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SERMONS

SERMONS ON PSALM 119

by John Calvin

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TWO AND TWENTY SERMONS OF MAITER

JOHN CALUIN,

In which Sermons is most religiously
handled, the hundredth and nineteenth

Psalm of David, by eight verses
apart according to the
Hebrew Alphabet

*Translated out of French into
English by T. S.*

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

The time for Calvin's *Sermons on the Hundredth and Nineteenth Psalm of David* has come, in fact, has been too long in coming. This splendid English edition, done by Thomas Stocker in the year 1580, has apparently been overlooked for over 400 years, yet belongs to the same family of Calvin's sermons on various books and sections of the Bible which have been reprinted in this century. The collection of sermons on Psalm 119 is one of a series of reprints of Calvin's sermons recently undertaken by Old Paths Publications, and makes a fine compliment to his *Sermons on Galatians*, and *Sermons on Election & Reprobation*. An explanation is no doubt in order as to the particulars of the present volume, editorial decisions, and the publisher's decision to present this work in a form not characteristic of either a simple photolithographed facsimile or a new translation from the original French.

Firstly, a word about translations. We decided to forego the task of a new translation for two primary reasons. The first is that there existed a translation which was believed to be adequate and reasonable. The second is that there is more to translation than simply translating. What we mean by this is that in our age anything with the name "new" is assumed to have some special and improved significance. As in the case of modern translations of the Bible, the onslaught of new versions or new translations has done anything but justice to the original language or to the older translations. As for the spiritual writings of men, criticism may arise regarding the faithfulness of a translation made 400 years ago, and the capabilities of the translator himself. However, this translation was performed by one, namely Thomas Stocker, who translated many of Calvin's writings, such as *Diuers Sermons Concerning the Divinitie, Humanitie, and Nativitie of Our Lord Jesus Christ — 1581*; *Sermon on the History of Melchisedech — 1592*; and *An Excellent Treatise of the Immortalitye of the Soul — 1581*. Besides having translated Calvin, Stocker was also responsible for the translation of writings by Viret, Toussain, and Basil. Additionally, this translation was undertaken within a generation of the original sermons, and published in English only fifteen years after Calvin's death.

The qualifications of Stocker, who was familiar with the times in which these sermons of Calvin were written and the religious circumstances to which they applied, are strengthened for such an undertaking. He also performed this task of translation with access to the collection of sources, at his command, by the author. Furthermore, there is something to be said for the fact that Stocker was knowledgeable of the vulgar language of that day, both in English for his translation and the original French. The approach to translation employed by Stocker no doubt had characteristics like that which is taken by many who are acquainted with an author's writings, theology, and circumstances. Further, Stocker has demonstrated, by his selections for translation, that he was sympathetic to the growing undercurrent of English Calvinism and Puritanism. Hence, his theological leanings were complementary, if not indebted to their development.

Secondly, a word about facsimile reprints. If one could obtain a mint copy of an original antiquarian book, that is to say, one without any stains, tears, creases, worming, or markings of any sort, then he has an ideal copy from which to produce his reprinted volumes. Obtaining such a pristine copy is difficult, particularly if the book is rare, expensive, printed or bound in a less than adequate fashion, of poor quality paper, exposed to elements of inclement weather, war, or frequent use by its owners, etc. These are far more easily overcome than the obstacle of the hesitant, disinclined and reluctant reader who chooses not to endure the product of the ancient printing press. As the saying goes, "you can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink." We decided that it is a larger disservice to placate the modern reader with a watered down edition suitable for milky appetites than to challenge him with the meat necessary to develop beyond the limited literacy characteristic of the present day. Moreover, our age is one which is not only largely responsible for the wholesale destruction of the remembered past, but is guilty of rewriting and altering the meaning of Christian history as well.

In light of this, a publisher is faced with the dilemma of how to best accomplish the goal of getting sound Christian writings into the hands of God's people, providing the stimulus to actually read the writings, and to having the Christian qualitatively yet comprehensively benefit from the writings. Therefore we attempted to bring the ancient forward and carry the modern backward. That is to say, the work itself has been left complete and unabridged, except that the text of the sermons has been

newly typeset and edited to reflect contemporary spelling, and bracketed words *in italics* inserted following some antiquated terms or phrases. The task of modernizing spelling required identifying old texts that used (y for i), (u for v), (v for u), (vv for w), (I for J), and characters with loops on the top such as (c h l t and T). Also you will see something that looks like the letter “f” when in fact it is a letter “s” (note the difference): “f” and “s “. Examples of spelling changes are “*sonne*” to “*son*”, “*deere*” would be “*dear*”, “*Jesus*” would appear as “*Jesus*”, and “*Paule*” should be “*Paul*”. However, exceptions to this were made for other names such as Esay, Moyses, Haggay, Abacuc, etc. , which have been left intact. Other exceptions are for the use of “*eth*” at the end of a word, such as “*behooveth*”, or “*blesseth*”. Additionally, capitalization and punctuation techniques that were the current practices of that era and the printing industry were left intact. For example, there are what appears to be inconsistencies (or rather nuances, if you will) such as “*GOD*” or “*God*” or “*god*”, and “*Gospel*” and “*gospel*”. Capitalization differences are most likely attributable to the availability of letters for layout on the movable type printing press. In the example just mentioned, the letter “G” frequently would be used in the manuscript and so in some cases would be replaced by a “g”. There are instances, however, where it is reasonable to assume that the translator or even Calvin himself employed capitalization to emphasize a particular point, or simply to refer to more than one characteristic or attribute of God (not unlike the varying occurrences of capitalization used by the translators of the Authorized Version). Scripture references quoted by Calvin and found in the side margins of the original edition have been checked and in some cases corrected. They appear at the bottom of each page as daggered footnotes to the sermons.

Another area of decision pertains to the brief Scripture sections preceding each sermon. These verses have been stylishly typeset to approximate their original appearance. This was done for two primary reasons. Firstly, to maintain an accurate reproduction of Stocker’s English text of this Psalm translated from Calvin’s French version which Calvin translated himself from the original languages. Secondly, to offer the reader a taste of antiquity by viewing the rich and full majesty that so beautifully flows from translations of the Reformation era.

