

PSALM 119

This is a psalm by itself, like none of the rest; it excels them all, and shines brightest in this constellation. It is much longer than any of them more than twice as long as any of them. It is not making long prayers that Christ censurers, but making them for a pretence, which intimates that they are in themselves good and commendable. It seems to me to be a collection of David's pious and devout ejaculations, the short and sudden breathings and elevations of his soul to God, which he wrote down as they occurred, and, towards the latter end of his time, gathered out of his day-book where they lay scattered, added to them many like words, and digested them into this psalm, in which there is seldom any coherence between the verses, but, like Solomon's proverbs, it is a chest of gold rings, not a chain of gold links. And we may not only learn, by the psalmist's example, to accustom ourselves to such pious ejaculations, which are an excellent means of maintaining constant communion with God, and keeping the heart in frame for the more solemn exercises of religion, but we must make use of the psalmist's words, both for the exciting and for the expressing of our devout affections; what some have said of this psalm is true, "He that shall read it considerately, it will either warm him or shame him." The composition of it is singular and very exact. It is divided into twenty-two parts, according to the number of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, and each part consists of eight verses, all the verses of the first part beginning with Aleph, all the verses of the second with Beth, and so on, without any flaw throughout the whole psalm. Archbishop Tillotson says, It seems to have more of poetical skill and number in it than we at this distance can easily understand. Some have called it the saints' alphabet; and it were to be wished we had it as ready in our memories as the very letters of our alphabet, as ready as our A B C. Perhaps the penman found it of use to himself to observe this method, as it obliged him to seek for thoughts, and search for them, that he might fill up the quota of every part; and the letter he was to begin with might lead him to a word which might suggest a good sentence; and all little enough to raise any thing that is good in the barren soil of our hearts. However, it would be of use to the learners, a help to them both in committing it to memory and in calling it to mind upon occasion; by the letter the first word

would be got, and that would bring in the whole verse; thus young people would the more easily learn it by heart and retain it the better even in old age. If any censure it as childish and trifling, because acrostics are now quite out of fashion, let them know that the royal psalmist despises their censure; he is a teacher of babes, and, if this method may be beneficial to them, he can easily stoop to it; if this to be vile, he will be yet more vile.

II. The general scope and design of it is to magnify the law, and make it honourable; to set forth the excellency and usefulness of divine revelation, and to recommend it to us, not only for the entertainment, but for the government, of ourselves, by the psalmist's own example, who speaks by experience of the benefit of it, and of the good impressions made upon him by it, for which he praises God, and earnestly prays, from first to last, for the continuance of God's grace with him, to direct and quicken him in the way of his duty. There are ten different words by which divine revelation is called in this psalm, and they are synonymous, each of them expressive of the whole compass of it (both that which tells us what God expects from us and that which tells us that we may expect from him) and of the system of religion which is founded upon it and guided by it. The things contained in the scripture, and drawn from it, are here called,

- 1.** God's law, because they are enacted by him as our Sovereign.
- 2.** His way, because they are the rule both of his providence and of our obedience.
- 3.** His testimonies, because they are solemnly declared to the world and attested beyond contradiction.
- 4.** His commandments, because given with authority, and (as the word signifies) lodged with us as a trust.
- 5.** His precepts, because prescribed to us and not left indifferent.
- 6.** His word, or saying, because it is the declaration of his mind, and Christ, the essential eternal Word, is all in all in it.
- 7.** His judgments, because framed in infinite wisdom, and because by them we must both judge and be judged.
- 8.** His righteousness, because it is all holy, just, and good, and the rule and standard of righteousness.

9. His statutes, because they are fixed and determined, and of perpetual obligation. His truth, or faithfulness, because the principles upon which the divine law is built are eternal truths. And I think there is but one verse (it is v. 122) in all this long psalm in which there is not one or other of these ten words; only in three or four they are used concerning God's providence or David's practice (as v. 75, 84, 121), and v. 132 they are called God's name. The great esteem and affection David had for the word of God is the more admirable considering how little he had of it, in comparison with what we have, no more perhaps in writing than the first books of Moses, which were but the dawning of this day, which may shame us who enjoy the full discoveries of divine revelation and yet are so cold towards it. In singing this psalm there is work for all the devout affections of a sanctified soul, so copious, so various, is the matter of it. We here find that in which we must give glory to God both as our ruler and great benefactor, that in which we are to teach and admonish ourselves and one another (so many are the instructions which we here find about a religious life), and that in which we are to comfort and encourage ourselves and one another, so many are the sweet experiences of one that lived such a life. Here is something or other to suit the case of every Christian. Is any afflicted? Is any merry? Each will find that here which is proper for him. And it is so far from being a tedious repetition of the same thing, as may seem to those who look over it cursorily, that, if we duly meditate upon it, we shall find almost every verse has a new thought and something in it very lively. And this, as many other of David's psalms, teaches us to be sententious in our devotions, both alone and when others join with us; for, ordinarily, the affections, especially of weaker Christians, are more likely to be raised and kept by short expressions, the sense of which lies in a little compass, than by long and laboured periods.

~~EBE~~ PSALM 119:1-3

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

1. ALEPH.

The psalmist here shows that godly people are happy people; they are, and shall be, blessed indeed. Felicity is the thing we all pretend to aim at and pursue. He does not say here wherein it consists; it is enough for us to know what we must do and be that we may attain to it, and that we are here told. All men would be happy, but few take the right way; God has here laid before us the right way, which we may be sure will end in happiness, though it be strait and narrow. Blessednesses are to the righteous; all manner of blessedness. Now observe the characters of the happy people. Those are happy,

1. Who make the will of God the rule of all their actions, and govern themselves, in their whole conversation, by that rule: They *walk in the law of the Lord*, v. 1. God's word is a law to them, not only in this or that instance, but in the whole course of their conversation; they walk within the hedges of that law, which they dare not break through by doing any thing it forbids; and they walk in the paths of that law, which they will not trifle in, but *press forward* in them *towards the mark*, taking every step by rule and never walking at all adventures. This is *walking in God's ways* (v. 3), the ways which he has marked out to us and has appointed us to walk in. It will not serve us to make religion the subject of our discourse, but we must make it the rule of our walk; we must walk *in his ways*, not in the way of the world, or of our own hearts, ^{<820>}Job 23:10, 11; 31:7.

2. Who are upright and honest in their religion — *undefiled in the way*, not only who keep themselves pure from the pollutions of actual sin, *unspotted from the world*, but who are habitually sincere in their intentions, *in whose spirit there is no guile*, who are really as good as they seem to be and row the same way as they look.

3. Who are true to the trust reposed in them as God's professing people. It was the honour of the Jews that *to them were committed the oracles of God*; and blessed are those who preserve pure and entire that sacred deposit, *who keep his testimonies* as a treasure of inestimable value, keep them as the apple of their eye, so keep them as to carry the comfort of them themselves to another world and leave the knowledge and profession of them to those who shall come after them in this world. Those who would *walk in the law of the Lord* must *keep his testimonies*, that is, his truths. Those will not long make conscience of good practices who do not adhere to good principles. Or *his testimonies* may denote his covenant; the

ark of the covenant is called *the ark of the testimony*. Those do not keep covenant with God who do not keep the commandments of God.

4. Who have a single eye to God as their chief good and highest end in all they do in religion (v. 2): They *seek him with their whole heart*. They do not seek themselves and their own things, but God only; this is that which they aim at, that God may be glorified in their obedience and that they may be happy in God's acceptance. he is, and will be, the rewarder, the reward, of all those who thus *seek him diligently, seek him with the heart*, for that is it that God looks at and requires; and *with the whole heart*, for if the heart be divided between him and the world it is faulty.

5. Who carefully avoid all sin (v. 3): *They do no iniquity*; they do not allow themselves in any sin; they do not commit it as those do who are the servants of sin; they do not make a practice of it, do not make a trade of it. They are conscious to themselves of much iniquity that clogs them in the ways of God, but not of that iniquity which draws them out of those ways. Blessed and holy are those who thus exercise themselves *to have always consciences void of offence*.

PSALM 119:4-6

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

We are here taught,

1. To own ourselves under the highest obligations to walk in God's law. The tempter would possess men with an opinion that they are at their liberty whether they will make the word of God their rule or no, that, though it may be good, yet it is not so necessary as they are made to believe it is. He taught our first parents to question the command: *Hath God said, You shall not eat?* And therefore we are concerned to be well established in this (v. 4): *Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts*, to make religion our rule; and *to keep them diligently*, to make religion our business and to mind it carefully and constantly. We are bound, and must obey at our peril.

2. To look up to God for wisdom and grace to do so (v. 5): *O that my ways were directed* accordingly! not only that all events concerning us may be so ordered and disposed by the providence of God as not to be in any thing

a hindrance to us, but a furtherance rather, in the service of God, but that our hearts may be so guided and influenced by the Spirit of God that we may not in any thing transgress God's commandments — not only that our eyes may be directed to behold God's statutes, but our hearts directed to keep them. See how the desire and prayer of a good man exactly agree with the will and command of a good God: “Thou wouldest have me keep thy precepts, and, Lord, I fain would keep them.” *This is the will of God, even our sanctification*; and it should be our will.

3. To encourage ourselves in the way of our duty with a prospect of the comfort we shall find in it, v. 6. Note,

(1.) It is the undoubted character of every good man that he has a *respect to all God's commandments*. He has a respect to the command, eyes it as his copy, aims to conform to it, is sorry wherein he comes short; and what he does in religion he does with a conscientious regard to the command, because it is his duty. He has *respect to all the commandments*, one as well as another, because they are all backed with the same authority (<sup>James 2:10, 11) and all levelled at the same end, the glorifying of God in our happiness. Those who have a sincere respect to any command will have a general respect to every command, to the commands of both testaments and both tables, to the prohibitions and the precepts, to those that concern both the inward and the outward man, both the head and the heart, to those that forbid the most pleasant and gainful sins and to those that require the most difficult and hazardous duties.

(2.) Those who have a sincere *respect to all God's commandments shall not be ashamed*, not only they will thereby be kept from doing that which will turn to their shame, but they shall have *confidence towards God* and boldness of access to the throne of his grace, (<sup>1 John 3:21). They shall have credit before men; their honesty will be their honour. And they shall have clearness and courage in their own souls; they shall not be ashamed to retire into themselves, nor to reflect upon themselves, for their hearts shall not condemn them. David speaks this with application to himself. Those that are upright may take the comfort of their uprightness. “As, if I be wicked, woe to me; so, if I be sincere, it is well with me.”

PSALM 119:7-8

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

I. David's endeavour to perfect himself in his religion, and to make himself (as we say) master of his business. He hopes to *learn* God's *righteous judgments*. He knew much, but he was still pressing forward and desired to know more, as knowing this, that *he had not yet attained*; but as far as perfection is attainable in this life he reached towards it, and would not take up short of it. As long as we live we must be scholars in Christ's school, and sit at his feet; but we should aim to be head-scholars, and to get into the highest form. God's judgments are all righteous, and therefore it is desirable not only to learn them, but to be learned in them, *mighty in the scriptures*.

II. The use he would make of his divine learning. He coveted to be learned in the laws of God, not that he might make himself a name and interest among men, or fill his own head with entertaining speculations, but,

1. That he might give God the glory of his learning: *I will praise thee when I have learned thy judgments*, intimating that he could not learn unless God taught him, and that divine instructions are special blessings, which we have reason to be thankful for. Though Christ keeps a free-school, and teaches without money and without price, yet he expects his scholars should give him thanks both for his word and for his Spirit; surely it is a mercy worth thanks to be taught so gainful a calling as religion is. Those have learned a good lesson who have learned to praise God, for that is the work of angels, the work of heaven. It is an easy thing to praise God in word and tongue; but those only are well learned in this mystery who have learned to *praise him with uprightness of heart*, that is, are inward with him in praising him, and sincerely aim at his glory in the course of their conversation as well as in the exercises of devotion. God accepts only the praises of the upright.

2. That he might himself come under the government of that learning: *When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments I will keep thy statutes*. We cannot keep them unless we learn them; but we learn them in vain if

we do not keep them. Those have well learned God's statutes who have come up to a full resolution, in the strength of his grace, to keep them.

III. His prayer to God not to leave him: “*O forsake me not!* that is, leave me not to myself, withdraw not thy Spirit and grace from me, for then *I shall not keep thy statutes.*” Good men see themselves undone if God forsakes them; for then the tempter will be too hard for them. “Though thou seem to forsake me, and threaten to forsake me, and dost, for a time, withdraw from me, yet let not the desertion be total and final; for that is hell. *O forsake me not utterly!* for woe unto me if God departs from me.”

~~119~~ PSALM 119:9

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

2. BETH.

Here is,

1. A weighty question asked. By what means may the next generation be made better than this? *Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?* Cleansing implies that it is polluted. Besides the original corruption we all brought into the world with us (from which we are not cleansed unto this day), there are many particular sins which young people are subject to, by which they defile their way, *youthful lusts* (~~119~~ 2 Timothy 2:22); these render their way offensive to God and disgraceful to themselves. Young men are concerned to cleanse their way — to get their hearts renewed and their lives reformed, to make clean, and keep clean, from the *corruption that is in the world through lust*, that they may have both a good conscience and a good name. Few young people do themselves enquire by what means they may recover and preserve their purity; and therefore David asks the question for them.

2. A satisfactory answer given to this question. Young men may effectually *cleanse their way by taking heed thereto according to the word of God*; and it is the honour of the word of God that it has such power and is of such use both to particular persons and to communities, whose happiness lies much in the virtue of their youth.

(1.) Young men must make the word of God their rule, must acquaint themselves with it and resolve to conform themselves to it; that will do more towards the cleansing of young men than the laws of princes or the morals of philosophers.

(2.) They must carefully apply that rule and make use of it; they must take heed to their way, must examine it by the word of God, as a touchstone and standard, must rectify what is amiss in it by that regulator and steer by that chart and compass. God's word will not do without our watchfulness, and a constant regard both to it and to our way, that we may compare them together. The ruin of young men is either living at large (or by no rule at all) or choosing to themselves false rules: let them ponder the path of their feet, and walk by scripture-rules; so their way shall be clean, and they shall have the comfort and credit of it here and for ever.

PSALM 119:10

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's experience of a good work God had wrought in him, which he takes the comfort of and pleads with God: "*I have sought thee, sought to thee as my oracle, sought after thee as my happiness, sought thee as my God; for should not a people seek unto their God? If I have not yet found thee, I have sought thee, and thou never saidst, Seek in vain, nor wilt say so to me, for I have sought thee with my heart, with my whole heart, sought thee only, sought thee diligently.*"

2. His prayer for the preservation of that work: "Thou that hast inclined me to seek thy precepts, never suffer me to wander from them." The best are sensible of their aptness to wander; and the more we have found of the pleasure there is in keeping God's commandments the more afraid we shall be of wandering from them and the more earnest we shall be in prayer to God for his grace to prevent our wanderings.

◀BIB▶ PSALM 119:11

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The close application which David made of the word of God to himself: *He hid it in his heart*, laid it up there, that it might be ready to him whenever he had occasion to use it; he laid it up as that which he valued highly, and had a warm regard for, and which he was afraid of losing and being robbed of. God's word is a treasure worth laying up, and there is no laying it up safely but in our hearts; if we have it only in our houses and hands, enemies may take it from us; if only in our heads, our memories may fail us: but if our hearts be delivered into the mould of it, and the impressions of it remain on our souls, it is safe.

2. The good uses he designed to make of it: *That I might not sin against thee*. Good men are afraid of sin, and are in care to prevent it; and the most effectual way to prevent is to hide God's word in our hearts, that we may answer every temptation, as our Master did, with, *It is written*, may oppose God's precepts to the dominion of sin, his promises to its allurements, and his threatenings to its menaces.

◀BIB▶ PSALM 119:12

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David gives glory to God: *“Blessed art thou, O Lord! Thou art infinitely happy in the enjoyment of thyself and hast no need of me or my services; yet thou art pleased to reckon thyself honoured by them; assist me therefore, and then accept me.”* In all our prayers we should intermix praises.

2. He asks grace from God: *“Teach me thy statutes; give me to know and do my duty in every thing. Thou art the fountain of all blessedness; O let me have this drop from that fountain, this blessing from that blessedness:*

Teach me thy statutes, that I may know how to bless thee, who art a blessed God, and that I may be blessed in thee.”

⌘ PSALM 119:13-16

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

I. David looks back with comfort upon the respect he had paid to the word of God. He had the testimony of his conscience for him,

1. That he had edified others with what he had been taught out of the word of God (v. 13): *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.* This he did, not only as a king in making orders, and giving judgment, according to the word of God, nor only as a prophet by his psalms, but in his common discourse. Thus he showed how full he was of the word of God, and what a holy delight he took in his acquaintance with it; for it is *out of the abundance of the heart that the mouth speaks.* Thus he did good with his knowledge; he did not hide God's word from others, but hid it for them; and, out of that *good treasure in his heart,* brought forth good things, as the householder out of his store *things new and old.* Those whose hearts are fed with the bread of life should with their lips feed many. He had prayed (v. 12) that God would teach him; and here he pleads, “Lord, I have endeavoured to make a good use of the knowledge thou hast given me, therefore increase it;” for *to him that has shall be given.*

2. That he had entertained himself with it: “Lord, teach me thy statutes; for I desire no greater pleasure than to know and do them (v. 14): *I have rejoiced in the way of thy commandments,* in a constant even course of obedience to thee; not only in the speculations and histories of thy word, but in the precepts of it, and in that path of serious godliness which they chalk out to me. *I have rejoiced in this as much as in all riches,* as much as ever any worldling rejoiced in the increase of his wealth. In the way of God's commandments I can truly say, *Soul, take thy ease;”* in true religion there is all riches, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

II. He looks forward with a holy resolution never to cool in his affection to the word of God; what he *does that he will do*, ~~<BIB>~~2 Corinthians 11:12. Those that have found pleasure in the ways of God are likely to proceed and persevere in them.

1. He will dwell much upon them in his thoughts (v. 15): *I will meditate in thy precepts*. He not only discoursed of them to others (many do that only to show their knowledge and authority), but he communed with his own heart about them, and took pains to digest in his own thoughts what he had declared, or had to declare, to others. Note, God's words ought to be very much the subject of our thoughts.

2. He will have them always in his eye: *I will have respect unto thy ways*, as the traveller has to his road, which he is in care not to miss and always aims and endeavours to hit. We do not meditate on God's precepts to good purpose unless we have respect to them as our rule and our good thoughts produce good works and good intentions in them.

3. He will take a constant pleasure in communion with God and obedience to him. It is not for a season that he rejoices in this light, but "*I will still, I will for ever, delight myself in thy statutes*, not only think of them, but do them with delight," v. 16. David took more delight in God's statutes than in the pleasures of his court or the honours of his camp, more than in his sword or in his harp. When the law is written in the heart duty becomes a delight.

4. He will never forget what he has learned of the things of God: "*I will not forget thy word*, not only I will not quite forget it, but I will be mindful of it when I have occasion to use it." Those that meditate in God's word, and delight in it, are in no great danger of forgetting it.

~~<BIB>~~ PSALM 119:17

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

3. GIMEL.

We are here taught,

1. That we owe our lives to God's mercy. David prays, *Deal bountifully with me, that I may live.* It was God's bounty that gave us life, that gave us this life; and the same bounty that gave it continues it, and gives all the supports and comforts of it; if these be withheld, we die, or, which is equivalent, our lives are embittered and we become weary of them. If God deals in strict justice with us, we die, we perish, we all perish; if these forfeited lives be preserved and prolonged, it is because God deals bountifully with us, according to his mercy, not according to our deserts. The continuance of the most useful life is owing to God's bounty, and on that we must have a continual dependence.

2. That therefore we ought to spend our lives in God's service. Life is *therefore* a choice mercy, because it is an opportunity of obeying God in this world, where there are so few that do glorify him; and this David had in his eye: "Not *that I may live* and grow rich, live and be merry, but *that I may live and keep thy word*, may observe it myself and transmit it to those that shall come after, which the longer I live the better I shall do."

