law saith, Thou shalt not steal. Though the place be never so secret where he may sin, although it be no manifest unrighteousness, and gross injury, yet if it were but to deny the last thing, which were right and due, the child of God both feareth punishment of God, if he had done it, or if he have not done it, he trembleth to do it. And Saint James he reasoneth thus: that he that hath commanded one thing hath also commanded another: and he that forbiddeth one thing, hath forbidden another. And surely howsoever man's law punisheth one, and dispenseth with another sin, yet the word of God rewardeth all obedience, and punisheth all disobedience. So that he that hath said as well, Thou shalt not commit adultery, as, Thou shalt not do murder, hath as well pronounced the shutting of the kingdom of heaven against adulterers, as against murderers, 1 Cor. 6, which thing God's children knowing, make as great a conscience of swearing, banning, cursing, breaking of the Sabbath, drunkenness, adultery and lying, which in man's law escape scot-free; as of theft, which by Civil law is adjudged worthy of death: because that God that saith, Thou shalt not steal; he also saith, Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord in vain: thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath, &c. Suppose they that

those things are not forbidden by the law of God, which are not prohibited by the law of man? Then no marvel though there be so few thieves, and so many Sabbath breakers; why there be so few murderers, and so many swearers: because men abstain from theft and murder, for fear of temporal punishment, and men have no care to eschew swearing and profaning of God his Sabbath; because they fear no external punishment. See here is men's conscience, here is their religion, this is their devotion. Well, haddest thou never such gifts outwardly, without this reverent fear of God, thou shalt never enter into God his kingdom. But peradventure, when thou shalt come to answer before the tribunal of God, thou wilt say, O Lord, I knew not by man's law that breach of thy Sabbath, or swearing were such great sins: hear what the Lord will answer: I gave thee my law, whereby thou shouldest be governed, neither did I give any commandment in more ample and flat words, than the law of my Sabbath; wherefore seeing thou hast manifestly cast my law behind thee, and made less account of my commandments, and judgments, than of man's law and threatening's, I adjudge thee to eternal damnation.

Great indeed is the benefit of man's laws, to restrain sin, and to bring to repentance, yea often the punishment of man, and shame thereof preventeth the judgment of God, and shame of hell fire: because we see many have been more ashamed of sin at the gallows, than others that have died upon their beds. Howbeit where this law is not executed, and sin severely punished; or where there be any sins, which come not within the precincts of man's jurisdiction, it is most certain, they shall not escape the punishment of God. Wherefore we must otherwise stand in awe of God's law, then man's law doth punish, if we will with the man of God from our heart stand in fear of his word.

This fear maketh servants as faithful in their masters absence, as in their presence, because it keepeth under the most secret sins. For hypocrites fly sin before men, but sin greedily behind their backs; and they sin not because man's law will punish them, not because God's law doth forbid them. But God his children abhor sin, as well privy as manifest, and that because sin is sin, and not in that it is punishable by man's law. For they considering that Adam, Hosiah, Hezekiah and others were punished for small things, dare account no sin to be small in the eyes of God. It is the whip, the rod, and the scourge, that causeth the hypocrite, as an asse, a fool, and a slave, to leave sin: but it is love, conscience, and obedience, that moveth God's children willingly to abhor it.

—• **Verse. 162. - I rejoyce at thy word, as one that findeth great spoils.**

As he hath spoken of his fear, so now he speaketh of his joy. Great is the joy of them that find spoils: for spoils bring victory, and victory makes the triumph: so that spoil brings profit, and the victory pleasure, both then must needs cause great joy. His meaning then is: that what battle soever he did fight, what town soever he spoiled, his joy was nothing so great, as it was in taking pleasure in God his word. Here then is a true note to discern us from hypocrites, when we take comfort in nothing so much as in the word of God.

But some will say, that this extraordinary joy appertaineth to the Prophet, rather than to us: wherefor let us hear what the holy Ghost speaketh hereof in the Gospel, as Rom. 5. We have peace towards God, and rejoyce under the hope of the glory of God. And Philip 4, he calleth it, The peace of God which passeth all understanding: and the Apostle, 1 Pet. 1, showing how in the mercy of God we are begotten again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance immortal and

undefiled, reserved in heaven for us, biddeth us to rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorious. And Paul, 1 Cor. 2:9, showeth what cause we have to rejoice, because the things which eye hath not seen, neither ear hath heard, neither came into man's heart, are, which God hath prepared for them that love him. These things we see are such as are common to all: why then do God's children so much rejoice in the word? First, in consideration of their own vile and miserable estates; then in consideration of God his love and Christ his merits for them. For they considering with themselves, that by nature they are nothing but vassal of sin, the bondslaves of the devil, the enemies of God, and fire-brands of hell, and that by Christ they are freed from their sins, set at liberty from Satan, ransomed from hell, and reconciled unto God, and that he will bring unto them the fruit of his death, and benefit of his resurrection, by killing sin in them, and quickening them unto righteousness, and remembering (Col. 2:14.) that Christ hath taken away the hand-writing, and fastened it unto his cross, and that every member, through him, hath spoiled the principalities and powers, and led captive the world, the flesh and the devil, and hath made a show of them openly, and hath triumphed over them in the same cross, feel such a joy as never any earthly conquerors felt the like. For look how far greater the victory of sin and Satan is, above the victory of men: so far greater is the joy, and more glorious is the triumph of Christians, than of earthly Captains. And as far as the robes of Christ his righteousness are richer than the royal arms of Princes: so far doth the joy of God's children exceed all the joy of the Princes of this world. Whosoever then have not this joy, by so much they show themselves as yet to be more carnal, more worldly, and more subject to Satan.

[At thy word.] Still we must observe this, that what affections soever we pretend to God, they must be tried by his blessed word, whether it be of love, or of fear, or of joy. Whosoever then will say, they are merry in God, as they hope, when their mirth is not in the word, and they can rejoice in Christ as well as others, and yet they rejoice in vanity and worldly things, they deceive themselves: yea, although they did not rejoice in ill things, yet they cannot rejoice in prayer, they cannot rejoice in the word, they have no joy in the Sacraments, whereby notwithstanding they attain all precious things, and an inheritance which fadeth not away. But alas, how can men joy? How can they sport? How can they laugh so earnestly at vain things, and take so little comfort and solace in God's word? And why doth the word of God make us so dull? Why doth prayer make us so heavy? Why doth meditation cause us to be so sad? Even because we are so carnal and earthly minded. Well, the Prophet Isaiah showeth, chap 58, what is the joy of God's children: 13. If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy will in mine holy day, and call the Sabbath a delight, to consecrate it as glorious to the Lord, &c. And the Prophet David, Psalm 63. Thy loving kindness is better than life, therefore my lips shall praise thee. And Psalm. 84:4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house they will ever praise thee. 10. A day in thy Court is better than a thousand other where: I had rather be a door-keeper in the house of my God than to dwell in the tabernacle of wickedness. Psal. 42:4. I went with the multitude, and led them into the house of God, with the voice of singing and praise, as a multitude that keepeth a Feast. This is the joy of God his children, this joy will never leave us, no not in the grave, it will accompany us to the judgment seat of God.

If we will rejoice in God his word, God will rejoice in us. But alas! Do not all men rejoice in vanities? And yet they shall perish with men, and men

shall perish with the abuse of them Whereas that joy so far excelleth this; how is it that this is so far preferred before that? Do we not think him to be a foolish man, who will make the day of his pleasure in playing and sporting, whereas he should make it the day of his profit in buying and selling? Would we not account him a mad man, who might be encouraged to go into the field, with a promise to carry away the victory, and to triumph over his enemies, if he linger the time until the occasion be past, by the incurse of his enemies, and so he willingly lease the victory, and make his adversaries to triumph over him? How foolish then are they to pass the Sabbath, which is the market day of the soul, and wherein the Lord calleth us to come buy honey, wine, milk and oil, and that without penny or pennyworth, in vain pleasures willingly, to lease such spiritual and heavenly profits? And how mad are they that on this day may receive both counsel for policy, and furniture for strength, to encounter against the world, the flesh and the devil, and run rather to filthy pleasures, suffering themselves willingly to be a pray for the devil, to be seduced by sin, to be overcome of the flesh, and trodden down of the world? True it is, that we have many bickering's, and fight many skirmishes in the week days: but on the Lord's Sabbath especially we fall to the main battle, and we come as it were to hand-strokes, and buckle with our enemies hand to hand. Do we not think this a dangerous thing then, when the Lord doth offer as it were into our hands the spoil of sin, Satan, the world, and the flesh, and we willingly and unthankfully will suffer ourselves, and offer ourselves to be spoiled of them? Where is now our joy in the word? Where is our spoil wherein we should triumph? Well, if men rejoyce so much when they give the foil to their enemies, and pray upon the spoils, we may easily conjecture how greatly they sorrow, that take the foil at their adversaries hand, and are

become a pray and a spoil before them. For the same is the reason of contraries. And to apply this same to us: if we truly rejoice, when we have subdued our affections, murdered our temptations, and put to flight the world, the flesh and the devil, making a show of them through Christ; how much must we be grieved, when our affections have carried us captive, our temptations have slain the soul, and our enemies have taken the spoil of all those spiritual graces which before we possessed. This then must try our repentance whether we have this sorrow or no, when the rage of sin hath spoiled us of God his grace. This affection we see was in the Prophet David, Psal. 51, who crieth, Have mercy upon me, according to thy loving kindness, make me hear joy and gladness, that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice: Create in me a clean heart, O God, renew a right spirit within me: Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thine holy spirit from me. Where David complaineth, that his heart was hardened, blind was his understanding, troubled was his mind, and his soul in bondage of sin, and in danger to lose God's spirit. Thus we see how he felt himself spoiled of all the graces of God.

When then we shall see the flesh or the world hath taken from us all comfort in the word and in prayer, and that we begin to be dull in good things, we must know for a truth, that either Satan, the flesh or the world have given us some foil, and that they have taken rich spoils from us. Wherefore we are not after sin to be too quiet with ourselves, as we use to be, if we truly consider of this: for our joy should not be so great in one, but our sorrow should be as great in the other: and as we rejoice when we have gotten the victory; so must we sorrow when we have lost, and they have gotten the spoils. For if we find joy of conscience, to make a show of our enemies, because we have spoiled them; even so when they shall spoil us,

that our understanding be blind, our hearts made dull, when we cannot with comfort call God our Father; when we can get no power of our sins; when we are wavering in our perseverance; if there be in us any regard of our glory, or any respect of our dignity and our kingdom, when Satan hath so spoiled us, great should be our sorrow.

But this is the cause, why we do not sooner recover ourselves in fighting, because we feel not the loss of our spoils, and therefore no marvel if in Christ we feel not our strength renewed. It is no small dignity, to be a companion with the Angels, to be the children of God, fellow heirs with God; it is no little prerogative, to be royal Priests before the Lord; it is no small honor to be counted Prophets; it is no little preeminence, to wait for a kingdom: but shall we look to be the members of Christ, and fellow heirs with him, and shall we not sever ourselves from the world, the flesh and the devil? Nay, as he offereth to us the one, so he forbiddeth to us the other. If we were redeemed, not with gold and silver, but with the most precious blood of the immaculate Lamb, how thankful should we be in all manner of obedience? If we were called to a holy conversation, and not to the lusts of the flesh, how holily should we walk? Wherefore if the Lord so call us to the banquet, and allure us to such rich spoils on the Sabbath day, if any shall say, I cannot come, I must marry a wife; I must go see my farm; I must go about my business: Oh how unworthy guests shall we be! And how worthy to be trampled under the feet of our adversaries? But here may arise a question: how can fear and joy dwell in a man at once? That he should truly fear God's word, and heartily rejoice in the same, when as notwithstanding in the holy Scriptures, we may often observe this thing, as Psal. 5:7. I will come into thine house in the multitude of thy mercies, and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy Temple. And in Psal. 2:11. Serve the Lord in fear,

and rejoice in trembling: and in this Octonary which we here have in hand, I stood in awe at thy word: and I rejoiced at thy word. We answer, we must know what kind of fear this is, it is not that fear which is of the judgments of God alone, but a fear joined with his mercies. For there is a fear of his judgments alone, which hindereth the certainty of faith: and there is a fear of his judgments, tempered with a fear of his mercies, which beateth down the security of the flesh; of which the man of God speaketh, Psal. 130:4. Mercy is with thee, therefore thou shalt be feared: that is, Therefore are thine afraid to displease thee, because they have tasted of thy goodness, and because thou of nature art merciful. He speaketh then of that fear, which is assured of God's mercies, as of his judgments. Wherefore as there is a difference between the fear of servants and the fear of sons; because servants do their business more unwillingly; and sons do their duties more cheerfully: so there is a difference between the obedience of the godly, proceeding from a childish fear to obey their Father, and the grudging obeying of the wicked, in a servile and slavish fear of punishment.

—• **Verse. 163. - I hate falsehood and abhor it, but thy law do I love.**

The mean, how the man of God came to this joy of the word, was, in that his heart was well purged of the things contrary unto it, wherein he showeth, that it is not possible for us truly to rejoice in the word, until we be brought to the perfect hatred of the corruptions.

By falsehood, he meaneth not that breach of charity, which is forbidden in the ninth Commandment, but whatsoever is opposite to the true word of God. In this sense we did also take it, Port. 4, and 5. Take from me the way of lying, and grant me graciously thy law. Where lying is nothing else, but that which is contrary to the word, either in doctrine or in life. Likewise Port. 15:2. I hate vain inventions, but thy law do I love: In this meaning,

Satan is said to be the father of lies, and we use to say, God only is true, and man is a liar: that is, as God is good, so is he true; as man is evil of himself, so is he false. His meaning then is, that he hated that, which was contrary to the word.

I hate and abhor, &c This showeth that he had no light hatred, but a thorough hatred of it, which is also showed, Psal. 139:21. Do I not hate them O Lord that hate thee? And do not I earnestly contend with those that rise up against thee? I hate them with an unfeigned hatred, as they were mine utter enemies. Prov. 29:27. A wicked man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in his cause, is an abomination to the wicked. True hatred hath this nature, to abhor the thing hated, as a dainty woman abhorreth to touch a toad. And we express this thing in our affections, breaking oft into these speeches: I abhor it, I cannot abide to hear of it, I quake, I shake, I am the worse when I hear it.

We are here taught then, that as love being cold will soon fail, so our hatred being cold, will soon slake; and as love must be hot, if we will have it continual, so hatred must be with abhorring, if we will have it permanent. Wherefore we see, where our first love waxeth cold to prayer, and the not abhorring of the want of prayer is, there we fall into a carelessness of prayer: and where our zeal is not hot against sin, and sinners, and we make but a jest of it, when we should make war against them, to the spending of the heart blood, we are often ready to fall into sin. And although we be not maintainers of sin, (for that were the highest degree of sin) yet if we be not abhorrrers of sin, we may for a time keep in, yet in the end we shall bewray ourselves. And thus when we are too smooth and too gentle (although I reprehend not that loving rebuking and admonishing of Christians) we shall

be taught to be zealous. We see, that we cannot say, that we truly rejoice in the word, until we have a perfect hatred of falsehood.

No marvel then, though we rejoice no more in God, seeing we do not so abhor our sin as we should do. Neither do we thoroughly abhor sin, because we never felt the inestimable and unspeakable treasures of the peace of conscience. Wherefore as we must not only love God, but love exceedingly; so we must not only hate ill, but abhor it zealously. For when abhorring of sin falleth to hating; and hating of sin falleth to misliking, and misliking cometh little to esteem of sin, we are in a relapse. We cannot then love God too much, nor hate ill too much. We must also labor to have our love and hatred proportionable to the things loved and hated, and our affections must be answerable, either in liking the things which are commanded, or in misliking the things which are forbidden.

If our first love decay, it will first come to be cold, and then to be none. Wherefore the holy Ghost doth exhort men in the book of the Proverbs, that their love should be wholly set on their wives, and so they should not covet any other. And Isaac, who is said to love his wife Rebecca dearly, never fell into the sin of Polygamy or concubines: So our love to the word, must be so through a love, that it take up all our affections, and so may shut out all that comes in the way, which either might impair part of our love, or spoil us of the whole. We see in them, that are irreconcilable, what hatred is in them. We may see, how many having found sometimes terror of conscience, have fallen from the hatred of sin to the like of it, and so have made relapse either into old sins, from which they were delivered, or else into some new sins, where with before they were not acquainted. Wherefore we must pray, that our love to good things, and hatred to evil, may daily be growing. For if we stand at a stay we shall come to less and less, yea in the end we shall

shake hands with sin again. For many are so cold in the pursuit of sin, that it is to be feared, that the Lord will plague us, either with heresy or with profaneness. For whereof cometh our commending of Papists and heretics, that we can say, Surely he is an honest man, it is pity he is a Papist, I knew never any ill by him; it is to be feared, we shall come to be such Papists, for want of more fervent hatred against them.

—• **Verse. 164. - Seven times a day do I praise thee, because of thy righteous judgments.**

As before the man of God spake of his joy, fear, and hatred; so now he showeth his love, which therefore seemeth to be no cold love, because it made him seven times a day to praise the Lord. As the children of God cannot satisfy themselves in the hatred of sin, no more can they satisfy themselves in the love of the Lord. And as for their true hatred of sin, they abhor it not only in themselves but in others; so for the true love of the Lord, they love it not only in themselves but in others, wheresoever they find it. The meaning of the man of God briefly is thus much: because I see, O Lord, that thou performest thy promise unto thy children, and executest thy threatening's on the wicked, I praise thee, and when I consider the examples of thy judgments and see thy truth so just, I delight in praising thee.

The cause then why we have no more pleasure in praising God, is because we observe no more diligently God's mercy, and truth fulfilled and executed in ourselves, or in others.

[Seven times a day.] If this be used on any day, doubtless on the Sabbath day, because in respect of our callings, other days are full of distractions, neither are the minds at such liberty as they are at other times. The Apostle Ephes. 5:16, saith, Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye

fulfilled in the spirit; 29, speaking unto yourselves in psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, &c: as if he should say, whereas other men cannot be merry, unless they be mad, and they can find no solace, without their own conceits; yet it is good for you in your most mirth to be plentiful in the spirit and in good affections. The same thing is urged Col. 3:16 Let the word of God dwell plentifully in you in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing your own selves in Psalms, &c. What shall now become of them? Who think they do God great good service, to come twice on the Lord his day to the Church, and think it a sufficient discharge for them, seeing the Prophet protesteth, that he came seven times a day to praise God: that is, Often he resorted to this sacrifice: for this phrase of speech is usual in the word to set down a certain number to express an uncertain thing. These remember not the often frequenting of private prayer, thanksgiving, conference, admonition, preparation, visiting of the sick, alms giving, which be duties of love, annexed with the former public duties of religion, and as well to be used in the Lord's Day as the other. If this then be not to be done on the Sabbath day, when should we do it? True it is, that with the good servants of God David and Daniel, we take up every day at morning, noontide and evening to praise the Lord, but especially we must remember to speak of these wonderful works of the Lord in the Sabbath: as that 92 Psalm, which is a Psalm of the Sabbath, doth teach us. Thus see, how the Sabbath should wholly from morning to night be spent in these exercises, and therefore is it set apart from all other days, because that worship of God which we do but in part on other days, may now wholly be spent on the Lord.

We see in time of Popery, how holy men would be at their solemn feasts, as at Christ his tide, Easter, Candlemas as they call it, Holy Thursday and All-saints day. Were they so superstitious in ill, and shall we be cold in

good things? Were they so fervent in idolatry? And shall we be so zealous in the Lord his days, wherein we have all things? Doth not this day teach us the benefits of Christ's birth, the profit of his Passion, the fruit of his Resurrection, the glory of his Ascension, the joy of the coming of the holy Ghost? Doth it not teach us, how in this world, we may praise God with his Angels, and how hereafter we shall be occupied in heaven? Wherefore let us pray often in that day, let us examine our hearts what sins we have done, what benefits we have received; let us prepare ourselves before the congregation is gathered, when they are assembled let us so pray and hear, that after the departure we may examine our hearing by meditating, applying, and conferring the prayers by the effects of them. Thus in private and public exercises in matters of religion and practices of love, we are to spend the whole Sabbath. Alas, how far are they now from praising God, now seven times in the day, who pass it over in pleasures, and so end it in their own delights? Who no marvel must needs slip in common life, who fall so deeply into God his course.

[Do I praise thee?] By naming one part of the exercise of God his worship, he comprehendeth many: for it is not like that he contented himself with praising of God; but that he also prayed, heard, meditated, and conferred of the word, and setting down by name that, whereunto we are most unapt, and most hardly drawn; he includeth those things, which more willingly, and easily we are brought unto. If any have occasion seven times and often to praise the Lord; it is our age, who from the abundance of God his blessings, should not only have our hearts enlarged: but also from our abundance of the heart, our mouths with praises should be filled.

[Because of thy righteous judgments:] This is not the only thing in the word; but there are promises and threatening's: but the judgments of God

comprehend all, in that they are seen as we have showed, in fulfilling his promises, and executing his threatening's. True it is, we must praise him for the creation of the world, for his loving promises made unto us: but we can never see truly the creation, until we observe his providence, neither can we effectually praise him for his promises, until we diligently observe his judgments. For then we truly praise God for his promises and threatening's, when we praise him for his executing of them. This therefore requireth an experimental faith, and therefore we shall see in all the Psalms of Moses, Deborah, Hezekiah, David, and Isaiah, that it was usual to them then to make them, when either they had received some notable deliverance, or their enemies had some notable overthrow, or the Church obtained some special benefit: As after the deliverance by the Red Sea, after they had safely passed through the wilderness, and had put to flight the army of the all the aliens. For what else doth the History, which is the image of things past, teach us; but to praise God by seeing God to be such a one in truth, which he is in his promises?

Look what the law generally speaketh of, either concerning these which are to be done, or left undone; either of praises or threatening's: we shall see the sermons of the Prophets, the things done which were commanded, and the promises performed to them, which did according to God's commandment, the undone, which were forbidden, or else the threatening's executed on them which did contrary to the Lords commandment. This we shall see wonderfully to increase our faith if we thus compare the time of the Prophets with the time of the law. If we compare our times with the prophecies of our Savior Christ, Matth 3:24, that there shall arise false Christ's and false Prohpehts, we are to fear, that they which would not learn of the truth, shall learn of illusions and heresies. We may call to mind, how

many earnest professors in king Edward his time, became very papists in Queen Mary's days, and how many heretofore Christians in Queen Mary's days, are now become zealless worldlings, and they that were then papists, to what height they are grown, and we shall see sufficient matter to praise God his righteous judgments. Again if we consider the great mercy of God, in restoring our countrymen, who were in banishment, we shall have great cause to be thankful.

—• **Verse. 165 - They that love thy law shall have a great prosperity: or rather, shall have no manner of offense, or occasion of stumbling, and they shall have no hurt.**

These in sense agree with that which the man of God said, Port 65. I will walk at liberty for I seek thy precepts. In which places the Prophet showeth, that they shall have peace in mind, and shall walk at liberty, and not be entangled, they shall have no manner of offense, neither shall any stumbling blocks be laid in their ways, which carefully seek to obey the will of God.

This is the benefit of them, that know and receive the word in love, that they shall escape dangers, doubts, in straits and plagues: so that in all these they shall find happy issues, and wholesome outgate in what straits or troubles they are soever. They then that walk in this knowledge and love of God his law, shall have this grace, and no man shall be able to take it from them: seeing then it is engrafted in us all, to be careful of nothing more than to be directed in our plagues, yet most of us fail in the way to this, by following too much their own devises, and not the prescript rule of the word. Here then is described the happy estate of God his children, that by faith and love shall have a settled mind, and continually have the blessing of God, watching over them in all their doings, and whatsoever tumult come on them, yet they shall possess their souls in patience, and not be

plunged and overwhelmed in these miseries as other men are. O most singular commendation of the word in working such peace, in promising such success, in our affairs, and in delivering us from all ill things?

[That love thy law.] We see here is required that faith which worketh by love: for many will say that they believe who bewray their want of faith, by want of love. It is then, that saith which worketh by love, that maketh us so to delight in the law of the Lord. Here hence cometh so much disquietness, and so many cross blows in our attempts, because our faith is so small, and our love to the word so little. When we shall see then the destruction of our minds, so many ditches, hedges, walls, grins and snares, we must consider the chief cause, to be our want of love to the word, not that it always so appeareth to flesh and blood, but that to faith it is apparent, which learneth out of the word, John 17 In the world they shall have trouble, but in me they shall have peace: as if our Savior should have said: howsoever flesh and blood think, and others judge over us, heaven and earth shall pass; but his promise shall not fail. Ye shall have peace in trouble: for God that hath spoken it is no more liberal in promising, than faithful in performing. If then we have troubles, it is for want of faith and love of the word. And as here is a plentiful comfort for them who love the word: so is there a fearful threatening to the wicked, which the Prophet Isaiah in his 47th and 48th chapters speaketh: there is no peace (saith the Lord) unto the wicked, but the wicked are like the raging sea that cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. In which place after the Prophet had promised this good success to God his people, he addeth, that the wicked shall not be partakers of it. For as the Sea hoisteth up, and is stirred more vehemently with the tempest and wind, and being once moved, one wave fighteth with another: so that in that continual conflict, much froth and filthy scum is cast and

spewed out: so, so soon as any tempest of temptation hath stirred up a wicked man's mind, and one temptation beginneth to fight with another, many foaming and corrupt affections are spewed out which disturb the peace of the mind and offend all the beholders.