The production of this work was through the joint efforts of many, most of whom probably would rather remain anonymous; however, we feel it is

only appropriate to identify the instruments that accomplished the finished work. We are grateful first of all for the generous assistance of Thomas Rockhill, and David Clum, who largely financed this work. There was also the typing by Cheryl Tanski who slaved over a photocopy of a 415 year-old book with all its antiquity. The painstaking task of proof-reading was undertaken by Willard Neel, Likhi Tanski and Adriel Tanski. We also are thankful for the quality artwork and design of the dust-jacket by Peter Nicolas. The publisher also wishes to thank his wife April and children for the time so generously sacrificed while husband and father was buried for countless hours in the production of this work.

Ernie Springer

Old Paths Publications

FOREWORD

BY

Dr. James Montgomery Boice

Senior Minister of Tenth Presbyterian Church

When the Protestant Reformation took place in the sixteenth century and the truths of the Bible, which had long been obscured by the traditions of the medieval church, again became known, there was an immediate elevation of the Scriptures in Protestant services. John Calvin in particular carried this out with thoroughness, ordering that the altars (long the center of the Latin mass) be removed from the churches and that a pulpit with a Bible upon it be placed in the center of the building. This was not to be on one side of the room, but at the center, where every line of the architecture would carry the gaze of the worshiper to that Book.

Calvin did not merely prescribe this for others, of course. He led the way himself. For Calvin was preeminently a preacher, and as a preacher he saw himself primarily as a Bible teacher. Calvin is hardly thought of in that way today. He is best known for his greatly influential *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, not for his preaching, and perhaps, though wrongly, for what many regard as his high-handed ordering of the secular business of Geneva. Yet Calvin spent most of his time and effort preaching. During the part of his life that we know best, from 1541 until his death in 1564, Calvin regularly preached two sermons on Sundays (one at daybreak, the other in the afternoon), and usually every day of the week (Monday through Friday) on alternate weeks. In the weeks he was not preaching daily he lectured three days on theology. Calvin also gave impromptu addresses, visited the sick, governed the church, and carried on a voluminous correspondence to advance the Reformation cause. Still he saw his most important work to be preaching.

Calvin's sermons usually lasted an hour and were in the nature of continuous expositions. He began at the first verse of a Bible book and then treated it in successive sections, averaging four or five verses, until he reached the end, at which point he began another book.

One of the best stories about his preaching is how he picked up exactly where he had left off three-and-a-half years earlier, when he returned to Geneva from his exile in Strasbourg. He had preached in Geneva the last time on Easter Day 1538, and had left the city immediately thereafter. He picked up at the next verse when he began again on September 13, 1541.

Sequential exposition was not a new approach to preaching invented by Calvin. It had been popular in the fourth and fifth centuries, especially in the sermons of John Chrysostom and Saint Augustine. And although that style of preaching had been lost during the Middle Ages — few priests knew the Bible well enough to do it — it was a common pattern of teaching in the theological schools. Calvin merely revived and combined these preaching and teaching patterns.

Normally he begins his sermon with a brief introduction, reminding his listeners of what he had been treating in the previous sermon. Then he works through the passage sentence by sentence, sometimes even word by word, explaining what each part means and, where necessary, resolving difficulties, for example, apparent contradictions with other parts of Scripture. Then he applies the teaching to his hearers so they will profit from the study.

We see that in the sermons in this collection. The first sermon (on <19B901> Psalm 119:1-8) introduces Psalm 119 as the ABC's of God's instruction about the Bible so that we may be "taught the straight rule and order by which we may rightly and truly serve him." The next sermon (on <19B909> Psalm 119:9-16) refers to the earlier study: "Upon Sunday last I declared unto you in sum the argument of this Psalm, the use thereof, and the instruction we may gather by it: to wit, that a faithful man is here taught to stir up himself to the reading of God's Word and thereby to confirm himself accordingly."

After these introductions Calvin moves through each of the two sections explaining one sentence at a time, all the while moving toward practical spiritual applications, like this from the end of sermon one: "According to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the face of our good God in confessing our faults, beseeching him that it would please him to give us a taste that we may feel what a pleasure he doth us when he communicateth his word familiarly among us, and that he will instruct us thereby, not only to understand to discern betwixt good and evil, but that

we may also be sure and certain of his love and good will toward us, to the end that we, living under his charge and conduction, might run unto him, that in the midst of the miseries and wretchedness of this world he will make us blessed, that we may come to everlasting bliss and the glory immortal, which hath been purchased for us once for all by our Lord and Savior, Christ Jesus his Son. ”

In most of our existing English translations passages like this seem to be intricate and cumbersome, but they did not come across that way in the French spoken by Calvin. There is little rhetorical flourish. His words are straightforward, the sentences simple. This is because Calvin understood his calling, as well as that of all other preachers, to be to make the meaning of the biblical text as clear as possible to his hearers.

Calvin preached these sermons on Psalm 119 in early 1553, from January 8 to July 2, a bit less than twelve years after he had returned to Geneva from Strasbourg. They were preached at St. Pierre Church on Sunday afternoons, the main service at the church. At that time Calvin was also preaching on Acts at the early service and on Ezekiel during the week.

The sermons were taken down in shorthand by Denis Raguenier, a French refugee who recorded most of Calvin’s sermons from 1549 until his death either in late 1560 or early 1561. They were published in French in 1554. The English edition was translated by Thomas Stocker and appeared in 1580.

Psalm 119 is a great psalm, which is one reason why this reissue of Calvin’s sermons on it are so welcome. The German scholar Franz Delitzsch wrote, “Here we have set forth in inexhaustible fullness what the Word of God is to a man and how a man is to behave himself in relation to it” (*Biblical Commentary on the Psalms*, volume 3). Derek Kidner, a modern commentator, says, “This giant among the psalms shows the full flowering of that ‘delight... in the law of the Lord’ which is described in ^{<190101>}Psalm 1, and gives its personal witness to the many-sided qualities of Scripture praised in Psalm 19” (*Psalms 73-150: A Commentary on Books III-V of the Psalms*).