◀HB▶ PSALM 119:18

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Observe here,

1. That there are *wondrous things* in God's law, which we are all concerned, and should covet, to *behold*, not only strange things, which are very surprising and unexpected, but excellent things, which are to be highly esteemed and valued, and things which were long *hidden from the wise and prudent*, but are now *revealed unto babes*. If there were wonders in the law, much more in the gospel, where Christ is all in all, whose name is *Wonderful*. Well may we, who are so nearly interested, desire to behold these wondrous things, when the angels themselves reach *to look into them*, ▶1 Peter 1:12. Those that would see the wondrous things of God's law and gospel must beg of him to *open their eyes* and to give them an understanding. We are by nature blind to the things of God, till his grace cause the scales to fall from our eyes; and even those in whose hearts God has said, *Let there be light*, have yet need to be further enlightened, and must still pray to God to open their eyes yet more and more, that those who at first *saw men as trees walking* may come to see all things clearly;

and the more God opens our eyes the more wonders we see in the word of God, which we saw not before.

~~<BB>~~ PSALM 119:19

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here we have,

1. The acknowledgment which David makes of his own condition: *I am a stranger in the earth.* We all are so, and all good people confess themselves to be so; for heaven is their home, and the world is but their inn, the land of their pilgrimage. David was a man that knew as much of the world, and was as well known in it, as most men. God built him a house, established his throne; strangers submitted to him, and people that he had not known served him; he had a name like the names of the great men, and yet he calls himself a stranger. We are all strangers on earth and must so account ourselves.

2. The request he makes to God thereupon: *Hide not thy commandments from me.* He means more: “Lord, show thy commandments to me; let me never know the want of the word of God, but, as long as I live, give me to be growing in my acquaintance with it. *I am a stranger,* and therefore stand in need of a guide, a guard, a companion, a comforter; let me have thy commandments always in view, for they will be all this to me, all that a poor stranger can desire. *I am a stranger* here, and must be gone shortly; by thy commandments let me be prepared for my removal hence.”

~~<BB>~~ PSALM 119:20

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David had prayed that God would open his eyes (v. 18) and open the law (v. 19); now here he pleads the earnestness of his desire for knowledge and grace, for it is the fervent prayer that avails much.

1. His desire was importunate: *My soul breaketh for the longing it hath to thy judgments,* or (as some read it) “*It is taken up, and wholly employed,*

in longing for thy judgments; the whole stream of its desires runs in this channel. I shall think myself quite broken and undone if I want the word of God, the direction, converse, and comfort of it.”

2. It was constant — *at all times*. It was not now and then, in a good humour, that he was so fond of the word of God; but it is the habitual temper of every sanctified soul to hunger after the word of God as its necessary food, which there is no living without.

⌘ PSALM 119:21

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The wretched character of wicked people. The temper of their minds is bad. They are *proud*; they magnify themselves above others. And yet that is not all: they magnify themselves against God, and set up their wills in competition with and opposition to the will of God, as if their hearts, and tongues, and all, were their own. There is something of pride at the bottom of every wilful sin, and the tenour of their lives is no better: They *do err from thy commandments*, as Israel, that did *always err in their hearts*; they err in judgment, and embrace principles contrary to thy commandments, and then no wonder that they err in practice, and wilfully turn aside out of the good way. This is the effect of their pride; for they say, *What is the Almighty, that we should serve him?* As Pharaoh, *Who is the Lord?*

2. The wretched case of such. They are certainly cursed, for *God resists the proud*; and those that throw off the commands of the law lay themselves under its curse (⌘ Galatians 3:10), and he that now *beholds them afar off* will shortly say to them, *Go, you cursed*. The proud sinners bless themselves; God curses them; and, though the most direful effects of this curse are reserved for the other world, yet they are often severely rebuked in this world: Providence crosses them, vexes them, and, wherein they dealt proudly, God shows himself above them; and these rebukes are earnest of worse. David took notice of the rebukes proud men were under, and it made him cleave the more closely to the word of God and pray the more earnestly that he might not *err from God's commandments*. Thus saints get good by God's judgments on sinners.

PSALM 119:22

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays against the reproach and contempt of men, that they might be *removed*, or (as the word is) *rolled, from off him*. This intimates that they lay upon him, and that neither his greatness nor his goodness could secure him from being libelled and lampooned. Some despised him and endeavoured to make him mean; others reproached him and endeavoured to make him odious. It has often been the lot of those that do well to be ill-spoken of. It intimates that they lay heavily upon him. Hard and foul words indeed break no bones, and yet they are very grievous to a tender and ingenuous spirit; therefore David prays, “Lord, *remove* them from me, that I may not be thereby either driven from my duty or discouraged in it.” God has all men's hearts and tongues in his hand, and can silence lying lips, and raise up a good name that is trodden in the dust. To him we may appeal as the assertor of right and avenger of wrong, and may depend on his promise that he will clear up our *righteousness as the light*, ¹³⁷⁶Psalm 37:6. Reproach and contempt may humble us and do us good and then it shall be removed.

2. He pleads his constant adherence to the word and way of God: *For I have kept thy testimonies*. He not only pleads his innocency, that he was unjustly censured, but,

(1.) That he was jeered for well-doing. He was despised and abused for his strictness and zeal in religion; so that it was for God's name's sake that he suffered reproach, and therefore he could with the more assurance beg of God to appear for him. The reproach of God's people, if it be not removed now, will be turned into the greater honour shortly.

(2.) That he was not jeered out of well-doing: “Lord, remove it from me, *for I have kept thy testimonies* notwithstanding.” If in a day of trial we still retain our integrity, we may be sure it will end well.

⌞119⌟ PSALM 119:23

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

See here,

1. How David was abused even by great men, who should have known better his character and his case, and have been more generous: *Princes did sit, sit in council, sit in judgment, and speak against me.* What even princes say is not always right; but it is sad when judgment is thus turned to wormwood, when those that should be the protectors of the innocent are their betrayers. Herein David was a type of Christ, for they were the princes of this world that vilified and *crucified the Lord of glory*, ⌞418⌟ 1 Corinthians 2:8.

2. What method he took to make himself easy under these abuses: he *meditated in God's statutes*, went on in his duty, and did not regard them; as a deaf man, he heard not. When they spoke against him, he found that in the word of God which spoke for him, and spoke comfort to him, and then none of these things moved him. Those that have pleasure in communion with God may easily despise the censures of men, even of princes.

⌞119⌟ PSALM 119:24

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here David explains his meditating in God's statutes (v. 23), which was of such use to him when princes sat and spoke against him.

1. Did the affliction make his sad? The word of God comforted him, and was *his delight*, more his delight than any of the pleasures either of court or camp, of city or country. Sometimes it proves that the comforts of the word of God are most pleasant to a gracious soul when other comforts are embittered.

2. Did it perplex him? Was he at a loss what to do when the princes spoke against him? God's statutes were *his counsellors*, and they counselled him to bear it patiently and commit his cause to God. God's *testimonies* will be

the best counsellors both to princes and private persons. *They are the men of my counsel*; so the word is. There will be found more safety and satisfaction in consulting them than in the multitude of other counsellors. Observe here, Those that would have God's testimonies to be their delight must take them for their counsellors and be advised by them; and let those that take them for their counsellors in close walking take them for their delight in comfortable walking.

◀BBB▶ PSALM 119:25

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

4. DALETH.

Here is,

I. David's complaint. We should have thought his soul soaring to heaven; but he says himself, *My soul* not only rolls in the dust, but *cleaves to the dust*, which is a complaint either,

1. Of his corruptions, his inclination to the world and the body (both which are dust), and that which follows upon it, a deadness to holy duties. When he would *do good evil was present with him*. God intimated that Adam was not only mortal, but sinful, when he said, *Dust thou art*, ◀CCB▶ Genesis 3:19. David's complaint here is like St. Paul's of a body of death that he carried about with him. The remainders of in-dwelling corruption are a very grievous burden to a gracious soul. Or,

2. Of his afflictions, either trouble of mind or outward trouble. *Without were fightings, within were fears*, and both together brought him even to the *dust of death* (◀DDD▶ Psalm 22:15), and his soul clave inseparably to it.

II. His petition for relief, and his plea to enforce that petition: "*Quicken thou me according to thy word*. By thy providence put life into my affairs, by thy grace put life into my affections; cure me of my spiritual deadness and make me lively in my devotion." Note, When we find ourselves dull we must go to God and beg of him to quicken us; he has an eye to God's word as a means of quickening (for the words which God speaks, *they are spirit and they are life* to those that receive them), and as an encouragement to hope that God would quicken him, having promised

grace and comfort to all the saints, and to David in particular. God's word must be our guide and plea in every prayer.

PSALM 119:26-27

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

We have here,

1. The great intimacy and freedom that had been between David and his God. David had opened his case, opened his very heart to God: "*I have declared my ways, and acknowledged thee in them all, have taken thee along with me in all my designs and enterprises.*" Thus *Jephthah uttered all his words*, and Hezekiah spread his letters, *before the Lord*. "*I have declared my ways, my wants, and burdens, and troubles, that I meet with in my way, or my sins, my by-ways (I have made an ingenuous confession of them), and thou heardest me, heardest patiently all I had to say, and tookedst cognizance of my case.*" It is an unspeakable comfort to a gracious soul to think with what tenderness all its complaints are received by a gracious God, ¹⁵⁴1 John 5:14, 15.
2. David's earnest desire of the continuance of that intimacy, not by visions and voices from heaven, but by the word and Spirit in an ordinary way: *Teach me thy statutes*, that is, *Make me to understand the way of thy precepts*. When he knew God had heard his declaration of his ways he did not say, "Now, Lord, tell me my lot, and let me know what the event will be;" but, "Now, Lord, tell me my duty; let me know what thou wouldst have me to do as the case stands." Note, Those who in all their ways acknowledge God may pray in faith that he will *direct their steps* in the right way. And the surest way of keeping up our communion with God is by learning his statutes and walking intelligently in the *way of his precepts*. See ¹⁵⁶1 John 1:6, 7.
3. The good use he would make of this for the honour of God and the edification of others: "Let me have a good understanding of *the way of thy precepts*; give me a clear, distinct, and methodical knowledge of divine things; *so shall I talk* with the more assurance, and the more to the purpose, *of thy wondrous works.*" We can talk with a better grace of God's wondrous works, the wonders of providence, and especially the wonders

of redeeming love, when we understand the way of God's precepts and walk in that way.

PSALM 119:28-29

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's representation of his own griefs: *My soul melteth for heaviness*, which is to the same purport with v. 25, *My soul cleaveth to the dust*. Heaviness in the heart of man makes it to melt, to drop away like a candle that wastes. The penitent soul melts in sorrow for sin, and even the patient soul may melt in the sense of affliction, and it is then its interest to pour out its supplication before God.

2. His request for God's grace.

(1.) That God would enable him to bear his affliction well and graciously support him under it: "*Strengthen thou me with strength in my soul, according to thy word*, which, as the bread of life, strengthens man's heart to undergo whatever God is pleased to inflict. Strengthen me to do the duties, resist the temptations, and bear up under the burdens, of an afflicted state, that the spirit may not fail. *Strengthen me according to that word* (⁴⁶⁸²⁵Deuteronomy 33:25), *As thy days so shall thy strength be.*"

(2.) That God would keep him from using any unlawful indirect means for the extricating of himself out of his troubles (v. 29): *Remove from me the way of lying*. David was conscious to himself of a proneness to this sin; he had, in a strait, cheated Ahimelech (⁴⁹²¹⁰1 Samuel 21:2), and Achish, v. 13 and ⁴⁹²¹⁰1 Samuel 27:10. Great difficulties are great temptations to palliate a lie with the colour of a pious fraud and a necessary self-defence; therefore David prays that God would prevent him from falling into this sin any more, lest he should settle in the way of it. A course of lying, of deceit and dissimulation, is that which every good man dreads and which we are all concerned to beg of God by his grace to keep us from.

(3.) That he might always be under the guidance and protection of God's government: *Grant me thy law graciously*; grant me that to keep me from the *way of lying*. David had the law written with his own hand, for the

king was obliged to transcribe a copy of it for his own use (~~4878~~Deuteronomy 17:18); but he prays that he might have it written in his heart; for then, and then only, we have it indeed, and to good purpose. “Grant it me more and more.” Those that know and love the law of God cannot but desire to know it more and love it better. “Grant it me *graciously*,” he begs it as a special token of God's favour. Note, We ought to reckon God's law a grant, a gift, an unspeakable gift, to value it, and pray for it, and to give thanks for it accordingly. The divine code of institutes and precepts is indeed a charter of privileges; and God is truly gracious to those whom he makes gracious by giving them his law.

~~4880~~PSALM 119:30-32

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Observe,

I. That those who will make anything to purpose of their religion must first make it their serious and deliberate choice; so David did: *I have chosen the way of truth*. Note,

1. The way of serious godliness is the way of truth; the principles it is founded on are principles of eternal truth, and it is the only true way to happiness.

2. We must choose to walk in this way, not because we know no other way, but because we know no better; nay we know no other safe and good way. Let us choose that way for our way, which we will walk in, though it be narrow.

II. That those who have chosen the way of truth must have a constant regard to the word of God as the rule of their walking: *Thy judgments have I laid before me*, as he who learns to write lays his copy before him, that he may write according to it, as the workman lays his model and platform before him, that he may do his work exactly. As we must have the word in our heart by an habitual conformity to it, so we must have it in our eye by an actual regard to it upon all occasions, that we may walk accurately and by rule.

III. That those who make religion their choice and rule are likely to adhere to it faithfully: “*I have stuck to thy testimonies with unchanged affection and an unshaken resolution, stuck to them at all times, through all trials. I have chosen them, and therefore I have stuck to them.*” Note, The choosing Christian is likely to be the steady Christian; while those that are Christians by chance tack about if the wind turn.

IV. That those who stick to the word of God may in faith expect and pray for acceptance with God; for David means this when he begs, “*Lord, put me not to shame; that is, never leave me to do that by which I shall shame myself, and do thou not reject my services, which will put me to the greatest confusion.*”

V. That the more comfort God gives us the more duty he expects from us, v. 32. Here we have,

1. His resolution to go on vigorously in religion: *I will run the way of thy commandments.* Those that are going to heaven should make haste thither and be still pressing forward. It concerns us to redeem time and take pains, and to go on in our business with cheerfulness. We *then* run the way of our duty, when we are ready to it, and pleasant in it, and *lay aside every weight*, ^{<821>}Hebrews 12:1.

2. His dependence upon God for grace to do so: “I shall *then* abound in thy work, *when thou shalt enlarge my heart.*” God, by his Spirit, enlarges the hearts of his people when he gives them wisdom (for that is called *largeness of heart*, ^{<119>}1 Kings 4:29), when he *sheds abroad the love of God* in the heart, and puts gladness there. The joy of our Lord should be wheels to our obedience.

<119> PSALM 119:33-34

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

5. HE.

Here,

I. David prays earnestly that God himself would be his teacher; he had prophets, and wise men, and priests, about him, and was himself well

instructed in the law of God, yet he begs to be taught of God, as knowing that *none teaches like him*, ^{<862>}Job 36:22. Observe here,

1. What he desires to be taught, not the notions or language of God's statutes, but *the way* of them — “the way of applying them to myself and governing myself by them; teach me the way of my duty which thy statutes prescribe, and in every doubtful case let me know what thou wouldst have me to do, let me hear the word behind me, saying, *This is the way, walk in it*” ^{<311>}Isaiah 30:21.

2. How he desires to be taught, in such a way as no man could teach him: *Lord, give me understanding*. As the God of nature, he has given us intellectual powers and faculties; but here we are taught to pray that, as the God of grace, he would give us understanding to use those powers and faculties about the great things which belong to our peace, which, through the corruption of nature, we are averse to: *Give me understanding*, an enlightened understanding; for it is as good to have no understanding at all as not to have it sanctified. Nor will the spirit of revelation in the word answer the end unless we have the spirit of wisdom in the heart. This is that which we are indebted to Christ for; for the *Son of God has come and has given us understanding*, ^{<610>}1 John 5:20.

II. He promises faithfully that he would be a good scholar. If God would teach him, he was sure he should learn to good purpose: “*I shall keep thy law*, which I shall never do unless I be taught of God, and therefore I earnestly desire that I may be taught.” If God, by his Spirit, give us a right and good understanding, we shall be,

1. Constant in our obedience: “*I shall keep it to the end*, to the end of my life, which will be the surest proof of sincerity.” It will not avail the traveller to keep the way for a while, if he do not keep it to the end of his journey.

2. Cordial in our obedience: *I shall observe it with my whole heart*, with pleasure and delight, and with vigour and resolution. That way which the whole heart goes the whole man goes; and that should be the way of God's commandments, for the keeping of them is the whole of man.

PSALM 119:35-36

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

He had before prayed to God to enlighten his understanding, that he might know his duty, and not mistake concerning it; here he prays to God to bow his will, and quicken the active powers of his soul, that he might do his duty; for *it is God that works in us both to will and to do*, as well as to understand, what is good, ^{<1883>}Philippians 2:13. Both the good head and the good heart are from the good grace of God, and both are necessary to every good work. Observe here,

I. The grace he prays for.

1. That God would make him able to do his duty: *“Make me to go; strengthen me for every good work.”* Since we are not sufficient of ourselves, our dependence must be upon the grace of God, for from him all our sufficiency is. God puts his Spirit within us, and so causes us to *walk in his statutes* (^{<267>}Ezekiel 36:27), and this is that which David here begs.

2. That God would make him willing to do it, and would, by his grace, subdue the aversion he naturally had to it: *“Incline my heart to thy testimonies, to those things which thy testimonies prescribe; not only make me willing to do my duty, as that which I must do and therefore am concerned to make the best of, but make me desirous to do my duty as that which is agreeable to the new nature and really advantageous to me.”* Duty is then done with delight when the heart is inclined to it: it is God's grace that inclines us, and the more backward we find ourselves to it the more earnest we must be for that grace.

II. The sin he prays against, and that is covetousness: *“Incline my heart to keep thy testimonies, and restrain and mortify the inclination there is in me to covetousness.”* That is a sin which stands opposed to all God's testimonies; for the love of money is such a sin as is the root of much sin, of all sin. Those therefore that would have the love of God rooted in them must get the love of the world rooted out of them; for *the friendship of the world is enmity with God*. See in what way God deals with men, not by compulsion, but he draws with the cords of a man, working in them an inclination to that which is good and an aversion to that which is evil.

III. His plea to enforce this prayer: “Lord, bring me to, and keep me in, *the way of thy commandments, for therein do I delight*; and therefore I pray thus earnestly for grace to walk in that way. Thou hast wrought in me this delight in the way of thy commandments; wilt thou not work in me an ability to walk in them, and so crown thy own work?”

~~<BB>~~ **PSALM 119:37**

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays for restraining grace, that he might be prevented and kept back from that which would hinder him in the way of his duty: *Turn away my eyes from beholding vanity*. The honours, pleasures, and profits of the world are the vanities, the aspect and prospect of which draw multitudes away from the paths of religion and godliness. The eye, when fastened on these, infects the heart with the love of them, and so it is alienated from God and divine things; and therefore, as we ought to *make a covenant with our eyes*, and lay a charge upon them, that they shall not wander after, much less fix upon, that which is dangerous (~~<BB>~~ Job 31:1), so we ought to pray that God by his providence would keep vanity out of our sight and that by his grace he would keep us from being enamoured with the sight of it.

2. He prays for constraining grace, that he might not only be kept from every thing that would obstruct his progress heaven-ward, but might have that grace which was necessary to forward him in that progress: “*Quicken thou me in thy way*; quicken me to redeem time, to improve opportunity, to press forward, and to do every duty with liveliness and fervency of spirit.” Beholding vanity deadens us and slackens our pace; a traveller that stands gazing upon every object that presents itself to his view will not rid ground; but, if our eyes be kept from that which would divert us, our hearts will be kept to that which will excite us.