God his children seeing those troubles to help them, which hurt the world, find only the truth of this doctrine, howsoever in time of prosperity the wicked would seem to be in as great quietness as the other. But as the deep sea in a calm day seemeth to be as still as other waters, until by the tempest of winds the raging of the one make a plain difference from the other: so the wicked do seem to have as great peace as the godly, whilst no trouble bloweth upon them: but so soon as the storm of temptation ariseth, then the hellish waves of their fearful torments yield a manifest distinction between their rage and the estate of the godly.

The very Heathen had a taste of these unquiet brunts and anguishes of spirit, which they termed Furies, which toss a man's conscience with such continual accusations, as neither eating nor drinking, nor sleeping nor waking, nor speaking, nor keeping silence they can find any quiet. Neither is there any greater plague than this, as testifieth the Wiseman in the book of the Proverbs: Give me any plague, saving the plague of the heart, &c. No marvel: for when our reason and appetite fight one with another, and there is a hurly-burly within us, we shall find nothing to be more precious than the peace of conscience, which so commendeth us to God, that we shall find in trouble peace, in banishment our country, in imprisonment liberty, in death life. What madness then is it to put this peace from us, and to hale towards us as with cart ropes these direful plagues of the spirit, which so torment us in this life, and without repentance in death will bring us to hell. If then by the grace of God his spirit, we would oft set before us some

serious meditation of death, and think earnestly of our departure from hence, even as our deliverance out of the flesh were then at hand, doubtless we should find by that an approved trial of the image of that estate which we should have, if death indeed were present. And if in the quietness of our minds on our beds at midnight, we would without hypocrisy present ourselves before God his judgment seat, as if Christ in that instance did appear in the clouds, we would redeem this benefit and peace of conscience with all the goods in the world. Wherefore as the Prophet exhorteth us, it is good thus to examine ourselves, and not to tarry the trial of our hearts, until affliction cometh upon us, but in the calm of our minds to use this practice in trembling. Let us pray then that this may still sound in our ears, that unto them that love God, all things shall turn to the best, as we may see Josh. 1, Psalm 1, Rom. 8. And as to them that love, all things counted ill, do turn to the best: so to the wicked all things that are counted good do turn to the worst: so that when a man's conscience doth boil with sin, all his pleasures, profits and glory will the further feed on him to his grief, and awake the more the troubles of his mind. Contrariwise, the godly in the death of Christ shall have all their troubles so sanctified, that reason would wonder to see their happy issues out of so fearful dangers. Yet we see God his promise will bring it to pass.

Well, we see how this verse followeth of experience the verse going before, as if the Prophet had said: I see, O Lord, that they that love the law have good success, and whatsoever befalleth to flesh and blood most contrary, it is turned to their salvation: contrariwise in them that fear thee not, I observe thus much, how they are plagued here and there, and how in their chief felicity they are subject to thy curse. For as for them that are delighted with thy law, if they be rich, they swell not; if they abound, they

are not puffed up; if they prosper in name, body and goods, they are not proud, but use this world as though they used it not: if thou callest them to a contrary estate, they are thankful; and if they want, or fall into sickness, or infamy, they fret not, they despair not; they are not so appalled in their spirits, but still they believe on thee, they call on thee, they glorify thee, even until their deaths.

We shall not only see the truth of this in the Patriarchs and Prophets, and Apostles, and in the Primitive Church, but also in the Saints of God of late memory in King Edward his days, who used their time as though they used it not, when affliction came, they neither feared, nor forswore themselves, but quietly suffered imprisonment, banishment, torment and martyrdom, as the dear children of God. We may call now to mind how the blessed man David behaved himself in all his miseries, and how Saul plunged himself in disobedience, who thinking in time of God his judgment to follow his own wit, fell from sin to sin, until he fell into a fury, when he began to ask counsel of the devil, and afterward by the justice of God had a miserable death. The like we may see in the Egyptians, Babylonians, Chaldeans and Israelites, when they forsook the Lord. In comparing these things together, we shall mark the works of God, and how they that love not the truth in love, are plagued of the Lord with anguish, distractions, and terrors of mind, some ending their lives in treasons, some in profaneness, some in heresies, some in shame, and some otherwise.

[They that love thy law, &c.] Rom. 8:28. We know that all things work together for the best unto them that love God, &c. This is a thing worthy of observation, that he saith, They that love thy law. For it is an easy matter to say, that we love God, as Heretics, Atheists, and the Family of love will brag, but they love not with the man of God the word, which is the true and

only touchstone to try us, whether we love God or no. Wherefore the Apostle John saith, 1 John 5:3 This is the love of God if we keep his commandments. This then must be remembered, whatsoever love we pretend to God, we must bear it to his word; and look how little our love is to the word, so little in truth is our love to God. And this is that which discerneth the fervent love of the godly, from the cold love of the wicked. Wherefore as the Prophet saith, Psal. 16:5. The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance: so he saith Psal. 119:111. Thy testimonies have I taken as mine heritage forever. We must think then that this doctrine standeth in need of our meditation and prayer, to try ourselves, if we fear the Lord, how we fear his threatening's; if we love the Lord, how we are affected to his promises, and to that which he commandeth. So shall we see that the godly have the Angels of God continually waiting on them, lest they should hurt their foot against a stone; and though they have many troubles, yet they take no offense at them. If we diligently consider how David prospered, whilst he continued in the love of God, what distress in his affairs disquietness of mind, straits in his kingdom, and punishments in his children be felt, when he began to love carnally, we shall have a sufficient truth of this doctrine. And for our example we have seen, how they that loved God, either died well, as they lived well; or else by their martyrdom glorified God, and edified others, who never sought great things in prosperity, nor were impatient in adversity. If we fear with Baruch, Jer. 45, the woeful troubles at hand, we are unfit to purchase glory to the Lord: but if we be of Jeremiah his mind, as considering how God hath always assisted his, and that if we bear the cross patiently with his children, who were justified, sanctified and blessed, we also shall be justified, sanctified, and blessed, and shall have our faith strengthened, whereby we may the better glorify him. For as the

curse causeless shall fly away, and do no harm: so heaven and earth shall pass, but not one word of the Lord shall fail.

—• **Verse. 166 - Lord, I have trusted in thy salvation, and have done thy testimonies.**

Here the man of God particularly applieth that to himself, which generally before he had spoken: whose meaning is thus much: I have seen that they that labor to keep a good conscience, shall have peace: therefore I labor to keep a good conscience, in hope that the same will come to me.

Now let us first carry away the lesson, namely, to apply that particularly to ourselves, which we hear, read, or received of others generally. And as he seeing the peace of the godly generally, labored to feel the same in himself particularly: even so we are not to satisfy ourselves with the general threatening's of the law, and promises of the Gospel, but to make them several and particular to ourselves. We see whatsoever the law teacheth generally; the prophecies inculcate particularly, whether it be in threatening's or promises, in things commanded or forbidden. Wherefore let every man desire of God that he may be a Prophet to himself, by laying the line of the word to his own conscience, in this or such like manner: This thing the Lord commanded, therefore I must do it, for he commandeth me; this thing the word forbiddeth, therefore I must avoid it, for it is forbidden me: this the Lord threateneth to such a sinner, if I lie in that sin, I am to fear it: this the Gospel promiseth to them that repent; then I hope upon repentance to feel the comfort of it. For this is the true use of hearing, when by this mean we are either comforted and encouraged to do well, or terrified and dismayed to do ill.

The words in their original tongue signify thus much: I have waited for thy salvation. Wherein is commended unto us a special effect of faith,

which must be seen in waiting for that which is promised. The first general truth that we must here take profit by, is, that if we will keep a good conscience, we must have a sound faith, which breedeth a good conscience, and without which it is impossible to please God. If we then will do good things, we must believe in God, as the author of all goodness, wisdom, and eternity, and that he hath made a sweet covenant with us, and believing this to be true, we must labor to keep his commandments. For without this faith, we do good or avoid ill, either for hope of reward, or for fear of ill: so that our obedience is violent, constrained, and not free. He believed not only, but also looked patiently for those promises, which is here showed by waiting. For many say, they love the word who do not in truth believe it; or if they believe it, as they will say, they do not patiently wait for it, and many think they fear God, who worship rather an Idol, and stay not themselves on God his promises. Many so persuade themselves to have faith, who will make haste that God should presently help: which if it come not, they withdraw themselves, and seek means to serve themselves. These declare themselves not to have this waiting faith. Faith (saith the holy Ghost, Heb. 11:1) is the ground of things which are hoped for, and the evidence of things which are not seen. So that it is a thing which bringeth us to the hope of that, which afterward we shall possess. As he that believeth shall live by faith: so he that waiteth not on the Lord, hath no true faith, because he will not tarry for the Lord's appointed time, but will provide for himself. The Prophet saith, Isaiah 30:18. Blessed are all they that wait for the Lord. And Hab. 2:3. Though the vision tarry, (saith the Lord) wait: for it shall surely come and not stay. Again, it is said Psal. 147:11. The Lord delighteth in them that fear him, and attend upon his mercy. A doctrine worthy to be written with the Diamond of God his Spirit in our hearts. This then is one of

the chiefest effects of faith, when we wait on the Lord's leisure, and make a distinction of the time of making and accomplishing God's promises unto us. For between the one and the other, God sendeth often cross things in the way to try us, whether we will wait or no. Indeed at the first, whilst our faith is but tender, it pleaseth him to feed us as it were with pap, and to perform his promises plentifully unto us: but when we are grown to some strength, he will not still deal with us as with children, but will often prove us by suspending for a while his promises. If we consider how Abraham waited ten years, until the promise was accomplished, and how Jacob stayed himself one and twenty years, until he also obtained: and if we call to mind how long the Lord proved Joseph, after he had dreamed, and how he tried David with many troubles, and yet notwithstanding after so many temptations and dangers they believed, we shall see approved witnesses of this true effectual faith. And as it is the nature of true faith to wait; so it is the nature of incredulity to be hasty, so that if we have not things presently to help us, we cannot be merry, we must make some shifts to help ourselves. For how common a fruit of our unbelief is it, that we so often have in our troubles, and bring forth of the rotten stock of our corrupt nature, when help is a little deferred, to say, I have prayed, I have asked counsel of Physicians, I have used all the means I can, I have stayed thus long, I may wait indeed until my heart break, I have made hue and cry, I can find no release, I am never the better, I must needs go seek out, I must ask counsel abroad, I must needs go to some wiseman, I think now the Lord would have me to use some means for my relief. Thus Satan, after our Savior Christ had long fasted, thinking that after so long waiting, his temptation should come in some good season moved our Savior Christ to

seek out, and to make some shift to help himself, and as he was the Son of God, so he might the better and more easily provide for himself.

Thus we see the man of God speaketh not only of a small faith, but of a patient faith, and the cause of impatiency is want of faith. Of this faith speaketh the Prophet Isaiah 28:16. Behold, I will lay in Zion a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. He that believeth shall not make haste, to wit, to by-ways and indirect means, as casting off his hope of God his promises. Of the contrary the want of faith speaketh our Savior Christ, Luke 18:8. When the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? Likewise Heb. 10, when the Apostle had said, The just shall live by faith, If any withdraw himself, (his mind is not upright in him) my soul shall have no pleasure in him. Again, Hab. 2, when the Lord had commanded the Prophet to wait, he saith, He that lifteth up himself, his mind is not upright in him, that is, he hath a troubled mind, and unquiet spirit. Wherefore let us attend upon that exhortation of the Apostle, Jam. 5:11. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have known what end the Lord made: As if he should say, ye are not ignorant of that my error of patience, who, when the Lord suspended his judgments, still waited for the accomplishments of his promises. Whosoever then thinketh himself to have faith, and by patience cannot wait for the Lord his leisure, and due time of help, but withdraweth himself, and maketh haste to other means, and not staying himself on God his word and promises, but hasteneth, and cannot be quiet in his mind, until presently he have gotten some help, he is as yet an unbeliever.

[And I have done thy Commandments.] Even as without faith it is impossible to please God, so is it impossible truly to trust in God his salvation, unless we labor by faith to serve him in love, and to please him

with good works. Wherefore as the Apostle hath taken up the truth of this rule, so he showeth Heb. 11, how all the Fathers by their faith did travel in good works: By faith (saith he) Abel offered unto God, a greater sacrifice than Cain; by faith was Enoch taken away; by faith Noah prepared the Ark; by faith Abraham obeyed God; through faith Sarah received strength to conceive, &c.

A contrary argument to that which we have in our times, where our faith and profession is so barren of good works. True it is, that when we will glory before God, all boasting in good works is shut out, in that, if he entereth into judgment with the best of our actions, he shall find them polluted with many imperfections, so that we can by no means stand before him, but in faith: but, Jam. 2:20. Wilt thou understand, O thou vain man, that the faith which is without works, is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified through works? &c. where we must note the diverse significations of the word (justify) if we will show these two propositions to be true, and how they may be reconciled, we are justified by faith, we are justified by works. For as God sanctifieth us, when he maketh us partakers of his holiness; and we sanctify him, when we show him to be holy: so God is said to justify us, when we are approved just before God; and we justify God, when we testify that he is just. In like manner faith justifieth us, in that it acquitteth us before God from our sins for Christ his sake, in whom we believe: works justify us, in as much as they witness to us, and to men, that we are justified by faith before God, whereof our sanctification is a pledge.

So that we mean nothing else, when we say, we are justified by works, then if we should say, We declare and make known, that we are justified by these works. For when every good work is of the spirit of God, and the spirit of God is given to none, but to the children of God; when we fail in

doing many things, whereunto we are by God's spirit moved; and in those things which we do, we corrupt those motions, so that our best actions stand in need of faith, to have them purged in Christ his perfect obedience: it is manifest, that our works only give a testimony to ourselves, and others, that we are justified.

If then we have true faith, it must work by love, that as faith doth acquit us from sin before God; so good works may give evidence thereof before men. When then we are carried away with dullness in good things, and with deadness in well-doing, we are to try our hearts, if we want, God is not pleased with us, if we have saith without works, we deceive ourselves.

The meaning then of the man of God in this place, is thus much: Because I know, that they have happy success, that love thee and obey thy word; this moveth me to keep a good conscience. So we have learned thus much, that it is but folly to boast of faith without good works. For as we judge a man to be alive, so long as we perceive his vital spirits, his animal powers, and natural operations to exercise themselves, and think that he is not dead, whilst the faculties of the mind are exercised in the senses, members and powers of the body; but notwithstanding that life itself is a thing most secret, yet by a man's seeing, hearing, tasting, touching, going and working we discern the same; even so, so long as we perceive the fruits of God his spirit, and new birth, and the effects of grace, and fruits of sanctification in the soul, we think him not spiritually dead, in whom these things are: And notwithstanding saith, which is the life of God's children, be a most secret thing; yet when we can open our eyes, to see the wonderful word of God to his praise, and shut them from seeing vanities; when our ears are open to the works of God, and closed, and dull to hear worldly vanities; when our mouths can speak of God's judgments, and are dumb in leasing's: we may

judge by these and the like effects, that there is the life of Christ in us. And here withal we must observe, as these natural workings are not the cause of life, but that rather insomuch as we live, these things do exercise themselves in us: even so the good works are no cause why we are good or live by faith, but because by faith in Christ we are accounted good and just before the Lord, therefore we are good. For as the tree hath not his goodness of the fruits, but the fruits have their goodness, because first the tree was good, so we cannot be said to be good in respect of our works, but our works are good in respect of us justified before by faith. And although the sap, life and nourishment of the tree, be a thing most secret and hidden from common sense; yet by the leaves, buds, greens and fruits thereof we draw knowledge of the life in it: so though our life which is hidden in Christ, be hidden from flesh and blood, yet by the holy practices of good works, we easily discern the same.

Now for want of this, we may see the great judgment of God in suffering the Papists, heretics, and family of love to spoil us of this peace of conscience, by teaching their false opinions of justification by works. Which thing seeing they hold the rather, with seeing the cold profession of worldly Protestants, it must needs humble us. For thus reason they, that are unstable in the truth, Surely their profession is not according to the truth, it is so barren of good works, and they maintain not the true doctrine, whose lives are so contrary to their professions. Woe be to them, by whom these offenses do justly come, and woe be to them that take such offenses, and that shut willfully their eyes, and will not see the truth. Howbeit we are to profit hereby, and to travel in a greater care of good works, whereby we may stop these blasphemous mouths of the adversaries.

—• **Verse. 167. - My soul hath kept thy testimonies: for I love them exceedingly.**

Here he confirmeth the same doctrine which he used before, for in saying my soul hath kept thy testimonies, is all one as if he should have said, I have looked (or waited) on thy salvation. For as we often observed, the man of God meaneth the covenant which engendereth faith, as the records and testimonials of God's favor towards us. So that the effect of these words is thus much: I have an entire care in sincerity of faith, to increase the blessed witnesses of thy love toward me. It is a usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express their vehement affection to anything to say, My soul: as Psal. 103:1, and 104:1. My soul praise thou the Lord, and Luk. 1. My soul doth magnify the Lord. So that here the Prophet doth not only outwardly commend the law, but saith, that he hath sworn and will perform the keeping of God his testimonies. With the heart, saith the Apostle, we believe, showing that the heart is the proper place of faith, and not the brain, and that we must as well be touched in affection, as in outward bettering of our judgment. They must be vehement passions of the mind wherewith we must let the testimonies of God sink down into the depth of our hearts. Wherefore we are here to learn that our over profession of the Gospel will not acquit us before God his judgment seat.

[For I love them exceedingly,] that is, They are not of small value with me, I love them entirely, because they are things most precious unto me. This is the high dignity and estimation which we owe and should perform to the sweet testimonies of our salvation. Wherefore our Savior Christ saith: the kingdom of heaven is like unto a treasure which is hidden, which when a man findeth, for joy he selleth all that he hath, to purchase that. Thus we

see the man of God having made mention of faith, maketh mention also of love, teaching us, that true faith worketh by love.

Also he showeth us, that the cause why the comfortable promises of the Gospel so soon slip from us, and our comforts are so momentary, and griefs so sore charge us and overwhelm us, is, even because we have laid up these promises rather in the brain, than in the heart. This is too short, cold and small a love for the profession of the Gospel, and bewrayeth the want of faith; and the want of faith declareth a want of love. For if we know aright, what an inestimable treasure the promises of God were, in that in them we have the assurance of all our sins pardoned, of God his providence watching over us, his Angels ministering to us, his creatures waiting on us, that we shall be companions not only with his Saints and Angels, but heirs and fellow heirs with Christ, and that after this life a happy crown of glory is laid up for us, we should more highly esteem of them, then we do, and more heartily love them. For what maketh worldlings so to love gold, but that they think it the most precious metal? What causeth ambitious men so to set by preferment, but that they think it the best thing for them? What causeth the man so to love or like his wife, or the woman her husband, but that they are persuaded, that none in the world were fitter each for other? When our Savior Christ would have Peter to be careful in overseeing his flock, he useth this trial, lovest thou me Peter? And the Apostle said, how through love he was enforced to preach Christ to the Church. This then must not be faint and feeble love, but a straightened and laborsome affection, which is still occupied in adorning the thing loved, and cannot satisfy itself in thinking of it, and in speaking of it, and in doing it, so that the greatness of the persuasion draweth out the greatness of the affection.

It is then a drowsy dream which some hold for a settled opinion, who think that love goeth before faith, when the very heathen saw by the light of nature, that a man could not love, that which he knew not. And we know that faith is a knowledge with a full persuasion; so that if we love the word exceedingly, we are persuaded by an exceeding faith of the word which we love, and this faith showing itself in love, is fruitful in good works. Look in what measure we are persuaded of the goodness of the thing, in that measure we love it.

—• **Verse. 168. - I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.**

We have heard the man of God speaking of his faith and love, whereunto now he joineth his fear, which moved him to keep both the testimonies of the Lord and his precepts. So that if we will grow to this measure of obedience, we must first labor for faith to believe, faith must work by love, and love breed in us a reverent fear of God his majesty, which fear must engender in us a care to please God, and a grief to displease him: so that we may thus show the prophet his meaning. Lord, I set all my doings open in thy sight, wherefore I am careful to do anything which thou commandest, and afraid to do anything thou forbiddest. So that we learn for our instruction, that as the very motions of his heart were laid open before the Lord, whereby he was armed with this care and fear; so if we will be beautified with the like affections we must use the like means. True it is that God seeth all men's ways, and gageeth the hearts of all, as well of the wicked, as of his children, howbeit all believe not, all see not this in themselves. The wicked may confess it so to be in outward things, but doubtless they are not in truth persuaded that God doth see their hearts. For if they were, how durst they do that in the sight of God and his Angels,

which they dare not do in the sight of the day-light and of a little child? But let them cover their sins in the depth of their hearts, let them hide them with darkness, surely the Lord will keep them in a register, and in time will lay all their sins before them, that all the world may know how they have buried the long suffering of the Lord in the hollow graves of their hypocrisy. Wherefore every man, that will show himself thus to be persuaded of God's all-seeing presence, must show it by an earnest care of obedience, and a reverent fear of disobedience, whereof the one, that is the fear of disobedience is showed in the first verse of this octonary, the other is showed in the last.

Shall we then assure ourselves, that we be persuaded indeed that God doth behold us, let us search our hearts whether we have these or the like affections. For dare a subject in the presence of his prince commit anything against the laws for fear of a check, or rather will he not be careful in the eyes of his sovereign to do all things to his liking and contentation? Dare a good child in the presence of his father willingly break his commandment for fear of controlment, or will he not rather endeavor to be very dutiful for hope of commendation? Then doubtless without this care and fear we receive our souls with this drowsy dream and vain persuasion of God's beholding us. Wherefore how dare the heretics, papists and family of love, persuade themselves to walk before the Lord, seeing they have not submitted themselves to his word, which is the only instrument that maketh naked the conscience of man, as it is Heb. 4:12. The word of God is lively and mighty in operation, &c. and it is added in the verse following; Neither is there any creature, which is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and open unto his eyes. So that they which are not truly instructed in the word, cannot truly have their sins laid naked, and they which have not

their sins laid open, cannot in the fear of God forsake their corruptions. Wherefore in like manner all ignorant persons may persuade themselves, that they please God and walk before him in care and fear, but they do but deceive their own souls. But if we can truly say this, with pure trial of it in our hearts, it is most certain, it will serve instead of a hundredth rules besides for the right direction and holy government of our lives.

In that the man of God saith, that he kept both the precepts and the testimonies, he giveth us to understand, that if we will in truth be persuaded that God seeth us in all things, we must believe his testimonies, and observe his statutes because we can neither believe aright, unless our faith worketh by love, neither be our works acceptable, but as they be the fruits of faith.

There is indeed a fear without this faith, but it is a servile and slavish, far differing from that childish and filial fear which is here understood. For as a servant may obey and do his outward task rather for fear of stripes of his master, if he should not do it, then for any pure love; and the child is in all things obedient, not so much that he is afraid of the rod, as he is loath to have the least displeasure of his loving father: so we may use the outward obedience in a carnal fear, trembling at the severe threatening's of God, as of a judge, but without this, we shall lose the care to please him, as loath to be deprived of his fatherly countenance and affection towards us. So that without this faith we are in danger to walk either in secret pride, or else in slavish fear. But faith maketh us come liberally and cheerfully to obedience, when we shall see, that he will not deal roughly with us, as judging us according to our deserts, but as bearing with our infirmities, and sparing us as a merciful father. Neither, as dare I affirm, did ever any truly obey God, which in some measure had not this fear of God before his eyes, where by they feared him as a God, and loved him as a father.

God's children dare not dally with their most privy thoughts, for they know that God seeth in darkness as well as in delight: he is the God of the night as of the day, and to him they are both as one; he beholdeth their thoughts a far off, and there is no word in their tongue: which he knoweth not: they know he is privy to their down lying's, and uprisings; to their goings out, and their comings in; neither can they in any place, high or low, far or near, early or late fly from his all-seeing presence. If they do ill, they tarry not long to seek reconcilment, because they know that his judgments are according to truth: if they do well, they are not proud of it. This worketh in them a wonderful boldness in God's causes, and bringeth them to fear, when their cause is not good. Again, it breedeth patience in trouble, profit in slanders, meekness, when the world contemneth them, seen in secret sins, knowing that when the world hath passed in judgment on them, there shall judgment in greater truth be given of them by Christ. And again, though they escape the judgments of man; yet they shall not escape the judgments of God. But as the Lord throweth the wicked with their hypocrisies to hell: So he will humble and punish his children with sore corrections. So that this is the way of them that walk before the Lord, they know in time the Lord will reward, and make known their secret godliness, and in time punish and make known their secret sins.

If it come to pass that God's children forget themselves sometimes to be in their Fathers presence, as earthly children rejoice sometimes to be from their Fathers, that they might play the more: nevertheless after they come to be ashamed and grieved, when they consider that all that time their Father espied and marked them: and though they did forget that their Father saw them, being carried away with some strong lust, the best they know is to return in time. For then they begin to reason on this manner: Oh what a

wretch was I, to do this in the eyes of my God, and in the presence of my Father: so that as we see this consideration of God's presence bringeth grief for sins present; so it maketh after the examinations of ourselves ashamed of sins past.

We heard before how it also worketh patience in us, when our good causes, have not good success, because we remember that Psalm: 34. The eyes of the Lord art over the just, and his ears are open to their prayers: Whereupon we recover ourselves, with this and such like meditations: Well I am misdeemed, I am suspected, I see I am ill thought of, I know in the end, that the Lord seeing my cause to be good, and to be used with a good heart, will defend me; and he seeing their cause to be ill, and how they maintain it with an ill heart, will in time give them the overthrow: and I holding a general good thing, though in particulars I fail, yet mercy being with the Lord, that he might be feared, know that he will look upon me.