Others have also loved this psalm. In his *Treasury of David* Charles Haddon Spurgeon has 349 commentary pages on Psalm 119, which is a book in itself. Charles Bridges, a great Church of England evangelical of the

last century, wrote 481 pages (Banner of Truth Trust edition). His book contains a sermon for each of the psalm's twenty-two stanzas and was issued in 1827 when Bridges was only thirty-three years old. Most impressive of all is the three volume work by Thomas Manton, one of the most prolific of the Puritans. Each volume is from 500 to 600 pages in length for a total of 1,677 pages (Banner of Truth edition). The work has 190 long chapters, more than one for each verse.

Three features of Psalm 119 are worth noting in this introduction. First, Psalm 119 is an acrostic psalm, the most elaborate in the Psalter. The others are ^{<190901>}Psalm 9 to ^{<191001>}Psalm 10 (together), ^{<192501>}Psalm 25, ^{<193401>}Psalm 34, ^{<193701>}Psalm 37, ^{<19B101>}Psalm 111, ^{<19B@01>}Psalm 112 and ^{<19E501>}Psalm 145, nine in all. Psalm 119 is divided into twenty-two stanzas, one for each letter of the Hebrew alphabet, and each verse of each stanza begins with one of these letters in sequence. Thus each of the first eight verses begins with the letter *aleph*, each of the next eight verses begin with the letter *beth*, and so on. Calvin preached one sermon on each of these sections, a total of twenty-two sermons in all.

Second, each verse of the psalm refers to the Word of God, the Bible, with only a small handful of exceptions. This is so striking that virtually every commentator mentions it. The Massoretes said that the Word of God is referred to in every verse but ^{<19B9122>}Psalm 119:122. Derek Kidner says that there are three exceptions, ^{<19B984>}Psalm 119:84, ^{<19B9121>}Psalm 119:121 and ^{<19B9122>}Psalm 119:122, though ^{<19B9121>}Psalm 119:121 may not be an exception if “righteous and just” can be understood as an oblique reference to God's Word. On the other hand, ^{<19B990>}Psalm 119:90 and ^{<19B9132>}Psalm 119:132 also fail to mention the Bible, unless “faithfulness” in ^{<19B990>}Psalm 119:90 and “name” in ^{<19B9132>}Psalm 119:132 mean the Bible. By any reckoning, at least 171 of the Psalm's 176 verses refer to the precepts, words, laws, commandments or decrees of God explicitly.

Third, various synonyms for Scripture dominate the psalm. There are at least eight that occur again and again: “law” (*torah*), which occurs twenty-five times; “word” (*dabar*), twenty-four times; “rulings” or “ordinances” (*mispatim*), twenty-three times; “testimonies” (*hedot*), twenty-three times; “commandments” (*miswoth*), twenty-two times; “statutes” (*huqqim*), twenty-one times; “precepts” or “charges” (*piqqudim*), twenty-one times; and “sayings,” “promise” or “word” (*imra*), nineteen times. However,

there are other terms that are close to being synonyms, such as “way” (<19B903> Psalm 119:3, 15, 30) and “path” (<19B9104> Psalm 119:104, 105, 128), and I have already mentioned the possibility that “righteous and just” and “name” may mean the Bible. The rabbis said that there are ten synonyms for Scripture in this psalm, one for each of the Ten Commandments.

All this was known to Calvin and comes into his exposition at the right places. It is a delight to have these studies available again in a readable English format through the welcome efforts of Ernie Springer and Old Paths Publications.

TO THE RIGHT WORSHIPFUL

*Sir Robert Jermyn, Knight, and to the right
worshipful his godly and virtuous wife, the lady
Judith Jermyn, Thomas Stocker wisheth continual
increase of all spiritual and earthly good things in
this life, with an earnest zeal to the glorious
Gospel of Christ Jesus, and perseverance of
practice thereof unto the end and in the
end, and after this life, everlasting
joy and bliss in the life to come
through the same Christ
Jesus our Lord.*

Albeit the whole Scripture universally (Right Worshipful) is as it were a divine Mistress, teaching both virtue and true faith: yet not-withstanding the Book of Psalms hath over and besides that in a manner an express image of the state and condition of souls, and therefore very necessary for all people in general. Howbeit this hundred and nineteenth Psalm, namely containeth a perfect art and a wonderful vehemency of the Kingly Prophet, in setting forth and highly extolling the praise of God's law and the excellency thereof: wherein he cannot satisfy himself, nor yet sufficiently express the affection which he beareth thereunto, adding moreover many notable complaints and consolations, wherefore it is most meet for all the children of God to have it always both in their hearts and mouths, and so continually meditating thereon as this holy Prophet did in his distress, they may also find the like comfort, whensoever and whatsoever affliction shall assail them, and also to flee and abhor that which is wicked and evil in the sight of the Lord.

Which Psalm being divided into two and twenty parts, by eight verses apart, according to the Hebrew Alphabet, the godly and learned Father and most famous furtherer of the glorious Gospel of our Savior and Redeemer Christ, hath according to that order, very religiously handled and drawn into as many Sermons, to the benefit and comfort of all the true and faithful Scholars in the School of God, which shall diligently read them,

and earnestly strive to follow the same direction in their life and conversation.

Which Sermons according to my poor skill, I have englished from the French, and have taken boldness to dedicate and offer this my simple travail unto your Worships, as a special token of my good will in Christ: beseeching you to accept of this my labor, not according to the rude translation, but the goodness of the matter which they propound, and my hearty affection unto you. And the rather have I been emboldened this to do: both for that I have been credibly informed of, either of your great pains taking in reading over such like godly works as also that myself am *Testis oculatus*, of your daily presence and diligent attention at all Sermons and godly exercises used in this country of Suff. Whose good and godly beginnings with the rest of the right worshipful both men and women in these parts (and all others of what state and condition soever they be) I heartily beseech our good God and merciful father, even for his Christ, his truth, and mercies sake, to increase, strengthen, and continue with daily practice of the same, in some measure in your lives and conversation, with full perseverance unto the end of your days here, without which all the rest is but labor lost. For as the Apostle witnesseth, we are made partakers of Christ, if we keep sure unto the end that beginning wherewith we are upholden.