⌘ PSALM 119:38

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is

1. The character of a good man, which is the work of God's grace in him; he is *God's servant*, subject to his law and employed in his work, that is, *devoted to his fear*, given up to his direction and disposal, and taken up with high thoughts of him and all those acts of devotion which have a tendency to his glory. Those are truly God's servants who, though they have their infirmities and defects, are sincerely *devoted to the fear of God* and have all their affections and motions governed by that fear; they are engaged and addicted to religion.

2. The confidence that a good man has towards God, in dependence upon the word of his grace to him. Those that are God's servants may, in faith and with humble boldness, pray that God would *establish his word to them*, that is, that he would fulfil his promises to them in due time, and in the mean time give them an assurance that they shall be fulfilled. What God has promised we must pray for; we need not be so aspiring as to ask more; we need not be so modest as to ask less.

⌘ PSALM 119:39

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays against *reproach*, as before, v. 22. David was conscious to himself that he had done that which might give *occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme*, which would blemish his own reputation and turn to the dishonour of his family; now he prays that God, who has all men's hearts and tongues in his hands, would be pleased to prevent this, to *deliver him from all his transgressions*, that he *might not be the reproach of the foolish*, which he feared (⌘ Psalm 39:8); or he means that reproach which his enemies unjustly loaded him with. Let their *lying lips be put to silence*.

2. He pleads the goodness of God's judgments: "Lord, thou sittest in the throne, and *thy judgments are right and good*, just and kind, to those that are wronged, and therefore to thee I appeal from the unjust and unkind censures of men." It is a small thing to be judged of man's judgment, while *he that judges us is the Lord*. Or thus: "Thy word, and ways, and thy holy religion, are very good, but the reproaches cast on me will fall on them; therefore, *Lord, turn them away*; let not religion be wounded through my side."

<BB0>PSALM 119:40

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David professes the ardent affection he had to the word of God: "*I have longed after thy precepts*, not only loved them, and delighted in what I have already attained, but I have earnestly desired to know them more and do them better, and am still pressing forward towards perfection." Tastes of the sweetness of God's precepts will but set us a longing after a more intimate acquaintance with them. He appeals to God concerning this passionate desire after his precepts: "*Behold, I have thus loved, thus longed*; thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I am thus affected."

2. He prays for grace to enable him to answer this profession. "Thou hast wrought in me this languishing desire, put life into me, that I may prosecute it; *quicken me in thy righteousness*, in thy righteous ways, according to thy righteous promise." Where God has wrought to will he will work to do, and where he has wrought to desire he will satisfy the desire.

<BB0>PSALM 119:41-42

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

6. VAU.

Here is,

1. David's prayer for the salvation of the Lord. "Lord, thou art my Saviour; I am miserable in myself, and thou only canst make me happy; *let thy salvation come to me.* Hasten temporal salvation to me from my present distresses, and hasten me to the eternal salvation, by giving me the necessary qualifications for it and the comfortable pledges and foretastes of it."

2. David's dependence upon the grace and promise of God for that salvation. These are the two pillars on which our hope is built, and they will not fail us: —

(1.) us: —

(1.) The grace of God: *Let thy mercies come, even thy salvation.* Our salvation must be attributed purely to God's mercy, and not to any merit of our own. Eternal life must be expected as the *mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ*, ~~(12)~~ Jude 1:21. "Lord, I have by faith thy mercies in view; let me by prayer prevail to have them come to me."

(2.) The promise of God: "*Let it come according to thy word, thy word of promise. I trust in thy word,* and therefore may expect the performance of the promise." We are not only allowed to trust in God's word, but our trusting in it is the condition of our benefit by it.

3. David's expectation of the good assurance which that grace and promise of God would give him: "*So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproaches me* for my confidence in God, as if it would deceive me." When God saves those out of their troubles who trusted in him he effectually silences those who would have *shamed that counsel of the poor* (~~(14)~~ Psalm 14:6), and their reproaches will be for ever silenced when the salvation of the saints is completed; then it will appear, beyond dispute, that it was not in vain to trust in God.

~~(11)~~ PSALM 119:43-44

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's humble petition for the tongue of the learned, that he might know how to *speak a word in season* for the glory of God: *Take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth.* He means, "Lord, let the word of truth be always in my mouth; let me have the wisdom and courage which are necessary to enable me both to use my knowledge for the instruction of others, and, like the good householder, to bring out of my treasury *things new and old*, and to make profession of my faith whenever I am called to it." We have need to pray to God that we may never be afraid or ashamed to own his truths and ways, nor deny him before men. David found that he was sometimes at a loss, that the *word of truth* was not so ready to him as it should have been, but he prays, "Lord, let it not be taken utterly from me; let my always have so much of it at hand as will be necessary to the due discharge of my duty."

2. His humble profession of the heart of the upright, without which the tongue of the learned, however it may be serviceable to others, will stand us in no stead.

(1.) David professes his confidence in God: "Lord, make me ready and mighty in the scriptures, *for I have hoped in those judgments of thy mouth*, and, if they be not at hand, my support and defence have departed from me."

(2.) He professes his resolution to adhere to his duty in the strength of God's grace: "*So shall I keep thy law continually.* If I have thy word not only in my heart, but in my mouth, I shall do all I should do, stand complete in thy whole will." Thus shall the *man of God be perfect, thoroughly furnished for every good word and work*, <sup>² Timothy 3:17; <sup>⁶ Colossians 3:16. Observe how he resolves to keep God's law,

[1.] Continually, without trifling. God must be served in a constant course of obedience every day, and all the day long.

[2.] *For ever and ever*, without backsliding. We must never be *weary of well-doing*. If we serve him to the end of our time on earth, we shall be serving him in heaven to the endless ages of eternity; so shall we *keep his law for ever and ever*. Or thus: "Lord, let me have the word of truth in *my mouth*, that I may commit that sacred deposit to the rising generation (<sup>² Timothy 2:2) and by them it may be transmitted to succeeding ages; so shall thy law be kept *for ever and ever*," that is, from one generation to

another, according to that promise (²⁵²¹Isaiah 59:21), *My word in thy mouth shall not depart out of the mouth of thy seed, nor thy seed's seed.*

¹¹⁹⁵PSALM 119:45-48

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

We may observe in these verses,

1. What David experienced of an affection to the law of God: *“I seek thy precepts, v. 45. I desire to know and do my duty, and consult thy word accordingly; I do all I can to understand what the will of the Lord is and to discover the intimations of his mind. I seek thy precepts, for I have loved them, v. 47, 48. I not only give consent to them as good, but take complacency in them as good for me.”* All that love God love his government and therefore love all his commandments.

2. What he expected from this. Five things he promises himself here in the strength of God's grace: —

(1.) That he should be free and easy in his duty: *“I will walk at liberty, freed from that which is evil, not hampered with the fetters of my own corruptions, and free to that which is good, doing it not by constraint, but willingly.”* The service of sin is perfect slavery; the service of God is perfect liberty. Licentiousness is bondage to the greatest of tyrants; conscientiousness is freedom to the meanest of prisoners, ⁴⁸²John 8:32, 36; ⁴⁷⁴Luke 1:74, 75.

(2.) That he should be bold and courageous in his duty: *I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings.* Before David came to the crown kings were sometimes his judges, as Saul, and Achish; but, if he were called before them to give a reason of the hope that was in him, he would *speak of God's testimonies*, and profess to build his hope upon them and make them his council, his guards, his crown, his all. We must never be afraid to own our religion, though it should expose us to the wrath of kings, but speak of it as that which we will live and die by, like the three children before Nebuchadnezzar, ²¹⁸⁶Daniel 3:16; ⁴⁰⁰Acts 4:20. After David came to the crown kings were sometimes his companions; they visited him and he returned their visits; but he did not, in complaisance to them, talk of every thing but religion, for fear of affronting them and making his

conversation uneasy to them. No; God's testimonies shall be the principal subject of his discourse with the kings, not only to show that he was not ashamed of his religion, but to instruct them in it and bring them over to it. It is good for kings to hear of God's testimonies, and it will adorn the conversation of princes themselves to speak of them.

(3.) That he should be cheerful and pleasant in his duty (v. 47): “*I will delight myself in thy commandments*, in conversing with them, in conforming to them. I will never be so well pleased with myself as when I do that which is pleasing to God.” The more delight we take in the service of God the nearer we come to the perfection we aim at.

(4.) That he should be diligent and vigorous in his duty: *I will lift up my hands to thy commandments*, which denotes not only a vehement desire towards them (^{<1316>}Psalm 143:6) — “I will lay hold of them as one afraid of missing them, or letting them go;” but a close application of mind to the observance of them — “I will lay my hands to the command, not only to praise it, but practise it; nay, I will lift up my hands to it, that is, I will put forth all the strength I have to do it.” The hands that hang down, through sloth and discouragement, shall be lifted up, ^{<1322>}Hebrews 12:12.

(5.) That he should be thoughtful and considerate in his duty (v. 48): “*I will meditate in thy statutes*, not only entertain myself with thinking of them as matters of speculation, but contrive how I may observe them in the best manner.” By *this* it will appear that we truly love God's commandments, if we apply both our minds and our hands to them.

^{<1344>}PSALM 119:49

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

7. ZAIN.

Two things David here pleads with God in prayer for that mercy and grace which he hoped for, according to the word, by which his requests were guided: —

1. That God had given him the promise on which he hoped: “Lord, I desire no more than that thou wouldst *remember thy word unto thy servant*, and *do as thou hast said*;” see ^{<1373>}1 Chronicles 17:23. “Thou art wise, and

therefore wilt perfect what thou hast purposed, and not change thy counsel. Thou art faithful, and therefore wilt perform what thou hast promised, and not break thy word.” Those that make God's promises their portion may with humble boldness make them their plea. “Lord, is not that the word which thou hast spoken; and wilt thou not make it good?”

<131>Genesis 32:9; <132>Exodus 33:12.

2. That God, who had given him the promise in the word, had by his grace wrought in him a hope in that promise and enabled him to depend upon it, and had raised his expectations of great things from it. Has God kindled in us desires towards spiritual blessings more than towards any temporal good things, and will he not be so kind as to satisfy those desires? Has he filled us with hopes of those blessings, and will he not be so just as to accomplish these hopes? He that did by his Spirit work faith in us will, according to our faith, work for us, and will not disappoint us.

<133>PSALM 119:50

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is David's experience of benefit by the word.

1. As a means of his sanctification: “*Thy word has quickened me.* It made me alive when I was dead in sin; it has many a time made me lively when I was dead in duty; it has quickened me to that which is good when I was backward and averse to it, and it has quickened me in that which is good when I was cold and indifferent.”

2. Therefore as a means of his consolation when he was in affliction and needed something to support him: “Because thy word has quickened my at other times, it has comforted me then.” The word of God has much in it that speaks *comfort in affliction*; but those only may apply it to themselves who have experienced in some measure the quickening power of the word. If through grace it make us holy, there is enough in it to make us easy, in all conditions, under all events.

⌄PSALM 119:51

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here tells us, and it will be of use to us to know it,

1. That he had been jeered for his religion. Though he was a man of honour, a man of great prudence, and had done eminent services to his country, yet, because he was a devout conscientious man, *the proud had him greatly in derision*; they ridiculed him, bantered him, and did all they could to expose him to contempt; they laughed at him for his praying, and called it *cant*, for his seriousness, and called it *mopishness*, for his strictness, and called it *needless preciseness*. They were the proud that sat in the scorner's seat and valued themselves on so doing.

2. That yet he had not been jeered out of his religion: “They have done all they could to make me quit it for shame, but none of these things move me: *I have not declined from thy law* for all this; but, *if this be to be vile*” (as he said when Michal had him greatly in derision), “*I will be yet more vile.*” He not only had not quite forsaken the law, but had not so much as declined from it. We must never shrink from any duty, nor let slip an opportunity of doing good, for fear of the reproach of men, or their revilings. The traveller goes on his way though the dogs bark at him. Those can bear but little for Christ that cannot bear a hard word for him.

⌄PSALM 119:52

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

When David was derided for his godliness he not only held fast his integrity, but,

1. He comforted himself. He not only bore reproach, but bore it cheerfully. It did not disturb his peace, nor break in upon the repose of his spirit in God. It was a comfort to him to think that it was for God's sake that he bore reproach, and that his worst enemies could find *no occasion against him, save only in the matter of his God*, ²⁷⁶⁵ Daniel 6:5. Those that are derided for their adherence to God's law may comfort themselves with this, that *the reproach of Christ* will prove, in the end, *greater riches* to

them *than the treasures of Egypt.*

2. That which he comforted himself with was the remembrance of God's *judgments of old*, the providences of God concerning his people formerly, both in mercy to them and in justice against their persecutors. God's judgments of old, in our own early days and in the days of our fathers, are to be remembered by us for our comfort and encouragement in the way of God, for he is still the same.

~~<BB>~~ PSALM 119:53

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The character of wicked people; he means those that are openly and grossly wicked: *They forsake thy law.* Every sin is a transgression of the law, but a course and way of wilful and avowed sin is downright forsaking it and throwing it off.

2. The impression which the wickedness of the wicked made upon David; it frightened him, it put him into an amazement. He trembled to think of the dishonour thereby done to God, the gratification thereby given to Satan, and the mischiefs thereby done to the souls of men. He dreaded the consequences of it both to the sinners themselves (and cried out, *O gather not my soul with sinners! let my enemy be as the wicked*) and to the interests of God's kingdom among men, which he was afraid would be thereby sunk and ruined. He does not say, "*Horror has taken hold on me* because of their cruel designs against me," but "because of the contempt they put on God and his law." Sin is a monstrous horrible thing in the eyes of all that are sanctified, ~~<BB>~~ Jeremiah 5:30; 23:14; ~~<BB>~~ Hosea 6:10; ~~<BB>~~ Jeremiah 2:12.

~~<BB>~~ PSALM 119:54

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's state and condition; he was *in the house of his pilgrimage*, which may be understood either as his peculiar trouble (he was often tossed and hurried, and forced to fly) or as his lot in common with all. This world is the house of our pilgrimage, the house in which we are pilgrims; it is our tabernacle; it is our inn. We must confess ourselves *strangers and pilgrims upon earth*, who are not at home here, nor must be here long. Even David's palace is but the house of his pilgrimage.

2. His comfort in this state: "*Thy statutes have been my songs, with which I here entertain myself,*" as travellers are wont to divert the thoughts of their weariness, and take off something of the tediousness of their journey, by singing a pleasant song now and then. David was the sweet singer of Israel, and here we are told whence he fetched his songs; they were all borrowed from the word of God. God's statutes were as familiar to him as the songs which a man is accustomed to sing; and he conversed with them in his pilgrimage-solitudes. They were as pleasant to him as songs, and *put gladness into his heart* more than those have that *chant to the sound of the viol*, ^{<1065>}Amos 6:5. *Is any afflicted then? Let him sing over God's statutes, and try if he cannot so sing away sorrow,* ^{<1385>}Psalm 138:5.

<1195> PSALM 119:55-56

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The converse David had with the word of God; he kept it in mind, and upon every occasion he called it to mind. God's name is the discovery he has made of himself to us in and by his word. *This is his memorial unto all generations*, and therefore we should always keep it in memory — remember it *in the night*, upon a waking bed, when we are communing with our own hearts. When others were sleeping David was remembering God's name, and, by repeating that lesson, increasing his acquaintance with it; in the night of affliction this he called to mind.

2. The conscience be made of conforming to it. The due remembrance of God's name, which is prefixed to his law, will have a great influence upon our observance of the law: *I remembered thy name in the night*, and therefore was careful to *keep thy law* all day. How comfortable will it be in the reflection if our own hearts can witness for us that we have thus

remembered God's name, and kept his law! 3. The advantage he got by it (v. 56): *This I had because I kept thy precepts*. Some understand this indefinitely: *This I had* (that is I had that which satisfied me; I had every thing that is comfortable) *because I kept thy precepts*. Note, All that have made a business of religion will own that it has turned to a good account, and that they have been unspeakable gainers by it. Others refer it to what goes immediately before: "I had the comfort of keeping thy law because I kept it." Note, God's work is its own wages. A heart to obey the will of God is a most valuable reward of obedience; and the more we do the more we may do, and shall do, in the service of God; the branch that bears fruit is made *more fruitful*, ~~485~~ John 15:2.

~~486~~ PSALM 119:57

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

8. CHETH.

We may hence gather the character of a godly man.

1. He makes the favour of God his felicity: *Thou art my portion, O Lord!* Others place their happiness in the wealth and honours of this world. Their portion is in this life; they look no further; they desire no more; these are *their good things*, ~~485~~ Luke 16:25. But all that are sanctified take the Lord for the portion of their inheritance and their cup, and nothing less will satisfy them. David can appeal to God in this matter: "Lord, thou knowest that I have chosen thee for my portion, and depend upon thee to make me happy."

2. He makes the law of God his rule: "*I have said that I would keep thy words; and what I have said by thy grace I will do, and will abide by it to the end.*" Note, Those that take God for their portion must take him for their prince, and swear allegiance to him; and, having promised to *keep his word*, we must often put ourselves in mind of our promise, ~~481~~ Psalm 39:1.

PSALM 119:58

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David, having in the foregoing verse reflected upon his covenants with God, here reflects upon his prayers to God, and renews his petition. Observe,

1. What he prayed for. Having taken God for his portion, he *entreated his favour*, as one that knew he had forfeited it, was unworthy of it, and yet undone without it, but for ever happy if he could obtain it. We cannot demand God's favour as a debt, but must be humble suppliants for it, that God will not only be reconciled to us, but accept us and smile upon us. He prays, "*Be merciful to me*, in the forgiveness of what I have done amiss, and in giving me grace to do better for the future."
2. How he prayed — *with his whole heart*, as one that knew how to value the blessing he prayed for. The gracious soul is entirely set upon the favour of God, and is therefore importunate for it. *I will not let thee go except thou bless me*.
3. What he pleaded — the promise of God: "*Be merciful to me, according to thy word*. I desire the mercy promised, and depend upon the promise for it." Those that are governed by the precepts of the word and are resolved to keep them (v. 57) may plead the promises of the word and take the comfort of them.

PSALM 119:59-60

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David had said he *would keep God's word* (v. 57), and it was well said; now here he tells us how and in what method he pursued that resolution.

1. He *thought on his ways*. He thought beforehand what he should do, pondering the path of his feet (²⁰⁰⁵Proverbs 4:26), that he might walk surely, and not at all adventures. He thought after what he had done, reflected upon his life past, and recollected the paths he had walked in and the steps he had taken. The word signifies a fixed abiding thought. Some

make it an allusion to those who work embroidery, who are very exact and careful to cover the least flaw, or to those who cast up their accounts, who reckon with themselves, What do I owe? What am I worth? “*I thought not on my wealth (as the covetous man, ^{<911>} Psalm 49:11) but on my ways, not on what I have, but what I do:*” for what we do will follow us into another world when what we have must be left behind. Many are critical enough in their remarks upon other people's ways who never think of their own: but *let every man prove his own work.*

2. He turned his feet to God's testimonies. He determined to make the word of God his rule, and to walk by that rule. He turned from the by-paths to which he had turned aside, and returned to God's testimonies. He turned not only his eye to them, but his feet, his affections to the love of God's word and his conversation to the practice of it. The bent and inclinations of his soul were towards God's testimonies and his conversation was governed by them Penitent reflections must produce pious resolutions.

3. He did this immediately and without demur (v. 60): *I made haste and delayed not.* When we are under convictions of sin we must strike while the iron is hot, and not think to defer the prosecution of them, as Felix did, to a more convenient season. When we are called to duty we must lose no time, but set about it *to-day, while it is called to-day.* Now this account which David here gives of himself may refer either to his constant practice every day (he reflected on his ways at night, directed his feet to God's testimonies in the morning, and what his hand found to do that was good he did it without delay), or it may refer to his first acquaintance with God and religion, when he began to throw off the vanity of childhood and youth, and to remember his Creator; that blessed change was, by the grace of God, thus wrought. Note,

(1.) Conversion begins in serious consideration, ^{<688>} Ezekiel 18:28; ^{<257>} Luke 15:17.

(2.) Consideration must end in a sound conversion. To what purpose have we thought on our ways if we do not turn our feet with all speed to God's testimonies?