And as God his children are afraid of their secret corruptions: so in their troubles they dare appear to the Lord, who seeth all things. We further are here to learn, if we look on the law, and on the gospel, without any consideration of the presence of God, it will work in us a mercenary fear, and will breed a care to do well in hope of commodity, and a fear to displease for fear of punishment. True it is, as we be carnal, we need such second helps of promises and threatening's: yet we must know that to be true faith in the promises of God, which is mixed with faith in his threatening's; and that is true fear of his threatening's, which is tempered with fear of his mercies. For thus we shall walk in a fear of his Majesty, as he is a God, and in fear of losing his fatherly mercy and countenance as he is our Father; and so shall we not commit gross sins, for fear of his judgments, nor fear too much when we commit secret sins, because we

know him to be merciful, in that he will not sooth nor cocker us in any sin, as wanton mothers do their children, nor always be checking and taunting us as a severe and austere father, to dull us for our secret sins.

PORTION 22.

—• **Verse. 169. - Let my complaint come before thee, O Lord, and give me understanding according unto thy Word.**

The argument of that which hath been before, is still continued, which was briefly contained in these two things, either that he prayed for a clearer understanding of God's word, or else y t with his good understanding he might have a more godly life. So that the brief sum of this octonary is, that he first prayeth for the true direction of himself in his judgment; then for the true fruit of his knowledge in his life. For in the four former verses he prayeth for soundness of judgment, and in the four latter, that the issues of God's promises might appear in a godly life. In the two first verses he prayeth for understanding; in the two next, he promiseth to be thankful. In the first verse, he desireth to be truly directed in the word; in the second to be rid from all straits and hindrances of his knowledge. In the first part of the first verse, he asketh not his suite simply, but earnestly, as with complaint. What meaneth this, that he should pursue his old argument? It seemeth that either he was very blockish in understanding, who still prayed for his direction in judgment, and that we are very quick in the knowledge of the word, who use so few prayers; or that we are very blockish in seeing our wants, and he quick-sighted in his own corruptions. For it must needs be confessed, if the man of God could not without using of so many means, attain to the pure understanding of God's word, and we persuade ourselves that we with fewer means can attain unto it, that there was either a

marvelous dullness in him, and there is some wonderful freshness in us; or else, that he saw much, what an hard matter it is, either to come to, or continue in the true knowledge of the law, which we see not. But seeing it is manifest, that he was a man of God, and as a Prophet governed by the spirit of God, and yet so reverently and carefully used all the means, then we are in a blockish blindness, and senseless deadness, who having in no measure the like graces, in no degree use the like means: And that as on him was God's great blessing: so unto us is due the resting of his deserved curse. It is a manifest token that he had a marvelous sight and feeling of his wants, in that he so often reneweth his request to be taught, and as may evidently appear, by his doubling of his prayer, at the least in every portion. For to take some short view of all the portions going before, we shall see port. 1:5, he saith, Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes. Port. 2:4, Blessed art thou, O Lord, teach me thy statutes. 3:2, Open mine eyes, that I may see the wonders of thy law: I am a stranger upon earth, hide not thy commandments from me. 4:3, Make me to understand the way of thy truth, and I will meditate in thy wondrous works: take from me the way of lying, and grant me graciously thy law. 5:1, Teach me the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end: give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law, yea I will keep it with mine whole heart: direct me in the paths of thy commandments. 8:8, The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy, teach me thy statutes. 9:2, Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I have believed thy commandments: thou art good and gracious, teach me thy statutes. 10:1, Thine hands have made me, and fashioned me, give me understanding therefore, that I may learn thy commandments. 11:8, Quicken me according to thy loving kindness, so shall I keep thy testimonies of thy mouth. In the 15, portion, he showeth the fruits and effects of the word. Port. 14:1, he

showeth that it was a lantern to his feet, and a light to his paths. 15:4, Stablish me according to thy promise, that I may live. 16:5, I am thy servant, grant me therefore understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. 17:5, Direct my steps in thy word, &c. Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant, and teach me thy statutes. 18:8, The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting, grant me understanding, and I shall live. 19:5, Hear my voice according to thy loving kindness: O Lord quicken me according to thy judgments. 20:7, Quicken me according to thy judgments. 7, Quicken me according to thy loving kindness, and here he saith, Lord I make my pitiful moan unto thee for this knowledge. Was he not now, shall we think thoroughly persuaded, that the word of God is a treasure, seeing he would meditate of it, run after it, seek early and late, pray for it, and practice it continually? This must make us ashamed of our cold love unto it.

Well, we see here that the man of God doth not overly, or lightly ask this heavenly knowledge, hypocrites may stretch out their throats, and yell with their voices as loud as he: but the man of God in the bitterness of his spirit complaineth to God of his wants, and from the abundance of the heart prayeth thus to the Lord. And besides his much and continually praying, we see his other exercises in meditating, at morning and evening, his praising God seven times a day, his teaching and conferring with others. Wherefore we must needs see and confess, that either he was very vile, and we very holy: or he most holy, and we very vile. Shall we hope to attain this without using the like means? Did not he attain to Knowledge without so many means, and shall we attain to it with using of no means? Shall we think the Lord will be more partial with us, than he was with his beloved Prophet? Did not the man of God obtain without asking often, and shall we obtain without asking at all? Shall he cry and call, pray and complain, watch, and

wake to get understanding, and shall we slug and do nothing? Or did it more appertain to him to do these things; or do they less concern us, seeing he did them for our instruction? The holy Ghost hath for no other end blessed the commendation of so good men to us, then for a type of godliness, which we must follow, and whereby he vouchsafeth as it were to open heaven gates for us, and to give us access to the treasures of heaven. Surely, it was not for any profit of the Prophet himself, who did it, but for all posterity to come, to put us in mind of our corruption, to show how we should strive against it. Wherefore it standeth us in hand more carefully, more frequently, more fervently to use prayer, if ever we will hope for the like graces. For the Lord hath promised, that if we knock on this sort, the door of knowledge shall be opened; if we seek wisdom on this sort, we shall surely find her; if we crave understanding with this affection and alacrity, we shall receive plentifully. We must then in our behalf know, that we must knock and that instantly, we must seek and that carefully, we must ask and that diligently, with a holy importunity. Away then with our old drowsiness, God will not bestow his hidden secrets, his treasures, his mysteries, his jewels upon them, who vouchsafe not to ask them. For seeing the things which he promiseth in his word be no small things, but such as the eye hath not seen, the ear heard, tongue expressed, nor heart conceived; shall we think to come to them by shutting our eyes, by making dull our ears, by closing up our mouths, and hardening our hearts? Surely no. Behold then this vehement praying of the man of God, for a president for us to follow.

But why should the man of God here pray for understanding? Had he not often prayed for it before? Was he a novice in knowledge being a Prophet? Doth not our Savior Christ reprehend repetitions and babbling in prayer? True it is our Savior Christ doth reprehend that babbling, which is without

faith and knowledge, and a feeling of our wants, but he speaketh not against these serious and often repetitions, which proceed from a plentiful knowledge, abundant faith, and lively feeling of our necessities. Again, although it cannot be denied, but he was a man of God, and had received great graces, yet God giveth knowledge to his dearest Saints in this life but in part, and the most which we see and know is the least thing, which we see not, nor know. Besides, when we have knowledge, and knowledge must be brought into practice, we shall find such difficulties, such waywardness, such forgetfulness, such wants, that although we have had with the Prophet a very good direction in the general things of the word, which are universal and few; yet we shall find many distractions in our practices, which must be particular and many, and we shall either fail in memory by forgetfulness, or in judgment by blindness, or in affection by dullness. So easily may we slip, when we think we may hold our journey on. Wherefore the man of God, through that examination which he took of his heart and affections, seeing those manifold straits and difficulties, prayeth in the verse following, not for the renewing of men in general troubles, but for the hindering of his particular estate and condition.

—• **Verse. 170. - Let my supplication come before thee, and deliver me according to thy promise.**

Well now, if we only consider those former causes, we shall see that here is no vain repetition, and that in nothing this prayer was made too often. For besides that, as we said, we know here but in part, we forget also that which we know, and we cannot practice that which we remember: so that it is a rare thing to have a good judgment, but rarer when we have a good judgment to have a good affection, and most rare when we have a good judgment and a sound affection, to have them still. For we have not in us

any indwelling righteousness. Again, as it had not been sufficient for us to have had light heretofore, and not to have it now; or having it now, unless we have it hereafter: so it is requisite for our life which we hold in Christ, that we have not only had judgment heretofore, unless we have it now; and it is not sufficient to have it now, unless we have it hereafter. For they that think their judgment is perfect enough, and their affections holy, had no need to have Christ to be their schoolmaster, who teacheth the simple and ignorant; they that are whole need him not to be their physician, who came not to call the righteous: but sinners to repentance. But God his children seeing their ignorance and corrupt affections, even by experience (the schoolmistress of schools) know, how needful it is daily to crave knowledge, and continually to labor for a good conscience. On the contrary part, who so bold as blind bayard; who so lofty as he that understandeth least; who so proud, as he that hath but slender knowledge? But surely the children of God, who are conscious still of their deadness and dullness in heavenly things, would even have despaired, had they not seen the same in the Saints of God before them, and had they not received from God this holy Psalm, both for a pattern of godliness, to their instruction, and also for an example, how they might be rid from their ignorance, deadness, and dullness, and how they might be comforted, when after much striving and shaking them off, they return to them again to their consolation. For when we see that the Saints of God before us have had such fights, not only with corruptions of ill judgment, and corrupt affections, which they had of nature: but after they have been renewed by knowledge, and therewithal consider, that by prayer alone they have been revived, we are assured and comforted, that if we continue, and renew our prayers, God will continue and renew his graces in us. Thus we see as well to our consolation as

instruction, that the Saints of God were not only not safe from presumptuous sins, but also they labored to see the errors of this life, and also desired to be rid from the dangerous and sluggish sins of profane professors, who will see nothing at all.

[According to thy Word.] These words will bear a double interpretation: for either the meaning of them is, give me understanding, which is according to the prescript truth of thy holy Word; or else, according as thou hast promised in the Word, to them that by prayer ask it of thee. But because this latter sense comprehendeth the former, I more willingly embrace the latter. For if God help us according to his promise, it is doubtless according to his word, for he promiseth nothing which is not agreeable with his word. Besides; this may be proved by that which is added in the verse following, where he saith, according to thy promise.

Now in that he repeateth the same thing, he showeth, that certainly God hath promised to help and relieve his necessity. Neither must we think that this promise was made to David alone, who alone had not such infirmities, but he speaketh as a member of the Church: for the promise appertaineth to the Church, and to all in the Church universally; Howbeit, look what the Lord had promised to all generally, he applieth to himself particularly. For we may see both in this Psalm, Port 17:2. The entrance into thy word showeth light, and giveth understanding to the simple; as also Psal. 19:7. The testimony of the Lord is sure, and giveth light to the simple: that the promise is general, and as well appertaineth to us as to him. So that the meaning of this latter part is nothing else but this; as thou hast promised to give knowledge to them that seek it, so Lord give it me: for I thus seek it. Thus we see how needful it is to have knowledge of God his word, seeing none obtain but they that pray, according as God hath promised in his word,

according to that John 5:4 This is the assurance that we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us. Ye ask, saith S. James, chap. 4:3, and receive not, because ye ask amiss. We must not pray then for every fantasy, and for every grace that cometh into our minds, but for those things for which we are taught to pray according to the word. But how can we do this without knowledge? How should we pray to him, in whom we have not believed? Or how should we believe in him, whom we have not known? Whosoever then will pray aright, must pray in faith, and he that will pray in faith, must also pray in knowledge.

Again, we are here to observe thus much: that whosoever he be that will be directed in singular actions, he must acquaint himself with the particular knowledge of the word. Wherefore let us learn to use often reading, hearing, and meditating of the word, and with often reading, hearing, and meditating, let us use often praying, applying, and examining of ourselves, that we may both seek understanding in knowledge, and the obedience of it in our affections. For often reading, hearing, and meditating, bring ripeness of judgment; often praying, applying, and examining ourselves, bring quickness of our affections. We shall see then for often praying, the Lord will drive us to it with often giving of his graces, with the giving of his graces, he will give necessities, with the giving of necessities, he will often give occasions to set forth his glory. How shall we pray now without judgment? Or how shall we meditate without knowledge? We must often hear for knowledge sake, we must often meditate for conscience sake. For as we cannot have profit in the general knowledge of a thing, without particular meditating of it: so can we not meditate without some troubling of our mind, unless we do it of judgment, no more than not having knowledge we can pray, without great turmoiling and troubling of our mind.

Thus we must join all means together; as first by conference we must labor for knowledge; to make our knowledge more effectual we must join meditation; and that both knowledge and meditation may be sanctified, we must use prayer.

[Let my supplication come before thee, and deliver me according to thy promise.] Here he prayeth to be rid from these straits and encumbrances, which did hinder this understanding of the word which he desired. For whereas some understand it of outward and common troubles, I think, by those things which go before, and comparing it with those things that follow after, that he meaneth that deliverance, which might rid him from those things which are contrary and prejudicial to the things before prayed for, that so both being enlightened with true knowledge, and delivered from all blindness, he might praise God more freely and liberally both for his understanding, and for the escapes of those distresses perplexities, doubts and ignorance's of his mind. And thus considering that he prayeth to obtain the good things, and to be delivered from the contrary evil things, let us consider of that which followeth.

[According to thy promise.] If we will obtain anything of the Lord, we must first vow thankfulness; and as we be suitors, we must be thanksgivers; as we be suppliants, we must be plentiful in praises to the Lord. For this is the end of our creation: this is the end of our redemption, this is the end of our sanctification, this is the end of all our praying, and obtaining, even plentifully to praise the name of our good God.

—• **Verse. 171. - My lips shall speak praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.**

As we learn now that the end of all God's blessings is thanksgiving, and unless we purpose and will perform this, we must never look to obtain

anything in favor: so we are also to learn, that before God teacheth us from above, we are as tongue-tied, and cannot pray, before he by his spirit doth instruct us, we cannot once speak of his word. This he showeth both in the first portion and seventh verse: I will praise thee with an upright heart, when I shall have learned the judgments of thy righteousness: and in the second portion, where after he hath prayed to be taught in the statutes, he promiseth with his lips to tell the judgments of the Lord.

We cannot then bless God before he instruct us. When the Lord rectifieth our knowledge with clear judgment, and reneweth our hearts with holy affections, we are most ready to praise the Lord, according to that in the Psalm: Lord open thou my lips, and my mouth shall show thy praise. And Rom. 8:29. The spirit helpeth our infirmities: for we know not how to pray as we ought, &c. Wherefore if we live to eat, to drink, to sleep, and not to praise God, we live no better than brute beasts, or rather worse: for they praise God in their willing serving of man's necessities, and according to their kind in their ways. But man, to whom the Lord hath given eyes to look to heaven, ears to hear his word, speech to sound his praises, a mind to conceive his glorious works and blessed word, seeing he hath these gifts above beasts, it is certain there must be thankfulness in man above that which is in beasts, unless man will be judged even by the brute beasts, to be more guilty of his condemnation. For as there is no more praying in us, than there is believing: so there is no believing without knowing God, and there is no thanksgiving, without both knowing and also believing in God. If in any measure therefore we will praise God, we must in some measure know God; if we will praise God more than the common sort of men, we must labor to know more than the common sort of men.

But what meaneth the Prophet, to desire to be taught? Was he not well seen in the word? Had he not learned much, as becometh a Prophet? What teaching doth he here mean? Knowledge puffeth up and is void of humility, confessing our wants. This is the teaching of the spirit. For it is no doubt but he had eyes to see as well as others, he had cares to hear, he had an hear to conceive, he was a man of God. Howbeit, we are to know, that though our eyes be upon our book, and the word be sounded in our ears; yet it is the spirit of God that maketh us teachable in judgment, and frameable in our affections. What have we which we have nor received? It is the gift of God, and to you it is given, saith our Savior Christ to his Disciples, to understand the mysteries of God. This then being given of God by his spirit, must cause us to be thankful. Why do so many excel in knowledge? And why do so few give thanks? Surely because they are taught by the letter, and not by the spirit. For a man may attain to the knowledge of the word, as others attain to the knowledge of human arts, but to his juster condemnation. Wherefore in a word we may conclude, if the man of God might have achieved such knowledge without such means, he was either too much busied in that wherein he needed not have troubled himself, or else a hypocrite.

But if we read, that the blind which were restored to their sight, the deaf whose ears were opened, the dumb, who by the finger of Christ his power did speak again, acknowledged this to be the only work of God, and were thankful; although indeed of the ten lepers which were cleansed, one only was thankful, and nine held their peace: how much are we bound to praise and magnify the name of our good God, who hath delivered us from blindness and ignorance, wherein we were plunged, to see the bright beams of the glorious Gospel, who hath opened our heavy and dull ears to hear the sweet voice of the son of God, who hath untied our tongues and unclosed

our lips, which were sewed up from sounding the praise of our salvation, yea and which more is, hath untied and restored our feet, to walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God, and hast cast out of us the devil and his power, and spoiled from henceforth his kingdom in us, that we might serve the Lord in newness of conversation.

We see now, that whosoever is taught aright to the kingdom of God, he shall praise the Lord. But what is the cause, why this effect is so little found in us of praising God? Even because we are void of the cause, that is, of teaching of the spirit. For either surely we have none understanding, or else we have not the understanding of the spirit. O blessed work of God's spirit, thanksgiving! This made the Prophet say: Psal. 16:2. My well-doing extendeth not to thee, O Lord. And 116:12. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me? I will take the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord. That is, I will acknowledge his old graces received, and hope that I shall have his mercies continued. But herein is another thing worthy to be observed, that according to the proportion of his prayers, is the proportion of thanksgiving. For as the two former verses contain two prayers; so the two latter verses contain two thanksgivings. And mark how according to the vehemency of his prayer, there is a vehemency of thanksgiving. For as he had said let my complaint come before thee: so he addeth, my lips shall pour forth thy praise continually. A word drawn from spouts or spring-heads, which abundantly yield water out from them. So to complaints answereth the word of pouring out. In the second he saith: Let my supplication come before thee. Whereunto answereth: my tongue shall entreat of thy word: Where he promiseth to be no less shrill in thanksgiving, than loud in praying to the Lord.

Oh, this throweth down the hearts of God's children, that they can in no measure nor proportion be thankful for God's benefits. This unthankfulness must needs be grievous unto the Lord, which is so odious in the sight of man: we see, bestow a benefit on a beggar, their suites and complaints do in many degrees exceed their thanksgiving; and certainly as this unthankfulness is from man to man: so also it is from man to God. For let us be in pain, in sickness, in poverty, or any other affliction, and what prayers make we? What protestations vow we? How often cry we? Lord help me, Lord have mercy upon me? Rid me now Lord, and I will give thanks to thee? But when the rod is off, how many among ten return to give thanks for our deliverance! Peradventure one. Thus we see how liberal we are in praying, because it is easy, to see our wants; and how sparing we are in thanksgiving, because we do not so easily see our benefits. We see how often we are in praying, how seldom in thanksgiving: we see how fervent we are in craving, how cold we are in acknowledging the supply of our wants.

If we attain not to this measure and proportion of thanksgiving with the man of God, at the least let us complain and moan our unthankfulness and dullness. For we must be assured, that if we offer not in some degree, the calves of our lips, the Lord hath lost his mercies, and spent them as it were in vain; and we deprive ourselves of the fruit of them, to be continued unto us hereafter.

—• **Verse. 172. - My tongue shall entreat of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous.**

And though the man of God saith here, My tongue shall entreat of thy praises: We must not therein deny but that our lives must express the fruits of the same, as we may see port. 5:1. Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy

statutes, and I will keep it unto the end. And port. 1:8, when the man of God hath promised to praise the Lord with an upright heart, he addeth in the verse following, I will keep thy statutes, &c. As also port. 19:1. Hear me, O Lord, and I will keep thy statutes: So that not only in word, but in our lives must we endeavor to praise God.

It followeth in the same verse, For all thy commandments are righteous: that is, there is no one of thy commandments but it hath in it righteousness itself; neither is there any righteousness, but it is altogether in thy law.

This is a Hebraism to call a thing righteousness when they will express it to be righteous in the highest degree. We are here to learn, what yieldeth matter of teaching others, and of praising God: Even because whatsoever is good, it is in God's law; and whatsoever is in God's law, it is absolutely good.

Besides here the man of God teacheth us, that the coldness of teaching others, and giving of thanks proceedeth from hence, even because we want this thorough persuasion, that whatsoever is in the law of God, it is righteous, perfect and holy: and whatsoever is righteous, perfect and holy, is in it.

—• **Verse. 173. - Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy precepts.**

Here we see the effect of the man of God his prayers, which hath this sense: As I have prayed for understanding, so that now I might see the issue of it, let me see, O Lord, thy fatherly and provident care of me. As afterward he saith, Let me see, if thou hast true judgment for me. For as he prayed to be directed by knowledge, so he also prayeth for the effect of it, that he might thereby see the merciful hand of God, assisting him in all his troubles.

[For I have chosen thy precepts:] that is, I know I am but a man, I have many injuries offered me, which may hale me this way and that way; yet I prefer thy word before all these troubles. We must not think now, as the world doth judge of God's children, that he chose these as a Mome, or of silly simplicity: but his election was with judgment, which proceeded from consultation, which consultation proceeded of reasons, used on both sides of his causes: so that he made his choice advisedly, considerately, and after long deliberating of the matter, he preferreth the word of God before all the pleasures of this life. It was not then a foolish preciseness of puritanism, it was no childish simplicity, as of a man who chose this because he knew no other things, but it was of wisdom. Wherefore the man of God here teacheth that it is not with God's children as the world deemeth them, that is, that they be silly souls, simple men, and God's fools, who know not what the world meaneth; but as the world is of itself too wise, so it thinketh too hardly of God's children: For it is not to be doubted, but that he had many temptations, and that he debating them by the wisdom of God's spirit, chose the word of God.

They are not ignorant, what it is, to have worldly wealth, and pleasures, and earthly commodities, but comparing these with the wealth of the soul, the pleasures of the spirit and commodities of the world, they by judgment and sufficient advice, prefer the word of God. And herein is their blessed wisdom, that they seeing and weighing both in the balance, being moved on one side by carnal reason, and sustained on the other side by spiritual wisdom, they refuse the worst, and choose the best, contrary to the folly of the world, who also hath some sight of them both, and yet refuseth most cursedly the word, and chooseth most foolishly the pleasures of this life. For as the preferring of good things is the blessing of God in the godly; so it

is a fearful judgment in the ungodly, in preferring these transitory pleasures, before eternal treasures.

Again, what is the cause of such halting between two professions, and of such mammerings in religion? Surely the want of choice, and a purpose not resolutely set in any part, in that whilst we will be between the flesh and the spirit, between the Church and the world, between God and the devil, we know not which side to cleave unto. For if our choice were made, we must not seek God's glory, and our glory; the honor of the Gospel and our own commendation. For undoubtedly, if God his children thus walk in a mammering, as though they would give the Lord the half part of their profession, and part stakes with his glory, shall for their pleasure be sure to seek pain, and seeking sport, they shall find smart: when they look for profit, they shall have loss; when they sow for glory, they shall reap shame. This is the singular mercy of God in this world to his children, to punish them here, and to save them from the great judgment to come. And as the Lord used in mercy these means to his, to school them in their choice, so also when they are come to their choice, he also in wisdom will try them.

Again, with permitting the world to offer on the one side preferment, or if that serve not, on the other side imprisonments, he suffereth Satan either to illude them with fair promises, or to terrify them with fearful threatening's: and giveth leave to the flesh, to assault them with delights, or to oppress them with calamities, that he may in truth prove their constancy, whether they have so chosen, as they will not repent them, or whether their choice be as sure as free. For many if they might be basted with glory and estimation, and might maintain still their credit, and wallow in wealth, would not care greatly to serve God; but without this resolute purpose, we shall surely find, that when trouble cometh we would shrink away.

Wherefore the Lord trieth his in the furnace of affliction, and in the floods of temptations he gage them, to try their hearts, to find their faith, to scour them from the dross of infidelity, the dross of security, the dross of hypocrisy; as the furnace is not only for the trial of gold, but after the trial had, to purge it thoroughly from corruption.

Indeed so long as we are led with the cord of our natural corruptions, there is no conflict, the flesh rebelleth not against the spirit: but when our judgments are heavenly, and our affections spiritual, fighting with carnal reason and earthly cogitations, then is the main battle. When Satan seeth a man given to the world, and as long as he is in a mammering, he striveth not with him, but when he seeth himself forsaken and defied, and that Christ Jesus a stronger than he hath made an entrance into the house, then he rageth, then he useth his cunning, all his shifts, and summoneth a Parliament of seven devils more, who come all together to the casting out of Christ, to the discouraging of the man newly called, and to make a reentry into his old possession. Thus then we shall see, he is a roaring lion, and that our fight is not only with worldly powers, but also with spiritual enemies in heavenly things. So long as we follow the guise and fashion of this world, and frame ourselves to live after it, we shall be at league with them, and they will be at peace with us: if we follow heresies, heretics will not speak ill of us; if we like idolatry, idolaters will be acquainted with us; if we will walk carefully ourselves, and will not rebuke the sins of the world, or desire the dreams of heresies, happily we shall pass scot-free; but when we hate the world, the world will hate us, because though we be in the world, we are not of the world, John 15. If we proclaim war with heresies, heretics will condemn us, if we taunt and rebuke the sins and cold profession of worldlings, they will soon put us to silence. For it may be, they will be

content, that we should be Momes, and do well, and not rebuke them; but when we pull at their sins by the ears, and lay violent hands on their cold profession, then we shall see the enmity between the seed of the Serpent, and the seed of the Woman. Thus we see, so long as we will shake hands with the world, the flesh and the devil, we shall be quiet enough; but all our perils and dangers are in resisting them. For all must have these troubles, that make their choice, but all make not this choice, and therefore are so quiet: all must suffer persecution, that will live godly in Christ Jesus; but so few suffer, because so few live godly in Christ Jesus. We may now conclude, that all our conflicts are in new birth, not that we have more troubles and temptations in regeneration, than in old birth: but because we were so soused and brawned in them, that we saw them not so much, as we afterward do, being enlightened with God's spirit. Why do the wicked then say of us, Oh these are new Professors, newfangled, these men had need have a new world? Surely because there is no argument with the worldlings and God's children. But all these troubles are to make us more zealous in our choice. True it is, the Lord dealeth favorably with us in the beginning, as a father dandleth his children, and as the Bridegroom useth the children of the marriage, but we are grown and are past children in knowledge and profession: he thinketh it meet we should be purged as gold seven times in the furnace, Psal. 12 He thinketh we must be pruned to bring forth fruit more abundantly, John 15. If we dally then with our sins, as truly as God hath sworn our salvation, and it is most sure we shall be saved; so hath he ordained means, for so many as shall be saved, as his word, Prayer, the Sacraments and discipline, which when they do not prevail with us, yet hath he sanctified another mean, that is, affliction; wherewith he will rather humble us, than we should lose our salvation, that when prayer cannot help

us, when the word doth not instruct us, when the Sacraments do not confirm us, when discipline doth not awe us, we should taste of this last remedy, his fatherly correction.