The Lord God therefore by his holy spirit work these effects in you and in us all that profess his gospel, and lead our adversaries (when it shall please him) into the truth, as he is God of truth: that when his son Christ our Savior shall appear in glory, we may be found to have walked without halting [*waivering*] in whatsoever he hath thought meet to open to us for our salvation. From Mildenhall the 4th of November, 1579.

Your Worships to command
in the Lord
Thomas Stocker

TO ALL FAITHFUL READERS

THE Reading over of these present Sermons, will sufficiently declare what commodity and profit they may bring with them: As in very deed the Author of them right well sheweth throughout all his works, in what sort the Lord GOD hath heretofore been served, and also how ordinarily he is served by him.

And therefore for a full recommendation as well of the Author, as also of the work itself, I intend through GOD his assistance to set forth none other thing, than the same fruit and profit, which they have already gotten, that have read them, and that fruit which they may make report of, that shall hereafter read them. For this may very well be thought that nothing in the whole world maketh a man more blessed, than the lively and continual meditation of the holy law and good will of our heavenly father. Now then this is the Psalm, which is framed, and wholly serveth to this end and purpose, daily to exercise ourselves herein, and although that he so oftentimes repeateth these words, Law, Ordinances, Statutes, Edict, Commandments, Decrees, and other such like: yet are they no vain repetitions: but used to this intent and purpose, to let us thoroughly understand, how marvelous perverse and forward our nature is causing these so necessary things, too easily to melt (like wax against the Sun, as we say) clean away from us, and also to make us to be touched at the quick, that we might feel how fervently we ought to sigh and groan, after the law and ordinance of God, how zealously to desire to put the same in execution, and also how greatly to be grieved with beholding the most proud and villainous contempt of the ungodly treading the same under their feet.

And because there are some who rather desire to have such Books as they may easily carry about with them, I have the rather to please all parties been very willing to satisfy them herein, always reserving this good affection, that GOD might be honored, and glorified, by this my small travail, and the building up of his Church advanced,

Farewell.

THE FIRST SERMON OF

M. JOHN CALVIN

UPON THE HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM OF THE KINGLY PROPHET DAVID

The first eight Verses upon

ALEPH

- 1 Blessed are all those which are upright in the way: and walk in the law of the lord.
- 2 Blessed are they which keep his Testimonies: and seek him with their whole heart.
- 3 Surely they work no iniquity: that walk in his ways.
- 4 Thou hath commanded to keep thy Precepts diligently.
- 5 O that my ways were directed too keep thy Statutes.
- 6 Then should not I be confounded: when I have respect unto all thy Commandments.
- 7 I will praise thee with an upright heart: when I shall learn the judgments of thy righteousness.
- 8 I will keep thy Ceremonies: o forsake me not overlong.

BELOVED, WE OUGHT TO BE GREATLY ashamed of ourselves, when as our good God and heavenly Father, goeth about by all means possible to draw us unto him, and yet we in no wise will come nigh him, but rather as is commonly said, do pull our heads out of the collar and hale backward. If there were none other testimony hereof against us, but this Psalm which I am here now in hand about to handle, it might suffice. The sum whereof is this, to show unto us what grace the Lord our God offereth unto us, when as we are taught the straight rule and order, by which we may rightly and truly serve him, wherein consisteth the whole effect of our salvation, and the same to be the very way and means to come thereunto. When as God then granteth unto us his grace, to be thus instructed by his word, behold he hath now given unto us an unspeakable treasure, and impossible to be sufficiently valued. By this Psalm is declared unto us, that this is the very

use of the law of God, and also of all the holy Scripture: and that we are instructed and exhorted to profit ourselves by that which is there offered unto us. But because that when any talk is ministered of drawing us to God, we are so blockish and dull, that it is pity and lamentable to see: and albeit that God approacheth near unto us, and that we have many and sundry times clearly forgotten all whatsoever we have understood and learned of him, see here what an aid and help he hath added for our behoove: which is this, that his will and meaning is, that this Psalm should be drawn and framed into an order of eight verses apart, and that all the verses of every eight apart, should begin with a several letter, after the order of an ABC. As if he should say, It shall not be material that we be profound learned men, for our instruction in that which is necessary to our salvation: But that the doctrine is common as well to the learned as to the unlearned. Are our wits and memories grown so short? Let us then reckon and tell upon our fingers, when as we have learned our ABC. Let us then join eight verses together, and so eight by eight, and go through the whole crossrow, and we shall have the whole Psalm at our fingers' ends. What shall we farther say? If we will hereby profit ourselves no way, neither yet vouchsafe [*allow*] to hearken unto our good God, ne [*nor*] yet suffer us to be so familiarly guided by him, yea even unto that thing which is more than necessary may it not be very well said, that we are almost accursed? True it is that the verses indeed begin not either with the English or yet the Latin letters: but with the Hebrew: wherein David made and wrote this Psalm. Notwithstanding so it is, that the will and purpose of the holy ghost, is to make us to feel and understand that which before I have declared: to wit, that the doctrine herein contained, is not only set down for great Clerks which have gone to school ten or twenty years: but also for the most simple: to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance. And herewithal let us note this by the way: That we all, ought to know and understand this Psalm as perfectly as our Pater noster as we usually say. But here we must not say as a number of men do, that our wit and capacities are not so excellent and fine, as to comprehend and understand the holy scriptures: and besides, that our memory will not serve to retain and keep that which sometimes is preached unto us. A strange case: we will easily retain and keep in mind not only vain and foolish songs and ditties, but also such as are both wanton and dissolute, and even such as Saint Paul saith, do corrupt and poison good manners, for this horrible infection is always shut up for an evil intent and purpose. For

if we shall hear any villainous and ribaldrous [*crude, indecent*] song, which shall only stir us up to all filthy lust and shamelessness: the same by and by we retain with great ease.