~~119~~ PSALM 119:61

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The malice of David's enemies against him. They were wicked men, who hated him for his godliness. There were bands or troops of them confederate against him. They did him all the mischief they could; they robbed him; having endeavoured to take away his good name (v. 51), they set upon his goods, and spoiled him of them, either by plunder in time of war or by fines and confiscations under colour of law. Saul (it is likely) seized his effects, Absalom his palace, and the Amalekites rifled Ziklag. Worldly wealth is what we may be robbed of. David, though a man of war, could not keep his own. *Thieves break through and steal.*

2. The testimony of David's conscience for him that he had held fast his religion when he was stripped of every thing else, as Job did when the bands of the Chaldeans and Sabeans had robbed him: *But I have not forgotten thy law.* No care nor grief should drive God's word out of our minds, or hinder our comfortable relish of it and converse with it. Nor must we ever think the worse of the ways of God for any trouble we meet with in those ways, nor fear being losers by our religion at last, however we may be losers for it now.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:62

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Though David is, in this psalm, much in prayer, yet he did not neglect the duty of thanksgiving; for those that pray much will have much to give thanks for. See,

1. How much God's hand was eyed in his thanksgivings. He does not say, "*I will give thanks because of thy favours to me, which I have the comfort of,*" but, "*Because of thy righteous judgments, all the disposals of thy providence in wisdom and equity, which thou hast the glory of.*" We must give thanks for the asserting of God's honour and the accomplishing of his word in all he does in the government of the world.

2. How much David's heart was set upon his thanksgivings. He would *rise at midnight to give thanks* to God. Great and good thoughts kept him awake, and refreshed him, instead of sleep; and so zealous was he for the honour of God that when others were in their beds he was upon his knees at his devotions. He did not affect to be seen of men in it, but gave thanks in secret, where our heavenly Father sees. He had praised God *in the courts of the Lord's house*, and yet he will do it in his bed-chamber. Public worship will not excuse us from secret worship. When David found his heart affected with God's judgments, he immediately offered up those affections to God, in actual adorations, not deferring, lest they should cool. Yet observe his reverence; he did not lie still and give thanks, but rose out of his bed, perhaps in the cold and in the dark, to do it the more solemnly. And see what a good husband he was of time; when he could not lie and sleep, he would rise and pray.

Ⓜ PSALM 119:63

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David had often expressed the great love he had to God; here he expresses the great love he had to the people of God; and observe,

1. Why he loved them; not so much because they were his best friends, most firm to his interest and most forward to serve him, but because they were such as *feared God and kept his precepts*, and so did him honour and helped to support his kingdom among men. Our love to the saints is *then* sincere when we love them for the sake of what we see of God in them and the service they do to him.

2. How he showed his love to them: He was *a companion of them*. He had not only a spiritual communion with them in the same faith and hope, but he joined with them in holy ordinances in the courts of the Lord, where rich and poor, prince and peasant, meet together. He sympathized with them in their joys and sorrows ([Ⓜ]Hebrews 10:33); he conversed familiarly with them, communicated his experiences to them, and consulted theirs. He not only took such to be his companions as did fear God, but he vouchsafed himself to be a companion with all, with any, that did so, wherever he met with them. Though he was a king, he would

associate with the poorest of his subjects that feared God, ~~Psalm~~ Psalm 15:4:
~~James~~ James 2:1.

~~Psalm~~ PSALM 119:64

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David pleads that God is good to all the creatures according to their necessities and capacities; as the heaven is full of God's glory, so *the earth is full of his mercy*, full of the instances of his pity and bounty. Not only the land of Canaan, where God is known and worshipped, but the whole earth, in many parts of which he has no homage paid him, is full of his mercy. Not only the children of men upon the earth, but even the inferior creatures, taste of God's goodness. *His tender mercies are over all his works.*

2. He therefore prays that God would be good to him according to his necessity and capacity: "*Teach me thy statutes.* Thou feedest the young ravens that cry, with food proper for them; and wilt thou not feed me with spiritual food, the bread of life, which my soul needs and craves, and cannot subsist without? *The earth is full of thy mercy;* and is not heaven too? Wilt thou not then give me spiritual blessings in heavenly places?" A gracious heart will fetch an argument from any thing to enforce a petition for divine teaching. Surely he that will not let his birds be unfed will not let his children be untaught.

~~Psalm~~ PSALM 119:65-66

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

9. TETH.

Here,

1. David makes a thankful acknowledgment of God's gracious dealings with him all along: *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant.* However God has dealt with us, we must own he has dealt *well* with us, better than we

deserve, and all in love and with design to work for our good. In many instances God has done well for us beyond our expectations. He has done well for all his servants; never any of them complained that he had used them hardly. *Thou hast dealt well with me*, not only according to thy mercy, but *according to thy word*. God's favours look best when they are compared with the promise and are seen flowing from that fountain.

2. Upon these experiences he grounds a petition for divine instruction: “*Teach me good judgment and knowledge*, that, by thy grace, I may render again, in some measure, according to the benefit done unto me.” Teach me *a good taste* (so the word signifies), a good relish, to discern things that differ, to distinguish between truth and falsehood, good and evil; for *the ear tries words, as the mouth tastes meat*. We should pray to God for a sound mind, that we may have *spiritual senses exercised*, ^{<354>}Hebrews 5:14. Many have knowledge who have little judgment; those who have both are well fortified against the snares of Satan and well furnished for the service of God and their generation.

3. This petition is backed with a plea: “*For I have believed thy commandments*, received them, and consented to them that they are good, and submitted to their government; therefore, Lord, *teach me*.” Where God has given a good heart a good head too many in faith be prayed for.

~~<356>~~ PSALM 119:67

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here tells us what he had experienced,

1. Of the temptations of a prosperous condition: “*Before I was afflicted*, while I lived in peace and plenty, and knew no sorrow, *I went astray* from God and my duty.” Sin is going astray; and we are most apt to wander from God when we are easy and think ourselves at home in the world. Prosperity is the unhappy occasion of much iniquity; it makes people conceited of themselves, indulgent of the flesh, forgetful of God, in love with the world, and deaf to the reproofs of the word. See ^{<306>}Psalm 30:6. It is good for us, when we are afflicted, to remember how and wherein we went astray *before we were afflicted*, that we may answer the end of the affliction.

2. Of the benefit of an afflicted state: “*Now have I kept thy word, and so have been recovered from my wanderings.*” God often makes use of afflictions as a means to reduce those to himself who have wandered from him. Sanctified afflictions humble us for sin and show us the vanity of the world; they soften the heart, and open the ear to discipline. The prodigal's mistress brought him to himself first and then to his father.

⌘ PSALM 119:68

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David praises God's goodness and gives him the glory of it: *Thou art good and doest good.* All who have any knowledge of God and dealings with him will own that he does good, and therefore will conclude that he is good. The streams of God's goodness are so numerous, and run so full, so strong, to all the creatures, that we must conclude the fountain that is in himself to be inexhaustible. We cannot conceive how much good our God does every day, much less can we conceive how good he is. Let us acknowledge it with admiration and with holy love and thankfulness.

2. He prays for God's grace, and begs to be under the guidance and influence of it: *Teach me thy statutes.* “Lord, thou doest good to all, art the bountiful benefactor of all the creatures; this is the good I beg thou wilt do to me, — Instruct me in my duty, incline me to it, and enable me to do it. *Thou art good, and doest good;* Lord, *teach me thy statutes,* that I may be good and do good, may have a good heart and live a good life.” It is an encouragement to poor sinners to hope that God will *teach them his way* because he is *good and upright,* ⌘ Psalm 25:8.

⌘ PSALM 119:69-70

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here tells us how he was affected as to the proud and wicked people that were about him.

1. He did not fear their malice, nor was he by it deterred from his duty: *They have forged a lie against me.* Thus they aimed to take away his good name. Nay, all we have in the world, even life itself, may be brought into danger by those who make no conscience of forging a lie. Those that were proud envied David's reputation, because it eclipsed them, and therefore did all they could to blemish him. They took a pride in trampling upon him. They therefore persuaded themselves it was no sin to tell a deliberate lie if it might but expose him to contempt. Their wicked wit forged lies, invented storied which there was not the least colour for, to serve their wicked designs. And what did David do when he was thus belied? He will bear it patiently; he will keep that precept which forbids him to render railing for railing, and will with all his heart sit down silently. He will go on in his duty with constancy and resolution: "Let them say what they will, *I will keep thy precepts, and not dread their reproach.*"

2. He did not envy their prosperity, nor was he by it allured from his duty. *Their heart is as fat as grease.* The proud are *at ease* (~~100~~ Psalm 123:4); they are full of the world, and the wealth and pleasures of it; and this makes them,

(1.) Senseless, secure, and stupid; they are past feeling: thus the phrase is used, ~~200~~ Isaiah 6:10. *Make the heart of this people fat.* They are not sensible of the touch of the word of God or his rod.

(2.) Sensual and voluptuous: "*Their eyes stand out with fatness* (~~300~~ Psalm 73:7); they roll themselves in the pleasures of sense, and take up with them as their chief good; and much good may it do them. I would not change conditions with them. *I delight in thy law;* I build my security upon the promises of God's word and have pleasure enough in communion with God, infinitely preferable to all their delights." The children of God, who are acquainted with spiritual pleasures, need not envy the children of this world their carnal pleasures.

~~400~~ PSALM 119:71

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

See here,

1. That it has been the lot of the best saints to be afflicted. The proud and the wicked lived in pomp and pleasure, while David, though he kept close to God and his duty, was still in affliction. *Waters of a full cup are wrung out to God's people,* ~~450~~ Psalm 73:10.

2. That it has been the advantage of God's people to be afflicted. David could speak experimentally: *It was good for me;* many a good lesson he had learnt by his afflictions, and many a good duty he had been brought to which otherwise would have been unlearnt and undone. *Therefore* God visited him with affliction, that he might learn God's statutes; and the intention was answered: the afflictions had contributed to the improvement of his knowledge and grace. He that chastened him taught him. *The rod and reproof give wisdom.*

~~452~~ PSALM 119:72

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

This is a reason why David reckoned that when by his afflictions he learned God's statutes, and the profit did so much counterbalance the loss, he was really a gainer by them; for God's *law*, which he got acquaintance with by his affliction, was *better* to him than all the *gold and silver* which he lost by his affliction.

1. David had but a little of the word of God in comparison with what we have, yet see how highly he valued it; how inexcusable then are we, who have both the Old and New Testament complete, and yet account them as a strange thing! Observe, *Therefore* he valued the law, because it is *the law of God's mouth*, the revelation of his will, and ratified by his authority.

2. He had a great deal of gold and silver in comparison with what we have, yet see how little he valued it. His riches increased, and yet he did not set his heart upon them, but upon the word of God. That was better to him, yielded him better pleasures, and better maintenance, and a better inheritance, than all the treasures he was master of. Those that have read, and believe, David's *Psalms* and Solomon's *Ecclesiastes*, cannot but prefer the word of God far before the wealth of this world.

~~<BB7>~~ PSALM 119:73

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

10. JOD.

Here,

1. David adores God as the God of nature and the author of his being: *Thy hands have made me and fashioned me*, ~~<SB18>~~ Job 10:8. Every man is as truly the work of God's hands as the first man was, ~~<BD15>~~ Psalm 139:15, 16. “*Thy hands have not only made me, and given me a being, otherwise I should never have been, but fashioned me, and given me this being, this noble and excellent being, endued with these powers and faculties;*” and we must own that we are *fearfully and wonderfully made*.

2. He addresses himself to God as the God of grace, and begs he will be the author of his new and better being. God made us to serve him and enjoy him; but by sin we have made ourselves unable for his service and indisposed for the enjoyment of him; and we must have a new and divine nature, otherwise we had the human nature in vain; therefore David prays, “*Lord, since thou hast made me by thy power for thy glory, make me anew by thy grace, that I may answer the ends of my creation and live to some purpose: Give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.*” The way in which God recovers and secures his interest in men is by giving them an understanding; for by that door he enters into the soul and gains possession of it.

~~<BB74>~~ PSALM 119:74

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The confidence of this good man in the hope of God's salvation: “*I have hoped in thy word; and I have not found it in vain to do so; it has not failed me, nor have I been disappointed in my expectations from it. It is a hope that maketh not ashamed; but is present satisfaction, and fruition at last.*”

2. The concurrence of other good men with him in the joy of that salvation: *“Those that fear thee will be glad when they see me relieved by my hope in thy word and delivered according to my hope.”* The comforts which some of God's children have in God, and the favours they have received from him, should be matter of joy to others of them. Paul often expressed the hope that for God's grace to him thanks would be rendered by many, ~~4111~~ 2 Corinthians 1:11; 4:15. Or it may be taken more generally; good people are glad to see one another; they are especially pleased with those who are eminent for their hope in God's word.

~~4115~~ PSALM 119:75

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Still David is in affliction, and being so he owns,

1. That his sin was justly corrected: *I know, O Lord! that thy judgments are right*, are righteousness itself. However God is pleased to afflict us, he does us no wrong, nor can we charge him with any iniquity, but most acknowledge that it is less than we have deserved. We know that God is holy in his nature and wise and just in all the acts of his government, and therefore we cannot but know, in the general, that his *judgments are right*, though, in some particular instances, there may be difficulties which we cannot easily resolve.

2. That God's promise was graciously performed. The former may silence us under our afflictions, and forbid us to repine, but this may satisfy us, and enable us to rejoice; for afflictions are in the covenant, and therefore they are not only not meant for our hurt, but they are really intended for our good: *“In faithfulness thou hast afflicted me*, pursuant to the great design of my salvation.” It is easier to own, in general, that God's *judgments are right*, than to own it when it comes to be our own case; but David subscribes to it with application, *“Even my afflictions are just and kind.”*

PSALM 119:76-77

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. An earnest petition to God for his favour. Those that own the justice of God in their afflictions (as David had done, v. 75) may, in faith, and with humble boldness, be earnest for the mercy of God, and the tokens and fruits of that mercy, in their affliction. He prays for God's *merciful kindness* (v. 76), his *tender mercies*, v. 77. He can claim nothing as his due, but all his supports under his affliction must come from mere mercy and compassion to one in misery, one in want. "Let these *come to me*," that is, "the evidence of them (clear it up to me that thou hast a kindness for me, and mercy in store), and the effects of them; let them work my relief and deliverance."

2. The benefit he promised himself from God's lovingkindness: "Let it *come to me for my comfort* (v. 76); that will comfort me when nothing else will; that will comfort me whatever grieves me." Gracious souls fetch all their comfort from a gracious God, as the fountain of all happiness and joy: "Let it *come to me, that I may live*, that is, that I may be revived, and my life may be made sweet to me, for I have no joy of it while I am under God's displeasure. *In his favour is life*; in his frowns are death." A good man cannot live with any satisfaction any longer than he has some tokens of God's favour to him.

3. his pleas for the benefits of God's favour. He pleads,

(1.) God's promise: "Let me have thy kindness, *according to thy word unto thy servant*, the kindness which thou hast promised and because thou hast promised it." Our Master has passed his word to all his servants that he will be kind to them, and they may plead it with him.

(2.) His own confidence and complacency in that promise: "*Thy law is my delight*; I hope in thy word and rejoice in that hope." Note, Those that delight in the law of God may depend upon the favour of God, for it shall certainly make them happy.

PSALM 119:78-79

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here David shows,

I. How little he valued the will-will of sinners. There were those that dealt perversely with him, that were peevish and ill-conditioned towards him, that sought advantages against him, and misconstrued all he said and did. Even those that deal most fairly may meet with those that deal perversely. But David regarded it not, for,

1. He knew it was *without cause*, and that for his love they were his adversaries. The causeless reproach, like the curse causeless, may be easily slighted; it does not hurt us, and therefore should not move us.

2. He could pray, in faith, that they might *be ashamed* of it; God's dealing favourably with him might make them ashamed to think that they had dealt perversely with him. "*Let them be ashamed*, that is, let them be brought either to repentance or to ruin."

3. He could go on in the way of his duty, and find comfort in that. "However they deal with me, *I will meditate in thy precepts*, and entertain myself with them."

II. How much he valued the good-will of saints, and how desirous he was to stand right in their opinion, and keep up his interest in them and communion with them: *Let those that fear thee turn to me*. He does not mean so much that they might side with him, and take up arms in his cause, as that they might love him, and pray for him, and associate with him. Good men desire the friendship and society of those that are good. Some think it intimates that when David had been guilty of that foul sin in the murder of Uriah, though he was a king, those that feared God grew strange to him and turned from him, for they were ashamed of him; this troubled him, and therefore he prays, Lord, let them *turn to me again*. He desires especially the company of those that were not only honest, but intelligent, *that have known thy testimonies*, have good heads as well as good hearts, and whose conversation will be edifying. It is desirable to have an intimacy with such.

⌄PSALM 119:80

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's prayer for sincerity, that his heart might be brought to God's *statutes*, and that it might be *sound* in them, not rotten and deceitful, that he might not rest in the form of godliness, but be acquainted with the subject to the power of it, — that he might be hearty and constant in religion, and that his soul might be in health.

2. His dread of the consequences of hypocrisy: *That I be not ashamed*. Shame is the portion of hypocrites, either here, if it be repented of, or hereafter, if it be not: “*Let my heart be sound, that I fall not into scandalous sin, that I fall not quite off from the ways of God, and so shame myself. Let my heart be sound, that I may come boldly to the throne of grace, and may lift up my face without spot at the great day.*”

⌄PSALM 119:81-82

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

II. CAPH.

Here we have the psalmist,

I. Longing for help from heaven: *My soul faints; my eyes fail*. He longs *for the salvation of the Lord and for his word*, that is, salvation according to the word. He is not thus eager for the creatures of fancy, but for the objects of faith, salvation from the present calamities under which he was groaning and the doubts and fears which he was oppressed with. It may be understood of the coming of the Messiah, and so he speaks in the name of the Old-Testament church; the souls of the faithful even *fainted to see* that salvation of which the prophets testified. (⌄1 Peter 1:10); their eyes failed for it. Abraham saw it at a distance, and so did others, but at such a distance that it put their eyes to the stretch and they could not stedfastly see it. David was now under prevailing dejections, and, having been long

so, his eyes cried out, “*When wilt thou comfort me? Comfort me with thy salvation, comfort me with thy word.*” Observe,

1. The salvation and consolation of God's people are secured to them by the word, which will certainly be fulfilled in its season.
2. The promised salvation and comfort may be, and often are, long deferred, so that they are ready to faint and fall in the expectation of them.
3. Though we think the time long ere the promised salvation and comfort come, yet we must still keep our eye upon that salvation, and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. “Thy salvation, thy word, thy comfort, are what my heart is still upon.”

II. Waiting for that help, assured that it will come, and tarrying till it come: *But I hope in thy word*; and but for hope the heart would break. When the *eyes fail* yet the faith must not; for *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it shall speak and shall not lie.*

⌘ PSALM 119:83

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David begs God would make haste to comfort him,

1. Because his affliction was great, and therefore he was an object of God's pity: Lord, make haste to help me, *for I have become like a bottle in the smoke*, a leathern bottle, which, if it hung any while in the smoke, was not only blackened with soot, but dried, and parched, and shrivelled up. David was thus wasted by age, and sickness, and sorrow. See how affliction will mortify the strongest and stoutest of men! David had been of a ruddy countenance, as fresh as a rose; but now he is withered, his colour is gone, his cheeks are furrowed. Thus does man's beauty consume under God's rebukes, as a moth fretting a garment. A bottle, when it is thus wrinkled with smoke, is thrown by, and there is no more use of it. Who will put wine into such old bottles? Thus was David, in his low estate, looked upon *as a despised broken vessel*, and *as a vessel in which there was no pleasure*. Good men, when they are drooping and melancholy, sometimes think themselves more slighted than really they are.