Here we see, deliberation did put the reasons in the balance, and election made the choice, and God's children comparing and examining the love of the world with the love of God, though they be made of the same mold, that others are made of; yet seeing the judgment of God on both parts, they ponder the reasons of one side, and the reasons of another side, and after long deliberation they forsake that glory, riches and dignity which the world doth offer, and taketh that which the Lord in mercy bestoweth on them.

But the wicked go indeed so far, as they see the good, but to their condemnation: for light coming into the world, they refused it; and though with Balaam sometimes they desire to die the death of the children of God, yet they blot out these motions, and forsaking the word, they follow error; forsaking God, they follow the devil; forsaking the Church, they cleave to the world: so just is their condemnation, for burying the light of God his spirit.

—• **Verse. 174. - I have longed for thy salvation O Lord, and thy law is my delight.**

The man of God goeth on forward in showing his unfeigned affection to the word, and therefore here he showeth, both how he longed for it, and also how in the meantime he slayeth himself. It might seem a general speech, and of less importance which he useth here: for who is so far gone, and hath so small hope of recovery, that cannot say, he longeth for his salvation? For we read that even Balaam desired to be saved, and the most wicked in their life time will have many wishes of their salvation. What notable thing then is there here in the man of God? True it is, that the Lord wringeth out thus

much often even out of the mouth of the wicked, unto whom he imparteth so much of his right and goodness, that they see what they should do and desire, but yet in truth they do it not, in that their desire is so short and slender. When we see then that all their wishing and praying cometh to nothing, it is sure they are but hypocrites. Again, they will say they long for salvation, but they will not use the means thereunto: as if one should say he longed for bread, and pray daily, give us this day our daily bread; and yet they will either walk in no calling, or else get it by fraud and rapine, not staying themselves at all on God's providence, but they long rather for other things joined with God's glory, than for God his will, howsoever in the mean season they make the help of God their pretense: so it is in the spiritual estate of the soul; for although Idolaters, heretics, and hypocrites say, that they long for their salvation: yet they long indeed for their profit, pleasure, glory, and self-love. For if they longed for that salvation which is of God, they would not so follow their own dreams, revelations, and superstitions, but use those means of the word, which the Lord himself hath appointed. As for profane Professors, they will indeed say as much as the other: but bring them to the word, to prayer, to the Sacraments, and to discipline, ye shall see they have no sound longing, but are carried away with the desires of their own flesh and blood. Wherefore we see how this longing of the man of God differeth from the longing of other men, as we may see by the sequels; for my delight is in thy word. Where we see, that as he longed after salvation, so he delighted in the means thereunto. And here as we often showed before, the law is taken for that general thing of the whole word of God, and not for the particular thing of the moral law, which consisteth in bidding and forbidding, in promises to the obedient, and threatening's to the disobedient. And that the true longing is no new thing in

him, but appertaineth to all men, we may see in the first Psalm where he is said to be blessed, who severeth himself from the wicked in thought, word and deed, both in religion and manners, and giveth himself to meditate continually in the word.

Now if we will try ourselves, whether this true longing be in us or no, we must see whether it be after that salvation which is to be joyed, or whether it vanisheth away, and is nothing but a torment of the conscience. Besides, this is a sure note of it: if our desire be sound, it is not satisfied, until the thing longed for, be accomplished. As we may see in natural and human things; is in them that are sick with love, they are in continual perplexity of mind, until they have obtained their love, likewise must we long after the word. For longing is a fervent desire, and not a thing quickly come, and quickly gone; but a thing that hath been searched by reason, and in judgment hath been chosen So that as we showed before, there is a great difference between a lightning desire, and a settled judgment which causeth us in truth to long. In that he now maketh mention of his longing after his election, he showeth that he had cast his accounts, and set down how he might be able to meet the mighty man, indenter battle with him, as it is in the gospel. This longing cannot be in the wicked: for when they long, it is for heresies or worldly pleasures, and right longing cometh from a right sight, judgment and affection, which will bring in the careful using of the means. For as it holdeth in false longing, so also in holy longings, that after long debating, and examining of ourselves, and casting our accounts, what will be the fruit of the good, and what will be the end of sin, carefully will use the means. For as the desire useth means; so longing useth means carefully.

Let us now examine ourselves, where our fervency is: for joy and hope, fear and sorrow show a man's heart; as whatsoever we joy in, whiles we have it; that we sorrow for, when we have lost it. And let us examine our longing, whether we can use the word with delight or no; whether prayer be pleasant, whether the sacraments be comfortable to us or no, and whether the discipline of the Church be reverend and precious to us. If our desire be cold, our using of the means is also cold: if we be fervent in desire, we are also fervent in using of the means. The Apostle speaking to the Romans, chap. 6, after the manner of men, saith he will not extort so much as he might do, but he will deal with them more easily; and whereas he might require greater obedience, he saith: as ye have given your members servants unto uncleanness, and iniquity, to commit iniquity? So now give your members servants unto righteousness in holiness. This is but an human thing if we should see how we have longed after things natural and unnatural: if we should see how we have longed inordinately, let us see if our longing be alike after the word, and let us say to our own souls, what was there such a longing in us, after such things whereof we are now ashamed before God in our prayers, and before men when they are but named, and have we such slender longing after our salvation? It is to be feared, our choice is not yet made, for if it were, we should surely long more, and longing we should more use the means.

—• **Verse. 175. - Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee, and thy judgments shall help me.**

Here the man of God desireth life to none other end, but to praise God, in keeping of his word, as he said before, Port. 3:1. Be beneficial to thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy Word. In which place he also desireth none other life, but that which is according to the word of God. For all other

lives have a vain title of life, but this is true life. We see the man of God doth not only feel with the Apostle, that in God we move, live, and have our being: but also speaketh of a more excellent thing, to wit, that in him we live spiritually. Again, he looketh not in himself for any natural life; but acknowledgeth that mans life is of the word of God. Let us therefore learn with David to commit our lives to the Lord, Psalm 31:15. Into thine hands I commend my spirit, &c. He speaketh this in his life time, and committeth it to the Lord, that as he gave it him; so he would vouchsafe to keep it being given.

Now we shall never in truth say the like, until we perceive how we received our life of God, how he nourisheth it, and how to him we must surrender it again. Wherefore we are not to live, as do the brute beasts, and the heathen: but we must live to enjoy our salvation, and covet our salvation to praise the Lord, because there is no other end of man's life, than God's glory.

As for them which live to any other end, Solomon judgeth no better of the untimely fruit than of them, who enjoy many days in pleasure, and after go to the darkness. Besides we know how all other inferior things were created to glorify God in serving man, and man was made to glorify God by the true use of the word.

[Let my soul live. &c.] This is the usual phrase of the Scripture, when they use to set down a thing more pathetically, as Luke 1. My soul doth magnify the Lord: my spirit praiseth Go my Savior. And Psalm 103:1, and 104:1. My soul praise thou the Lord. Psalm 115:17. The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into the place of silence, and Psalm 6:5. In death there is no remembrance of thee, in the grave who shall praise thee: and Isaiah 38:19. The pit cannot praise thee, the grave cannot confess thee,

death cannot praise thee, they that go down into the pit cannot praise thee: but the living, the living shall confess thee, as I do this day, &c. How grievous a thing it is now, every man may judge, that a man should go out of this world, or ever he knew wherefore he came into the world, and this is that which maketh us so loath to die. This was it that made the Saints of God in former times so unwilling to leave this life, not that they wanted any hope of the life to come, or had not the joy of a blessed resurrection; but either they had some special sins heavily pressed their consciences, whereby they had dishonored God; or else they desired to live in greater measure to glorify God, either in entering into the way of repentance, or else growing in the same, after they had entered; because as yet they could not say in truth: I have fought a good fight, I have run a good race, I have kept thy faith, from henceforth a crown of glory is prepared for me. For they knew that, whereof we are willingly ignorant, that we shall never incessantly praise God in heaven, unless we carefully serve God in earth; and we shall never praise God in the congregation of Angels, which praise not God in the congregation of his saints. Let us remember then, that we live not to eat, as do brute beasts; we live not to live, as do the heathen: we live to live well, as having all the creatures to serve to our use we must live to God's glory, according to his will. It is requisite that Christians in this life should be prepared to praise God in the life to come with Angels: for how shall we cry holy, holy, holy, with Angels, unless we learn to praise God with his Saints in this life? Neither is there anything more effectual to enforce this doctrine, than to know how our life is given us of God to his glory, and that it shall return to him again. And as the children of God use this world, as though they used it not; but they use prayer, the word and Sacraments most carefully: so the ungodly use prayer, the word and

sacraments, as though they used them not; but they use the world most carefully.

Some can put on a good face, and run slyly away with sin: but when God's children see the occasion of well-doing taken from them, oh how it woundeth them! Oh how it grieveth them, that they have dishonored God, it pincheth then so to the heart, that they had rather die a thousand deaths, than so displease God. They then deceive themselves, that think they can be saved, and use their pleasures too: but God his children dare not fully use their liberty even in lawful things, least by little and little they should abuse it. And here is to be noted the vehemency of his delight, that he contented not himself in the verse going before, to say: thy law is my delight, but thy law is my delight, and thy judgments shall help me: that is, and to confirm myself herein, I will set before me thy judgments, which are the real records of thy truth: for as thy word is my delight; so I will mark how thou doest ratify the same, both by accomplishing thy promises, and executing thy threatening's. And whereas other men make no conscience to observe thy judgments, yet I will mark them, that I may go on to the end. If we will live then to the praise of God, we must see how he doth deal with men, considering as he hath a word written: so also he hath an hand working. The word teacheth that God governeth the world, and the observing of this government confirmeth the word; indeed heathen men attribute things to chance, or to fortune, for want of knowledge of the word; but seeing we have God's mysteries in his word, we must observe them in his works.

This observation consisteth in things already past, and in things hereafter to come: in things past, as if the Prophet had said: Whereas I see that flesh and blood would discourage me, because my faith is weak, I consider thy works of old, and I find thy children were never finally forsaken, and that

their enemies in the end were overthrown. Let us learn in this strength first to look into the word of God, and from thence to observe the works of God: let us consider how he hath dealt with the Patriarchs, Prophets, Evangelists and Apostles, and all our forefathers that put their trust in him, and we shall see his rich mercy to the repentant, and his treasures of vengeance on the impenitent. And as we look into the judgments of old, so are we to think that he will deal in time to come: for whatsoever is written of old, is written for our learning, that we might receive comfort in the accomplishing of the promises, and fear by the execution of the threatening's. This the Apostle showeth, 1 Cor. 10; who after he had feared them with the examples of God's judgments in the Jews, in the 11th chap. Now all these things came unto them for examples, and were written to admonish us upon whom the ends of the world are come. As if he should say: For this cause these things remain in record to this day, to instruct us, that if we commit these or like sins, we shall have these or like punishment. Thus we have them not as personal, but real examples. The Apostles Peter and Jude gather the examples of God's wrath on the Angels, on Sodom, on Gomorrah, on the old world, and on Judas to threaten sinners, and to enforce their threatening's: for as God will never leave his, so upon the heap of sin, he will bring the full heap of destruction upon the wicked, whipping their naked bodies to the grave, and scourging their wretched souls unto hell fire.

—• **Verse. 176. - I have gone astray like a lost sheep: seek thy servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.**

He compareth himself to a sheep, which of all other is most simple, and standeth in most need of a guide: so that here he confesseth his need of a guider: and this appeareth in that there is a continual comparison of a sheep, and shepherd in the Scriptures. Again, though a sheep go astray, yet it is

soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: My sheep hear my voice. Thus David when he went against Nabal, was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman: and when he had slain Uriah, he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometime me go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed.

[Seek, &c.] Before we be come to the Lord, we cannot desire to be fought, but he of his own pleasure must look upon us. Thus he prayed then after his calling, that he might not err.

Forgotten. A thing is said to be remembered, either which is wholly remembered, or else in part; so that it may be easily brought to remembrance: and after this sort had not he forgotten the word, that is, not wholly: but yet in part he might, for we have the holy Ghost not only to teach us new things, but also to bring to our remembrance things forgotten.

FINIS.

MEDITATIONS ON PROVERB 4. VERSES 13-23.

TAKE HOLD OF INSTRUCTION, and leave not, keep her, for she is thy life.

The matter which is contained in this verse, hath been often repeated in the Chapters before, yet here again it is necessarily repeated: for in these matters besides our great dullness and negligence, we are so ready to deceive ourselves, and to think we love the Word when we do not, and do persuade ourselves in our own imaginations, that we have laid fast hold of Wisdom, when indeed we have neither touched nor tasted it. Therefore that we might beware of this, he repeateth that which he had spoken before in most effectual and significant speeches. For the word which is here translated, lay hold, doth signify to lay hold with strength, as we see men that are in peril of drowning, they will lay hold so fast upon a thing, that their hands may be sooner broken then loosed: all their power for the present time is in their hands, and they will most surely hold fast that they catch in their hands; In like manner must we lay hold upon Wisdom with our heart, with such strength and power must we catch hold of it, that

nothing whatsoever be able to separate us from it. This is the first thing whereunto we are here exhorted. The second must necessarily be joined to this: which is, that we do not leave it for anything, but keep it as fast as we hold it.

Both these exhortations are most necessary, for we are very slack and slow to lay hold, and when we have laid hold, through carelessness we are ready to lose it: hereof it followeth, that we forget many godly lessons that we have learned. Hereof it is, that we lose many worthy things, wherein we have been greatly comforted, yea, hereof it cometh, that we be many times ignorant of some principal points, of which we have been often instructed. Therefore if we will forever learn, that we have once learned, if we will continually feel comfort, in that wherein we have once been comforted? Then let us with all diligence attend unto these two things: First, that we lay fast hold upon the word, and then that we keep it fast and sure, when we have laid hold of it. This if we would do, then are we to beware of two things, which herein would greatly hurt us: first, we must beware of the vanity of our minds, that we be not led away with it, from the Word unto worldly lusts, and from virtue unto vanity. Secondly, we must be very circumspect in matters of this world, for the over-bold and unwary dealing in them, is of great force and power to keep us from catching fast hold upon Wisdom, and if we have already laid fast hold as we think, yet if our minds be bewitched with worldly things, the covetousness of them will choke up all care of the Word; the desire of them will dispossess Wisdom, and cast it out of our hearts. These two things, if we be careful to avoid, then shall our hearts be much more fit to receive the Word, and to keep it with care, when we have received it. The things whereunto we are here exhorted, are given

us in charge, in the second commandment of the Law, unto which place this verse must be referred.

—• **Verse. 14. - Enter not into the way of the wicked, and walk not in the way with them.**

—• **Verse. 15. - Avoid it and go not by it, turn from it and pass by.**

Salomon hath hitherto exhorted us to wisdom, now he dehortheth and calleth us back from all manner of evil, which might hinder our proceedings in wisdom, and first he adviseth us to avoid all evil examples: secondly he willeth us to beware of our own waywardness and corruptions, and to fly from the evil examples of sinful and wicked men. He dehortheth us in six verses, that is, from the 14th to the 20th, and his dehortation consisteth of a precept, and the reasons of the precept: the principal is expressed in the 14th and 15th verse: we must have no fellowship or familiarity with the wicked, and because it is hard to fly from them, and because their company is dangerous, therefore Solomon useth many words to set out the matter, showing indeed, that we can never be too much or too often warned of them: for he saith, Enter not, walk not, withdraw thyself from it, pass not by it, decline from it. Much like unto this Physic, the Physicians prescribe for the plague: for they say, if a man will be preserved from the plague, he must observe these three things: first, that he quickly and with all speed fly from it: secondly, that he fly far away: thirdly, that it be long ere he return to the place again. By this they mean, that if the air be once infected, there can be no remedy devised to preserve a man in that place: now the plague is more contagious then the wicked are, the plague doth no more infect the air, then the wicked do infect those places wherein they live: and therefore Solomon doth very well to prescribe this remedy for the avoiding of the infection

which might be gotten by evil company. For what could preserve a man in Sodom, but only his lawful calling: therefore unless a man have such a calling to keep him there, he must fly quickly from the wicked, he must fly far from them, he must see them amend, before he return unto them. David did very well see this, and therefore he doth in many places cry out against them. Away from me ye wicked. Woe is me, that I have so long dwelt in Kedar. David was not effeminate, he had not a womanish heart to cry without cause, he felt the smart of it, and therefore crieth so earnestly against them, he saw no good example, he saw no occasion of goodness, he was much hindered in his obedience, he had many pullbacks, and other great disprofits. By this then we see, how needful a precept Solomon doth here give us; but the necessity of this shall more plainly appear, if we consider either the wickedness of their wicked practices, or the hurt which the godly have received by them: for the will of the wicked is wholly bent to evil, they be ever willing and ready to hurt good people, when any occasion is offered, their skill is great, and their wisdom is answerable to their will. And therefore our Savior saith, The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of Light.

This wisdom we may perceive in them, whether they show themselves deadly and open enemies, or friendly and counterfeited friends: for if they profess themselves to be our enemies, it is marvelous to see their practices. First, they will use all extremity and hard dealing, they will offer violence, and oppress him (if it be possible) with wrongful injuries: and what is their purpose in all this, but to provoke him that is good, to require evil for evil, and so fall from his God, or at the leastwise to stay and hinder him in the course of his godliness, that God may be displeased with him? If this thing will not prevail, they will work another way, and labor by slanders and false

reports, in such wise to discredit him, that he may be utterly discouraged, and caused to forsake his profession. And yet they will find another way if this will not work: they will devise crafty fetches, and practice subtlety against him, they will invent pestiferous policies, and find crafty counsels to overthrow him. These and many other ways have they to spit their spite, and spew out their venomous poison against the people of God. If thus also they cannot have that success they look for, if by this means they cannot obtain their purpose, they will take a contrary course to prevail that way if it be possible: they will fame friendship and become our friends, they will flatter us with fair words, and allure us with their benefits, to communicate with them in their wickedness; and to be companions with them in their sins: but when they deal most dangerously, when they mark and observe our dispositions, and become applicable to our nature (for this means will they also use:) so malicious are they indeed towards us. If we be religious, they will shape some show of religion: if we praise any, they will praise him; if we mislike or dispraise any, they will show their mislike of him. Thus in all things they will mark our minds and our dispositions, and will so apply themselves unto us, that except God give us grace they will overthrow us. Seeing therefore they have a ready will to hurt us: seeing also they have great skill to devise most forcible and politic means against us, what worthy account must we make of this precept, wherein Solomon teacheth us how we may keep ourselves from receiving any hindrance by them? Again, if we think upon the hurt that the godly have had by them, or if we consider how they have been infected through their corruption, we shall confess indeed that it is most dangerous to deal with them, and it is the best way to keep us far from them. Joseph was a good man, and endued with great graces, he had received great increases and strength of Faith, and had strong

temptations: yet being daily conversant among the Egyptians, he learned to swear by the life of Pharaoh. David was a man according to God's own heart, he suffered much, and learned great obedience by his sufferings: yet abiding but a while among the uncircumcised Philistines, he learned to lie, and to dissemble. What shall I say of Lot and his family? What danger was he in? What loss did he sustain? What hurt had he in his goods, in his soul and body? He was carried away with the wicked Sodomites captive, his goods and Cattle were taken from him: and though through God's goodness he was rescued, yet he loved Sodom still, and would live in it, yea, though fire and brimstone were ready to be poured upon it, he must be dragged and drawn out of the Town, or else he would not easily have left the place, albeit his soul was daily vexed with the filthiness of their behavior; his wife looked back when she was delivered, and therefore she was turned into a Pillar of salt: his daughters were so corrupted, that they were not ashamed to lie with their father, and Lot himself learned to drink wine very liberally, whereby he was brought into a filthy sin. If a man were assured that he should continue safe, notwithstanding all the temptations of the wicked: yet the care of his family, and fear of their falling, should be a cause sufficient to drive him from wicked company. But if he himself be touched with a conscience and a feeling of his own infirmity, what love of profit, what hope of advantage should keep him there? Lot therefore might plainly see the judgment of God upon him, and upon his family, because he would live, and linger so long among those wicked Sodomites. Now if these men received such deep and great wounds by wicked company, then who is that man, or what is his name that can think to stand among them? We therefore ought to be most circumspect and careful to keep us from the company of wicked men: for their heresies will make us heretics, their carelessness will

make us ungodly and secure. This commandment of flying evil is very general, and may be extended to all the commandments, which we are brought to break by reason of evil company.

—• **Verse. 16. - For they cannot sleep except they have done evil; their sleep departeth except they have caused some to fall, &c.**

The law and precept which was provided for the avoiding of evil company, was most effectually set down in the two former verses. The reasons of this commandment do follow in the four next verses. These reasons are in number two. The first is drawn from the perverse and crooked nature of the will and disposition of wicked men, in the 16th, 17th, and 19th verses. The second is drawn from the state of the godly, and from their behavior, verse. 18. The nature of the wicked is such, that they count wickedness as pleasant as wine, and therefore they make ungodly practices their chiefest delight; it is their meat and drink to do evil, they are best refreshed when they most offend: neither are they content with their own wickedness, but they do moreover cause other to fall into wickedness. If they cannot come by their purpose; if they have not great occasion to work that which they have devised; if they have not made some fitter for their ungodly friendship, then their sleep departeth from them, they cannot be at rest. For as the hungry man cannot sleep quietly, because his appetite continually craveth meat: so the wicked taketh no rest nor sleep, if he be not stuffed, if he have not his belly full of wickedness. How careful ought we then to be to avoid evil company? How far must we fly from it, and how heartily should we hate it continually? Here we may note the contrary, as a very special sign and mark of the true child of God: for if we can make it our meat and our drink to do good, as our Savior Christ saith, It is my meat to do the will of my Father: and as Job saith, I esteemed it more than mine

appointed food. And again, if we can count it the great comfort of our hearts, and solace of our souls, when we can do good to others, and provoke and stir them up to goodness, this is an argument that we have received the spirit of God, as a pledge and a seal of our everlasting salvation, and that we are the children of God. Moreover, if we be grieved when we have wrought no goodness, nor gotten good by others: if we be as it were comfortless, when we have not taught others some goodness, or when we have not provoked them unto practice of some good, which they had before time learned: this may well warrant us that we do truly love God, and that he loveth us, and will bring us unto life. Thus far for the first reason, which as it describeth unto us the nature of the wicked: so it must be applied to the general head of sin, and the corruption of our nature.

—• **Verse. 18. - The way of the Righteous shineth as the Light, that shineth more and more, unto the perfect day.**

The second reason why we should avoid the evil company of the wicked, is, because of duty we are bound to join ourselves to the godly, and to be companions of all them that fear the Lord. It is not enough to fly from the wicked, and to leave their company: but we must make hast to the assemblies of the godly, and link ourselves in friendship with them: for of ourselves we can devise evil, and by ourselves we can learn to work wickedness: we can give place to ungodly motions, we can foster up fleshly desires, yea, and through our corruptions, abundance of evil will flow out of us. Albeit therefore we do avoid the corruption wherewith we might be infected by others, yet if we provide not some help for our own infirmities, by good company, we may be as wicked when we are alone, as those which live among the wicked: we must then seek the company of God's people, and with them we must nourish peace and love, by laboring to profit them

by what good thing soever we have, and by receiving and learning some goodness by them, for the sustaining of our infirmities, for the relieving of our needs, and for the supply of our manifold wants. David did see how needful this was: therefore Psal. 16. he doth not only say, that he will keep himself from the corrupt worship of the wicked, because he hateth them: but he will join himself to God's people, for the love that he beareth them, saying: All my delight is in the Saints. And in another Psalm, saith he: I hate them that hate thee O Lord: whereunto that may be well joined, that is, I am companion to all them that love thee, and love thy name. But Lot did greatly fail in that point, when he would not return to his uncle Abraham, after he was delivered out of Sodom: for if he had gone unto him, he might have been preserved from much woe peradventure, which after did befall him. But it was hard for him to confess his fault unto his uncle, this was grievous unto him, and therefore he would not seek for the company of Abraham. And what came hereof but grief unto himself, shame unto his family, and continual punishment unto his posterity?