Behold now, how the Lord our God here teacheth us as it were by an ABC a most excellent song amongst the rest, by which we may learn to rule and order our lives, whereby also he exhorteth us to well doing, to comfort us in all our afflictions, to ratify unto us the promises of salvation, to open unto us the Gates of his everlasting Kingdom, that we might enter into everlasting life: and all this is contained within this ABC of this present Psalm, and yet we will all say that our memory is overshoot, and our wit too gross, or weak to hold it. Now I beseech you tell me this, will this excuse go for payment or not? Verily I believe not, wherefore let us learn to bestow our whole endeavor and study to record the lessons which are here taught us: and that we may be hereafter thoroughly acquainted with this Psalm, if we will be reputed and taken to be the children of God. And seeing we see our nature to be given to many ungodly and pernicious, or at the least to very unprofitable thing: let us yet retain and hold that which shall be most profitable for us, and the rather because that God so abaseth himself to the most rude, simple, and ignorantest among us, For mine own part, because I will frame myself to that manner and order which the holy Ghost hath here set down, I shall enforce myself to follow as briefly as I can the plain and true meaning of the text: and without continuing in long exhortations. I will only do my best to mince or shred, as we say, the words of David, because we may the better digest them. For performance whereof, I determine by the grace of God to finish eight verses apart in every Sermon, and to hold myself within such a compass, as that the most ignorant shall easily, acknowledge and confess that I mean nothing else but to make open and plain the simple and pure substance of the text. And now let us come to the contents of the first eight verses apart, beginning with the first letter Aleph: *Blessed are they* (saith David) *which are upright in the way: and walk in the Law of the Lord*. First of all, he doth us here to wit, that we understand not wherein our chief blessedness consisteth, and the reason is, because that we are blind, and do live in the world as savage and wild beasts, utterly void of sense and reason: and suffer ourselves to be led and carried away of our brutish and swinish affections and lusts. And because it is so, that we are thus carried away, it is a manifest sign and token that we discern not good from evil: or else that

the Devil hath so bewitched us, that we think thereof no whit at all. True it is that the most wicked will confess and say, that they desire to be saved but yet in the desire thereof, they clearly fly from it, and go as clean away from it, as they can for their lives.

But what is the cause why they so greatly withdraw themselves from that which they so highly protest to love? Yea they draw as near unto it, as they can possibly fly from it. By this it seemeth that they have conspired to reject and make little account of that good which GOD meaneth to do for them. And here we are to note, that David in this first verse accuseth us of horrible blindness, as if he should say, Surely you are all senseless and without wit. And to say the truth if there were but one drop of reason in us, without doubt, we would not so reject and refuse our salvation of a set purpose as we do. See here how mercifully our good God dealeth with us, who sheweth us how and in what manner we may be blessed, and yet we for all that draw altogether backward. Doth not David then of very right, justly condemn us? But because every of us protesteth to know the right way, he addeth, *They which walk in the way of the Lord*. He hath said: *Blessed are they which are undefiled in their way*: that is, which walk aright. And who are they? It is very true indeed as before I have said, that there are a great number, which will boast themselves to walk aright, and that in such sort, as that it cannot be much amended: and yet notwithstanding, if they be asked who made their way, and who it is that assureth them that they shoot at the true mark, they know not what answer to make. For there is but one way which leadeth to salvation, which is the law: as David hereof speaketh, wherefore as many as walk in the Law of the Lord, saith he, go not out of their way. We have in this first verse two notable lessons: The one is, that God here accuseth us, that every of us strayeth and erreth from the way of salvation, and although we protest that we are willing and desirous to be saved, yet for all that our wicked affections do in such sort carry us away, as that we desire nothing else but that we may be far from that felicity and blessedness which is set before us. For there it is said, *Blessed are they which walk in the right way*. And thus much for the first point. The second is, That we may invent and devise many and sundry kinds of life, and so think that we go the best and surest way that may be, and by this means deceive ourselves, for there is but one way that leadeth to salvation. What way is it? It is not that which we of our own brain do imagine: For when Isaiah saith,(<235306> Isaiah 53:6)

that everyone hath declined from his way, he meaneth that we all run into everlasting destruction. The Law of God then is the way which must rule and order our life, and when we will hearken unto it, all things shall go well with us, but whosoever swerveth from that, the same is like unto a savage and wild beast, which can do nothing else but gallop and fling overthwart the fields. There is none of us all but that may have many motions which may seem good to us, as we may see by the poor and silly unbelievers, which are very fervent and earnest to do this or that, which to their thinking seemeth very good and profitable: but yet the spirit of God is not their leader and guide.

Now it is said, That when we have the law of God before us, it shall go well with us: and that without it, it is impossible, but that our life must needs be confounded and come to naught. He saith a little after, *Blessed are they which keep his Testimonies: and seek him with their whole heart.* David now useth another word, than this word the law, to wit, testimonies. This word in itself importeth a covenant or contract, and it is not to be understood otherwise than to be applied to this end: to wit, that God covenanting with us, declareth, that his meaning is to pull and draw us unto him, and also how we ought to order our life, because it is a mutual Contract between him and us. As if he should have said: Go to now, understand you that here I make a covenant with you, that you acknowledge me to be your GOD: That you doubt not of my love towards you, and in loving you that I am your Savior, and that you call upon me in this affiance and trust, and besides that you be also my loving and obedient Children, that I do protect and govern you, and that you are my household Servants. When the Lord our GOD thus abaseth and offereth himself unto us, and that he useth such familiarity and gentleness towards us, as to talk with us, It is said, that he giveth us his Testimonies of his love and favor towards us.