2. Because, though his affliction was great, yet it had not driven him from his duty, and therefore he was within the reach of God's promise: *Yet do I not forget thy statutes*. Whatever our outward condition is we must not cool in our affection to the word of God, nor let that slip out of our minds; no care, no grief, must crowd that out. As some *drink and forget the law* (~~31:5~~ Proverbs 31:5), so others weep and forget the law; but we must in every condition, both prosperous and adverse, have the things of God in remembrance; and, if we be mindful of God's statutes, we may pray and hope that he will be mindful of our sorrows, though for a time he seems to forget us.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:84

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays against the instruments of his troubles, that God would make haste to execute judgment on those that persecuted him. He prays not for power to avenge himself (he bore no malice to any), but that God would take to himself the vengeance that belonged to him, and *would repay* (~~12:19~~ Romans 12:19), as the God that *sits in the throne judging right*. There is a day coming, and a great and terrible day it will be, when God will execute judgment on all the proud persecutors of his people, *tribulation to those that troubled them*; Enoch foretold it (~~1:14~~ Jude 1:14), whose prophecy perhaps David here had an eye to; and that day we are to look for and pray for the hastening of. *Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly*.

2. He pleads the long continuance of his trouble: "*How many are the days of thy servant? The days of my life are but few*" (so some); "therefore let them not all be miserable, and therefore make haste to appear for me against my enemies, *before I go hence and shall be seen no more*." Or rather, "*The days of my affliction are many*; thou seest, Lord, how many they be; when wilt thou return in mercy to me? Sometimes, for the elect's sake, *the days of trouble are shortened*. O let the days of my trouble be shortened; I am *thy servant*; and therefore, as the eyes of a servant are to the hand of his master, so are mine to thee, until thou have mercy on me."

PSALM 119:85-87

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David's state was *herein* a type and figure of the state both of Christ and Christians that he was grievously persecuted; as there are many of his psalms, so there are many of the verses of this psalm, which complain of this, as those here. Here observe,

I. The account he gives of his persecutors and their malice against him.

1. They were *proud*, and in their pride *they persecuted him*, glorying in this, that they could trample upon one who was so much cried up, and hoping to raise themselves on his ruins.

2. They were unjust: *They persecuted him wrongfully*; so far was he from giving them any provocation that he had studied to oblige them; but *for his love they were his adversaries*.

3. They were spiteful: *They dug pits for him*, which intimates that they were deliberate in their designs against him and that what they did was of malice prepense; it intimates likewise that they were subtle and crafty, and had the serpent's head as well as the serpent's venom, that they were industrious and would refuse no pains to do him a mischief, and treacherous, laying snares in secret for him, as hunters do take wild beasts, ⁽¹²⁷⁾Psalm 35:7. Such has been the enmity of the serpent's seed to the seed of the woman.

4. They herein showed their enmity to God himself. The pits they *dug for him* were *not after God's law*; he means they were very much against his law, which forbids to *devise evil to our neighbour*, and has particularly said, *Touch not my anointed*. The law appointed that, if a man dug a pit which occasioned any mischief, he should answer for the mischief (⁽¹²⁸⁾Exodus 21:33, 34), much more when it was dug with a mischievous design.

5. They carried on their designs against him so far that *they had almost consumed him upon earth*; they went near to ruin him and all his interests. It is possible that those who shall shortly be consummate in heaven may be, for the present, *almost consumed on earth*; and *it is of the Lord's mercies* (and, considering the malice of their enemies, it is a miracle of

mercy) *that they are not quite consumed*. But the bush in which God is, though it burns, shall not be burnt up.

II. His application to God in his persecuted state.

1. He acknowledges the truth and goodness of his religion, though he suffered: “However it be, *all thy commandments are faithful*, and therefore, whatever I lose for my observance of them, I know I shall not lose by it.” True religion, if it be worth any thing, is worth every thing, and therefore worth suffering for. “Men are false; I find them do; men of low degree, men of high degree, are so, there is no trusting them. But *all thy commandments are faithful*; on them I may rely.”

2. He begs that God would stand by him, and succour him: “*They persecute me; help thou me*; help me under my troubles, that I may bear them patiently, and as becomes me, and may still hold fast my integrity, and in due time help me out of my troubles.” *God help me* is an excellent comprehensive prayer; it is a pity that it should ever be used lightly and as a by-word.

III. His adherence to his duty notwithstanding all the malice of his persecutors (v. 87): *But I forsook not thy precepts*. That which they aimed at was to frighten him from the ways of God, but they could not prevail; he would sooner forsake all that was dear to him in this world than forsake the word of God, would sooner lose his life than lose the comfort of doing his duty.

⌘ PSALM 119:88

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David in care to be found in the way of his duty. His constant desire and design are to *keep the testimony of God's mouth*, to keep to it as his rule and to keep hold of it as his confidence and portion for ever. This we must keep, whatever we lose.

2. David at prayer for divine grace to assist him therein: “*Quicken me after thy lovingkindness* (make me alive and make me lively), *so shall I*

keep thy testimonies,” implying that otherwise he should not keep them. We cannot proceed, nor persevere, in the good way, unless God quicken us and put life into us; we are therefore here taught to depend upon the grace of God for strength to do every good work, and to depend upon it as grace, as purely the fruit of God's favour. He had prayed before, *Quicken me in thy righteousness* (v. 40); but here, *Quicken me after thy lovingkindness*. The surest token of God's good-will toward us is his good work in us.

PSALM 119:89-91

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

12. LAMED.

Here,

1. The psalmist acknowledges the unchangeableness of the word of God and of all his counsels: “*For ever, O Lord! thy word is settled. Thou art for ever thyself* (so some read it); thou art the same, and with thee there is no variableness, and this is a proof of it. *Thy word*, by which the heavens were made, *is settled* there in the abiding products of it;” or the settling of God's word in heaven is opposed to the changes and revolutions that are here upon earth. *All flesh is grass; but the word of the Lord endures for ever. It is settled in heaven*, that is, in the secret counsel of God, which is hidden in himself and is far above out of our sight, and is immovable, *as mountains of brass*. And his revealed will is as firm as his secret will; as he will fulfil the thoughts of his heart, so no word of his shall *fall to the ground*; for it follows here, *Thy faithfulness is unto all generations*, that is, the promise is sure to every age of the church and it cannot be antiquated by lapse of time. The promises that look ever so far forward shall be performed in their season.

2. He produces, for proof of it, the constancy of the course of nature: *Thou hast established the earth for ever and it abides*; it is what it was at first made, and where it was at first placed, poised with its own weight, and notwithstanding the convulsions in its own bowels, the agitations of the sea that is interwoven with it, and the violent concussions of the atmosphere that surrounds it, it remains unmoved. “*They*” (the heavens

and the earth and all the hosts of both) “*continue to this day according to thy ordinances; they remain in the posts wherein thou hast set them; they fill up the place assigned them, and answer the purposes for which they were intended.*” The stability of the ordinances of the day and night, of heaven and earth, is produced to prove the perpetuity of God's covenant, ~~2485~~ Jeremiah 31:35, 36; 33:20, 21. It is by virtue of God's promise to Noah (~~4082~~ Genesis 8:22) that *day and night, summer and winter*, observe a steady course. “They have continued to this day, and shall still continue to the end of time, acting according to the ordinances which were at first given them; for all are thy servants; they do thy will, and set forth thy glory, and in both *are thy servants.*” All the creatures are, in their places, and according to their capacities, serviceable to their Creator, and answer the ends of their creation; and shall man be the only rebel, the only revolter from his allegiance, and the only unprofitable burden of the earth.?

~~4192~~ PSALM 119:92

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The great distress that David was in. He was in affliction, and ready to *perish in his affliction*, not likely to die, so much as likely to despair; he was ready to give up all for gone, and to look upon himself as cut off from God's sight; he therefore admires the goodness of God to him, that he had not perished, that he kept the possession of his own soul, and was not driven out of his wits by his troubles, but especially that he was enabled to keep close to his God and was not driven off from his religion by them. Though we are not kept from affliction, yet, if we are kept from perishing in our affliction, we have no reason to say, *We have cleansed our hands in vain*; or, *What profit is it that we have served God?*

2. His support in this distress. God's law was his delight,

(1.) It had been so formerly, and the remembrance of that was a comfort to him, as it afforded him a good evidence of his integrity.

(2.) It was so now in his affliction; it afforded him abundant matter of comfort, and from these fountains of life he drew living waters, when the cisterns of the creature were broken or dried up. His converse with God's

law, and his meditations on it, were his delightful entertainment in solitude and sorrow. A Bible is a pleasant companion at any time if we please.

◀HBB▶ PSALM 119:93

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. A very good resolution: *“I will never forget thy precepts, but will always retain a remembrance of and regard to thy word as my rule.”* It is a resolution for perpetuity, never to be altered. Note, The best evidence of our love to the word of God is never to forget it. We must resolve that we will never, at any time, cast off our religion, and never, upon any occasion, lay aside our religion, but that we will be constant to it and persevere in it.

2. A very good reason for it: *“For by them thou hast quickened me; not only they are quickening, but,”*

(1.) *“They have been so to me; I have found them so.”* Those speak best of the things of God who speak by experience, who can say that by the word the spiritual life has been begun in them, maintained and strengthened in them, excited and comforted in them.

(2.) *“Thou hast made them so;”* the word of itself, without the grace of God, would not quicken us. Ministers can but prophesy upon the dry bones, they cannot put life into them; but, ordinarily, the grace of God works by the word and makes use of it as a means of quickening, and this is a good reason why we should never forget it, but should highly value what God has put such honour upon, and dearly love what we have found and hope still to find such benefit by. See here what is the best help for bad memories, namely, good affections. If we are quickened by the word, we shall never forget it; nay, that word that does really quicken us to and in our duty is not forgotten; though the expressions be lost, if the impressions remain, it is well.

◀BB▶ PSALM 119:94

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David claims relation to God: “*I am thine*, devoted to thee and owned by thee, thine in covenant.” He does not say, *Thou art mine* (as Dr. Manton observes), though that follows of course, because that were a higher challenge; but, *I am thine*, expressing himself in a more humble and dutiful way of resignation; nor does he say, *I am thus*, but, *I am thine*, not pleading his own good property or qualification, but God's propriety in him: “*I am thine*, not my own, not the world's.”
2. He proves his claim: “*I have sought thy precepts*; I have carefully enquired concerning my duty and diligently endeavoured to do it.” This will be the best evidence that we belong to God; all that are his, though they have not found perfection, are seeking it.
3. He improves his claim: “*I am thine; save me; save me from sin, save me from ruin.*” Those that have in sincerity given up themselves to God to be his may be sure that he will protect them and preserve them to his heavenly kingdom, ▶BB▶ Malachi 3:18.

◀BB▶ PSALM 119:95

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David complains of the malice of his enemies: *The wicked* (and none but such would be enemies to so good a man) *have waited for me to destroy me*. They were very cruel, and aimed at no less than his destruction; they were very crafty, and sought all opportunities to do him a mischief; and they were *confident* (they *expected*, so some read it), that they should destroy him; they thought themselves sure of their prey.
2. He comforts himself in the word of God as his protection: “While they are contriving my destruction, *I consider thy testimonies*, which secure to

me my salvation.” God’s testimonies are *then* likely to be our support, when we consider them, and dwell in our thoughts upon them.

~~EB96~~ PSALM 119:96

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here we have David’s testimony from his own experience,

1. Of the vanity of the world and its insufficiency to make us happy: *I have seen an end of all perfection.* Poor perfection which one sees an end of! Yet such are all those things in this world which pass for perfections. David, in his time, had seen Goliath, the strongest, overcome, Asahel, the swiftest, overtaken, Ahithophel, the wisest, befooled, Absalom, the fairest, deformed; and, in short, he had *seen an end of perfection, of all perfection.* He saw it by faith; he saw it by observation; he saw an end of the perfection of the creature both in respect of sufficiency (it was scanty and defective; there is that to be done for us which the creature cannot do) and in respect of continuance; it will not last our time, for it will not last to eternity as we must. The glory of man is but as the flower of the grass.

2. Of the fulness of the word of God, and its sufficiency for our satisfaction: *But thy commandment is broad, exceedingly broad.* The word of God reaches to all cases, to all times. The divine law lays a restraint upon the whole man, is designed to sanctify us wholly. There is a great deal required and forbidden in every commandment. The divine promise (for that also is commanded) extends itself to all our burdens, wants, and grievances, and has that in it which will make a portion and happiness for us when we *have seen an end of all perfection.*

~~EB97~~ PSALM 119:97

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

13. MEM.

Here is,

1. David's inexpressible love to the word of God: *O how love I thy law!* He protests his affection to the word of God with a holy vehemency; he found that love to it in his heart which, considering the corruption of his nature and the temptations of the world, he could not but wonder at, and at that grace which had wrought it in him. He not only loved the promises, but loved the law, and delighted in it after the inner man.

2. An unexceptionable evidence of this. What we love we love to think of; by *this* it appeared that David loved the word of God that it was his *meditation*. He not only read the book of the law, but digested what he read in his thoughts, and was delivered into it as into a mould: it was his meditation not only in the night, when he was silent and solitary, and had nothing else to do, but in the day, when he was full of business and company; nay, and *all the day*; some good thoughts were interwoven with his common thoughts, so full was he of the word of God.

~~EBB~~ PSALM 119:98-100

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

We have here an account of David's learning, not that of the Egyptians, but of the *Israelites indeed*.

1. The good method by which he got it. In his youth he minded business in the country as a shepherd; from his youth he minded business in the court and camp. Which way then could he get any great stock of learning? He tells us here how he came by it; he had it from God as the author: *Thou hast made me wise*. All true wisdom is from God. He had it by the word of God as the means, by *his commandments* and *his testimonies*. These are able to *make us wise to salvation* and to *furnish the man of God for every good work*.

1. These David took for his constant companions: "*They are ever with me, ever in my mind, ever in my eye.*" A good man, wherever he goes, carries his Bible along with him, if not in his hands, yet in his head and in his heart.

2. These he took for the delightful subject of his thoughts; they were his *meditation*, not only as matters of speculation for his entertainment, as

scholars meditate on their notions, but as matters of concern, for his right management, as men of business think of their business, that they may do it in the best manner.

3. These he took for the commanding rules of all his actions: *I keep thy precepts*, that is, I make conscience of doing my duty in every thing. The best way to improve in knowledge is to abide and abound in all the instances of serious godliness; for, *if any man do his will, he shall know of the doctrine of Christ, shall know more and more of it*, ~~ROM~~ John 7:17. The love of the truth prepares for the light of it; the *pure in heart shall see God* here.

II. The great eminency he attained to in it. By studying and practising God's commandments, and making them his rule, he learnt to *behave himself wisely in all his ways*, ~~ORSA~~ 1 Samuel 18:14.

1. He outwitted his enemies; God, by these means, made him wiser to baffle and defeat their designs against him than they were to lay them. Heavenly wisdom will carry the point, at last, against carnal policy. By keeping the commandments we secure God on our side and make him our friend, and therein are certainly wiser than those that make him their enemy. By keeping the commandments we preserve in ourselves that peace and quiet of mind which our enemies would rob us of, and so are wise for ourselves, wiser than they are for themselves, for this world as well as for the other.

2. He outstripped his *teachers*, and had more understanding than all of them. He means either those who would have been his teachers, who blamed his conduct and undertook to prescribe to him (by keeping God's commandments he managed his matters so that it appeared, in the event, he had taken the right measures and they had taken the wrong), or those who should have been his teachers, the priests and Levites, who sat in Moses's chair, and whose lips ought to have kept knowledge, but who neglected the study of the law, and minded their honours and revenues, and the formalities only of their religion; and so David, who conversed much with the scriptures, by that means became more intelligent than they. Or he may mean those who had been his teachers when he was young; he built so well upon the foundation which they had laid that, with the help of his Bible, he became able to teach them, to teach them all. He was not now a babe that needed milk, but had *spiritual senses exercised*, ~~SUB4~~ Hebrews

5:14. It is no reflection upon our teachers, but rather an honour to them, to improve so as really to excel them, and not to need them. By meditation we preach to ourselves, and so we come to *understand more than our teachers*, for we come to understand our own hearts, which they cannot.

3. He outdid *the ancients*, either those of his day (he was young, like Elihu, and they were very old, but his keeping God's precepts taught more wisdom than the multitude of their years, ~~881E~~ Job 32:7, 8) or those of former days; he himself quotes the proverb of the ancients (~~02H3~~ 1 Samuel 24:13), but the word of God gave him to understand things better than he could do by tradition and all the learning that was handed down from preceding ages. In short, the written word is a surer guide to heaven than all the doctors and fathers, the teachers and ancients, of the church; and the sacred writings kept, and kept to, will teach us more wisdom than all their writings.

~~881E~~ PSALM 119:101

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's care to avoid the ways of sin: *"I have refrained my feet from the evil ways they were ready to step aside into. I checked myself and drew back as soon as I was aware that I was entering into temptation."* Though it was a broad way, a green way, a pleasant way, and a way that many walked in, yet, being a sinful way, it was an evil way, and he refrained his feet from it, foreseeing the end of that way. And his care was universal; he shunned every evil way. *By the words of thy lips I have kept myself from the paths of the destroyer,* ~~07H4~~ Psalm 17:4.

2. His care to be found in the way of duty; *That I might keep thy word*, and never transgress it. His abstaining from sin was,

(1.) An evidence that he did conscientiously aim to keep God's word and had made that his rule.

(2.) It was a means of his keeping God's word in the exercises of religion; for we cannot with any comfort or boldness attend on God in holy duties, so as in them to keep his word, while we are under guilt or in any by-way.

PSALM 119:102

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's constancy in his religion. He had *not departed from God's judgments*; he had not chosen any other rule than the word of God, nor had he wilfully deviated from that rule. A constant adherence to the ways of God in trying times will be a good evidence of our integrity.
2. The cause of his constancy: "*For thou hast taught me*"; that is, they were divine instructions that I learned; I was satisfied that the doctrine was of God, and therefore I stuck to it." Or rather, "It was divine grace in my heart that enabled me to receive those instructions." All the saints are taught of God, for he it is that gives the understanding; and those, and those only, that are taught of God, will continue to the end in the things that they have learned.

PSALM 119:103-104

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The wonderful pleasure and delight which David took in the word of God; it was *sweet to his taste, sweeter than honey*. There is such a thing as a spiritual taste, an inward savour and relish of divine things, such an evidence of them to ourselves, by experience, as we cannot give to others. We have *heard him ourselves*, ^{John 4:42}. To this scripture-taste the word of God is sweet, very sweet, sweeter than any of the gratifications of sense, even those that are most delicious. David speaks as if he wanted words to express the satisfaction he took in the discoveries of the divine will and grace; no pleasure was comparable to it.
2. The unspeakable profit and advantage he gained by the word of God.

(1.) It helped him to a good head: “*Through thy precepts I get understanding to discern between truth and falsehood, good and evil, so as not to mistake either in the conduct of my own life or in advising others.*”

(2.) It helped him to a good heart: “*Therefore, because I have got understanding of the truth, I hate every false way, and am stedfastly resolved not to turn aside into it.*” Observe here,

[1.] The way of sin is a false way; it deceives, and will ruin, all that walk in it; it is the wrong way, and yet it seems to a man right, ^{<3142>}Proverbs 14:12.

[2.] It is the character of every good man that he hates the way of sin, and hates it because it is a false way; he not only refrains his feet from it (v. 101), but he *hates it*, has an antipathy to it and a dread of it.

[3.] Those who hate sin as sin will hate all sin, hate every false way, because every false way leads to destruction. And,

[4.] The more understanding we get by the word of God the more rooted will our hatred of sin be (for *to depart from evil, that is understanding*, ^{<3333>}Job 28:28), and the more ready we are in the scriptures the better furnished we are with answers to temptation.

^{<3315>}PSALM 119:105

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

14. NUN.

Observe here,

1. The nature of the word of God, and the great intention of giving it to the world; it is a *lamp and a light*. It discovers to us, concerning God and ourselves, that which otherwise we could not have known; it shows us what is amiss, and will be dangerous; it directs us in our work and way, and a dark place indeed the world would be without it. It is a lamp which we may set up by us, and take into our hands for our own particular use, ^{<3163>}Proverbs 6:23. The commandment is a lamp kept burning with the oil of the Spirit; it is like the lamps in the sanctuary, and the pillar of fire to Israel.