This rule then must be diligently observed, that we be always as careful and desirous to join ourselves with godly company, as we be to avoid the assemblies of the wicked. If this be so, as it ought to be indeed; then how great and how grievous is their sin, and how fearfully do they offend, which forsake the society of the godly, to dwell among the wicked, and do leave the company of God's people, to have the familiarity of wicked men? It were good for such to consider what the Angel of the Lord said unto Hagar, when she fled from Sarah her mistress: Hagar, Sarah's maid, whence comest thou? And whither wilt thou go? This talk might pass between them. Angel. Whence comest thou? Hagar. From Abraham's house. Angel. Whither goest thou? Hagar. Into Egypt. Angel. Whence comest thou? Hagar. From the

people of God. Angel. Whither goest thou? Hagar. To the ungodly Egyptians. Angel. Whence comest thou? Hagar. From the Church of God. Angel. Whither goest thou? Hagar. To the Synagogue of Satan. Angel. Take heed to thyself and beware, commit not this great wickedness, do not this great sin against the Lord, return thyself unto thy mistress, humble thyself unto her, and be obedient unto her will. How pithy is this speech? How effectual and worthy to be remembered, if we have already changed our places, or if we go about to change them? Let us remember the saying of the Angel, and let us consider whether it may not likewise be said unto us: whence comest thou? Out of the Church of God: whither goest thou? To the assembly of heretics: where hast thou been? In the Church: where art thou, or whither wilt thou go? To the world and the vanity thereof. O fearful exchange! Refrain thyself betimes, return thy foot with speed, come hastily to the Lord thy God, humble thyself under his hand, promise and perform all obedience unto him, that thee may receive thee to his favor again. Let us think that the Lord doth speak unto our consciences, and let us answer him with a pure heart, and it will without doubt stay us from many unadvised and unprofitable changes. If we do rightly and in truth consider of this, we shall be so far from going to the wicked, that if we be among them, we shall hastily separate ourselves from them, that we may resort to the children and people of God, which in this verse are called righteous.

The righteous men whose company we must keep, and to whom we must associate and join ourselves, are here described by two notes. The first note of a righteous man is this, that his life be ordered and guided by the word of God, which shineth out before him as a light to his feet, and a lantern to his paths. When a man therefore hath a desire and care to measure all things by

the word, he walketh in the light, his light shineth, he hath an argument that she is a righteous man.

The second note of a righteous man is, that he still grows up, and maketh daily good proceedings in godliness. But here may some man say: I feel not this increase and going forward: nay I am so far from that, that I am sometimes driven to commit sin. To this I answer, that such a state is both doubtful and dangerous: yet if in a good conscience thou labor to provide for the peace of thy soul, then try thyself and thine own heart by these notes. First if the conscience of thy former carelessness do make thee careful: if the remembrance of thy former sins do cause thee more to hate and abhor sin, more to fly from it, and the more manfully to strive and fight against it; and to be short, if thou canst make everything that befalleth thee, an occasion to help thee forward: then mayest thou think, that even in these things thou makest some good proceedings; for as we know that the clouds can neither lessen the light of the Sun, nor let the course thereof, because at the last they are scattered by the heat of the Sun which shineth out most comfortably: so we may be sure that although sometimes our righteousness be covered with our infirmities; yet if we overcome them and drive them away, the course of our righteousness is not hindered. And again, as a man is not letted by a fall in his journey, when he learneth thereby to take better heed, and to haste faster forward: so we by our falls and infirmities are not stayed, if they make us more careful of ourselves, and more earnest in going forward; yet must we not say here, it is a light matter to sin, that thereby they may be made more careful: for if a man have once truly felt the grief of heart for sin, if he know how hard it is to get victory over it, if he consider how much he hath displeased God by sin, if he consider the fearful punishment which he hath procured to himself, and if he be persuaded that

none can raise him up from sin but God alone; then he will be most afraid to sin, because he knoweth not whether God will raise him up or no, and therefore if any think that it is but a small matter to sin, it is certain, that they have not as yet unfeignedly repented, they are not as yet washed from their sins. This first rule is good, and very fit to try ourselves, when to our own feeling we can perceive no increase of godliness within us, which doth cause us when we see it, to esteem more highly of the word, and to make greater account of it: for if our former negligence, or some sin through infirmity, whereunto we have slipped, do make the word more savory and lightsome unto us, then it is certain, that the Lord of his goodness, by this fall hath helped us forward. Contrariwise, if our former carelessness do make us more careless, if our slips or sins do make the word unsavory or unseasonable unto us, we are in a most fearful plight, we are in great danger to fall away: therefore let us strive against these, and let us labor to use everything to help us forward, let us labor to find sweetness in the Word, and thus we shall have comfort, even in our infirmities; then shall our light shine brighter every day, until we come to our dying day now: the means which God hath appointed to preserve and increase this light in us, is his holy Word, by which as we received our light, so must we labor to have it continued: therefore if we will not have our light quenched, we must not despise prophecy; if we will have it to burn clear, then we must attend unto hearing, reading, conferring, meditating, and other exercises of the Word, we must eschew evil, and the occasions of evil, then our light shall flame out continually.

—• **Verse. 19. - The way of the wicked is darkness, they know not wherein they shall fall.**

The former verse is amplified by the contrary estate and condition of the wicked, their way is as darkness, because they be destitute of the light of God's word, and they know not wherein they shall fall: they sin and see it not; they run unto heresies, and know it not; the judgments of God hang over their heads, and they espy it not: therefore when they think least, they shall be brought into greatest danger; trouble shall assail them like an armed man, and their sorrow shall come upon them like as upon a woman that travaileth with child. In this case are all those which are not enlightened by the word, this is the state of all those that make not the word their lantern, continually to shine out before them. But the children of God are in a contrary case, they are directed by the word in all their doings, and in the light of the word they see light. They see the subtlety of sin, and therefore they shun it, and they are taken with a horror as it were of all manner of heresies, they foresee God's judgments and prevent them, and so are they kept safe and preserved from evil. Thus far have we been dehorted from ungodly company, both by precepts and reasons. The second part of this dehortation followeth from this place to the end of the Chapter.

—• **Verse. 20. - My son, attend unto my words, incline thine ear unto my sayings.**

Here followeth the dehortation, wherein we are forewarned of the corruption which is in ourselves: yet before the Wiseman cometh to give any special or particular precepts of this corruption, he doth after this manner deliver some general precepts for the use of the word, whereby this corruption may be cured in us. These general precepts are set forth in these three verses, wherein first there is generally required of us great attendance unto the whole word of God in these words: Attend unto my words. Secondly, we are commanded to hear the word. This precept bindeth us to

hear, whether the word be read or preached, or whether it be conferred of: for all these ways we may get great profit by hearing the word. And because we are not easily drawn unto this hearing, therefore the precept is very effectually delivered in these words. Incline thine ear. In which kind of speech there is first noted, our natural slothfulness and security, which of ourselves have no good desire or inclination to hear, unless God by his spirit do work it in us, and bore through our ears. Secondly, there is noted this; that we should hear though it be plain for us to do, we must strive and struggle with ourselves, that we may hear when the Lord doth never so little stir us up thereunto.

—• **Verse. 21. - Let them not depart from thine eyes: but keep them in the midst of thine heart.**

In these words is a third charge given unto us, and that is this, that we should make a profitable use for ourselves in the reading of the word, and in beholding of the creatures: for both these ways we may win great and good strength to overcome our corruption, and both these exercises are in the word commended unto us. The fourth and last precept is contained in the latter end of the verse in these words: Keep them in the midst of thine heart. In this precept is prescribed the manner of the using and doing of the former duties: for all of them must be done with the heart, we must give attendance to the word, not only with the stillness and quietness of the outward members, but we must also be attentive with our hearts, we must hear the word read, preached, and conferred of, not with our outward ears alone, but also with our very hearts. We are not to rest in the simple reading of the word, or the bare beholding of the creatures: but we must labor for a fourth thing, we must look that our hearts be present, when we either read the word, or behold the creatures. And yet there is a further thing to be here

observed: for by this commandment we are charged to lay up in our hearts all the profit which we learn by these means. It is not sufficient to use them, it is not enough to feel some present use and profit by them: but we must lay up in our hearts whatsoever gain we get, that we may be stored and prepared for the time to come. This must be done by prayer and meditations; for if we pray fervently before, after, and in the using of these means: and if after we have used them, we do diligently meditate upon them, both that we may be confirmed in each duty, and also that we may apply them to our own particular and private use: then undoubtedly God will give a blessing to his means rightly used, and will write the fruit of them in our hearts, yea the Lord will give a further blessing unto them; life unto us, and health unto our flesh, as it followeth in the 22nd verse, which before hath been expounded.

These verses are very notable and worthy of all remembrance: for they commend unto us all the means whereby God's word is made effectual unto us, as hearing, reading, preaching, praying, conferring, meditating, and such like godly and heavenly exercises. In other places of the scripture, sometime one, sometime another is mentioned. But here all are expressly named, and this no doubt was done by the great wisdom of God the holy Ghost, which by this hath met with the corruption of our own nature. For this corruption much prevaieth and beareth great sway in us, that we using someone means diligently, do neglect all the rest. Some men do so rest in their private reading, that they neglect hearing, praying, and other wholesome means: some do so highly esteem hearing, that they will never read to confirm the thing that they have heard, nor use any other means. And so of the rest: for there are men of all sorts. But the holy Ghost commendeth all unto us, and chargeth us with all, and that so straightly, that

we cannot with hope look for any blessing from God, unless we be careful and diligent in all. It is the duty then of every man to be seriously exercised and occupied in all those exercises, that God may bless all: or if not, that sometime one, sometime another, according to his good pleasure, may profit us. These nine verses, because they give us in charge to use with diligence the hearing and other exercises of the word, must be referred unto the second commandment.

—• **Verse. 23. - Keep thy heart with all diligence: for thereout proceed the actions of life.**

In this verse he doth call us from all kind of inward evil, which secretly lieth lurking in our heart, for as much as that in very deed is the well-spring of all wickedness, and because Solomon doth here note the heart, as that which is the cause of all sinful actions: so that although we should never see any man do evil, and although we should not at any time be tempted to do evil by any: yet our own hearts would corrupt us, and cause us to sin. We do hereby see that the doctrine both of the Papists and of the Family of love is most untrue: for they do teach that a man is not naturally inclined unto evil, that his nature is not wholly corrupted with sin: but that he is corrupted and infected either by the allurements, or example and temptation of others. True it is, that the occasion of evil may be offered by some other man: but Solomon doth here teach us, that the cause of our evil is in ourselves, and for this cause he commandeth us above all things to be watchful over our hearts; for from them do proceed the actions of life or of death.

Now the causes why we are charged to keep such strait watch over our hearts, are in number two. The first is, because the heart doth carry with it every way all our senses: so that as the Heathen said, It is not the eye that seeth, but the heart; it is not the hand that toucheth, but the heart: and so the

other senses. So from hence it cometh that there be oftentimes great sounds and much noise: yet because our ears do attend upon our hearts, which are earnestly occupied about some other matter, we hear not the sounds, we do not listen unto the noise. From hence it cometh, that we see not goodly sights and shows when they be sometimes offered unto our eyes, because our eyes are set upon that thing, about which the heart is occupied. Yea from hence it cometh, that we sometimes stumble in the plain ground, and our feet do fail us even in fair places, because our feet are carried with our heart, which is earnestly occupied on some other matter. Therefore although we ought to keep with great care our eyes, our hands, our ears, and other parts of our body: yet doth it most stand us in hand to keep all watch and ward over our hearts, seeing they rule all the rest.

The second cause why we should watch over our hearts, is, because it maketh or marreth all our actions: for if our heart be pure, then all our actions be pure and accepted of through Christ, though some want be in them: and contrariwise, if our hearts be not sound, but corrupted and impure; the things that in their own nature and kind are good, yet do become evil and sinful through us. This may be perceived in all the parts of our life: let us then a little see how our corruption deceiveth and defileth us in many things. First this is without all controversy, that is only the corruption of our own hearts, which causeth us to be slack in doing good, or to leave it altogether undone, or else to do that which is evil and odious in the sight of God. For albeit many causes may be pretended, which sometime may have a show of goodness: yet those causes are but corruptions, there is no goodness in them. Some men are kept back from doing good to their family by catechizing them, because they would not have all men to talk of them, and because they would not hazard the credit

of their name. Some are kept back from being zealous in godliness: because they might still use their liberty, in buying and bargaining, whereby they might provide for their selves and families. And for everything they do, they will have a colorable excuse, they will do nothing without a reason. But their excuses are but colors, their reasons are very raw, not seasoned with the word. They are deceived through the deceitfulness of sin, their corruption deceiveth them, they are beguiled because they make no trial of their hearts. The same thing cometh to pass even in those things which in their kind are good. To leave sin is a very good thing: yet if we do not herein take heed unto our hearts, we may before be deceived: for when we be minded and do purpose to leave sin, let us consider the cause why we purpose and go about such a thing, and we shall often find that it is not the conscience of sin, but the fear of punishment, or the shame of the world, which moveth us so to do. The adulterer doth many times abstain from his filthy adultery, not because that sin is odious in the sight of God, but because it will bring him to open shame among men. The thief without any hatred of theft doth sometimes keep himself from the outward act, that he may avoid hanging and the outward danger of the law. And that the shame of the world and fear of men doth more prevail with many than the fear of God, it may appear by this that they will abstain from such things whereunto there belongeth shame, or for which some grievous punishment amongst men is appointed, as for theft, murder, adultery, &c. yet they will pass by great sins for which there is no penal statute, as swearing, &c. For if there were any true conscience of sin in them, they would make a conscience of all sins: but especially of these sins which in God's eyes are most abominable. Again, we must not rest when we have left any sin, as though that were sufficient: but we must narrowly search into our hearts, to

see what cause hath moved us so to do: for if we do not with sorrow repent us of our wickedness, and leave it for the fear of God; but forsake it, either because it will be no longer profitable unto us, or because we be sickly, or old, or weak, and take no longer pleasure in it; then our labor is but lost, our hearts have deceived us. And many (no doubt) are thus deceived; yea, they show that they be deceived by this, that they can still speak of their sins without sorrow, and laugh at others, which commit the same sins. Verily, if they had repented of their sins, the remembrance of them would have been grievous unto them; yea, they would be very sorry when they saw others fall into the like sin. But seeing they can laugh and make a sport at it when any man doth it, as they have done, most sure and certain it is, that their hearts have deceived them, they are yet in their sins, though they have left them outwardly.

Let us proceed a little further, that we may see into the corruption of our hearts. We purpose to deal faithfully, we purpose to hear the word, to read it. These things in themselves are very good: yet if we be not careful over our hearts, their corruption will pollute and defile them. For if we be moved hereunto (not with any zeal of God's glory) but with a care of our own credit, not because in Truth we would countenance the Gospel, but because we would get some countenance by it, the thing good in it own nature is made evil unto us and sinful, because our hearts are not right in the thing. And how many be thus deceived, may soon appear by the small fruit, which most men do get by the word. For when we see many very diligent in hearing of the word, yet profiting nothing, nor desiring to profit, it is undoubtedly true, that those men are deceived by their own hearts, which are not right with God. If there were any conscience, if there were any heart or spirit in men, they would profit something, or at least they would be

greatly grieved for their not profiting. Moreover, when we have brought our purpose to practice and have done any good thing indeed; even then I say, may we be beguiled, if we take not good heed. The corruption of our heart is ready to make us proud of well-doing, whereas indeed we should be humbled: it is ready to make us glory in that, for which we should give glory to God; it is ready to make that an occasion of slothful carelessness, which should be as a spur to make us more careful. Therefore when the thing is done, when the work is wrought, and when all our purpose is brought to pass, we must still be careful over our hearts, we must still have an eye to them, that our corruption be in no wise hurtful to that good grace which God hath given us. Thus whether we purpose to leave sin, or we leave it indeed, yet we may be deceived by our hearts, if they be not right in doing of them. Therefore above all things we must take heed unto our hearts: otherwise, we may do many goodly and glorious things in the sight of men, yet our hearts will one day accuse us for them, our conscience will check and control us, and God, which is greater than our consciences, will utterly condemn us. Now contrariwise, when our heart is upright with God, when it is sound and sincere, then will the Lord favorably accept of our doings, and through his Son he will count them righteous. Thus if we with a pure heart do leave sin, though the dregs thereof remain with us: if with a good heart to Godward we labor after goodness, though we cannot do the good which we would, this uprightness of our hearts doth please God greatly, and he will surely pardon the other imperfections through Christ. True it is, that no man can say his heart is pure, if he compare it with the rule of God's word, or with the justice of God: and therefore, who so seeth not great corruptions in his heart, he seeth nothing. Yet the children of God may say, that their hearts are pure by Christ, which by Faith purifieth them,

and hath wrought the death of sin in them, though some corruption remain in their hearts.

This doctrine hath two special uses; First, to humble us: secondly, to comfort us. We have good cause to be humbled, seeing that it teacheth us, that the very cause of all our sins is in ourselves, and cannot be laid upon any other. It is our own corruption which causeth us to sin, whilst it giveth place to the suggestions of Satan, to the policies of perverse men, and to the temptation of our own flesh. If this corruption were not in us, no temptation should prevail against us: if this corruption were not rooted in our hearts, we should overcome evil through goodness. Christ was free from all sins, and void of all corruption, therefore Satan by temptations could not prevail against him; no, Satan could not prevail against our first father, until his heart through unbelief was corrupted: but we through our corruption do yield unto our temptations, and therefore we are the cause of our own sins. That saying therefore is altogether unsavory, which thieves and others have often in their mouths, when they say woe be to such a man or to such a woman, that ever I knew them; for if I had never fallen into their company, I had never come to this stay and woeful state. For albeit evil company might be a great occasion of their fall, and though such men and women did sin greatly in tempting them to sin, yet their own corruption caused them to be overcome by evil company, and therefore the cause of their sin resteth upon themselves. Secondly, this doctrine doth greatly comfort us, seeing it giveth assurance of victory against all temptations; if we be renewed in our inward man; if our heart be purified by Faith, and if we labor against them by flying unto Christ. And this shall seem comfortable indeed, if we consider that every man hath some corruption either more or less in his heart, according to the measure of his regeneration. And again, if we

consider that the devil as a deadly enemy, goeth about to overthrow him, and to subvert his Faith by means of that corruption. These things if we think of, it will be very comfortable to know, that we shall persevere and continue, not able finally to be overcome of any temptation: it will be very comfortable to know, that the devil for all his fury, is like unto that soldier which lanced the impostume of his enemy, and preserved his life, when he purposed nothing else but to have slain him. Joseph was regenerate, and when the temptations of his Mistress came into his ear, he did fight against them, fled unto Christ, and had a good issue of his temptations. David contrariwise, though in part regenerate, and truly renewed: yet when the like temptation was offered, he yielded and was overcome, because he looked not unto his heart, distrusted not his own weakness, set not the Lord for the time before his eyes, fled not unto Christ, nor fought not courageously himself against it: therefore in what measure we be regenerate, in what measure we unto our regeneration do add the fear of God, for the purging of our hearts, and a distrust of our weakness to drive us unto Christ, in that measure shall we withstand all temptations: and as we fail in all these, or in someone of these; so do we yield unto temptations, and so are we buffeted by Satan. If we be pure in heart and stand steadfast, the devil, the world, wicked men, our own corruptions and all may tempt us, yet they shall not hurt us. They may let us see some corruption that is in us, some sin whereof we have not thoroughly repented of, or something that is not right within us: yet if we yield not unto them, they shall do us good and not evil, they shall drive us to Christ, before whom we must lay open our wounds, that he of his goodness may bind them up. This doctrine then (as we see) doth teach us reverent and Christian humility, withal, it doth minister most worthy matter of singular comfort.

Now that we be not deceived herein, it is requisite that we make some trial of our hearts, whereby we may be truly humbled if we find them corrupted: or we may be comforted, if through the blood of Christ we do feel our sins washed away. Our hearts are tried two ways, either by afflictions and temptations, or else by the motions and affections thereof. For if there be any corruption in our hearts, it will appear by one of these. Sure it is, that as a man doth show himself in troubles and temptations, such a one he is indeed: if troubles do not overturn him, if fear cause him not to fall away, if temptations cannot move him to forsake the truth, or to deny his profession; then verily he hath a good argument that his heart is upright; he hath great cause of comfort and rejoicing. But contrariwise, if for fear his heart faint, if for troubles he turn away, if in temptation he forget his trial, and betray the truth; his heart is not upright with God, he is in the gall of bitterness, he ought in his heart to be greatly humbled. Before this time of trial come, he may think well of himself, he may persuade his heart that there is great godliness in him: but if he examine not himself, if he do not straitly look unto his heart, his virtue will prove vanity, and such godliness will work his grief.

There be many men which now in this time of the Gospel, do account themselves very religious, and they will bear a countenance with the best, and will outwardly appear very forward: but because they resting in their profession, do not examine their heart, their hope faileth them, and they fall away. For when the state of the Common-wealth shall be changed, when religion shall be altered, when the truth shall be persecuted, when the Lord shall take from them the light of his word, and shall suffer Satan to tempt them with heresy; then their corruption will overcome them, and cause them to believe lies. Likewise men that have been brought up by godly

parents, and men that have the company of good men, may seem to be sure settled in sound religion: but whilst they rest in these outward means, and labor not after some inward truth, their hearts do deceive them, and in time they show themselves to be but hollow hearted hypocrites: for when the benefit of good company is taken from them, and when they light upon wicked company, their former godliness is forgotten, they will frame themselves unto that company. Therefore if they be tempted unto theft, they will prove thieves: if occasion of filthiness or other vices be offered, they will take the occasion, and stay themselves with many sins. Thus do temptations try what is in the heart of man. Thus do afflictions find out the hypocrisy of the heart, so that he may well be counted a sound hearted man indeed, which is not overturned by temptations, and which falleth not away by the vehemency of afflictions: for even God's children for want of examining their hearts, do oftentimes take the foil in temptations. Lot no doubt was no common drunkard, and yet the forcible temptations of his daughters caused him twice to commit that sin: his daughters were no common harlots, for then they might have had great pleasure in Sedome. But the devil deceived them with a show of godliness, and brought them to that filthy sin of incest: for when they saw there was none to continue their fathers name upon earth, they thought it good to lie with their father, that so his name and seed might be continued. Very needful it is therefore to examine our hearts, and often to take a trial of them, lest the covertness of our corruption deceive us, and make us hypocrites: and this we must be careful to do, before afflictions and temptations do come, that when they come we may glorify God by keeping our standing.

The second rule to examine our hearts is, to take heed unto our joy and our grief, our hope and our fear: for whatsoever our hearts are most set

upon, we will be most glad when we have gotten it, we will be most fearful of losing it, and most greatly grieved when we have lost it. By this rule we may see how our hearts stand affected in anything we go about, or in any time wherein we live. As for example, in seeking riches, honor, promotion, or glory, if we are most comforted when we have great hope to obtain them, if we be most cheerful when we have gotten them; if we be most afraid lest we lose them, and if we could be contented to forgo anything, rather than them, verily our hearts are most set upon riches, upon glory, upon honor, dignity, and promotion. Again, if we be most desirous of our salvation; if we can most heartily rejoice, when we have gotten assurance of it; if we be sore afraid of all those things which might put us in danger of losing it, if no greater grief can befall us, than when we feel not the comfort of it, a most certain argument we may hereby gather, that our hearts do stand very rightly affected to our salvation: contrariwise, have we no desire to seek after it? Have we but small love of the means whereby we may attain unto it? Then surely we are more carnal than spiritual; yea, it may be well doubted that we are altogether earthly, we seek not the things that are above. The like may be seen in all other things: Art thou glad and cheerful when thou receivest some profit, and heavy hearted when thou shouldest be thankful? Art thou sorry when thou receivest any loss, and without all sorrow when thou hast sinned? Art thou angry when thou art wronged, and not at all displeased when thou hast done open injury to the High God? Where is thy heart? Where is thy uprightness? It is gone, wickedness hath bewitched thee, and thy own corruption hath made thee careless. In heaping up thy riches, thou sayest thou art not covetous, because thou givest to everyone his own, and takest nothing but that the Law will give thee. But all this thou mayest do, and yet be covetous: if then thou wouldest know

they heart thou mayest hereby try it. If thou be ever musing how thou mayest get thy goods: if it, cheer up thy heart, when thou doest increase them, then thou art covetous, though thou see it not, thy mind is on thy money, though thou perceive it not. Let us see in this one particular point: thou hast much corn to sell, dearth of corn would be commodious unto thee, and yet hurtful unto thy poor brother, and to the whole land: Now if thou wouldest wish dearth for thy own profits sake, though it would be a hindrance to the whole Church; if thou rejoice more in thine own gain, then thou canst be sorrowful for thy brothers harm; if thy gain do make thee through pride, to advance thyself above thy brother, then doubtless, thy heart is sore infected with corrupted covetousness. Contrarywise, if it be cheap, and thou canst be more glad for the profit of many, then thou art grieved for thy own loss, or if it be dear, yet thou canst wish from thine heart, that it were cheap; then thou mayest safely say, that covetousness prevaileth not against thee, it ruleth not in thy heart, yea, by this thou mayest see, that thine heart is rightly affected, both to God and to thy brethren.