Here now David declareth, That they are blessed which keep the Testimonies of GOD: and seek him with their whole heart. As if he should say that the Law of God consisteth not only in this, that it sheweth unto us what we ought to do, but that it carrieth also with it another special Doctrine: to wit, to assure us that he will be our Father, that he loveth us so dearly that he desireth none other thing of us, but that we would be his sons and heirs. And hereunto tend all the Ceremonies, whereof we shall speak hereafter more at large. Yet this is true, that as well in this place

above said, as also by the rest of the names couched in this Psalm, as of Statutes, Decrees, and Ordinances, David always meaneth the doctrine of the Law. Howbeit it is to be noted, that this diversity of words, it is not here set down without good cause. For it expresseth most plainly unto us, what variety of consolation we receive by that which GOD sheweth unto us in the Law of Moyses, and in all the Prophets, who are as it were Expositors thereof. For many times when we speak of the Law, we suppose that there is nothing else meant but that which GOD commandeth us to do. But there is a great deal more to be considered: to wit, he assureth us of his favor and grace, and willeth us to stay ourselves thereon, that we might be assured of our salvation, and that also we might be certain of his love by his sacraments therein ordained. Moreover, that we should address ourselves to Jesus Christ, and by that means be instructed to run unto him who is our only and alone Savior. When God then speaketh unto us, we must consider that he saith not only, do this, or that, but declareth himself unto us, what manner of one we should think him to be, and what one also he sheweth himself on his part to be towards us, both by experience and effect. This diversity of words used here in this Psalm by David is not superfluous: For it sheweth us that the Law of God doth not only command us how we should live, and after what sort: but doth also certify us of the good will of God, promiseth us salvation, leadeth us to Jesus Christ, stirreth us up to call upon the name of God, giveth us Ceremonies to confirm us therein and moreover, that it guideth, and holdeth us within our limits. And surely there is not one verse in all this Psalm (although there are very many) wherein there is not mention made of one of these words, to wit, either of the law of God, or of his Commandments, either else of his Ordinances, Statutes, or Testimonies, or of his voice, Judgments, or Justice. These words are here so many times repeated, as that there is not one verse, but that there is one or sometimes two of them in it: as hereafter we shall see throughout the whole Psalm.

And now let us come to the matter herein contained: *Blessed are they which keep the Testimonies of the Lord: and which seek him with their whole heart.* First David declareth here (as afore said) that we have greatly profited in the law, when as we shall acknowledge and confess what affection and love God beareth us, and how we ought to assure ourselves of his good will and fatherly love. And afterward he telleth us to what end and purpose it is, that God granteth unto us such an assurance, because

(saith he) we should seek him. For this is most sure, when as we shall understand God to be such a one, as he declareth himself unto us by his word, it is impossible but that we should stir up ourselves, and be moved to give ourselves wholly unto him. And to prove that this is true, behold the inestimable bounty and goodness declared unto us in our God, what man is he that is so perverse and void of sense and reason, which will not be contented to place himself there, where he thinketh his whole blessedness and felicity consisteth and lieth. Even so likewise, when as we become careless in seeking after the Lord our God, it is a sign and token that we have understood nothing of that which he hath showed unto us of his goodness and mercy, and of all his fatherly affection, which is witnessed unto us in the law, and in the holy scriptures. But because it shall be no great ado for a number of men, to make a countenance of seeking the Lord, David sheweth that we must not seek him with our feet and hands, with the outward gestures of the body alone, but with a true and pure affection. And therefore, he saith, *Blessed are they which seek him with their whole heart*. As if he should say, I would not have you to do as the hypocrites do, which bear of religion with strong hand, no, I mean not so: but I would have your love to be sound and true. As touching that saying, *With their whole heart*, it is to declare unto us, That God cannot away with parting of stakes, as we men many times do: For we are well contented to bestow some part upon God, and would be at free liberty to hold us with the world, and to serve God by halves. But David teacheth us here to serve him with our whole heart: to wit, in all integrity and soundness, and not with two faces in one hood. He would not have us parted in sunder, to say, Well, I am contented to serve God, howbeit I would not that he should require my whole service to himself: but that I might after satisfy and follow my own lusts and pleasures, that I might be at liberty to serve the world. No not so (saith he:) It must be brought into a true and perfect soundness, and not to divide man after such a manner. True it is that we shall never be able to seek God with such a perfection, but that it may be greatly amended: neither doth the holy scripture mean by this saying, *With their whole heart*, full perfection, but only opposeth itself against the hypocrisy of a great number of men, and which would be in us all, were it not that God himself did remedy and help it. That is, we would with good will serve God by halves, if so be he would let us alone with the rest, to do what we thought good. As for example, We shall have very many which will not stick with God, to come to the Sermon on a

Sunday, and to be present at the prayers of the faithful, and to make some show of religion: and yet they would have God to give them free choice to do what they listed [*desired*] all the rest of the week after: or if they come to a Sermon oftener than on the Sunday, it seemeth to them that they have done very well, that they are thoroughly discharged of their duties if they tarry there but one hour. But because they might be set at more liberty, they will not stick to say, that they will be free from some one vice, one will say that he will be no whoremaster, Another, that he will be no drunkard, Another, that he will be no blasphemer: and yet every one of these will have his particular vice, and think that God ought to bear with them, seeing that for his honor, and to do him pleasure, they abstained from some sin, and that they obeyed him in some point. But the scripture telleth us that all this is nothing, but that everyone ought to examine himself thoroughly and in all points, and finding in himself anything which is against the will of God: to be utterly displeased therewith, clearly to renounce it, and to desire nothing but to be cleansed thereof. See now, this is that perfection, whereof David here speaketh. Now let us see what is the sum of the second verse, to wit, that we should do nothing else but study in the law of God, not only to know what is forbidden or commanded, but to be certain what manner of one GOD is towards us, and what affection he beareth us, that we might put the trust of our salvation in him, and call upon his holy name. And besides, there is declared unto us, that when we have tasted of the mercies of God, that he hath certified us of his love and grace, that the same ought to stir us up to seek him, and to cleave wholly unto him, and to yield ourselves wholly to his service: and that not in the outward show, and in hypocrisy: but with a pure and sound heart and affection, and not by halves: so that there be found true soundness and integrity, as before I have touched. Now it followeth,

Surely they work none iniquity that walk in his ways. First David here sheweth in this present verse, what the cause is why all men abound in evil and iniquity: to wit, forsomuch as they will not be ruled by the Lord their God. See here the springhead [*source, cause*] of the outrages, of all the disorder, and confusions in the world, to wit, that God is pressed and ready to guide and govern us, but what? we may not away to bear his yoke, every man refuseth it, and will be exempt from it. Lo here whereupon ariseth our dissolute and wanton life, to wit, because we will not suffer the authority which God hath over us, to lead and guide us, as

he is always ready to do, and as he also sheweth us by his law. Let this then be an Item for us.