2. The use we should make of it. It must be not only a *light to our eyes*, to gratify them, and fill our heads with speculations, but a *light to our feet* and *to our path*, to direct us in the right ordering of our conversation, both in the choice of our way in general and in the particular steps we take in that way, that we may not take a false way nor a false step in the right way. We are then truly sensible of God's goodness to us in giving us such a lamp and light when we make it a guide to our feet, our path.

◀BIB▶ PSALM 119:106

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The notion David had of religion; it is *keeping God's righteous judgments*. God's commands are his judgments, the dictates of infinite wisdom. They are righteous judgments, consonant to the eternal rules of equity, and it is our duty to keep them carefully.
2. The obligation he here laid upon himself to be religious, binding himself, by his own promise, to that which he was already bound to by the divine precept, and all little enough. "*I have sworn (I have lifted up my head to the Lord, and I cannot go back)* and therefore must go forward: *I will perform it.*" Note,
 - (1.) It is good for us to bind ourselves with a solemn oath to be religious. We must swear to the Lord as subjects swear allegiance to their sovereign, promising fealty, appealing to God concerning our sincerity in this promise, and owning ourselves liable to the curse of we do not perform it.
 - (2.) We must often call to mind the vows of God that are upon us, and remember that we have sworn.
 - (3.) We must make conscience of performing unto the Lord our oaths (an honest man will be as good as his word); nor have we sworn to our own hurt, but it will be unspeakably to our hurt if we do not perform.

PSALM 119:107

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The representation David makes of the sorrowful condition he was in: *I am afflicted very much*, afflicted in spirit; he seems to mean that especially. He laboured under many discouragements; without were fightings, within were fears. This is often the lot of the best saints; therefore think it not strange if sometimes it be ours.

2. The recourse he has to God in this condition; he prays for his grace: “*Quicken me, O Lord!* make me lively, make me cheerful; quicken me by afflictions to greater diligence in my work. *Quicken me*, that is, deliver me out of my afflictions, which will be as life from the dead.” He pleads the promise of God, guides his desires by it, and grounds his hopes upon it: *Quicken me according to thy word*. David resolved to perform his promises to God (v. 106) and therefore could, with humble boldness, beg of God to make good his word to him.

PSALM 119:108

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Two things we are here taught to pray for, in reference to our religious performances: —

1. Acceptance of them. This we must aim at in all we do in religion, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of the Lord. What David here earnestly prays for the acceptance of are the *free-will-offerings*, not of his purse, but of his *mouth*, his prayers and praises. *The calves of our lips* (³⁴²Hosea 14:2), *the fruit of our lips* (³⁰⁰Hebrews 1:15), these are the spiritual offerings which all Christians, as spiritual priests, must offer to God; and they must be *free-will-offerings*, for we must offer them abundantly and cheerfully, and it is this willing mind that is accepted. The more there is of freeness and willingness in the service of God the more pleasing it is to him.

2. Assistance in them: *Teach me thy judgments*. We cannot offer any thing to God which we have reason to think he will accept of, but what he is pleased to instruct us in the doing of; and we must be as earnest for the grace of God in us as for the favour of God towards us.

PSALM 119:109-110

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David in danger of losing his life. There is but a step between him and death, for the *wicked have laid a snare* for him; Saul did so many a time, because he hated him for his piety. Wherever he was he found some design or other laid against him to take away his life, for it was that they aimed at. What they could not effect by open force they hoped to compass by treachery, which made him say, *My soul is continually in my hand*. It was so with him, not only as a *man* (so it is true of us all; wherever we are we lie exposed to the strokes of death; what we carry in our hands is easily snatched away from us by violence, or if sandy, as our life is, it easily of itself slips through our fingers), but as a *man of war*, a soldier, who often jeopardied his life in the high places of the field, and especially as a *man after God's own heart*, and, as such, hated and persecuted, and *always delivered to death* (~~4011~~ 2 Corinthians 4:11), *killed all the day long*.

2. David in no danger of losing his religion, notwithstanding this, thus in jeopardy every hour and yet constant to God and his duty. None of these things move him; for,

(1.) He *does not forget the law*, and therefore he is likely to persevere. In the multitude of his cares for his own safety he finds room in his head and heart for the word of God, and has that in his mind as fresh as ever; and where that dwells richly it will be a *well of living water*.

(2.) He has not yet erred from God's precepts, and therefore it is to be hoped he will not. He had stood many a shock and kept his ground, and surely that grace which had helped him hitherto would not fail him, but would still prevent his wanderings.

PSALM 119:111-112

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

The psalmist here in a most affectionate manner, like an Israelite indeed, resolves to stick to the word of God and to live and die by it.

I. He resolves to portion himself in it, and there to seek his happiness, nay, there to enjoy it; “*Thy testimonies* (the truths, the promises, of thy word) *have I taken as a heritage for ever, for they are the rejoicing of my heart.*” The present delight he took in them was an evidence that the good things contained in them were in his account the best things, and the treasure which he set his heart upon.

1. He expected an eternal happiness in God's testimonies. The covenant God had made with him was an everlasting covenant, and therefore he took it as *a heritage for ever*. If he could not yet say, “They are my heritage,” yet he could say, “I have made choice of them for my heritage; and will never take up with a portion in this life,” ~~174~~ Psalm 17:14, 15. God's testimonies are a heritage to all that have received the Spirit of adoption; for, *if children, then heirs*. They are a *heritage for ever*, and that no earthly heritage is (~~104~~ 1 Peter 1:4); all the saints accept them as such, take up with them, live upon them, and can therefore be content with but little of this world.

2. He enjoyed a present satisfaction in them: *They are the rejoicing of my heart*, because they will be *my heritage for ever*. It requires the heart of a good man to see his portion in the promise of God and not in the possessions of this world.

II. He resolves to govern himself by it and thence to take his measures: *I have inclined my heart to do thy statutes*. Those that would have the blessings of God's testimonies must come under the bonds of his statutes. We must look for comfort only in the way of duty, and that duty must be done,

1. With full consent and complacency: “*I have, by the grace of God, inclined my heart to it*, and conquered the aversion I had to it.” A good man brings his heart to his work and then it is done well. A gracious

disposition to do the will of God is the acceptable principle of all obedience.

2. With constancy and perseverance. He would perform God's statutes always, in all instances, in the duty of every day, in a constant course of holy walking, and this *to the end*, without weariness. This is following the Lord fully.

PSALM 119:113

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

15. SAMECH.

Here we have,

1. David's dread of the risings of sin, and the first beginnings of it: *I hate vain thoughts*. He does not mean that he hated them in others, for there he could not discern them, but he hated them in his own heart. Every good man makes conscience of his thoughts, for they are words to God. Vain thoughts, how light soever most make of them, are sinful and hurtful, and therefore we should account them hateful and dreadful, for they do not only divert the mind from that which is good, but open the door to all evil, ~~2014~~ Jeremiah 4:14. Though David could not say that he was free from vain thoughts, yet he could say that he hated them; he did not countenance them, nor give them any entertainment, but did what he could to keep them out, at least to keep them under. *The evil I do I allow not.*

2. David's delight in the rule of duty: *But thy law do I love*, which forbids those vain thoughts, and threatens them. The more we love the law of God the more we shall get the mastery of our vain thoughts, the more hateful they will be to us, as being contrary to the whole law, and the more watchful we shall be against them, lest they draw us from that which we love.

<BIB> PSALM 119:114

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. God's care of David to protect and defend him, which he comforted himself with when his enemies were very malicious against him: *Thou art my hiding-place and my shield.* David, when Saul pursued him, often betook himself to close places for shelter; in war he guarded himself with his shield. Now God was both these to him, a hiding-place to preserve him from danger and a shield to preserve him in danger, his life from death and his soul from sin. Good people are safe under God's protection. He is their *strength and their shield, their help and their shield, their sun and their shield, their shield and their great reward,* and here their *hiding-place and their shield.* They may by faith retire to him, and repose in him as their hiding-place, where they are kept in secret. They may by faith oppose his power to all the might and malice of their enemies, as their shield to quench every fiery dart.

2. David's confidence in God. He is safe, and therefore he is easy, under the divine protection: *"I hope in thy word, which has acquainted me with thee and assured me of thy kindness to me."* Those who depend on God's promise shall have the benefit of his power and be taken under his special protection.

<BIB> PSALM 119:115

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's firm and fixed resolution to live a holy life: *I will keep the commandments of my God.* Bravely resolved! like a saint, like a soldier; for true courage consists in a steady resolution against all sin and for all duty. Those that would keep God's commandments must be often renewing their resolutions to do so: *"I will keep them.* Whatever others do, this I will do; though I be singular, though all about me be evil-doers, and desert me; whatever I have done hitherto, I will for the future walk closely

with God. They are the commandments of God, of my God, and therefore I will keep them. He is God and may command me, my God and will command me nothing but what is for my good.”

2. His farewell to bad company, pursuant to this resolution: *Depart from me, you evil-doers*. Though David, as a good magistrate, was a terror to evil-doers, yet there were many such, even about court, intruding near his person; these he here abdicates, and resolves to have no conversation with them. Note, Those that resolve to keep the commandments of God must have no society with evil-doers; for bad company is a great hindrance to a holy life. We must not choose wicked people for our companions, nor be intimate with them; we must not do as they do nor do as they would have us do, ^{<BIB1>}Psalm 1:1; ^{<BIB1>}Ephesians 5:11.

^{<BIB16>}PSALM 119:116-117

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays for sustaining grace; for this grace sufficient he besought the Lord twice: *Uphold me*; and again, *Hold thou me up*. He sees himself not only unable to go on in his duty by any strength of his own, but in danger of falling into sin unless he was prevented by divine grace; and therefore he is thus earnest for that grace to uphold him in his integrity (^{<BIB12>}Psalm 41:12), to keep him from falling and to keep him from tiring, that he might neither turn aside to evil-doing nor be weary of well-doing. We stand no longer than God holds us and go no further than he carries us.

2. He pleads earnestly for this grace.

(1.) He pleads the promise of God, his dependence upon the promise, and his expectation from it: “*Uphold me, according to thy word*, which word I hope in; and, if it be not performed, I shall be made *ashamed of my hope*, and be called a fool for my credulity.” But those that hope in God's word may be sure that the word will not fail them, and therefore their hope will not make them ashamed.

(2.) He pleads the great need he had of God's grace and the great advantage it would be of to him: *Uphold me, that I may live*, intimating

that he could not live without the grace of God; he should fall into sin, into death, into hell, if God did not hold him up; but, supported by his hand, he shall live; his spiritual life shall be maintained and be an earnest of eternal life. *Hold me up, and I shall be safe*, out of danger and out of the fear of danger. Our holy security is grounded on divine supports.

(3.) He pleads his resolution, in the strength of this grace, to proceed in his duty: “*Hold me up, and then I will have respect unto thy statutes continually and never turn my eyes or feet aside from them.*” *I will employ myself* (so some), *I will delight myself* (so others) *in thy statutes*. If God's right hand uphold us, we must, in his strength, go on in our duty both with diligence and pleasure.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:118-120

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

I. God's judgment on wicked people, on those that *wander from his statutes*, that take their measures from other rules and will not have God to reign over them. All departure from God's statutes is certainly an error, and will prove a fatal one. These are *the wicked of the earth*; they mind earthly things, lay up their treasures in the earth, live in pleasure on the earth, and are strangers and enemies to heaven and heavenly things. Now see how God deals with them, that you may neither fear them nor envy them.

1. He *treads them all down*. He brings them to ruin, to utter ruin, to shameful ruin; he makes them his footstool. Though they are ever so high, he can bring them low (~~319~~ Amos 2:9); he has done it many a time, and he will do it, for he resists the proud and will triumph over those that oppose his kingdom. Proud persecutors trample upon his people, but, sooner or later, he will trample upon them.

2. He *puts them all away like dross*. Wicked people are as dross, which, though it be mingled with the good metal in the ore, and seems to be of the same substance with it, must be separated from it. And in God's account they are worthless things, the scum and refuse of the earth, and no more to be compared with the righteous than dross with fine gold. There is a day

coming which will put them away from among the righteous (^{413b}Matthew 13:49), so that they shall have no place *in their congregation* (^{415b}Psalm 1:5), which will put them away into everlasting fire, the fittest place for the dross. Sometimes, in this world, the wicked are, by the censures of the church, or the sword of the magistrate, or the judgments of God, *put away as dross*, ^{415a}Proverbs 25:4, 5.

II. The reasons of these judgments. God casts them off because they *err from his statutes* (those that will not submit to the commands of the word shall feel the curses of it) and because *their deceit is falsehood*, that is, because they deceive themselves by setting up false rules, in opposition to God's statutes, which they err from, and because they go about to deceive others with their hypocritical pretences of good and their crafty projects of mischief. *Their cunning is falsehood*, so Dr. Hammond. The utmost of their policy is treachery and perfidiousness; this the God of truth hates and will punish.

III. The improvement David made of these judgments. He took notice of them and received instruction from them. The ruin of the wicked helped to increase,

1. His love to the word of God. "I see what comes of sin; *therefore I love thy testimonies*, which warn me to take heed of those dangerous courses and *keep me from the paths of the destroyer.*" We see the word of God fulfilled in his judgments on sin and sinners, and therefore we should love it.

2. His fear of the wrath of God: *My flesh trembles for fear of thee.* Instead of insulting over those who fell under God's displeasure, he humbled himself. What we read and hear of the judgments of God upon wicked people would make us,

(1.) To reverence his terrible majesty, and to stand in awe of him: *Who is able to stand before this holy Lord God?* ^{416b}1 Samuel 6:20.

(2.) To fear lest we offend him and become obnoxious to his wrath. Good men have need to be restrained from sin by *the terrors of the Lord*, especially when judgment *begins at the house of God* and hypocrites are discovered and *put away as dross*.

PSALM 119:121-122

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

16. AIN.

David here appeals to God,

1. As his witness that he had not done wrong; he could truly say, “*I have done judgment and justice*, that is, I have made conscience of rendering to all their due, and have not by force or fraud hindered any of their right.” Take him as a king, he *executed judgment and justice to all his people*, ^{<1185>}2 Samuel 8:15. Take him in a private capacity, he could appeal to Saul himself that *there was no evil or transgression in his hand*, ^{<1211>}1 Samuel 24:11. Note, Honesty is the best policy and will be our rejoicing in the day of evil.

2. As his Judge, that he might not be wronged. Having done justice for others that were oppressed, he begs that God would do him justice and avenge him of his adversaries: “*Be surety for thy servant, for good; undertake for me against those that would run me down and ruin me.*” He is sensible that he cannot make his part good himself, and therefore begs that God would appear for him. Christ is our surety with God; and, if he be so, Providence shall be our surety against all the world. Who or what shall harm us if God's power and goodness be engaged for our protection and rescue? He does not prescribe to God what he should do for him; only let it be *for good*, in such way and manner as Infinite Wisdom sees best; “*only let me not be left to my oppressors.*” Though David had *done judgment and justice*, yet he had many enemies; but, having God for his friend, he hoped they should not have their will against him; and in that hope he prayed again, *Let not the proud oppress me*. David, one of the best of men, was oppressed by the proud, whom God beholds afar off; the condition therefore of the persecuted is better than that of the persecutors, and will appear so at last.

PSALM 119:123

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David, being oppressed, is here waiting and wishing for the salvation of the Lord, which would make him easy.

1. He cannot but think that it comes slowly: *My eyes fail for thy salvation*. His eyes were towards it and had been long so. He looked for help from heaven (and we deceive ourselves if we look for it any other way), but it did not come so soon as he expected, so that his eyes began to fail, and he was sometimes ready to despair, and to think that, because the salvation did not come when he looked for it, it would never come. It is often the infirmity even of good men to be weary of waiting God's time when *their* time has elapsed.

2. Yet he cannot hope that it comes surely; for he expects *the word of God's righteousness*, and no other salvation than what is secured by that word, which cannot fall to the ground because it is a word of righteousness. Though our eyes fail, yet God's word does not, and therefore those that build upon it, though now discouraged, shall in due time see his salvation.

PSALM 119:124-125

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's petition for divine instruction: "*Teach me thy statutes*; give me to know all my duty; when I am in doubt, and know not for certain what is my duty, direct me, and make it plain to me; now that I am afflicted, oppressed, and *my eyes* are ready to *fail for thy salvation*, let me know what my duty is in this condition." In difficult times we should desire more to be told what we must do than what we may expect, and should pray more to be led into the knowledge of scripture-precepts than of scripture-prophecies. If God, who gave us his statutes, do not teach us, we shall never learn them. How God teaches is implied in the next petition: *Give me understanding* (a renewed understanding, apt to receive divine

light), *that I may know thy testimonies*. It is God's prerogative to give an understanding, that understanding without which we cannot know God's testimonies. Those who know most of God's testimonies desire to know more, and are still earnest with God to teach them, never thinking they know enough.

2. His pleas to enforce this petition.

(1.) He pleads God's goodness to him: *Deal with me according to thy mercy*. The best saints count this their best plea for any blessing, "Let me have it according to thy mercy;" for we deserve no favour from God, nor can we claim any as a debt, but we are most likely to be easy when we cast ourselves upon God's mercy and refer ourselves to it. Particularly, when we come to him for instruction, we must beg it as a mercy, and reckon that in being taught we are well dealt with.

(2.) He pleads his relation to God: "*I am thy servant*, and have work to do for thee; therefore *teach me* to do it and to do it well." The servant has reason to expect that, if he be at a loss about his work, his master should teach him, and, if it were in his power, give him an understanding. "Lord," says David, "I desire to serve thee; show me how." If any man resolve to do God's will as his servant, he shall be made to know his testimonies, ~~<BVT>~~ John 7:17; ~~<BTH>~~ Psalm 25:14.

~~<BTH>~~ PSALM 119:126

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. A complaint of the daring impiety of the wicked. David, having in himself a holy indignation at it, humbly represents it to God: "Lord, there are those that *have made void thy law*, have set thee and thy government at defiance, and have done what in them lay to cancel and vacate the obligation of thy commands." Those that sin through infirmity transgress the law, but presumptuous sinners do in effect make void the law, saying, *Who is the Lord? What is the Almighty, that we should fear him?* It is possible a godly man may sin against the commandment, but a wicked man would sin away the commandment, would repeal God's laws and

enact his own lusts. This is the sinfulness of sin and the malignity of the carnal mind.

2. A desire that God would appear, for the vindication of his own honour: “*It is time for thee, Lord, to work*, to do something for the effectual confutation of atheists and infidels, and the silencing of those that set their mouth against the heavens.” God’s time to work is when vice has become most daring and the measure of iniquity is full. *Now will I arise, saith the Lord.* Some read it, and the original will bear it, *It is time to work for thee, O Lord!* it is time for every one in his place to appear on the Lord’s side — against the threatening growth of profaneness and immorality. We must do what we can for the support of the sinking interests of religion, and, after all, we must beg of God to take the work into his own hands.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:127-128

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here, as often in this psalm, professes the great love he had to the word and law of God; and, to evidence the sincerity of it, observe,

- 1.** The degree of his love. He loved his Bible better than he loved his money — *above gold, yea, above fine gold.* Gold, fine gold, is what most men set their hearts upon; nothing charms them and dazzles their eyes so much as gold does. It is fine gold, a fine thing in their eyes; they will venture their souls, their God, their all, to get and keep it. But David saw that the word of God answers all purposes better than money does, for it enriches the soul towards God; and therefore he loved it better than gold, for it had done that for him which gold could not do, and would stand him in stead when the wealth of the world would fail him.
- 2.** The ground of his love. He loved all God’s commandments because he esteemed them to be right, all reasonable and just, and suited to the end for which they were made. They are all as they should be, and no fault can be found with them; and we must love them because they bear God’s image and are the revelations of his will. If we thus *consent to the law that it is good*, we shall delight in it after the inner man.
- 3.** The fruit and evidence of this love: He *hated every false way.* The way of sin being directly contrary to God’s precepts, which are right, is a false

way, and therefore those that have a love and esteem for God's law hate it and will not be reconciled to it.