To conclude this point, wouldest thou know in what truth of heart thou doest labor for the glory of thy God? Come hither, examine thy heart with all reverence by this rule, and thou shalt know it. The glory of God especially shineth in the prosperous and flourishing estate of his Church, and his glory is then trampled underfoot, when his Church is oppressed. Thou seest the Church in our land hath great quietness: this thou rejoicest at, yea thou canst heartily pray for thy Prince, that peace may be continued in this Church. This is well, and more than many do: but this is not enough, thy heart in this may deceive thee, because thou mayest be moved to do this for thine own ease, without any care of God's glory: examine thyself

therefore a little further, and call unto thy consideration the Churches beyond the Seas: thou dost hear that they be in continual trouble, they be persecuted, and on every side invaded: Their Priests are slain, with the sword, their Princes are piteously abused, their people are led into captivity: so that there are nothing but complaining's in their streets. Here mayest thou try thyself, if there be any truth in thee. For if so be thou be so full of thine own prosperity, that sorrow cannot enter into thy soul for thy poor and afflicted brethren's sake: nay, if thou canst not be more sorrowful in their sorrow, than thou canst rejoice in thine own joy, thou hast cause to fear, thy heart is not sincere toward the glory of God. In like manner, thou thyself art in misery, tossed with afflictions, and troubled on every side: yet thou hearest that rest is given to the Churches, thou hearest that God hath blessed them with the blessing of peace. Oh now if thou couldest rejoice in the joy of God's people, though thou wert in sorrow; if thou couldest glory with God's inheritance, though thou sufferedst some outward shame, if thou thoughtest thyself happy in the felicity of God's chosen, although of all men thou mightest seem most miserable; then would thy conscience no doubt speak comfortably unto thee, it would tell thee thou didst truly esteem of the glory of God. Now if thou thinkest that herein too much is required of thee, then look unto God's children in former ages: Paul was sore afflicted, much troubled, and often imprisoned; yet all this did nothing grieve him, so long as the Gospel had good success, and the Churches flourished. Therefore in his Epistles he saith often: I was comforted when I heard of your faith: I live if you stand fast, and such like speeches, whereby he did evidently declare that he sought the glory of God, and not his own praise. Daniel contrariwise was in great credit, honor, and estimation, he was preferred above all the Princes of Persia, and was second unto the King; but

how did he esteem of this honor? What account made he of his authority? Surely very little, for when he saw that the appointed time of the end of their captivity was not come, when he saw the worship of God decayed and worn almost clean out of mind, when he saw the oppression of God's people by the wicked heathen, his heart was heavy, and his soul did melt for grief; yea, though he had liberty to worship God, though he were free from all oppression, yet did he humble his soul with fasting, and was in heaviness three weeks of days, because God's Church was not farther enlarged, because the Temple lay unbuilt, and because his brethren the Jews had no opportunity to cleave unto God's worship. This was the practice of godly men in ancient times. This also must be our practice, if our hearts be pure: thus far for the trial of our hearts by fear, joy, hope, and grief, in all things which we take in hand. Now followeth the second part of this trial, by applying it unto times, as unto prosperity and adversity. If we look not warily unto that time wherein we live, we, through the great corruption of our hearts may be dangerously deceived. For prosperity will move us to praise God, and trouble will make us tremble at the thinking of him, and none almost is so desperate and void of all knowledge, which will not do so: the wife of Job will praise and bless God, in abundance and prosperity, and she no doubt hath many companions. Pharaoh will be humbled when the hand of God is upon him: Saul will be godly when God doth afflict him: and will not many do as Saul did? Are not many like unto Pharaoh? Therefore if thou wilt have thy heart pure, look unto thy profession in prosperity, and diligently try thine heart when thou art in trouble. For thou mayest seem to fear God when his hand is upon thee, thou mayest seem to love God when he doth enrich thee, and yet thou mayest prove a hypocrite at the last. Take heed therefore unto thy heart, and try it thus, when thou

aboundest in all things, thou lovest God. This is well if it be in truth. Doest thou also fear him? Art thou afraid to displease him? Art thou afraid to sin against him? Doest thou of very conscience abstain from secret sin against him, though no law can punish thee? Art thou afraid to do wrong to any man, then when he cannot revenge himself upon thee? This if thou canst do, thy love is true, thy prosperity hath not deceived thee: but if thy prosperity puff thee up, if it breed in thee a carelessness of sin, if by thy might thou wilt oppress him, although he be poor, and cannot withstand thee; then if thou hadst the love of men and Angels, it were but hypocrisy, though thou seemedst to be nothing but love, yet thy heart is bewitched, thy prosperity hath drawn thee from God, thy wealth hath deceived thee. O look unto Job, and consider his life, and thou shalt see, that when he flourished like the green bay tree, yet if he had sinned, he durst not go out of the doors, and if the most contemptible of his family had ought against him, he would have taken the reproof: if then thou abstain from open sin, and yet make no conscience of secret corruption, if thou abstain from those things, for which punishment is appointed, and yet not from those, which indeed are greater, though by law they be not punishable, thou doest not love God, because thou fearest not to offend him, he will count thee an hypocrite, although thou be called a Christian. The way to remedy this thy corruption, is to labor in thy trouble, that thou love God, and to strive in thy prosperity, that thou mayest fear God, and then thy heart shall be upright, neither thy prosperity nor thine adversity shall draw thee from God. But what speech can be sufficient to paint out the corruption of the heart, which unto man is unsearchable, and above all things most deceitful? One Sermon is too too little, if the exercises of weeks and months might be spent in one thing: this

amongst many, would minister sufficient matter in this exhortation. Take heed unto your hearts, for from thence proceed the actions of life.

FINIS.

MEDITATIONS ON PROVERB 14. VERSES 5-8.

—• **VERSE. 5. - A true witness will not lie: but a false witness speaketh lies.**

The righteous man knowing that his tongue was given to him speak the truth, will make conscience of a lie even in the least things. But if the matter be of more weight, or if it come into the place of judgment, then he will much more heartily abhor all lying and deceitfulness: yea, then he will not be brought to speak anything whereof he hath not a certain ground. As for the ungodly, it is not so with them: for they having no care of truth in light and common matters, do soon cast off all care and conscience even in greatest and most weighty causes. This agreeth with the saying of our Savior Christ, Luke 16:10. He that is faithful in the least, he is faithful also in much. Which may be thus particularly applied: he that for conscience sake doth speak the truth in common and small matters, he will also speak the truth in matters of great importance: and he that is not ashamed of a lie in his private dealing, he will also without shame bear false witness before the Judge. Here then we be taught in the least things, to inure our tongues to

speaking the Truth: So shall we be better preserved from false witness bearing: for the Lord would not have us to dally with sin. Therefore in his righteous judgment, he doth leave men that make no conscience of a lie, and suffereth them to fall, and to offend in some open and known truth. Again, whereas men take great liberty in lying, if the matter be secret and unknown; the Lord doth hate this hollowness and hypocrisy of men, and doth often bring it to light, that by the sorrow for, and shame of that sin, (if it be possible) they may be caused to make greater conscience of a lie forever after. Therefore if we would not have the Lord to punish our lesser frailties with greater sins: if we would not have him to punish our secret sins and faults, with open and notorious offenses, then let us be afraid to tell a lie in the very lightest and most secret causes. But if this will not at all move us, yet let us be overcome with the consideration of those fruits which will come of true speaking, specially let us consider of these two. First, the love of the Truth doth breed and beget in us a great and singular comfort, when we see that herein we resemble our heavenly Father, who is the God and author of Truth. Secondly, the love of the truth is a special help to revoke us from sin. For as the liar can so cloak his sin, and set such a color upon it that no man can accuse him; no admonition or rebuke can take hold upon him, no threatening fear him: So the silly soul that in simple truth doth confess his sin, is open unto rebukes and holy censures, his heart lieth naked before the word, which doubtless will work effectually to reclaim him from sin.

The second thing which we must learn out of these words is this: that albeit we must speak the truth at all times, and in all places: yet must we be especially careful so to do when we be called as witnesses before the judgment seat. For the whole state and order of judgment doth depend upon the witness: so that the Questmen, the Judge, and all, do proceed either

falsely or truly, according as the testimony of the witness is either false or true. Last of all, we learn that good care must be used in choosing of witnesses: so that we may not take perjured persons, or common liars, no not such as do often lie, though it be but in light matters: but if there be any one man that of conscience speaketh truth in all things, he is worthy and fit to be a witness. This condemneth the practice of the receiving all indifferently to be witnesses in court, and specially such as be known to be common liars. Thus much for this verse.

—• **Verse. 6. - The scorner seeketh wisdom, and findeth it not: but knowledge is easy for him that will understand.**

By the scorner is here meant the proud and contemptuous man, who in the pride of his wit will compass anything, neglecting, yea contemning those holy means which God hath ordained. This proud and contemptuous scorner shall not find knowledge. By knowledge we may understand, not the knowledge of the letter floating in the brain, and flowing even at the tongues end (which indeed is not worthy the name of knowledge:) but the true understanding of the word taught by the spirit, which entereth into the heart, and worketh on the affections, frameth to obedience, and assureth of everlasting life. This indeed is healthful knowledge, which the scorners though they seek, shall never obtain. And hereunto doth our Savior Christ give witness when he saith: Many shall seek to enter in, and cannot. Now if we would see the cause hereof, it is this, they do refuse the right and direct means whereby to come to knowledge, or else use the means with corrupted hearts. For if they seek and search in the profane writings of Heathen men, or in the corrupted writings of hellish heretics, no marvel if they never find this knowledge. For how can they find truth in falsehood? How can they find the true knowledge of God in the feigned devises and inventions of

men? Again, though they cast off all these, and come to the holy word of God: yet if their hearts be not sound and right; if they seek profit, preferment, and vain pleasure, doubtless they shall never attain to this holy knowledge. For sure if the heart be corrupted when they come to study upon the word, they shall be made worse and not better by it. The experience of this do we see in many, who seeking and searching after knowledge, either to get livings, or to gain credit, or to some such like evil and corrupt end; they have been disappointed of their hope, and have failed of that which they sought after. By the example of others then let us beware and learn to seek after the knowledge of God and of godliness in the written word of God, which only is able to make us godly. Again, above all things let us take heed unto our hearts, that they be upright and sound in seeking for it. Now for the trial hereof, let us examine whether we seek knowledge, that we might be better able to glorify God, and to profit our brethren: let us examine whether we seek Christ for Christ: whether in Christ we seek nothing but Christ: and this if we can truly see and feel even in the truth of our hearts, then our heart is upright, then have we before us a right end, then do we rightly seek God, and he whom he hath sent Jesus Christ, even to the salvation of our souls. True it is, that the Lord may and doth often bestow livings, riches, and such other outward helps and benefits on his children: but they do not chiefly seek these. They take these as a handful, yea as an overplus of his favor: but their hearts are not set upon them. Their love is set upon God and upon his glory, and that they especially labor for, that they do toil and travel about, and that is the end of all their labors, in what measure they obtain that, in that measure they be quiet, though they want other things: but in what measure they do not find that, in that measure are they grieved, though they abound in outward things. When a man is of

this mind, when he hath this heart, when he hath this good will to learn; then among many other blessings he shall be sure to find that which followeth in this verse: Knowledge shall be easy to him that will understand.

There be two things whereat many men are much offended, and whereby they are driven from that due care which they ought to have of the word. The first is because they see that great and wealthy men of this world little esteem it, and make light account of it. But men should know that the affections of such are for the most part weaned from the word; their love is set upon their profit, upon their pleasure, and upon such other things below. Now the mind and heart being forestalled, yea and surcharged with the liking of these things, they cannot with desire receive the word into their souls: and seeing that they have little liking of it, and less will and desire to learn it, no marvel though it be as unsavory salt unto them.

The second thing which feareth and offendeth many, is the hardness of the word. Oh (say they) we would gladly learn indeed, but the word is so obscure and hard, that indeed it cannot be learned. See the shameless ungraciousness of some men, who to clear themselves, will lay a fault upon the holy and pure word of God. But know this O man that the word is hard, because thy heart is hard through sin. Covetousness, anger, uncleanness, security, and such like sins, have so beaten and trampled upon thy heart, that it is even hardened through the deceitfulness of sin: but repent thee of thy former sin, and put away the evil of thy works, and then come to the word with a holy heart, and then thou shalt see and feel thy understanding enlightened, thy judgment reformed, and all the words of wisdom plain and easy unto thee. All this is confirmed unto us by plain and daily experience: for when a man hath been buffeted with some sin; when he hath yielded too

much to pride, worldliness, anger, and such like; when he hath fallen into some misliking of the word, or of the preacher, then in hearing he heareth not, and the word is a sealed book unto him. Contrariwise, when men do most mislike themselves for their sins, when they be most grieved for their dullness, when they think themselves most unapt and most unworthy of knowledge, and yet desire to find comfort in the word, wish to be enlightened and led into the true knowledge of it: then doth the Lord very often give them the deepest insight into his heavenly mysteries; then doth he work in them a most comfortable feeling, and then doth he also put and stir up most heavenly and holy motions in their minds. By all this must we learn many things: first when we hear the word without fruit, then we must return into ourselves, and know that our sins are the cause of blockish dullness which is come upon us. Anger hath troubled our affections, and pleasure hath stolen away our hearts: profit hath corrupted our judgments: therefore our judgments do not yield unto the word, it cannot enter into our hearts, neither can it work upon our affections. We are then in this case to bewail our sins, to labor for repentance, to pray for the spirit of sanctification, whereby these sins may be consumed, and then return unto the word with prayer, and the Lord will bless our understanding. Again, when we see our judgments reformed, and our hearts touched, so that the word worketh upon our affections, then we must know that the good work of God hath gone before: his mercy hath disburdened us of the heavy burden of sin, his goodness hath emptied our hearts of unprofitable thoughts, and his good spirit hath wrought all in all in us. Then to shut up this verse let us know, that as sin doth hinder and hold the word out of our hearts: so doth the love of the word as it were open the door of our hearts,

and make a broad and large passage for the word to enter into us, and to work that good work for which it was sent. It followeth in the next verse.

—• **Verse. 7. - Depart from a fool when thou perceivest not in him the lips of knowledge.**

God hath ordained that men should live together, that one might be helpful to another. But there is a nearer bond of friendship, when one entereth into league with another, or when one maketh choice of another, for some nearer bond of friendship, affinity, or such like. And because this bond cannot stand, but where there is a great likeness of conditions and qualities, and it is commonly seen that the party better affected is sooner changed: therefore in this place we be admonished to beware, least at any time we join ourselves to those that are foolish and ungodly. Not that it is altogether unlawful to have any dealing with them: but that we may not come too near unto them. For to eat and drink with them, to dwell in the same town by them, and such other common duties, be not unlawful. But to join in marriage with them, to make them privy to our counsels, or to use them as more near and special friends, this is unlawful, and this is here forbidden. For little or no good at all can be gotten by them, they will hardly or not at all be brought to goodness, and such is their subtlety, that one of them is able to pervert the faith, or at least to corrupt the manners of very many. Good cause therefore there is why we should depart and get ourselves from them: on the contrary side we be taught to seek out good company, and to join ourselves to them as nearly as may be, yet with this full purpose of heart, that we may receive fruit and profit by them. Nature doth call upon us to do this; the communion of Saints requires it at our hands, our own profit should compel us, the examples of every man in each calling may move us thereunto. For men do desire to be in company of their

betters: the scholar would be in company of him that is better learned: the worshipful man desireth the company of the noble man, and the honorable delighteth much in the favor of the Prince. Yea in the basest occupations and handicrafts, men do still desire to be in the company of them that are most skillful. And all this is to obtain the knowledge of earthly things, and the favor of them that can help them; how much more then should we desire the company one of another, that we might be helpful one to another in heavenly things? Nay, how entirely should we be joined one to another, and receive good one by another in all kind of goodness? And yet must this be done in great discretion: for the best men have their faults. Therefore we must be most careful, as to receive what good we can by any, so to receive hurt or hindrance by none at all It followeth.

—• **Verse. 8. - The wisdom of the prudent is to understand his way: but the foolishness of fools is deceit.**

That is true wisdom indeed, which beginning at knowledge doth go forward unto practice, and beginning at faith doth further proceed unto the fruits of faith. For unless there be profitable use of knowledge, both in our general and particular callings, it hath neither the sense nor the savor of heavenly wisdom. Then we be here admonished to labor that our knowledge may grow unto faith, and that we build a godly life upon faith. And that we may thus do, we must especially travel that our hearts may stand in awe of God's word, and that we may have a charitable and loving heart unto men. This if we can obtain, then shall we in fear and love do the good duties which may glorify God, profit men, and have sure arguments that we have true wisdom. But the foolishness of fools is deceit. That is, they do either take a wrong course of life, or else if they take a right course, yet their hearts are not aright: and therefore they deceive both themselves and others.

All this cometh to pass, because with conscience they do not apply every general point of doctrine to their particular estate, and labor not to make practice of it. We give titles unto men, and count them wise and politic men that can foresee and prevent worldly displeasure. But the holy Ghost hath given sentence upon such, that if they labor not to live godly, they be but fools: yea and the more knowledge they have, so much the greater fools they be, if they do not for conscience sake practice the same. We see then what we must do if we will not be counted fools. Now all of us, be we never so simple witted, would be loath to be counted fools, and indeed the name is most reproachful, and will grieve a man at the very heart. Therefore our Savior Christ doth recite it among those words that kill and murder, saying: Whosoever saith unto his brother thou fool, shall be guilty of hell fire. But howsoever grievous it is, yet in truth we are such, if having knowledge we do not bring it into practice. This then must be forcible to make us to join a godly life with good knowledge, and good works with a lively faith, if before the Lord we will not be accounted fools.

—• **Verse. 9. - A fool maketh a mock of sin: but among the righteous there is favor.**

The heart of man is fraught and filled with much gross and filthy corruption: but none is worse than that which is here spoken of, that a man should make a light matter of sin. It is strange and very monstrous that it should be so, and yet by this place we see it doth often so fall out. Yea in another place the holy Ghost doth testify, (and we know that his testimony is true) that the fool doth make even a sport and a pastime of sin. Our own days will confirm the same. For come unto an adulterer, to a false witness bearer, and to such gross sinners, tell them that God is angry with them, that he will be avenged on them, as he hath been upon others for such sins, and

what I pray you, will they do? Surely he that is filthy will be more filthy, and the false witness will mock at judgment. And what is this but to make a mock and a jest at sin? Nay, what is it but to make a God of sin, and to serve it instead of God? And how do they grow unto this height and excess of sin? Surely one chief cause is, because they be not plagued like other men, because the mercy of God doth hedge them in on every side, and because they pass their time in prosperity and pleasure. O what a monstrous thing is this that a man should be made worse by the goodness of God? How miserable is that man that will make the mercy of God an occasion of his own misery? And how unthankful is he, that the more benefits the Lord doth bestow upon him, the more he will heap sin upon sin? Nay how worthily is he destroyed that will abuse the unspeakable loving kindness of the Lord to his own destruction? And that there should be such, the Apostle Peter foretold us, In the latter times (saith he) shall come mockers, which shall ask for the coming of the Lord, as though he would not come at all. But these abuse the goodness and bounty of the Lord, who would that all should be brought to repentance. They therefore do treasure up wrath for themselves against the day of wrath, wherein the Son of God shall come in judgment and fierce wrath, against them that have made a mock of sin, and have not been led to repentance through his long patience and loving kindness.

Now seeing the judgment of God will lay hold of all those that lie in sin, and seeing we can never come out of sin so long as we make such light account of it; let us know that although one sin is less than another, and although a sinner in thought may be counted a little sin, in respect of a sin in outward act: yet in very deed and before the Lord no sin will be counted little For the infinite justice and mercy of God is violatè even by the least

sin, and therefore no sin can be counted little; for even the least sin is sufficiently able to condemn and confound us from the presence of God. Again, if the Lord should set the least sin upon our consciences, and suffer our consciences to check us for it, and Satan himself to burden us with it: doubtless it would be so heavy and grievous, that we should not be able to abide it. How then can we make light account even of that sin, which of all other seemeth least?

Moreover, the Lord will not only condemn the wicked as for their great, so for their lesser sins: but he will very sharply correct, yea and severely punish even his dearest children for those sins, which in our eyes do seem most small. Thus was Adam thrown out of Paradise for eating of the forbidden fruit. Moses for speaking of an angry word died in the wilderness, and could not be suffered to come into the promised land. Hezekiah did but show his treasures to the Ambassadors of Babel, and for that sin they were all carried into Babel: yea the holy temple was spoiled, the holy vessels were profaned, and their glory was given into the enemies hand. Josiah did go to war against his enemy and the enemies of God, and that only to keep them out of his own land: yet because he did not ask counsel at the Lord, therefore he was slain in the battle. What sins are less than these? And yet see how sharply the Lord did punish them in his own children: and can it be then that any sin should be counted light? Besides, though it were granted that some sin in itself were but little, yet for this cause could it not be counted little, because in time it will draw us and drive us into gross offenses. But seeing that in truth the least sin is too great, then how much the greater must we think every sin to be, considering that it cometh not alone, but either presently or shortly after bringeth in great transgressions? Last of all, seeing that the least sin could not be forgiven but

by the death of the Son of God, so that he must suffer the very pangs and pains of hell for the least sin that ever man committed: seeing that even our least transgressions caused him to be accursed, and in the extremity of grief to cry, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Where have we the face, or how can we find in our hearts to make a mock of the least sin? Well then, let us know sin to be sin, and labor to be sorrowful for every sin: so that although we be not in like measure sorrowful for all, yet let us take heed that no sin escape us without some true and godly sorrow: then shall we find favor among the righteous, yea then shall we obtain mercy from the Lord. For the less we favor sin, the nearer we be to the favor of God: and the more we hate sin, the more we shall be sure to enjoy the loving kindness of the Lord: yea, joy and peace and comfort in the holy Ghost is oftentimes bestowed upon men in greatest measure, when they feel the greatest measure of unfeigned repentance, and godly sorrow for sin, and have conceived the greatest hatred against the same. The Lord in mercy therefore increase this sorrow and hatred in us ever more and more, that our joy and comfort may be the more increased, through Jesus Christ our Lord: to whom with the holy Ghost, one true and ever-living God, be all praise, power, dominion and principality, now and ever.

Amen.

THE SUM OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

THE WHOLE EPISTLE TO the Hebrews containeth the sin of Apostasy, from which the Apostle laboreth to dehort them, and that by five reasons specially: First, in the first Chapter he shows that Christ is above all Angels, whereof he inferreth in the second Chapter, That if God did punish the contempt of the ministry of Angels, much more is the contempt of the ministry of Christ punishable, because he so far exceedeth the Angels. In the third Chapter he shows that Christ is above Moses, whereof he infers in the fourth Chapter, That if Moses ministry contemned caused revenge, much more Christ his ministry contemned causeth revenge, because it is far greater than Moses. In the fifth Chapter he shows, That Christ the sacrificer is greater than Aaron the Priest, whereof he inferreth in the sixth Chapter, That if God did correct the contempt of Aaron's sacrifice, much more will he condemn the contempt of Christ his oblation, because Christ is superior to Aaron. In the seventh, eight, and nine Chapters, That the ministry of the Gospel is better than the ministry of the law, whereof he inferreth in the tenth Chapter, That if they were punished that despised Moses law, much

heavier is their judgment which despise Christ his Gospel, for that Christ is above Moses. In the eleventh Chapter he shows, How all the Fathers were justified in continuing in the faith, whereof he inferreth in the twelfth Chapter, That who so will be justified with them, must after their example continue in the faith. Lastly, he concludeth with wholesome exhortations fitly joining to his former doctrine, For because we may be Apostates in life as well as in neglect of doctrine in the thirteenth Chapter he addeth many good precepts of Purity, mercy, sanctimony, prayer, thanksgiving, liberality, and obedience to their teachers. And then falling as it were on their necks, he kisseth them, and commending himself to their prayer, he commendeth them to the rich grace of God.

A BRIEF SUM OF ECCLESIASTES.

FOR THE UNDERSTANDING OF Ecclesiastes, because the things therein contained depend of an history, we must know that Solomon, from the beginning of his days was a well disposed young man, endued with most excellent gifts of regeneration and government. Afterward from one well given, and in a good way, he fell to be a riotous and a profane person: and yet obtaining grace by extraordinary privilege (I call that an extraordinary privilege which either implieth a particular commandment against a general precept, or a particular practice against some general rule dispensed of by God) he became sorrowful for his folly, and being desirous to leave to the world a testimony of his sorrow, he taketh upon him in this book the person of a public Penitentiarie, professing it to be a monument of his unwise dealing: and therefore it may be called Solomon's retractations. And surely it is verily to be supposed, that the Lord hath set up this man as a sign, in whom he would by proof and experience show, that men can never be happy, for these things which most men account to be happiness. We say in schools, that practical and real syllogisms are far above speculative and

imaginary reasons. And we know that in all histories the proof and experience of the reporter affordeth great credit. Solomon showeth in this book that he proved all, and yet this is his conclusion, That to fear God, in reverent regard to keep his commandments, is all a man can come to, the only way to find peace of conscience, and to assure us of the favor of God. This is the assurance of our country, that we shall one day enter into it; when we have a purpose to this, we need seek no further This had I (saith Solomon) notwithstanding he was not content, but he imagined something else might be found out which he had not, and being a man of wisdom he thought there might besom better kind of life invented than this was. Well, he trieth mirth, wives, building, &c. which might seem to content him: but when twenty years were spent in trying conclusions, he was as near then as he was at the first: nay, without the special indulgence of the Lord, he was further off too. And as a horse in a mill, when he had gone in his circuit, he was at last where he began first. Well (saith he) whatsoever I tried beside the conclusions of the faithful, all deceived me in the fruition. And that which is more, every purpose of mine heart being vain, left a sting and prick behind in conscience, which did countervail and surpass all the former delights. So then, Solomon returning into the favor of God, condemneth all external things to be but vanity, and he would teach us this lesson, that *ruina pracedentium* must be *admonitio sequentium*. If any man will try conclusions against God's conclusions, he shall try nothing in the end but himself to be a fool: and by how much the more examples might have forwarned us, the more we are to excuse the Lord, and to accuse ourselves if we fall.

A SHORT FORM OF CATECHIZING.

Wherein are briefly set down the Principles of
Christian Religion.

HEB. 5:12.

When is concerning the time ye ought to be teachers, yet have ye need again that we teach you the first principles of the word of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

JOB. 33:16,23,24.

Vers. 16.

He openeth the ears of men even by their corrections, which he sealeth.