And it followeth further. For David meaneth to confirm the words before spoken, to wit, how it cometh to pass that we are blessed, that is, if we keep the testimonies of our GOD, and walk in his law. For, saith he, they which do no wickedness walk in his ways: contrariwise, we do nothing but provoke his heavy wrath and displeasure against us, in committing of sin and iniquity.

When as God then standeth against us, and becometh our enemy, must not our life be unhappy and accursed? It cannot be otherwise chosen. Here then is one proof of that which before hath been said: to wit, that our whole felicity consisteth in this, that God is our instructor and teacher, and that we hold ourselves to the doctrine which we receive from him. And what is the reason? For lo, saith David, they will abstain from evildoing. When then we abstain from doing of evil, we provoke not God his heavy wrath against us: and so let us conclude, that herein consisteth our chief felicity. Moreover, here is to be noted, that as many as walk not in the law of God, cannot but run into mischief and destruction: yea howsoever they think of their well doing, and persuade themselves to live holily and godly, yet hath God told them that it is clean contrary. And here this parcel of scripture is worthy the marking, for hereby we may see the pride of us men, in that we make all the world believe, that all things go with us as well as is possible, when as we follow our own fantasies, being thus arrogant to say, whatsoever we do it is all well done. But behold what God (the only judge hereof) hath certainly set down, which we can no way, repeal or call back, neither shall be possible to be retracted as we lust, to wit, that no man can abstain from evil doing, but such only which walk after this heavenly doctrine. They then which walk after their own pleasure, must needs run into everlasting perdition. Now then there are two manner of ways wherein men do err. For one sort exceed in open and most manifest transgressions and sins: and although they very well know that they are evil and wicked, yet take they leave, continually to follow them. As a whoremonger cannot justify his wicked doing: no more can a thief, a swearer, nor a drunkard. And yet it is so with them, that they always give themselves leave to go from better to worse. Howbeit there is another manner of way of evildoing, which is more dangerous, and a great deal more to be feared, because it is more covert and secret, to wit, when as

men will not acknowledge themselves to be worthy of commendation, and that they think that there is none that can detect or condemn them, having a foolish and devilish opinion which blindeth their eyes. These men then (as it is the manner of all hypocrites) may well justify themselves: but yet the case so standeth, that God condemneth them, as here we may see. It remaineth now, that we use nothing for the whole rule and order of our life, but the law of God alone: for without it, all our life must needs be dissolute, and there shall be nothing in it but confusion and destruction. It followeth next after, *That God hath commanded us to keep diligently his precepts*, That is, always, according to the truth which David holdeth. For it is very sure, that God is so careful over our salvation, that he procureth and furthereth it, as much as is possible for us to desire. Now if God be thus touched with us, and beareth us such a good will and love: let us understand that when he chargeth us to keep his ordinances and precepts, that he thereby signifieth unto us, that the same is our whole blessedness and felicity. And to prove it to be so, God requireth not our service, because he hath some business for us to do: For he hath not, nor needeth any help of his creatures. When then we are not able to do that which he commandeth us, we can neither do good nor hurt unto our creator. What is it that moveth him to be so careful over us as he is, and what is it that pricketh and thrusteth us forward to keep his commandments? Surely, since neither his profit nor gain leadeth him to be thus careful, doubtless he respecteth only our salvation. By this we may conclude, that there is none other blessedness which we can enjoy, but to walk in his law, as he hath before said. But in the meanwhile we may see how villainous and wicked a thing our unthankfulness is: for God showeth not unto us only in a word what is our duty to do, but useth also a familiar and gentle doctrine, to draw us unto him. And afterward he exhorteth us, because he seeth us to be very cold and untoward. And for the selfsame cause he useth much diversity, and pursueth it diligently as we see: to the end we might pretend no excuse of ignorance, when we have not performed that which he hath set down unto us by his law: but that we should be convinced of malice, and that we might understand and know that we are well worthy of everlasting condemnation. And so much the more ought we thoroughly to mark this doctrine, where it is declared unto us, that no excuse shall serve us, when as every of us outrageth so much and followeth his own lust: seeing that God hath prevented [*preceded*] us, and that he hath declared unto us, that the right rule to walk by, is to follow his commandments:

neither that he hath done the same slightly, but that he hath persisted and continued therein, as much as was possible for him to do. Thirdly, that by this means he hath showed unto us his great love towards us, and what care he hath of our welfare and life. David then goeth on forward, and saith, *O that my ways were directed to keep thy Statutes.* Here David pricketh himself forward, and showeth the desire he hath to come to that blessedness and felicity whereof he hath spoken before. And we must be sure to observe this order, for it is not enough for us to understand and know wherein our felicity and blessedness consisteth, and the way to come thereunto, as God hath appointed us: but we must also enter into ourselves. For every man must think thus with himself. What manner of man am I? Seeing my God is so loving and merciful that he seeketh me, and that he requireth nothing else of me but that I should come unto him, is it reason that I should sit still? shall I become a block? shall I become a senseless and witless creature? shall I not be moved with such favor and grace as my GOD showeth unto me, and maketh me to feel.

See here what David meaneth to teach us in this verse, *O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep thy commandments.* When as he speaketh of his ways, he meaneth all the actions of his life, for the life of man is called a Way: And that not without cause, for all our thoughts and affections, are as ways, and as our footsteps. Now he saith, *O that my ways were made so direct, that I might keep thy commandments.* Herein he declareth, that a faithful man, after he hath known this mercy of God in guiding our life, ought to enter into himself, and think that there is neither reason nor wisdom in him how to govern himself: but that all proceedeth from the good will and lovingkindness of the Lord. Sithens [*since*] then that we are so inclined to rove in our own ways hither and thither, by reason of the foolish presumption and vain confidence which we have of our own wisdom, let us use such remedy as God hath assigned us: to wit, that we forsake ourselves, and tread under foot this carnal reason which deceiveth us: that we set at naught all our lusts and ungodly affections that God only may bear rule, and our life be guided according to his law.