⌘ PSALM 119:129

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

17. PE.

See here how David was affected towards the word of God.

1. He admired it, as most excellent in itself: *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* The word of God gives us admirable discoveries of God, and Christ, and another world; admirable proofs of divine love and grace. The majesty of the style, the purity of the matter, the harmony of the parts, are all wonderful. Its effects upon the consciences of men, both for conviction and comfort, are wonderful; and it is a sign that we are not acquainted with God's testimonies, or do not understand them, if we do not admire them.

2. He adhered to it as of constant use to him: *“Therefore doth my soul keep them,* as a treasure of inestimable value, which I cannot be without.” We do not keep them to any purpose unless our souls keep them. There they must be deposited, as the tables of testimony in the ark, there they must have the innermost and uppermost place. Those that see God's word to be admirable will prize it highly and preserve it carefully, as that which they promise themselves great things from.

⌘ PSALM 119:130

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The great use for which the word of God was intended, to give light, that is, to give understanding, to give us to understand that which will be of use to us in our travels through this world; and it is the outward and ordinary means by which the Spirit of God enlightens the understanding of

all that are sanctified. God's testimonies are not only wonderful for the greatness of them, but useful, as a light in a dark place.

2. Its efficacy for this purpose. It admirably answers the end; for,

(1.) Even *the entrance of God's word gives light*. If we begin at the beginning, and take it before us, we shall find that the very first verses of the Bible give us surprising and yet satisfying discoveries of the origin of the universe, about which, without that, the world is utterly in the dark. As soon as the word of God enters into us, and has a place in us, it enlightens us; we find we begin to see when we begin to study the word of God. The very first principles of the oracles of God, the plainest truths, the milk appointed for the babes, bring a great light into the soul, much more will the soul be illuminated by the sublime mysteries that are found there. "The exposition or explication of thy word gives light;" then it is most profitable when ministers do their part *in giving the sense*, ^{-KJB} Nehemiah 8:8. Some understand it of the New Testament, which is the opening or unfolding of the Old, which would give light concerning life and immortality.

(2.) It would *give understanding even to the simple*, to the weakest capacities; for it shows us a way to heaven so plain that the *wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein*.

◀BIB▶ PSALM 119:131

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The desire David had towards the word of God: *I longed for thy commandments*. When he was under a forced absence from God's ordinances he longed to be restored to them again; when he enjoyed ordinances he greedily sucked in the word of God, *as new-born babes desire the milk*. When Christ is formed in the soul there are gracious longings, unaccountable to one that is a stranger to the work.

2. The degree of that desire appearing in the expressions of it: *I opened my mouth and panted*, as one overcome with heat, or almost stifled, pants for a mouthful of fresh air. Thus strong, thus earnest, should our desires be

towards God and the remembrance of his name, ^{}Psalm 42:1, 2. ^{<C>}Luke 12:50.

^{}PSALM 119:132

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's request for God's favour to himself: “*Look graciously upon me; let me have thy smiles, and the light of thy countenance. Take cognizance of me and my affairs, and be merciful to me; let me taste the sweetness of thy mercy and receive the gifts of thy mercy.*” See how humble his petition is. He asks not for the operations of God's hand, only for the smiles of his face; a good look is enough; and for that he does not plead merit, but implores mercy.

2. His acknowledgment of his favour to all his people: *As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.* This is either,

(1.) A plea for mercy: “Lord, I am one of *those that love thy name*, love thee and thy word, and thou usest to be kind to those that do so; and wilt thou be worse to me than to others of thy people?” Or,

(2.) A description of the favour and mercy he desired — “that which thou usest to bestow on those that love thy name, which *thou bearest to thy chosen,*” ^{}Psalm 106:4, 5. He desires no more, no better, than neighbour's fare, and he will take up with no less; common looks and common mercies will not serve, but such as are reserved for those that love him, which are such as *eye has not seen,* ^{}1 Corinthians 2:9. Note, The dealings of God with those that love him are such that a man needs not desire to be any better dealt with, for he will make them truly and eternally happy. And as long as God deals with us no otherwise than as he uses to deal with those that love him we have no reason to complain, ^{}1 Corinthians 10:13.

PSALM 119:133

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here David prays for two great spiritual blessings, and is, in this verse, as earnest for the good work of God in him as, in the verse before, for the good-will of God towards him. He prays,

1. For direction in the paths of duty: “*Order my steps in thy word; having led me into the right way, let every step I take in that way be under the guidance of thy grace.*” We ought to walk by rule; all the motions of the soul must not only be kept within the bounds prescribed by the word, so as not to transgress them, but carried out in the paths prescribed by the word, so as not to trifle in them. And therefore we must beg of God that by his good Spirit he would order our steps accordingly.

2. For deliverance from the power of sin: “*Let no iniquity have dominion over me, so as to gain my consent to it, and that I should be led captive by it.*” The dominion of sin is to be dreaded and deprecated by every one of us; and, if in sincerity we pray against it, we may receive that promise as an answer to the prayer (^{ROM}Romans 6:14), *Sin shall not have dominion over you.*

PSALM 119:134

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays that he might live a quiet and peaceable life, and might not be harassed and discomposed by those that studied to be vexatious: “*Deliver me from the oppression of man — man, whom God can control, and whose power is limited. Let them know themselves to be but men* (^{PSA}Psalm 9:20), and let me be delivered out of the hands of my enemies, that I may serve God without fear; *so will I keep thy precepts.*” Not but that he would keep God's precepts, though he should be continued under oppression; “but so shall I keep thy precepts more cheerfully and with more enlargement of heart, my bonds being loosed.” *Then* we may expect

temporal blessings when we desire them with this in our eye, that we may serve God the better.

PSALM 119:135

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here, as often as elsewhere, writes himself God's servant, a title he gloried in, though he was a king; now here, as became a good servant,

1. He is very ambitious of his Master's favour, accounting that his happiness and chief good. He asks not for corn and wine, for silver and gold, but, "*Make thy face to shine upon thy servant*; let me be accepted of thee, and let me know that I am so. Comfort me with the light of thy countenance in every cloudy and dark day. If the world frown upon me, yet do thou smile."

2. He is very solicitous about his Master's work, accounting that his business and chief concern. This he would be instructed in, that he might do it, and do it well, so as to be accepted in the doing of it: *Teach me thy statutes*. Note, We must pray as earnestly for grace as for comfort. If God hides his face from us, it is because we have been careless in keeping his statutes; and therefore, that we may be qualified for the returns of his favour, we must pray for wisdom to do our duty.

PSALM 119:136

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here we have David in sorrow.

1. It is a great sorrow, to such a degree that he weeps *rivers of tears*. Commonly, where there is a gracious heart, there is a weeping eye, in conformity to Christ, who was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. David had prayed for comfort in God's favour (v. 135), now he pleads that he was qualified for that comfort, and had need of it, for he was one of those that mourned in Zion, and those that do so shall be comforted, ²⁶¹³Isaiah 61:3.

2. It is godly sorrow. He wept not for his troubles, though they were many, but for the dishonour done to God: *Because they keep not thy law*, either *because my eyes keep not thy law*, so some (the eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye), or, rather, *they*, that is, those about me, v. 139. Note, The sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend.

PSALM 119:137-138

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

18. TZADDI.

Here is,

1. The righteousness of God, the infinite rectitude and perfection of his nature. As he is what he is, so he is what he should be, and in every thing acts as becomes him; there is nothing wanting, nothing amiss, in God; his will is the eternal rule of equity, and he is righteous, for he does all according to it.
2. The righteousness of his government. He rules the world by his providence, according to the principles of justice, and never did, nor ever can do, any wrong to any of his creatures: *Upright are thy judgments*, the promises and threatenings and the executions of both. Every word of God is pure, and he will be true to it; he perfectly knows the merits of every cause and will judge accordingly.
3. The righteousness of his commands, which he has given to be the rule of our obedience: *“Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded, which are backed with thy sovereign authority, and to which thou dost require our obedience, are exceedingly righteous and faithful, righteousness and faithfulness itself.”* As he acts like himself, so his law requires that we act like ourselves and like him, that we be just to ourselves and to all we deal with, true to all the engagements we lay ourselves under both to God and man. That which we are commanded to practise is righteous; that which we are commanded to believe is faithful. It is necessary to our faith and obedience that we be convinced of this.

119 PSALM 119:139

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The great contempt which wicked men put upon religion: *My enemies have forgotten thy words*. They have often heard them, but so little did they heed them that they soon forgot them, they willingly forgot them, not only through carelessness let them slip out of their minds, but contrived how to cast them behind their backs. This is at the bottom of all the wickedness of the wicked, and particularly of their malignity and enmity to the people of God; they have forgotten the words of God, else those would give check to their sinful courses.
2. The great concern which godly men show for religion. David reckoned those his enemies who forgot the words of God because they were enemies to religion, which he had entered into a league with, offensive and defensive. And therefore his *zeal* even *consumed him*, when he observed their impieties. He conceived such an indignation at their wickedness as preyed upon his spirits, even *ate them up* (as Christ's zeal, 407 John 2:17), swallowed up all inferior considerations, and made him forget himself. *My zeal has pressed or constrained me* (so Dr. Hammond reads it), 415 Acts 18:5. Zeal against sin should constrain us to do what we can against it in our places, at least to do so much the more in religion ourselves. The worse others are the better we should be.

119 PSALM 119:140

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's great affection for the word of God: *Thy servant loves it*. Every good man, being a servant of God, loves the word of God, because it lets him know his Master's will and directs him in his Master's work. Wherever there is grace there is a warm attachment to the word of God.

2. The ground and reason of that affection; he saw it to be *very pure*, and therefore he loved it. Our love to the word of God is *then* an evidence of our love to God when we love it for the sake of its purity, because it bears the image of God's holiness and is designed to make us partakers of his holiness. It commands purity, and, as it is itself refined from all corrupt mixture, so if we receive it in the light and love of it it will refine us from the dross of worldliness and fleshly-mindedness.

◀▶▶▶ PSALM 119:141

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David pious and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, one whom the King of kings did delight to honour, and yet *small and despised* in his own account and in the account of many others. Men's excellency cannot always secure them from contempt; nay, it often exposes them to the scorn of others and always makes them low in their own eyes. *God has chosen the foolish things of the world*, and it has been the common lot of his people to be a despised people.

2. David poor and yet pious, *small and despised* for his strict and serious godliness, yet his conscience can witness for him that he did *not forget God's precepts*. He would not throw off his religion, though it exposed him to contempt, for he knew that was designed to try his constancy. When we are small and despised we have the more need to remember God's precepts, that we may have them to support us under the pressures of a low condition.

◀▶▶▶ PSALM 119:142

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Observe,

1. That God's word is *righteousness*, and it is *an everlasting righteousness*. It is the rule of God's judgment, and it is consonant to his counsels from

eternity and will direct his sentence for eternity. The word of God will judge us, it will judge us in righteousness, and by it our everlasting state will be determined. This should possess us with a very great reverence for the word of God that it is righteousness itself, the standard of righteousness, and it is everlasting in its rewards and punishments.

2. That God's word is a law, and that law is truth. See the double obligation we are under to be governed by the word of God. We are reasonable creatures, and as such we must be ruled by truth, acknowledging the force and power of it. If the principles be true, the practices must be agreeable to them, else we do not act rationally. We are creatures, and therefore subjects, and must be ruled by our Creator; and whatever he commands we are bound to obey as a law. See how these obligations are here twisted, these cords of a man. Here is truth brought to the understanding, there to sit chief, and direct the motions of the whole man; but, lest the authority of that should become weak through the flesh, here is a law to bind the will and bring that into subjection. God's truth is a law (~~1837~~ John 18:37) *and God's law is the truth*; surely we cannot break such words as these asunder.

~~1838~~ PSALM 119:143-144

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

These two verses are almost a repetition of the two foregoing verses, but with improvement.

1. David again professes his constant adherence to God and his duty, notwithstanding the many difficulties and discouragements he met with. He had said (v. 14), *I am small and despised*, and yet adhere to my duty. Here he finds himself not only mean, but miserable, as far as this world could make him so: *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me* — trouble without, anguish within; they surprised him, they seized him, they held him. Sorrows are often the lot of saints in this vale of tears; they are *in heaviness through manifold temptations*. There he had said, *Yet do I not forget thy precepts*; here he carries his constancy much higher: *Yet thy commandments are my delights*. All this trouble and anguish did not put his mouth out of taste for the comforts of the word of God, but he could still relish them and find that peace and pleasure in them which all the

calamities of this present time could not deprive him of. There are delights, variety of delights, in the word of God, which the saints have often the sweetest enjoyment of when they are in trouble and anguish, ~~405~~2 Corinthians 1:5.

2. He again acknowledges the everlasting righteousness of God's word as before (v. 142): *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting* and cannot be altered; and, when it is admitted in its power into a soul, it is there an abiding principle, *a well of living water*, ~~404~~John 4:14. We ought to meditate much and often upon the equity and the eternity of the word of God. Here he adds, by way of inference,

(1.) His prayer for grace: *Give me understanding*. Those that know much of the word of God should still covet to know more; for there is more to be known. He does not say, "Give me a further revelation," but, *Give me a further understanding*; what is revealed we should desire to understand, and what we know to know better; and we must go to God for a heart to know.

(2.) His hope of glory: "Give me this renewed understanding, and then *I shall live*, shall live for ever, shall be eternally happy, and shall be comforted, for the present, in the prospect of it." *This is life eternal, to know God*, ~~403~~John 17:3.

~~405~~PSALM 119:145-146

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

19. KOPH.

Here we have,

I. David's good prayers, by which he sought to God for mercy; these he mentions here, not as boasting of them, or trusting to any merit in them, but reflecting upon them with comfort, that he had taken the appointed way to comfort. Observe here,

1. That he was inward with God in prayer; he prayed *with his heart*, and prayer is acceptable no further than the heart goes along with it. Lip-labour, if that be all, is lost labour.

2. He was importunate with God in prayer; he *cried*, as one in earnest, with fervour of affection and a holy vehemence and vigour of desire. *He cried with his whole heart*; all the powers of his soul were not only engaged and employed, but exerted to the utmost, in his prayers. *Then* we are likely to speed when we thus strive and wrestle in prayer.

3. That he directed his prayer to God: *I cried unto thee*. Whither should the child go but to his father when any thing ails him?

4. That the great thing he prayed for was salvation: *Save me*. A short prayer (for we mistake if we think we shall be heard for our much speaking), but a comprehensive prayer: “Not only rescue me from ruin, but make me happy.” We need desire no more than God's salvation (~~482~~Psalm 50:23) and the *things that accompany* it, ~~483~~Hebrews 6:9.

5. That he was earnest for an answer; and not only looked up in his prayers, but looked up after them, to see what became of them (~~484~~Psalm 5:3): “Lord, *hear me*, and let me know that thou hearest me.”

II. David's good purposes, by which he bound himself to duty when he was in the pursuit of mercy. “*I will keep thy statutes*; I am resolved that by thy grace I will;” for, *if we turn away our ear from hearing the law*, we cannot expect an answer of peace to our prayers, ~~485~~Proverbs 28:9. This purpose is used as a humble plea (v. 146): “*Save me* from my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may *keep thy testimonies*.” We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully.

~~486~~PSALM 119:147-148

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David goes on here to relate how he had abounded in the duty of prayer, much to his comfort and advantage: he cried unto God, that is, offered up to him his pious and devout affections with all seriousness. Observe,

I. The handmaids of his devotion. The two great exercises that attended his prayers, and were helpful to them, were,

1. Hope in God's word, which encouraged him to continue instant in prayer, though the answer did not come immediately: "I cried, and hoped that at last I should speed, because *the vision is for an appointed time, and at the end it will speak and not lie. I hoped in thy word, which I knew would not fail me.*"

2. Meditation in God's word. The more intimately we converse with the word of God, and the more we dwell upon it in our thoughts, the better able we shall be to speak to God in his own language and the better we shall know what to pray for as we ought. Reading the word will not serve, but we must meditate in it.

II. The hours of his devotion. *He anticipated the dawning of the morning, nay, and the night-watches.* See here,

1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, *Yet a little sleep.*

2. That he began the day with God. The first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray, when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God they will help to keep us in his fear all the day long.

3. That his mind was so full of God, and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn. Even in *the night-watches*, when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray than turn himself and go to sleep again. He *esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose*, which we can as ill spare as our *food*, ~~Job~~ Job 23:12.

4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises. He was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not to find time for prayer. And this is our comfort, when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace; for we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with.

PSALM 119:149

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David applies to God for grace and comfort with much solemnity. He begs of God to hear his voice: “Lord, I have something to say to thee; shall I obtain a gracious audience?” Well, what has he to say? What is his petition and what is his request? It is not long, but it has much in a little: “*Lord, quicken me*; stir me up to that which is good, and make me vigorous, and lively, and cheerful in it. Let habits of grace be drawn out into act.”

2. He encourages himself to hope that he shall obtain his request; for he depends,

(1.) Upon God's lovingkindness: “He is good, therefore he will be good to me, who hope in his mercy. His lovingkindness manifested to me will help to quicken me, and put life into me.”

(2.) Upon God's *judgment*, that is, his wisdom (“He knows what I need, and what is good for me, and therefore will quicken me”), or his promise, the word which he has spoken, mercy secured by the new covenant: *Quicken me according to the tenour of that covenant.*

PSALM 119:150-151

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

I. The apprehension David was in of danger from his enemies.

1. They were very malicious, and industrious in prosecuting their malicious designs: They *follow after mischief*, any mischief they could do to David or his friends; they would let slip no opportunity nor let fall any pursuit that might be to his hurt.

2. They were very impious, and had no fear of God before their eyes: *They are far from thy law*, setting themselves as far as they can out of the reach of its convictions and commands. The persecutors of God's people are such as make light of God himself; we may therefore be sure that God will take his people's part against them.

3. They followed him closely and he was just ready to fall into their hands: *They draw nigh*, nigher than they were; so that they got ground of him. They were at his heels, just upon his back. God sometimes suffers persecutors to prevail very far against his people, so that, as David said (~~1~~¹ Samuel 20:3), *There is but a step between them and death*. Perhaps this comes in here as a reason why David was so earnest in prayer, v. 149. God brings us into imminent perils, as he did Jacob, that, like him, we may wrestle for a blessing.

II. The assurance David had of protection with God: "*They draw nigh to destroy me, but thou art near, O Lord!* to save me, not only mightier than they and therefore able to help me against them, but nearer than they and therefore ready to help." It is the happiness of the saints that, when trouble is near, God is near, and no trouble can separate between them and him. He is never far to seek, but he is within our call, and means are within his call, ~~1~~¹ Deuteronomy 4:7. *All thy commandments are truth*. The enemies thought to defeat the promises God had made to David, but he was sure it was out of their power; they were inviolably true, and would be infallibly performed.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:152

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

This confirms what he had said in the close of the foregoing verses, *All thy commandments are truth*; he means the covenant, the word which God has commanded to a thousand generations. This is firm, as true as truth itself. For,

1. God has founded it so; he has framed it for a perpetuity. Such is the constitution of it, and so well ordered is it in all things, that it cannot but be sure. The promises are *founded for ever*, so that when heaven and earth

shall have passed away every iota and tittle of the promise shall stand firm, ~~(11)~~ 2 Corinthians 1:20.

2. David had found it so, both by a work of God's grace upon his heart (begetting in him a full persuasion of the truth of God's word and enabling him to rely upon it with a full satisfaction) and by the works of his providence on his behalf, fulfilling the promise beyond what he expected. Thus he *knew of old*, from the days of his youth, ever since he began to look towards God, that the word of God is what one may venture one's all upon. This assurance was confirmed by the observations and experiences of his own life all along, and of others that had gone before him in the ways of God. All that ever dealt with God, and trusted in him will own that they have found him faithful.