Vers. 23.

If there be a messenger with him or an interpreter, one of a thousand to declare unto man his righteousness.

Vers. 24.

Then will he have mercy on him.

TO THE RIGHT VIRTUOUS AND GODLY GENTLEWOMEN,
MISTRIS ANNE BOWLES, AND MISTRIS A. STEVENS, H.H.

WISHETH ALL COMFORTS AND MERCIES IN JESUS CHRIST TO BE MULTIPLIED.

The holy Apostle S. John saith, he had no greater joy than this, to hear that his sons did walk in the truth. The same affection all the true Ministers of Christ have in some measure towards all the sons and daughters of God: specially such as they have gained, or God by them hath brought to the faith of Christ. I am well assured you remember Master Greenham's great care and love towards you, which was unfeigned, because of the good experience he had of your unfeigned faith in Christ, and love towards him. If he had longer lived he would have rejoiced yet much more to see your love so increase in knowledge, and the testimonies of your love in the fruit of righteousness, and in your godly perseverance in the truth. Now receive his works, and what you long expected and desired to see. This Catechism I have sent you, that you may teach it your children, as Eunice and Lois did their children. These letters serve well for your own use, that you may hear them always speak in his absence from you, whom you so rejoiced to hear, being present with you: and that you may have his own very words written and set before your eyes, which you have heard often to your great joy sounding in your ears, that so in the end, you may be able by your good experience to comfort others, with the same comforts, wherewith ye are and have been by him comforted of God. For the faithful are exercised of God diversely: some by outward, some by inward afflictions of mind: and some have both troubles without, and terrors within. Such as be not acquainted with the troubles of mind, whatsoever gift they have, can bring but cold comfort in time of need, to poor souls afflicted, as it is very manifest, both by Scripture and our common experience. Now the God of peace sanctify

you, both in spirit, soul, and body, and keep you with all yours blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Yours ever in Jesus Christ, Henry Holland.

A SHORT FORM OF CATECHIZING.

Whereas all men desire to be blessed, and the most men are deceived in seeking blessedness, tell me which is the true way thereunto?

To know God to be my Father in Jesus Christ, by the revelation of the spirit according to his word, and therefore to serve him according to his will, and to set forth his glory; believing that I shall want nothing that is good for me in this life, and that I shall enjoy everlasting blessedness in the world to come.

How know you this?

By the working of the holy Ghost, and by the means of God's word.

What call you God's word?

It is the revealed will of God, set forth unto us in the holy Scriptures.

Which call you the holy Scriptures?

The Books of the old and New Testament, commonly called Canonical.

Are all things that are necessary for us to know contained in them?

Yea: for God being full of all wisdom and goodness, would leave out nothing that was requisite for us to know.

Is it lawful for to add or to take anything from God's word?

No: for God hath flatly forbidden it, and hath pronounced grievous curses upon those that do it.

Why is it so grievous a sin?

Because it is a very great sin to alter the last will of a mortal man: therefore much more grievous a sin it is to change the last Testament of the eternal God.

Why is it requisite that the will of God should be set forth unto us?

That we might have pure rules of his worship, and sure grounds of our salvation.

Is it not lawful to repose any part of God's Worship, or of Salvation in the doctrine and doings of men?

No: for all men by nature are liars, and defiled with sin.

What followeth hereof?

That all men's doctrines and doings are mingled with lies and corruptions.

How far are we bound to their doctrine and doings?

So far forth as they be agreeable to God's word.

May all read the Scriptures?

Yea, all that be of age able to discern between good and evil, ought to increase in knowledge, for their furtherance in salvation, as they increase in years.

Why must all such read the Scriptures?

1. First, because everyone must be able to prove and try himself, whether he be in the Faith, or no, 2 Cor. 13:5.

Why else?

2. Secondly, because everyone must be able to prove and examine men's doctrines and doings by the Scriptures, that they be not in their salvation by them deceived. (Acts 17)

3. Thirdly, because everyone must be able, as his calling requireth, to teach, admonish, exhort, and comfort one another. (Heb. 3:12)

4. Fourthly, because everyone must be able to make an account of the faith and hope that is in him. (1 Pet. 3)

What if men cannot read?

Then they must use the help of others that can read.

Is it enough to read the Scriptures privately, or with others?

No: for God hath also commanded to hear them read publicly in the Church.

And is it enough to hear them read publicly in the Church?

No: for he also hath ordained preaching to be used.

Why must preaching be joined with reading?

Because it is the most principal and proper means to beget Faith in us.

Why must Faith be mixed with the Word, read, and preached?

Because otherwise the word profiteth us nothing. (Heb. 4:2)

How many things are requisite to be in everyone that will come to hear the Word read and preached?

Amongst others, four are necessary.

What is the first?

1. First, a reverend fear of the Majesty of God.
2. Secondly, an assured faith in Christ.
3. Thirdly, an earnest endeavor to frame our lives thereafter.
4. Fourthly, they must pray for the holy Ghost to be given them, to enlighten their minds, and to write all these things in their hearts.

Which be the principal parts of God's word?

The Law and the Gospel.

What call you the Law?

It is that part of the Word that commandeth all good, and forbiddeth all evil.

What if we could keep the Law?

Then we should be blessed.

What if we break the Law?

Then we are subject to the curse of God, and so to death and damnation.

What call you the Gospel?

It is that part of the word which containeth the free promises of God, made unto us in Jesus Christ, without any respect of our deserving's.

What doth that work in us?

It worketh in us a true and lively faith in Jesus Christ, whereby we lay hold of the free remission of our sins in him, and the true repentance of them.

What must we learn by the whole word of God?

Two things:

1. First, to make a right and sound entrance to our salvation.
2. Secondly, how to increase, and continue in the same unto the end.

What is required for our right and sound entrance to our salvation?

Three things are required.

1. First, to know and to be persuaded of the greatness of our sins, and the misery due to the same.
2. Secondly, to know and be persuaded, how we may be delivered from them.
3. Thirdly, to know and be persuaded what thanks we owe to—God for our deliverance.

How shall we come to the right sight of our sins, and a sound persuasion of the greatness of them?

By the spirit of God leading us into the true understanding of the Law, and a due examination of ourselves thereby.

Where is the Law set down?

It is written in many places of the Scriptures, but the sum thereof is contained in the ten Commandments.

Rehearse them?

I am the Lord thy God, thou shalt have none other gods but me.

How are they divided?

Into two principal heads or tables, as they be called.

What doth the first table teach us?

It teacheth us our duty towards God, and is contained in the four first Commandments.

What doth the second teach us?

Our duty towards our neighbor, and is contained in the six last Commandments.

Why are the duties towards God set down before the duties towards our neighbor?

1. Because the love of God is the ground of the love of our neighbor.

What followeth hereof?

2. That none can rightly love his neighbor except he first love God.

Why are the duties towards our neighbor joined to our duties towards God?

3. Because the love of our neighbor is the proof of our love towards God.

What ensueth hereof?

4. That none can love God aright, except he also love his neighbor.

Why are the Commandments set down in ten parts, and not in general?

5. Because God is not pleased with doing our duties in general or in some part, but he will be wholly served in all and every one of his Commandments.

Why are they set down singularly or to everyone?

6. Because everyone must do his own duty, though none go before him.

What followeth of this?

That everyone must bear his own burden, and none shall have excuse by the example of others.

Are there not some rules which serve for the better understanding of every one of the Commandments?

Yea, there be four which have special uses:

1. First, in every commandment where evil is forbidden, there the contrary good is commanded.

2. Secondly, many more evils are forbidden, and many more good things are commanded in every commandment, than in words are expressed.

3. Thirdly, because God is a spirit, therefore his commandments are spiritual, and require spiritual obedience.

4. Fourthly, in every commandment where evil is forbidden, there the occasions of the evil are forbidden: and where good is commanded, there also the occasions of good are commanded.

Rehearse the first Commandment.

Thou shalt have none other gods but me.

What evil is here generally forbidden?

Even that which the words do import.

What good is commanded?

To have God to be my only God, and to be always in his presence.

What is it to have God to be our only God?

To give him all things which be proper and peculiar to his Majesty.

Which be those that properly concern God, and therefore be the special things commanded?

They be very many.

Rehearse the sum of them, whereby the rest may be understood.

I am bound to believe in God, to love God, to fear and obey him, to pray unto him and praise him.

After what sort must you perform these duties of faith, love, fear, obedience, prayer, and thanksgiving?

With my whole mind and understanding, with my whole heart and my whole strength.

Which be the peculiar sins herein forbidden?

To fail in giving to God any of these or the like forenamed good things, in any part or in any respect.

What else is particularly forbidden?

To give any of the forenamed good things to any creature, or any other thing whatsoever, whereby my heart may be withdrawn from God in any part, or in any respect.

Which be the occasions of the breach of this Commandment?

1. First, the vain desire of the pleasures, riches, and glory of this world.
2. Secondly, a negligent and careless use of the means to serve God his providence.

Are not the contrary good things to these commanded?

Yea.

Which are they?

1. First, a heart contented with any estate, and using things of this world, as though we used them not.
2. Secondly, a reverend and diligent use of the means to serve God's providence.

Rehearse the second Commandment.

Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven Image, nor the likeness, &c.

What evil is expressly forbidden in this Commandment?

I am forbidden to make any Image either to represent God, or to worship him by.

What evil is generally forbidden?

I must avoid all inventions and devices of men in the outward worship of God, which be contrary or besides the written word of God.

Which be the special evils forbidden?

Chiefly all corruption in the substance of doctrine, prayer, Sacraments, and discipline of the Church.

What occasions of evil be forbidden?

There be some which we must necessarily avoid, unless we will fall into superstition and idolatry; and they be these:

1. First, to join the false parts of worship with the true worship of God.
2. Secondly, to be present in body at idolatrous and superstitious service.
3. Thirdly, the reservation of some special monument of superstition and idolatry.

Which be the lesser occasions forbidden, and yet (so we have the special grounds of God's worship) we must, and may tolerate them, when we cannot help them?

1. First, all vain, idle, and superstitious Ceremonies.
2. Secondly, all keeping company with false worshippers.

Is not the evil in heart also forbidden?

Yea, so far forth as I lust in my heart to have any of them prevail or be established.

What good is generally commanded?

All the outward means of God's worship, which be agreeable to his written word.

What is specially commanded?

I must use such doctrine, prayers, Sacraments, and discipline of the Church, as be agreeable to God's word in the substance.

What occasions of good be here commanded?

1. First, to have and use good books of the doctrine and history of the Church, written according to God's word.

2. Secondly, erecting and maintaining schools of learning, as nurseries of the ministry.

3. Thirdly, sufficient provision to be made for the Ministers of God's word.

4. Fourthly, building and maintaining Churches, and all things belonging thereunto.

5. Fifthly, I must use all good ceremonies and orders agreeable to the word of God.

6. Sixthly, all familiar company with the true worshippers of God.

What good in heart is commanded?

I am commanded to use the means of God's worship, not only outwardly, but also in spirit and truth.

What is meant by these words: For I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, &c?

That God will punish false worship in the false worshippers, and in their posterity unto the fourth generation.

What is meant by these words: And will show mercy unto thousands, &c?

That God will bless his true worship in the true worshippers and their posterity, unto the thousand descent.

What is the use of these?

The use is to make false worship more vile, and his true worship more precious in our eyes.

Rehearse the third Commandment.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain, &c.

What evils be here forbidden?

1. First, all perjury, banning or cursing, enchanting, or conjuring.
2. Secondly, all swearing by false God's, or naming them with reverence.
3. Thirdly, all customable swearing, or speaking of God without reverence.
4. Fourthly, to cause God's Name to be dishonored by false Doctrine or ungodly life, either in myself or in others.

What good is herein commanded?

1. First, in matters concerning God's glory, I must swear by God only in; Justice.
Judgment.
Truth.
2. Secondly, I must endeavor from my heart to grow up in true knowledge, and a godly life, that so God's Name may be praised in myself, and by mine example in others.

What is meant by these words: For the Lord will not hold him guiltless, &c?

That God will certainly punish the dishonoring of his Name in any sort.

What is the use of this?

The use of this is, to make us more fearful to dishonor him, and more careful to glorify his Name.

Rehearse the fourth Commandment.

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy, &c.

What is here generally commanded?

I am commanded to make it my whole delight, to sanctify the holy Sabbath of the Lord from morning to night.

What is particularly commanded?

1. First, to use all the public means of God's worship in the congregation of God's people.

2. Secondly, to rejoice to use all such private exercises, as may make the public means profitable to myself and to others.

Which be those private exercises?

1. First, the examining of my sins and wants, private prayer, reading of the Scriptures, singing of Psalms, conference with others, and applying all things to myself, with a care to profit others.

2. Secondly, relieving the needy, visiting the sick, and them that be in prison, comforting them that be in any misery, reconciling them that be at variance, admonishing the unruly, and such like.

What is especially commanded?

The spiritual beholding of the Creatures of God, thereby to provoke myself and others to praise him.

What else is?

A diligent searching of my heart, with a like care to find it out, and to reap some profit of the forenamed means, so that I may be the better for and through them.

What is then particularly forbidden?

1. All such labors and pleasures, in thought, word, and deed are forbidden, as may hinder me and others, for using of, or profiting by the same means.

2. Secondly, the leaving unused any of those public means or private exercises

What is here generally forbidden?

The using either of those public or private means in ceremony without some good fruit in myself, or care of fruit in others.

Rehearse the fifth Commandment.

Honor thy Father and thy Mother, that thy days may be long in the Land, &c.

Whom do you understand by father and mother?

By Father and Mother I do not understand only my natural parents, but also those whom God hath set over me for my good, as Magistrates, Ministers, Masters, and such like.

What duties do children owe unto their natural parents?

Children ought reverently and obediently to receive the instructions, commandments, and corrections of their parents, to succor them, and to pray for them.

What are they forbidden to do?

To refuse, or murmur at the instructions, commandments, and corrections of their parents, or to neglect any duty belonging to them.

How may they try their love by these duties?

They may try whether their love be right three ways.

1. First, if they be as desirous to do all these duties to their parents, as they would have their parents to do all duties unto them.

What is the second?

2. Secondly, if they be as desirous to do all duties to their parents, as they would have their children hereafter to honor them.

What is the third?

3. Thirdly, if they be as willing to do all these duties to their parents, as they would receive long life, or any other blessing at the hands of God.

What duties do parents owe to their children?

Parents ought to teach, correct, pray, and provide for their children.

How may they try their love by these duties?

They may try their love two ways.

What is the first?

1. First, if they be as careful to do all duties to their children, as they would have had their parents in times past to have performed all good duties unto them.

What is the second?

2. Secondly, if they be as careful to do duties to their children, as they would have their children hereafter to be dutiful unto them.

What be the duties of Servants to their Masters?

Servants ought in fear and trembling to submit themselves to the instructions, commandments, and corrections of their Masters, and to do no eye-service to them.

What if Parents and Masters do not their duties to their Children and Servants?

Yet they must obey them for conscience to God's ordinance.

What if they command unjust things?

Then they must obey God rather than men, and submit themselves to their correction.

Why are these words added, That thy days, &c?

They are added to allure us more carefully to keep, and willingly to obey this Commandment.

And shall not disobedience be punished?

Yea; it shall be rewarded with a short and miserable life.

How may they try their love by these duties?

They may try it three manner of ways.

What is the first?

1. First, if they be as desirous to do all these duties to their Masters, as they would have their Masters to do the duty of Masters unto them.

What is the second?

Secondly, if they be as careful to do all these duties to their masters, as they would have their servants to be dutiful unto them when they shall be masters.

What is the third?

Thirdly, if they be as willing to do all duties to their masters, as they would be glad to receive long life, or any other blessing at the hand of God.

What duties do Masters owe to their servants?

Masters ought to teach and correct their servants, and to pray for them.

How may they try their love by these duties?

They may try their loves two ways.

What is the first?

1. First, if they be as desirous to do all these duties to their servants, as they would have their Masters deal with them, if they were servants.

What is the second thing?

2. Secondly, if they be as careful to do all these duties to their servants, as they would be to have their servants to do all duties unto them.

Rehearse the sixth Commandment.

Thou shalt do no murder.

How many things are here forbidden?

Four especially:

1. First, is forbidden, by weapon or poison to kill our brother.
2. Secondly, by wound or blow, or any other means to shorten the life, or impair the health of any man.
3. Thirdly, by word, countenance, or gesture, to mock, grieve, or contemn any man.
4. Fourthly, we are forbidden all anger, hatred, or envy, whereby we may be brought to revenge ourselves upon our brother.

What good is here commanded?

1. First, we are commanded to have peace with all men, as much as is possible and in us lieth.
2. Secondly, we are commanded in thought, word, and deed, to seek the preservation of the health of our brother.

Rehearse the seventh Commandment.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

How many things are here forbidden?

Three things are forbidden.

Which is the first?

First, all outward actions are forbidden whereby the body is defiled, as Adultery, Fornication, uncleanness.

How many ways is uncleanness committed?

Two ways:

First, either against;

Our own bodies, which is unnatural: or,

The bodies of beasts; which is monstrous.

Secondly, by marrying one;

1. Of a false religion. or,
2. Of no religion at all.
3. Within the degrees forbidden.
4. Without the consent of parents.
5. It is committed by using the marriage bed intemperately.

What is the second thing forbidden?

Secondly, all instruments and occasions are forbidden, whereby this sin is raised up or strengthened in us; and they be all contained in this word, Wantonness.

How is this wantonness seen?

In two things:

First, when either;

1. The whole body is abused in idleness, or vain sports: or,
2. Any part of the body, as the eye, the ear, the tongue, the nose, the hand, or foot are abused.

Secondly, when we do intemperately abuse meat, drink, sleep, or apparel, or use any inconvenient company, time, or place.

What is the third thing forbidden?

Thirdly, all inward settled lusts are forbidden, whereunto the heart doth give consent.

What good is commanded?

1. First, I am commanded to keep myself pure and chaste both in body and soul.
2. Secondly, to use those means carefully, which may keep us chaste.

Which be the means of Chastity?

Continual sobriety, in meat, drink, sleep, and apparel.

Continual painfulness in our calling.

Fasting and watching, so often as need requireth.

What if by these means we cannot be kept chaste?

3. Then thirdly, we are commanded to marry, and in marriage to use those means carefully, whereby the marriage bed may be kept pure and undefiled.

Rehearse the eight Commandment.

Thou shalt not steal.

How many evils are herein forbidden?

1. First, all those outward acts are forbidden, whereby stealth is committed.

How many ways is stealth committed outwardly in act?

Two ways, either

By ourselves, and this is three ways.

1. First, all secret filching and open robbery, be it never so small a thing, for never so great a need.

2. Secondly, all extortion or violent wrong, all oppression and unmerciful dealing.

3. Thirdly, all deceit in buying and selling, or exchanging, in restoring things borrowed, found, given to keep, and such like.

By others, either;

By commanding or counseling others to steal.

By keeping counsel.

By consenting any way to them when they steal.

Which are the second evils forbidden?

2. Secondly, all outward occasions of stealth forbidden.

Which be they?

All idleness, wasteful spending of goods, living in an unlawful calling, all false weights, measures, coins, and such like.

What is thirdly forbidden?

3. Thirdly, all inward stealth of the heart is forbidden.

What is that?

The settled will or desire of our neighbors goods, although we cannot get them, or for fear, shame, or some other respect we do not take them.

What is here recommended?

1. First, to restore goods evil gotten, or wrongfully kept.

2. Secondly, to labor faithfully in a lawful calling, to be sparing of that we get, and to help others, as their need requireth.

Rehearse the ninth Commandment.

Thou shalt not bear false witness, &c.

What is forbidden herein?

We are forbidden not only to bear false witness ourselves, but also to be partakers with false-witness bearers.

How many ways do men bear false witness?

Two ways:

1. Outwardly and against others, and that is;

In judgment, or,

Out of judgment, or,

2. Inwardly themselves.

When they deny that to be in them which is indeed: or,

When they take upon them that which belongeth not unto them, whether it be good or evil.

In Judgment, when they give or receive false information, pronounce or write any false sentence.

Out of Judgment.

1. When any raise up, spread abroad, or listen after false reports. (Psal. 15)

2. When any report the faults of others without care of their credit, or when with flattering hearts they commend any man.

2. Inwardly, either;

1. In suspicion without just cause. (1 Cor. 13)

2. In judgment falsely or hardly of any man.

Which be the occasions of false witness hearing?

They be fleshly hatred of our enemies, the carnal love of ourselves or of our friends; to get the things we love, and to avoid the things we fear or hate.

How are we partakers with false witness bearers?

If we either command or counsel it to be done.

If we mislike it not, or not stay it if we can.

What is here commanded?

1. First, in judgment to further righteous causes, so far forth as my calling requireth.

2. Secondly, to speak the truth from my heart to every man, so far forth as it is requisite for him to know it.

3. Thirdly, to be as careful of the credit of my neighbor as of mine own, both in his presence and absence, so far forth as the nature of his offense will permit.

4. Fourthly, to hope and believe the best of every man.

Rehearse the tenth Commandment.

Thou shalt not covet, &c,

Are all motions and desires evil?

No: for the desire of meat, drink, sleep, and such like are natural, and in their own nature good, unless through our corruption they become sinful.

What motions be evil?

These motions be evil, which are either against;
God, or our Neighbor,

Are all those forbidden in this Commandment.

No: for all those which are against God are forbidden in the first commandment: but these motions only are here forbidden, which are against our Neighbor.

Seeing in the former Commandments we are forbidden to hurt our neighbor in heart, how doth this differ from the former?

In the former Commandments the settled desires of the heart are forbidden: but the motions are only here forbidden, whereunto the heart doth not consent.

Whereof do these motions arise?

They either arise from our own corruption, or are offered by Satan, or by the world.

Are all these motions sin in us?

All that arise of our corruption, are sins in us: but they that be offered by Satan or the world are not sins; unless we be infected with them.

How are we infected with them?

1. First, when we take pleasure in them.
2. When we be entangled with them.
3. When we suffer them to tarry in our minds, though our hearts do not give consent.

How is this Commandment broken?

Three ways.

1. First, when evil motions arise of our corruption, moving us to hurt our Neighbors.

2. Secondly, when we be infected with those motions which Satan or evil men do put into our minds.

3. Thirdly, when we do not with like affection desire the good of our Neighbor as we do our own.

What is then commanded?

I am commanded to love my Neighbor as myself.

Who is your Neighbor?

Every one that is near me, and standeth in need of my help, and it lieth in me to help him, though otherwise he be a stranger unto me, or my foe.

Why judge you so?

Because of the Image of God in him, and that he is mine own flesh in respect of our first parents.

Doth the Law of God prescribe the perfect rule of righteousness?

Yea, for there is no good thing in deed, word, or thought, but here it is commanded, and likewise no evil, but here it is forbidden.

Can everyone keep the Law of God perfectly?

They that are not born again of God cannot keep it, neither in all, nor in any one point, as pleasing God thereby in respect of themselves.

Why so?

Except a man be born again of God, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven, not enter therein, neither can he keep the commandments of God: moreover, all men by nature being born and conceived in sin, are not only insufficient to any good thing, but also disposed to all vice and wickedness. (Joh. 3, Eph. 2:3)

What punishment is due to the breakers of God's Law?

In this life the curse of God, and death, with manifold miseries both of body or soul, or both.

What else?

Where this curse is not taken away, everlasting death and damnation both of body and soul in the world to come.

But God is merciful?

He is indeed full of mercy, but he is also full of righteousness, which must fully be discharged, or else we cannot be partakers of his mercy.

And cannot we by ourselves make satisfaction for our sins?

We cannot by any means, but rather from day to day increase our debt.

But doth not God wrong to man, to require of him that he is not able to perform?

No; for God made man so, that he might have performed it: but he by his sin, spoiled himself and his posterity of those good gifts.

Can any creature in heaven or earth, which is only a creature, make satisfaction to his righteousness?

No, none at all: for, First, God will not punish that in another creature, which is due to be paid by man; and besides, none that is only a creature, can abide the wrath of God against sin, and deliver others from the same.

What manner of man is to be sought out to be our Mediator and Deliverer?

He which is indeed a very man and perfectly righteous, and more mighty than all creatures, that is he which also is very true God.

Why must he be man and perfectly righteous?

Because that the righteousness of God requireth, that the same nature that sinned, should pay, and make amends for sin.

Why must he be God withal?

Because that by his godly power he may abide the burden of God's wrath in his flesh, and may get again and restore to us the righteousness and life which we have lost.

Who is that Mediator, which is very God and very man, and perfectly righteous withal?

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made unto us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption. (1 Cor. 1)

What is the use of all that hitherto hath been taught?

The use is, to bring us to a sound persuasion and feeling of our sins, because they have deserved so grievous punishment, as either the death of the son of God, or hell fire.

Are they only delivered from the curse of the Law, and made partakers of the merits of Christ that are truly humbled?

They only and none other: Isa. 57, Mat. 5:3-5, and as for the Law, heaven and earth shall pass away: but one jot or title of God's Law shall not fail till all be fulfilled.

How is the truth of God's Law fulfilled?

It is fulfilled in;

1. God's children; because it bringeth them to be truly humbled in themselves for their sins, and then sendeth them to Christ, in whom it is fully fulfilled.

2. The wicked; because it declareth to them their just confusion, when to the end they either presume or despair.

Is sorrow for sin sufficient to bring us to Salvation?

No: for we must also have a true Faith.

What is that true Faith that saveth us?

It is a true persuasion of the mercies of God merited by our Lord Jesus Christ.

How shall we attain to this true Faith?

By the spirit of God, giving us this true persuasion by the Gospel.

Where is the Gospel declared unto us?

It is generally declared unto us in the holy Scriptures: but the Church of God hath gathered out of them a certain sum thereof.

Which is that?

The Articles of our Christian faith, commonly called the Creed.

Rehearse the Articles of our Christian faith?

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, &c.

Into how many parts are these Articles divided?

Into two:

The first is, of Faith in God.

The second is, of Faith concerning the Church.

What are you taught to believe in the first part?

In the first part, I declare that I believe in God the;
Father.

Son.

Holy Ghost.

Why say you I believe in God and not in God's?

Because there is but one only true God, upon whom my Faith is wholly stayed.

Seeing there is but one God, why name you three; the Father, Son, Holy Ghost?

Because that God hath so manifested himself in his word, that these sundry persons, are but one true and everlasting God.

Why say you I believe in God, and not rather, that there is a God?

By saying, I believe in God, I declare that I put my whole trust and affiance in God; whereas the Devils and wicked men believing that there is a God, yet cannot put their whole trust and confidence in God.

Why say you I believe, and not, We believe?

Because I must be saved by mine own faith, and not by the faith of another.

Why call you God Father?

Because he is the Creator of heaven and earth, and so is the Father of all creatures.

Why call you God, Creator of heaven and earth, and not Maker of heaven and earth?

Because he created all things of nothing; for to Create, is to make a thing of nothing, but to make, is to make a thing of that which was something before.

Why call you him Almighty?

Because as he created all things of nothing, so doth he preserve and guide them by his Almighty power, wisdom, Justice, and mercy.

What comfort doth this article minister unto you?

It ministereth unto me four notable comforts

1. First, that all the good Angels of God shall watch over me, and pitch their tents about me.

2. Secondly, that neither the devil nor men shall have any power to hurt me, but when, and as far forth as God doth give them leave.

3. Thirdly, that I shall have a profitable and convenient use of all God's creatures.

4. Fourthly, though I suffer hurt by Satan, or want of the creatures; yet all this shall turn to my good in the end.

How can this be?

Because God can do it as an Almighty God, and will do it as a most merciful and loving Father.

True it is, that by Creation we had this benefit but we have lost it, and are become the children of wrath: how then can God become our Father and show his mercy unto us?

He is become our Father by Faith in Jesus Christ the Son of God.

What believe you of God the Son?

1. First, I believe that he is able to work my salvation.
2. Secondly, I believe that he hath wrought it indeed, after that manner that is set down in the Creed.

How can you believe that he is able to work your salvation?

I do believe it, because he is both God and man, and hath an office from God the Father to work my Salvation.

By what words in the Creed do you believe Christ to be God?

By these words, His only Son: I declare that I believe in Christ the only begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made.

Why call you him the only begotten Son of God?

Because he is the alone Son of God by nature.

How can this be, seeing Adam, the Angles, and we also, be the sons of God?

Adam was the Son of God by Creation, which we have lost, but yet we be the sons of God by regeneration.

Why was it requisite that he should be God?

Because nothing but God was able to abide and overcome the wrath of God, and the punishment due unto sin.

What comfort have you by this that Christ is God?

Hereby I am sure, that he is able to save me, by reconciling me to the Father, that he may make me the child of God.

By what words in the Creed do you show that you believe Christ to be man?

By these words, Borne of the Virgin Mary, I do show, that Christ is born of the Virgin Mary, as others be, and subject to all infirmities of man, sin only excepted.

Why are these words added; Conceived by the holy Ghost?

To show, that Christ by the holy Ghost was conceived in the womb of Mary, (she continuing still a pure Virgin) and that he was born holy and without sin, whereunto all other men by nature are subject.

Was it needful that Christ should be without sin?

Yea, for otherwise the Godhead and Manhood could not be joined together: and again, if he had been a sinner, he could not have satisfied for the sins of other men.

Why was it requisite that Christ should be Man?

Because the righteousness of God requireth, that the same Nature which had sinned, should also pay and make amends for sins.

What comfort have you by this that Christ is man?

Hereby I am assured, that Christ is fit to suffer the punishment of my sin; and being man himself, is also meet to be more pitiful and merciful unto men.

What fruit have you by his holy Conception?

I am assured that this holy Conception hath covered the corruption of my nature, and that his pure Conception shall be imputed unto me.

What comfort have you by this that he is both God and man?

By this I am most certainly assured, that he is able most fully to finish my salvation, seeing that as he is man he is meet to suffer for sin; as he is God, he is able to bear the punishment for sin, and to overcome in suffering: and therefore he is called Jesus.

What doth Jesus signify?

It doth signify a Savior.

Why do you call him Jesus?

I do call him Jesus, (that is, a Savior,) because he saveth me from all my sins, and because there is none other means whereby I may in part or in whole be delivered from them.

What comfort have you by this?

My comfort is even the same which I have said, and the rather because God from heaven gave him his name, and the Church on earth hath subscribed thereunto.

What signifieth Christ?

It signifieth Anointed.

Why is he so called?

Because he was anointed to be a;
Prophet for all his people, and so for me.
Priest for all his people, and so for me.
King for all his people, and so for me.

How gather you this?

By the anointing of Prophets, Priests, and Kings, which were figures of him.

Was Christ anointed with material oil as they were?

No: but he was anointed with all gifts of the holy Spirit without measure.

Why do you call him Prophet?

Because he was, he is, and ever shall be the only teacher of the Church.

What were then the Prophets and Apostles?

They were his Disciples and servants, and spake by his Spirit.

What comfort have you by this?

Hereby I am sure, that he will lead me into all truth, revealed in his word, needful for God's glory and my salvation.

Why call you him Priest?

Because offering up himself a sacrifice once for all, he hath satisfied for all my sins, and maketh continual intercession to the Father for me.

What comfort have you by the Priesthood of Christ?

Hereby I am assured that he is my Mediator, and that I also am made a Priest.

How are you made a Priest?

By him I have freedom and boldness to draw near, and offer myself, and all that I have to God the Father.

Why call you him King?

Because he doth guide and govern me unto everlasting life by his word and spirit.

What comfort have you by this?

Hereby I am assured, that by his kingly power, I shall finally overcome the flesh, the world, the devil, death, and hell.

Why call you him Lord?

Because not with gold nor silver, but with his precious blood he hath purchased us to be a peculiar people to himself.

What comfort have you by this?

Seeing he hath paid such a price for me, he will not suffer me to perish.

What is the second thing wherein the faith of Christ consisteth?

Secondly, I believe that he hath wrought my salvation indeed after that manner that is set down in the Creed.

After what manner hath he wrought your salvation?

1. By his most painful sufferings for sin.
2. By his most glorious victory and triumph over sin.

In what words are his most painful sufferings expressed?

In these words; Suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, he descended into hell.

What is the general meaning of these words?

By them I show myself to believe, that Christ endured most grievous torments both of body and soul.

What comfort have you by this?

I am freed from all those punishments of body and soul which my sins have deserved.

How then cometh it to pass, that we are so often afflicted with grievous torments both in body and soul?

Our sufferings are not by desert any satisfaction for our sins in any part, but being sanctified in the most holy sufferings of Christ, they are medicines against sin.

Why are these words added; Suffered under Pontius Pilate?

Not only for the truth of the story, but also to teach that he appeared willingly and of his own accord before a mortal Judge, of whom he was pronounced innocent, and yet by the same he was condemned.

What comfort have you hereof?

That my Savior thus suffering not any whit for his own sins, but wholly for mine and for other men's sins before an earthly Judge, I shall be discharged before the heavenly judgment seat.

What is meant by this; That he was crucified?

That he died not only a common death, but such a death as was accursed both of God and man.

What comfort have you by this?

I am comforted in this, because I am delivered from the curse which I have deserved by the breach of the law, and shall obtain the blessing due unto him for keeping of the same.

What is meant by this; That he died?

That his soul was separated from his body, so that he died a corporal death.

Why was it requisite that he should die?

Because by sin came death into the world, so that the justice of God could not have been satisfied for our sins, unless death had been joined with his sufferings.

Why is it further added, That he was buried?

To assure us more fully that he was truly dead.

What comfort have you by his death and burial?

1. I am comforted, because my sins are fully discharged in his death, and so buried, that they shall never come into remembrance.

2. Secondly, my comfort is the more, because by the virtue of his death and burial sin shall be killed in me, and buried, so that henceforth it shall have no power to reign over me. (Phil. 3:9-13, Rom. 6:12)

3. Thirdly, I need not to fear death, seeing that sin which is the sting of death is taken away by the death of Christ, and that now death is made unto

me an entrance into this life.

What is the meaning of this, He descended into hell?

This is the meaning; that my Savior Christ did not only suffer in body, but also in soul did abide most unspeakable vexations, griefs, painful troubles, and fear of mind, into the which both before, and most of all when he hanged upon the cross, he was cast.

What comfort have you by this?

I am comforted in this, because in all my grievous temptations and assaults I may stay and make sure myself by this, that Christ hath delivered me from the sorrowful griefs and pains of hell.

What believest thou in this article, He rose again from the dead?

I believe that Christ in his manhood hath suffered for me, and that he did in the third day, rise again by his own power from the dead.

Wherein doth this article minister comfort unto thee?

In three things:

1. His resurrection doth assure me, that his righteousness shall be imputed to me for my perfect justification.
2. it comforteth me, because it doth from day today raise me up to righteousness and newness of life in this present world.
3. It ministereth unto me a comfortable hope, that I shall rise again in the last day from bodily death.

What believest thou in this Article, He ascended into heaven?

I believe that Christ in his human Nature (the Apostles looking on,) ascended into Heaven.

What comfort have you thereby?

1. I am comforted in this, that Christ hath prepared a place for me in heaven: which now I see by Faith, and hereafter shall fully enjoy.

2. I am comforted by his intercession to the Father for me.

What fruit have you by his intercession?

1. First, it doth reconcile me to the Father, for those sins which I do daily commit.

2. Secondly, being reconciled in him, I can pray to God with boldness, and call him Father.

What is the meaning of this article, He sitteth at the right hand of God the Father?

I believe that Christ in man's nature, was advanced by the Father unto that high authority, whereby he ruleth all things in heaven and earth.

What comfort have you thereby?

1. I am comforted, because I shall receive from him all things needful for me under his gracious government.

2. By his power all mine enemies shall be subdued, and trodden under my feet.

What believe you in this article, From thence he shall come, &c?

I believe that Christ shall come in his Majesty, to pronounce sentence upon all those that were dead before, and upon them that then shall be found alive.

What comfort have you by this?

1. I am comforted in my greatest misery, knowing that Christ will come one day and rid me out of all.

2. I am sure that he will give sentence on my side, and take me to glory with him.

Why say you I believe in God the holy Ghost?

Because he is God, equal with the Father and the Son.

Why call you him Holy?

Because he is the Author of all holiness.

What fruit have you by this?

1. The holy Ghost doth assure me that I am the child of God, by making me to call him Abba Father.
2. He assureth me, that by the virtue of the death and resurrection of Christ, that sin dieth in me, and I am raised up to holiness of life.
3. The holy Ghost leadeth me into all truth needful to God's glory and my salvation.
4. He comforteth me in all my troubles, and in death assureth me of a better life in this same body and soul.

What is the meaning of this article, I believe that there is a Catholic Church?

That God hath a certain number of his chosen children, which he doth call and gather to himself.

Why say you, I believe that there is a Catholic Church?

Because that the Church of God cannot be always seen with the eyes of man.

Why call you the Church, Holy?

Because the Church on the earth though in itself it is sinful, yet in Christ the head it is holy, and in the life to come shall be brought to perfection of holiness.

Why do you call it Catholic?

Because God in all places, and of all sorts of men had from the beginning, hath now, and ever will have a holy Church.

What is the meaning of this article, The Communion of Saints?

The whole Church communicateth with Christ, and every member one with another in the benefits of Christ.

What comfort have you by this article?

1. I am comforted, because I am justified by that Faith whereby Adam and Abraham were justified, which is tied to no time, or place, and excludeth no person.

2. I am comforted, because I am made partaker of Christ and all his mercies by Faith, and of all the blessings of the Church by love.

What believest thou in this article, I believe the forgiveness of sins?

I believe that God for Christ's sake doth freely forgive me, not only all my sins, but also the punishment that I have deserved by them.

Why say you, I believe the forgiveness of sins?

Because no reason can persuade me, but the holy Ghost only must work the assurance of it in my heart.

What comfort have you hereby?

1. First, I am comforted, because all the sins I have, and daily commit, shall never be laid to my charge.

2. Secondly, I am comforted, because that the weakness and wants of all my duties are covered and supplied in Christ.

3. Thirdly, I am comforted, because God will hear me praying for others, that they may have Faith to feel the forgiveness of sins.

What believest thou in this article, The resurrection of the body unto life everlasting?

I believe that this body after it shall be dissolved into dust, shall be raised up again at the last day, and my soul shall live in everlasting glory.

What comfort reap you thereby?

1. I am made comfortable and cheerful in well-doing, seeing my labor shall not be in vain.

2. I am made to despise the pleasures and glory of this world, and with patience to suffer all troubles that are laid upon me in this present life.

3. It comforteth me over the death of my dearest friends, and maketh me careful in death, knowing that I shall have a part in the resurrection of the just.

What fruit have you when you believe all these Articles?

All do come to this end, that being justified by faith, I am righteous in Christ before God.

What be the several fruits?

1. First, I am at peace with God, although in myself for my outward sins which I daily commit, and my inward corruption which remaineth, I am daily accused.

2. I get strength to fight against my outward sins, to subdue my inward corruption, to do outward good works, and to delight in the law of God in the inward man.

3. I have a right to all God's creatures, so that the use and want of them shall turn to the furtherance of my salvation.

4. I am assured of the glorification of my soul and body in the heavens, because I am made an heir of everlasting life.

Why is this given wholly and only unto Faith?

Not because Faith doth deserve it: but because the merits of Christ can be laid hold on and applied to myself, by none other means but by Faith alone. (Rom. 3:18)

Cannot our good works in some part justify us before God?

No: for the righteousness which is able to stand in the judgment of God, must be perfect in all respects.

Are not our good works perfect?

No: for in many things we sin all; and again, the best works we do, are defiled with sin, and therefore can deserve nothing at the hands of God.

Why then doth God promise a reward unto them?

The reward that God doth promise, it is not for the desert of works, but of his own grace and mercy.

Will not this doctrine make men careless of well doing?

No: for they that be engrafted into Christ, must needs bring forth good works.

Why is it needful that they should do good works?

1. First, that we may by them show ourselves thankful unto God for all his benefits.

2. That we may be assured of our Faith and election by good works.

3. That by our good works we may edify others.

How mayest thou edify others?

1. First, by encouraging and strengthening those that are good.

2. Secondly, by winning those that are not come unto God.

3. And then by stopping the mouths of the wicked.

4. The fourth ariseth of the former, and that is the glory of God, which is advanced by them.

Are good works so needful, that without them we cannot be saved?

Yea: for although good works do not work our salvation in any part, yet because they that are justified are also sanctified; they that do no good works, declare that they neither are justified nor sanctified, and therefore cannot be saved.

Then they must much more be condemned, which commit sin and lie in it?

Yea: for such are not only pronounced to be accursed by the Law, but also the Gospel hath denounced, that they shall not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

Can everyone do good works?

None can do good works, but they that are born again.

How can they that are thus born again do good works?

They that are thus born again, and carry in them the Image of God, have repentance wrought in them; from whence good works do proceed.

What is Repentance?

Repentance is a turning of ourselves to God, whereby we crucify and kill the corruption of our nature, and reform ourselves in the inward man, according to God's will.

What is it to crucify the corruption of our nature?

It is truly, and with all my heart to be sorry, that I have angered God with it, and with my other sins, and every day more and more to hate it and them, and to fly from them.

How is this sorrow wrought?

It is wrought in me partly by the threatening's of the Law, and the fear of God's judgments, but especially increased by feeling of the fruit of Christ his death, whereby I have power to hate sin, and to leave it.

How is this reformation of ourselves wrought in us?

Only by the promises of the Gospel, whereby we feel the fruit of the rising again of Christ.

What doth ensue hereof?

Hereby we are raised up into a new life, having a law written in our hearts, and so reform ourselves.

Hereby it appeareth that none can repent of themselves, or when they will?

Yea: for it was said before, that it is the gift of God, given unto them that are born again.

By this it is also evident that God's Children stand in need of Repentance, so long as they live?

Yea: for there is none of God's Saints but always carrying this corruption about them, they sometime fall, and are far from that perfection of goodness, which the Lord requireth.

Seeing it was said before, that good works did proceed from Repentance, what properties are required of works?

1. First, that they be such as God hath commanded in his Law.
2. Secondly, that they that do them be such as be engrafted into Christ, and continue in him.

What say you then of the good works of them that be not in Christ?

They do no good works, because they neither are as yet members of Christ, nor do offer them to God in the Name of Christ.

3. The third property of works is, that they may be to glorify God, and to assure our salvation.

Is it not lawful to seek our own praise and merit by our own good works?

No: For all our good works are imperfect, and salvation is only merited by the death of Christ, as was said before.

We have heard that the Law worketh the knowledge of our sins, and feeling of our misery: What means hath God ordained to work and increase Faith in us?

He hath ordained

1. The Gospel to beget and breed it in us.
2. Prayer
3. Sacraments
4. Discipline
5. Affliction. —to confirm it in us.

What is the Gospel?

It is that part of God's word, whereby the holy Ghost worketh in us a lively Faith, to apprehend the free remission of sins in Jesus Christ.

How many kinds of Faith be there?

Two, a;

1. General Faith, whereby I believe God to be true in all his works.
2. Special, and this is either whereby I believe God to be just in his threatening's, and so am made penitent; Or, whereby I believe him to be made merciful in his promises, and so come to repentance.

What difference is there between Penitence and Repentance?

Penitence is a sorrow for sin, wrought by the Law: Repentance is a recovering ourselves from sin, wrought by the Gospel.

Is there such difference between the Law and the Gospel?

Yea: for the Law differeth from the Gospel in four things.

1, First the Law revealeth sin, rebuketh us for it, and leaveth us in it: but the Gospel doth reveal unto us Remission of sins, bringeth us to Christ, and freeth us from the punishment belonging unto sin.

2. The Law commandeth to do good, and giveth no strength: but the Gospel enableth us to do good, the holy Ghost writing the law in our hearts, and assuring us of the promise.

3. The Law is the ministry of wrath, condemnation and death; but the Gospel is the ministry of grace, justification, and life.

4. In many points the Law may be conceived by reason; but the Gospel in all points is far above the reach of man's reason.

Wherein do they agree?

They agree in this, that they be both of God, and declare one kind of righteousness, though they differ in offering it unto us. (Rom. 3:2)

What is that one kind of righteousness?

It is the perfect love of God and of our neighbor.

What thing doth follow upon this?

That the severe law pronounceth all the faithful righteous.

How doth the Law pronounce them righteous?

Because that they have in Christ all that the Law doth ask.

But yet they remain transgressors of the Law?

They are transgressors in themselves, and yet righteous in Christ, and in their inward man they love righteousness and hate sin.

What then is the state of the faithful in this life?

They are pure in Christ, and yet fight against sin.

What battle have they?

They have battle both:

Within: the battle of the flesh against the Spirit, and;

Without: the temptation of Satan and the world.

How shall they overcome?

By a lively Faith in Jesus Christ. 1 John 5:4.

What call you the Flesh?

The corruption of our nature, wherein we were born and conceived.

Doth that remain after regeneration?

Yea: it dwelleth in us, and cleaveth fast unto us so long as we carry the outward flesh about us.

How doth the flesh fight against the spirit?

By continual lusting against the spirit.

What is that?

1. By hindering, or corrupting us in the good motions, words, and deeds of the spirit.

2. By continual moving us to evil-motions, words, and deeds.

What call you the Spirit?

The holy Spirit, which God in Christ hath given us, whereby we are begotten again.

Do we not receive the Spirit in full measure, and in perfection at the first?

No: but first, we receive the first fruits, and afterward the daily increase of the same unto the end, if the fault be not in ourselves.

How doth the Spirit fight in us?

By lusting against the flesh.

How doth it lust against the flesh?

1. First, partly by rebuking, and partly by restraining in us the evil motions and deeds of the flesh.

2. By continual enlightening and affecting us with-thoughts, words, deeds; agreeable to God's will.

What call you the World?

The corrupt state and condition of men, and the rest of the creatures.

How doth the world fight against us?

By alluring and withdrawing us to the corruptions thereof.

What means doth it use?

1. It allureth us by false 1. Pleasures, 2. Profit, 3. Glory; of this world, from our obedience to God.

2. It allureth us other whiles by pains, losses, and reproaches, to distrust God's promises.

How shall we overcome the pleasures, profit, and glory of this world?

1. By a true Faith in Jesus Christ, who despised all these things to work our salvation, and to make us overcome them.

2. By Faith in God's word, that feareth us from doing anything against his will.

How shall we overcome the pains, losses, and reproaches of the World?

1. By a lively Faith in Jesus Christ, who suffered all those things to work our salvation, and to enable us to suffer them.

2. By a steadfast Faith in God's promises and providence, that we shall want no good thing, and that all things seeming hurtful, shall be turned to the furtherance of our salvation.

What call you Satan?

The adversary of enemy of God and his people.

How doth he fight against us?

1. By subtlety, alluring us to sin, and therefore he is called a Tempter or Serpent.

2. By laying fearfully to our charge our sins committed, and therefore he is called the Devil, an accuser.

3. By seeking by manifold inward terrors and outward troubles to swallow us up, and therefore is called a roaring Lion.

How shall we fight against Satan and his temptations?

1. By Faith in Jesus Christ, who overcame all his temptations in his own person, that so we might overcome in him.

2. By resisting the inward motions and outward occasions of sin.

How shall we do that?

By believing that we are baptized into the death and resurrection of Christ.

How shall we overcome Satan, and his accusations?

1. By Faith in Jesus Christ, who hath justified us from all the sins for the which he can accuse us.

2. By all those comfortable promises of forgiveness of sins, which in Christ's Name are made unto us.

How shall we overcome him in our terrors and troubles?

1. By Faith in Jesus Christ, who was heard in all his troubles, to give us assurance that we shall not be overcome in them.

2. By Faith in God's providence, whereby we know that he can do no more unto us than the Lord doth direct, (and as it were) give in commission for our good.

We have heard that the Word is the first and chief means not only to beget, but also to strengthen and increase Faith in us: What is the next principal means?

Prayer is the next principal means, serving for the strengthening and increasing of Faith.

What is Prayer?

It is a lifting up of the mind, and a pouring out of the heart before God.

Is there any prescript rule of Prayer left us in the Scriptures?

Yea, even the Prayer which our Savior Christ Jesus taught his Disciples, called the Lord's prayer.

Is it lawful to use no other form of words?

We may use another form of words, but we must pray for the same things, and with like affection, following the same rules which are prescribed in that prayer.

How is that prayer divided?

It is divided into the;

Preface, or entrance to the prayer.

Prayer itself.

Conclusion, or shutting up of the prayer.

Which is the Preface?

Our Father which art in heaven.

What doth the Preface put us in mind of?

1. First, of him to whom we pray.
2. Secondly, of our own estate in prayer.

To whom do we pray?

Only to God the Father, Son, Holy Ghost.

Why do you here name the Father?

Because discerning the persons, we pray to the Father secretly understanding it, that we do in the mediation of the Son, by the working of the holy Ghost.

Why must we pray to the Father in the mediation of Christ his Son?

Because God being displeased for sin, we can have no dealing with him, but only by the means of his Son, in whom he is well pleased.

Why is it required that we pray by the working of the holy Ghost?

Because the holy Ghost assureth us that he is our Father; and whereas we know not what to pray, nor how to pray, the holy Ghost doth teach us both.

What must we be persuaded of, and how must we be affected in prayer?

Partly concerning;

Ourselves:

1. We must be truly humbled; which is wrought in us two ways:
 1. By a persuasion of our sinful misery and unworthiness to be helped.

2. By a persuasion of the loving mercy of God in heaven that must help us.

2. We must have a certain confidence we shall be heard: and this is wrought in us,

1. By faith, being persuaded that God loveth us as his own children, in our Lord Jesus Christ.

2. By faith, being persuaded that our Father being God Almighty, he is able to do whatsoever he will in heaven and in earth.

Others we must be persuaded;

1. That all God's people pray for us.

2. That it is our bounden duty to pray for others as well as for ourselves.

How are the petitions divided?

Into two parts: for,

1. We make request for those things that concern God's Majesty.

2. For those things which concern our own welfare.

Which be those that concern God's Majesty?

The three first:

1. Hallowed be thy Name.

2. Thy Kingdom come.

3. Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.

What is meant by the Names of God?

1. The Names and Titles of God, as Jehovah; the Lord of Hosts; and such like.

2. The;

1. Wisdom of God.

2. Power of God.

3. Mercy of God.

4. Goodness. of God.
5. Truth of God.
6. Righteousness of God.
7. Eternity of God.

Why be these Names called the Names of God?

Because as names serve to discern things by; so God is known to be God, by these things.

What is meant by the word Hallowed?

We pray that as God is glorious in himself, so he may be declared and made known unto men to be a most glorious God

How shall God's Name be declared to be holy and glorious?

1. First, we pray that his wisdom, power, goodness, mercy, truth, righteousness, and Eternity, may more and more be imparted and manifested unto us and other of God's people.

2. Secondly, we pray, that according as we know these things, so the fruits of them may appear in our, and other God's people's lives, that so God's Name may be honored and praised.

What do we pray against in this petition?

1. First, we pray against all ignorance of holy things we should know, and want of works, whereby God wants of his glory.

2. We pray against all false religion, wickedness, and ungodliness, whereby God's Name is dishonored.

I cannot as yet find any more of this Catechism; If any man have the rest in his private use, he shall do well to communicate the same unto the Church for the good of many.

FINIS.