~~(11)~~ PSALM 119:153-154

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

20. *RESH.*

Here,

I. David prays for succour in distress. *Is any afflicted? let him pray; let him pray as David does here.*

1. He has an eye to God's pity, and prays, "*Consider my affliction; take it into thy thoughts, and all the circumstances of it, and sit not by as one unconcerned.*" God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to *put him in remembrance* (~~(2)~~ Isaiah 43:26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way.

2. He has an eye to God's power and prays, *Deliver me; and again, "Deliver me; consider my troubles and bring me out of them."* God has promised deliverance (~~(3)~~ Psalm 50:15) and we may pray for it, with submission to his will and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better.

3. He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "*Plead my cause; be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client.*" David had a just

cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them; he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually, ^{<2512>}Isaiah 51:22; ^{<2614>}Jeremiah 50:34.

(4.) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, "*Quicken me*. Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink. O that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!"

II. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God and his obedient regard to its directions: *Quicken and deliver me according to thy word of promise, for I do not forget thy precepts*. The more closely we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time.

^{<2815>}PSALM 119:155

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The description of wicked men. They do not only do God's statutes, but they do not so much as seek them; they do not acquaint themselves with them, nor so much as desire to know their duty, nor in the least endeavour to do it. Those are wicked indeed who do not think the law of God worth enquiring after, but are altogether regardless of it, being resolved to live at large and to walk in the way of their heart.
2. Their doom: *Salvation is far from them*. They cannot upon any good grounds promise themselves temporal deliverance. *Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord*. How can those expect to seek God's favour with success, when they are in adversity, who never sought his statutes when they were in prosperity? But eternal salvation is certainly far from them. They flatter themselves with a conceit that it is near, and that they are going to heaven; but they are mistaken: it is far from them. They thrust it from them by thrusting the Saviour from them; it is so far from them that they cannot reach it, and the longer they persist in sin the

further it is; nay, while salvation is far from them, damnation is near; it slumbers not. *Behold, the Judge stands before the door.*

PSALM 119:156

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David admires God's grace: *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord!* The goodness of God's nature, as it is his glory, so it is the joy of all the saints. His mercies are tender, for he is full of compassion; they are many, they are great, a fountain that can never be exhausted. He is rich in mercy to all that call upon him. David had spoken of the misery of the wicked (v. 155); but God is good notwithstanding; there were tender mercies sufficient in God to have saved them, if they had not "*despised the riches of those mercies.*" Those that are delivered from the sinner's doom are bound for ever to own the greatness of God's mercies which delivered them.

2. He begs for God's grace, reviving quickening grace, *according to his judgments*, that is, according to the tenour of the new covenant (that established rule by which he goes in dispensing that grace) or according to his manner, his custom or usage, with those that love his name, v. 132.

PSALM 119:157

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David surrounded with difficulties and dangers: *Many are my persecutors and my enemies.* When Saul the king was his persecutor and enemy no marvel that many more were so: multitudes will follow the pernicious ways of abused authority. David, being a public person, had many enemies, but withal he had many friends, who loved him and wished him well; let him set the one over-against the other. In this David was a type both of Christ and his church. The enemies, the persecutors, of both, are many, very many.

2. David established in the way of his duty, notwithstanding: “*Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies*, as knowing that while I adhere to them God is for me; and then no matter who is against me.” A man who is steady in the way of his duty, though he may have many enemies, needs fear none.

<BIBES> PSALM 119:158

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's sorrow for the wickedness of the wicked. Though he conversed much at home, yet sometimes he looked abroad, and could not but see the wicked walking on every side. He *beheld the transgressors*, those whose sins were open before all men, and it *grieved* him to see them dishonour God, serve Satan, debauch the world, and ruin their own souls, to see the transgressors so numerous, so daring, so very impudent, and so industrious to draw unstable souls into their snares. All this cannot but be a grief to those who have any regard to the glory of God and the welfare of mankind.

2. The reason of that sorrow. He was grieved, not because they were vexatious to him, but because they were provoking to God: *They kept not thy word*. Those that hate sin truly hate it as sin, as a transgression of the law of God and a violation of his word.

<BIBES> PSALM 119:159

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. David's appeal to God concerning his love to his precepts: “Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love them; consider it then, and deal with me as thou usest to deal with those that love thy word, which thou hast magnified above all thy name.” He does not say, “Consider how I fulfil thy precepts;” he was conscious to himself that in many things he came short; but, “Consider how I love them.” Our obedience is pleasing to

God, and pleasant to ourselves, only when it comes from a principle of love.

2. His petition thereupon: “*Quicken me, to do my duty with vigour; revive me, keep me alive, not according to any merit of mine, though I love thy word, but according to thy lovingkindness;*” to that we owe our lives, nay, that is better than live itself. We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us.

◀BIG▶ PSALM 119:160

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David here comforts himself with the faithfulness of God's word, for the encouragement of himself and others to rely upon it.

1. It has always been found faithful hitherto, and never failed any that ventured upon it; *It is true from the beginning.* Ever since God began to reveal himself to the children of men all he said was true and to be trusted. The church, from its beginning, was built upon this rock. It has not gained its validity by lapse of time, as many governments, whose best plea is prescription and long usage, *Quod initio non valet, tractu temporis convalescit* — *That which, at first, wanted validity, in the progress of time acquired it.* But the *beginning of God's word was true* (so some read it); his government was laid on a sure foundation. And all, in every age, that have received God's word in faith and love, have found every saying in it *faithful and well worthy of all acceptation.*

2. It will be found faithful to the end, because righteous: “*Every one of thy judgments remains for ever unalterable and of perpetual obligation, adjusting men's everlasting doom.*”

◀BIG▶ PSALM 119:161

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

21. SCHIN.

David here lets us know,

1. How he was discouraged in his duty by the fear of man: *Princes persecuted him*. They looked upon him as a traitor and an enemy to the government, and under that notion sought his life, and bade him *go serve other gods*, ^{<183>}1 Samuel 26:19. It has been the common lot of the best men to be persecuted; and the case is the worse if princes be the persecutors, for they have not only the sword in their hand, and therefore can do the more hurt, but they have the law on their side, and can do it with reputation and a colour of justice. It is sad that the power which magistrates have from God, and should use for him, should ever be employed against him. But *marvel not at the matter*, ^{<183>}Ecclesiastes 5:8. It was a comfort to David that when princes persecuted him he could truly say it was without cause, he never gave them any provocation.

2. How he was kept to his duty, notwithstanding, by the fear of God: “They would make me stand in awe of them and their word, and do as they bid me; but *my heart stands in awe of thy word*, and I am resolved to please God, and keep in with him, whoever is displeased and falls out with me.” Every gracious soul stands in awe of the word of God, of the authority of its precepts and the terror of its threatenings; and to those that do so nothing appears, in the power and wrath of man, at all formidable. We ought to obey God rather than men, and to make sure of God's favour, though we throw ourselves under the frowns of all the world, ^{<171>}Luke 12:4, 5. The heart that stands in awe of God's word is armed against the temptations that arise from persecution.

^{<183>}PSALM 119:162

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. The pleasure David took in the word of God. He rejoiced at it, rejoiced that God had made such a discovery of his mind, that Israel was blessed with that light when other nations sat in darkness, that he was himself let into the understanding of it and had had experience of the power of it. He took a pleasure in reading it, hearing it, and meditating on it, and every thing he met with in it was agreeable to him. He had just now said that his heart stood in awe of his word, and yet here he declares that he rejoiced in

it. The more reverence we have for the word of God the more joy we shall find in it.

2. The degree of that pleasure — *as one that finds great spoil*. This supposes a victory over the enemy. It is through much opposition that a soul comes to this, to *rejoice in God's word*. But, besides the pleasure and honour of a conquest, there is great advantage gained by the plunder of the field, which adds much to the joy. By the word of God we become more than conquerors, that is, unspeakable gainers.

PSALM 119:163

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Love and hatred are the leading affections of the soul; if those be fixed aright, the rest move accordingly. Here we have them fixed aright in David.

1. He had a rooted antipathy to sin; he could not endure to think of it: *I hate and abhor lying*, which may be taken for all sin, inasmuch as by it we deal treacherously and perfidiously with God and put a cheat upon ourselves. Hypocrisy is lying; false doctrine is lying; breach of faith is lying. Lying, in commerce or conversation, is a sin which every good man hates and abhors, hates and doubly hates, because of the seven things which the Lord hates *one is a lying tongue and another is a false witness that speaks lies*, ¹¹⁸⁶Proverbs 6:16. Every man hates to have a lie told him; but we should more hate telling a lie because by the former we only receive an affront from men, by the latter we give an affront to God.

2. He had a rooted affection to the word of God: *Thy law do I love*. And therefore he abhorred lying, for lying is contrary to the whole law of God; and the reason why he loved the law of God was because of the truth of it. The more we see of the amiable beauty of truth the more we shall see of the detestable deformity of a lie.

PSALM 119:164

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David, in this psalm, is full of complaints, yet those did neither jostle out his praises nor put him out of tune for them; whatever condition a child of God is in he does not want matter for praise and therefore should not want a heart. See here,

1. How often David praised God — *Seven times a day*, that is, very frequently, not only every day, but often every day. Many think that once a week will serve, or once or twice a day, but David would praise God seven times a day at least. Praising God is a duty which we should very much abound in. We must praise God at every meal, praise him upon all occasions, in every thing give thanks. We should praise God seven times a day, for the subject can never be exhausted and our affections should never be tired. See v. 62.

2. What he praised God for — *because of thy righteous judgments*. We must praise God for his precepts, which are all just and good, for his promises and threatenings and the performance of both in his providence. We are to praise God even for our afflictions, if through grace we get good by them.

PSALM 119:165

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is an account of the happiness of good men, who are governed by a principle of love to the word of God, who make it their rule and are ruled by it.

1. They are easy, and have a holy serenity; none enjoy themselves more than they do: *Great peace have those that love thy law*, abundant satisfaction in doing their duty and pleasure in reflecting upon it. *The work of righteousness is peace* (²³⁰⁷Isaiah 32:17), such peace as the world can neither give nor take away. They may be in great troubles without and yet enjoy great peace within, *sat lucis intus* — *abundance of internal light*. Those that love the world have great vexation, for it does not answer their

expectation; those that love God's word have great peace, for it outdoes their expectation, and in it they have sure footing.

2. They are safe, and have a holy security: *Nothing shall offend them;* nothing shall be a scandal, snare, or stumbling-block, to them, to entangle them either in guilt or grief. No event of providence shall be either an invincible temptation or an intolerable affliction to them, but their love to the word of God shall enable them both to hold fast their integrity and to preserve their tranquility. They will make the best of that which is, and not quarrel with any thing that God does. Nothing shall offend or hurt them, for every thing shall work for good to them, and therefore shall please them, and they shall reconcile themselves to it. Those in whom this holy love reigns will not be apt to perplex themselves with needless scruples, nor to take offence at their brethren, ^{<416>}1 Corinthians 13:6, 7.

^{<416>}PSALM 119:166

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is the whole duty of man; for we are taught,

1. To keep our eye upon God's favour as our end: *“Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation,* not only temporal but eternal salvation. I have hoped for that as my happiness and laid up my treasure in it; I have hoped for it as thine, as a happiness of thy preparing, thy promising, and which consists in being with thee. Hope of this has raised me above the world, and borne me up under all my burdens in it.”

2. To keep our eye upon God's word as our rule: *I have done thy commandments,* that is, I have made conscience of conforming myself to thy will in every thing. Observe here how God has joined these two together, and let no man put them asunder. We cannot, upon good grounds, hope for God's salvation, unless we set ourselves to do his commandments, ^{<624>}Revelation 22:14. But those that sincerely endeavour to do his commandments ought to keep up a good hope of the salvation; and that hope will both engage and enlarge the heart in doing the commandments. The more lively the hope is the more lively the obedience will be.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:167-168

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David's conscience here witnesses for him,

I. That his practices were good.

1. He loved God's testimonies, he loved them exceedingly. Our love to the word of God must be a superlative love (we must love it better than the wealth and pleasure of this world), and it must be a victorious love, such as will subdue and mortify our lusts and extirpate carnal affections.

2. He kept them, his soul kept them. Bodily exercise profits little in religion; we must make heart-work of it or we make nothing of it. The soul must be sanctified and renewed, and delivered into the mould of the word; the soul must be employed in glorifying God, for he will be worshipped in the spirit. We must keep both the precepts and the testimonies, the commands of God by our obedience to them and his promises by our reliance on them.

II. That he was governed herein by a good principle: "*Therefore I have kept thy precepts, because by faith I have seen thy eye always upon me; all my ways are before thee; thou knowest every step I take and strictly observest all I say and do. Thou dost see and accept all that I say and do well; thou dost see and art displeased with all I say and do amiss.*" Note, The consideration of this, that God's eye is upon us at all times, should make us very careful in every thing to keep his commandments,

~~119~~ Genesis 17:1.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:169-170

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

22. TAU.

Here we have,

I. A general petition for audience repeated: *Let my cry come near before thee*; and again, *Let my supplication come before thee*. He calls his prayer his *cry*, which denotes the fervency and vehemence of it, and his *supplication*, which denotes the humility of it. We must come to God as beggars come to our doors for an alms. He is concerned that his prayer might come before God, might come near before him, that is, that he might have grace and strength by faith and fervency to lift up his prayers, that no guilt might interpose to shut out his prayers and to separate between him and God, and that God would graciously receive his prayers and take notice of them. His prayer that his supplication might come before God implied a deep sense of his unworthiness, and a holy fear that his prayer should come short or miscarry, as not fit to come before God; nor would any of our prayers have had access to God if Jesus Christ had not approached to him as an advocate for us.

II. Two particular requests, which he is thus earnest to present: —

1. That God, by his grace, would give him wisdom to conduct himself well under his troubles: *Give me understanding*; he means that wisdom of the prudent which is to understand his way; “Give me to know thee and myself, and my duty to thee.”

2. That God, by his providence, would rescue him out of his troubles: *Deliver me*, that is, with the temptation make a way to escape, ~~403~~1 Corinthians 10:13.

III. The same general plea to enforce these requests — *according to thy word*. This directs and limits his desires: “Lord, give me such an understanding as thou hast promised and such a deliverance as thou hast promised; I ask for no other.” It also encourages his faith and expectation: “Lord, that which I pray for is what thou hast promised, and wilt not thou be as good as thy word?”

~~407~~ PSALM 119:171

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. A great favour which David expects from God, that he will teach him his *statutes*. This he had often prayed for in this psalm, and urged his petition for it with various arguments; and now that he is drawing towards the close of the psalm he speaks of it as taken for granted. Those that are humbly earnest with God for his grace, and resolve with Jacob that they will not let him go unless he bless them with spiritual blessings, may be humbly confident that they shall at length obtain what they are so importunate for. The God of Israel will grant them those things which they request of him.

2. The grateful sense he promises to have of that favour: *My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me.*

(1.) Then he shall have cause to praise God. Those that are taught of God have a great deal of reason to be thankful, for this is the foundation of all these spiritual blessings, which are the best blessings, and the earnest of eternal blessings.

(2.) Then he shall know how to praise God, and have a heart to do it. All that are taught of God are taught this lesson; when God opens the understanding, opens the heart, and so opens the lips, it is that the mouth may show forth his praise. We have learned nothing to purpose if we have not learned to praise God.

(3.) *Therefore* he is thus importunate for divine instructions, that he might praise God. Those that pray for God's grace must aim at God's glory, <BIB2>Ephesians 1:12.

<BIB2> PSALM 119:172

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Observe here,

1. The good knowledge David had of the word of God; he knew it so well that he was ready to own, with the utmost satisfaction, that all God's commandments are not only righteous, but righteousness itself, the rule and standard of righteousness.

2. The good use he resolved to make of that knowledge: *My tongue shall speak of thy word*, not only utter praise for it to the glory of God, but discourse of it for the instruction and edification of others, as that which he himself was full of (for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will speak) and as that which he desired others also might be filled with. The more we see of the righteousness of God's commandments the more industrious we should be to bring others acquainted with them, that they may be ruled by them. We should always make the word of God the governor of our discourse, so as never to transgress it by sinful speaking or sinful silence; and we should often make it the subject-matter of our discourse, that it may feed many and *minister grace to the hearers*.

~~119~~ PSALM 119:173-174

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here,

1. David prays that divine grace would work for him: *Let thy hand help me*. He finds his own hands are not sufficient for him, nor can any creature lend him a helping hand to any purpose; therefore he looks up to God in hopes that the hand that had made him would help him; for, if the Lord do not help us, whence can any creature help us? All our help must be expected from God's hand, from his power and his bounty.

2. He pleads what divine grace had already wrought in him as a pledge of further mercy, being a qualification for it. Three things he pleads: —

(1.) That he had made religion his serious and deliberate choice: *“I have chosen thy precepts*. I took them for my rule, not because I knew no other, but because, upon trial, I knew no better.” Those are good, and do good indeed, who are good and do good, not by chance, but from choice; and those who have thus chosen God's precepts may depend upon God's helping hand in all their services and under all their sufferings.

(2.) That his heart was upon heaven: *I have longed for thy salvation*. David, when he had got to the throne, met with enough in the world to court his stay, and to make him say, “It is good to be here;” but still he was looking further, and longing for something better in another world. There

is an eternal salvation which all the saints are longing for, and therefore pray that God's hand would help them forward in their way to it.

(3.) That he took pleasure in doing his duty: “*Thy law is my delight.* Not only I delight in it, but it is my delight, the greatest delight I have in this world.” Those that are cheerful in their obedience may in faith beg help of God to carry them on in their obedience; and those that expect God's salvation must take delight in his law and their hopes must increase their delight.

◀117▶ PSALM 119:175

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

David's heart is still upon praising God; and therefore,

1. He prays that God would give him time to praise him: “*Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee,* that is, let my life be prolonged, that I may live to thy glory.” The reason why a good man desires to live is that he may praise God in the land of the living, and do something to his honour. Not, “Let me live and serve my country, live and provide for my family;” but, “Let me live that, in doing this, I may praise God here in this world of conflict and opposition.” When we die we hope to go to a better world to praise him, and that is more agreeable for us, though here there is more need of us. And therefore one would not desire to live any longer than we may do God some service here. *Let my soul live,* that is, let me be sanctified and comforted, for sanctification and comfort are the life of the soul, *and then it shall praise thee.* Our souls must be employed in praising God, and we must pray for grace and peace that we may be fitted to praise God.

2. He prays that God would give him strength to praise him: “*Let thy judgments help me;* let all ordinances and all providences” (both are God's judgments) “further me in glorifying God; let them be the matter of my praise and let them help to fit me for that work.”

PSALM 119:176

DEVOUT ASPIRATIONS

Here is,

1. A penitent confession: *I have gone astray*, or wander up and down, *like a lost sheep*. As unconverted sinners are like lost sheep (^{<2154>}Luke 15:4), so weak unsteady saints are like lost sheep, ^{<482>}Matthew 18:12, 13. We are apt to wander like sheep, and very unapt, when we have gone astray, to find the way again. By going astray we lose the comfort of the green pastures and expose ourselves to a thousand mischiefs.

2. A believing petition: *Seek thy servant*, as the good shepherd seeks a wandering sheep to bring it back again, ^{<342>}Ezekiel 34:12. “Lord, seek me, as I used to seek my sheep when they went astray;” for David had been himself a tender shepherd. “Lord, own me for one of thine; for, though I am a stray sheep, I have thy mark; concern thyself for me, send after me by the word, and conscience, and providences; bring me back by thy grace.” *Seek me*, that is, *find me*; for God never seeks in vain. *Turn me, and I shall be turned*.

3. An obedient plea: “Though I have gone astray, yet I have not wickedly departed, *I do not forget thy commandments*.” Thus he concludes the psalm with a penitent sense of his own sin and believing dependence on God's grace. With these a devout Christian will conclude his duties, will conclude his life; he will live and die repenting and praying. Observe here,

(1.) It is the character of good people that they do not *forget God's commandments*, being well pleased with their convictions and well settled in their resolutions.

(2.) Even those who, through grace, are mindful of their duty, cannot but own that they have in many instances wandered from it.

(3.) Those that have wandered from their duty, if they continue mindful of it, may with a humble confidence commit themselves to the care of God's grace.