It followeth, *Then should I not be confounded, when I have respect to all thy commandments.* Here David confirmeth himself in the doctrine next before: for he declareth what the mark is whereat he aimeth. O Lord, saith he, when as thou shalt do me that good, that I may be directed according to thy word, I shall never be confounded. When David now hath such a

desire, he thereby right well declareth, that every man ought to be careful and to endeavor himself thereunto, or else he shall never obey the will of God, considering that there are so many gainsayings in our flesh and nature, as is most pitiful to think upon. For look how many our affections and thoughts are, we have even so many enemies rebelling against God, and which hinder us to walk after his will. We ought therefore to pray unto him that he will hold us in, that he may be our master, and we his vessels. Moreover, let us consider well of that which is here spoken, to wit, that in keeping the commandments of God, we shall never be confounded. By this he doth us to understand that so many as follow their own lusts and fantasies, which look this way and that way, and do imagine themselves a mark, and forge themselves such a way as seemeth good in their own sight, that they shall be confounded and deceived. No doubt when men do that which best liketh themselves, they straightways think all things shall go so well with them as is possible to be wished, glorying in their own vain imaginations: but what followeth thereof? God confoundeth them in their own arrogancy wherewith they were puffed up for a time: Would we eschew this confusion of the unbelieving persons? Let us have an eye to the commandments of God: to wit, let our eyes be settled on them, and look not on our own reason, nor of our natural sense, neither yet of any other thing that lieth in our own power, which may turn us away from them. And it is a necessary point for us to be informed thereof. For as often as men will give themselves leave to imagine and think what they list [*desire*] to have done, there shall a thousand thoughts foreclose their minds, and so will turn them away from God, and wholly estrange them from the doctrine of salvation. And for this cause David declareth that there is but one only means, to wit, that we should wholly settle our eyes upon the Law of GOD, without turning away from it either on this side or on that, as commonly and usually we do. Afterward he goeth on and saith, *I will praise thee with an upright heart: when I shall learn the judgments of thy righteousness.* David showeth in this verse how we may praise the Lord our God, and that is continually following the plainness of his matter. For we must all confess that our life is miserable, if it tend not to the praise and glorifying of God. Let us now see how we may praise him: We must be exercised in his judgments, that is, in the rule which he hath set down unto us. For this word, *Judgments*, importeth that we are taught and instructed of that which we have to do. For our life is outrageous if we pass the limits and bounds which he hath appointed us: and contrariwise,

we keep a true uprightness in obeying of him. Now then he saith, that when he shall have learned the righteous judgments of God, that then he will thank him with an unfeigned [*honest*] heart. By this he signifieth unto us, that although men persuade themselves to love GOD as much as is possible, nevertheless that it is but feigned [*mendacious*], until such time as they are unfeignedly [*honestly*] instructed in the law. And thus much for that. Moreover, here is to be noted, that that is not all which we have learned that God showeth unto us in his word: but David speaketh here of an instruction which taketh root, and is settled and abideth in the heart of a man, according to that which hath heretofore been said. For a number may imagine of their own brain what the law of God is, but in the meanwhile it standeth so with them, that when we behold their life and conversation, it appeareth that they have profited no whit at all in his school. It is meet therefore that our heart be brought to the school of God, to wit, that whatsoever he teacheth us, it may be thoroughly imprinted and engraven within. And this is that manner of learning, whereof David here speaketh. For if we have been exercised in this sort, that we have holden the doctrine and law of God, we may very well glorify his blessed name: to wit, we may truly praise him as he hath commanded us.

When he saith, *I will keep thy Statutes*: that is, That he is so resolved and confirmed in the doctrine of the law, that he hath overcome all the affections and lusts of the flesh and the world, which might resist and hinder him in the service of God. He hath said before, O that my ways were made so direct. He desireth, as a man which when he cannot have that which he wisheth for, is in great pain and travail. It behooveth us also to pour out such sighs and groans, considering the rebellion of our flesh, which is so contrary to the righteousness of God, that all our thoughts and affections (as is above said) are so many gainsayings, that they turn us clean away from his obeisance. We must therefore say with David, Alas: how is it possible that I should be ever able to come to the perfect serving of my God? to trust upon him, and wholly to settle myself upon that rule and order which he hath set down unto me? Lo I say, these should be our wishes and desires. But this is not sufficient enough, to have a desire that we might serve God. But there is yet much more, as when we shall desire that God will push us forward and stir us up thereto, and yet we must not stay there neither. What must we then do? Let us step forth with David and protest, that we will keep the commandments of God: to wit, when

we have fought against our inordinate affections, and that we are assured to have victory over them, that we then make this conclusion: God shall so conduct me, that I shall be able to keep his Statutes. As for the rest, because we cannot have this as of ourselves, we are always to pray as David did:

O Lord forsake me not utterly. For if God withhold his holy hand from us, alas what shall become of us? Is it possible for us to have one good desire or thought in us? No, it is impossible, but we shall wholly decline to all evil and mischief, yea and we shall become his enemies and adversaries. We must therefore, having all our refuge from God, beseech him with David, that he will not forsake us. When he saith, *O Lord forsake me not overlong*, He signifieth unto us, that God many times suffereth us to go wrong, and suffereth us to fall, or else to stumble. And why doth he so? Because he would humble us: for what is he which goeth not out of the way, or at the least halteth [*waivereth*] not, and which oftentimes falleth not flat down? But yet for all that he would not have us discouraged. When then we see our weakness, and that there are many faults and imperfections in us. Let us beseech the Lord our God that he will not forsake us forever: for there is no difficulty which David would not but that we should know, and he knew a great many of faults in himself: But yet he hoped that God would not forsake him forever. And he knew also that though he happened oftentimes to fall, yet that he would relieve him by his grace.

And this is his meaning also what we must do: for we know this, that there is no man which wholly keepeth the law of God: we are all transgressors thereof, we are all miserable sinners. We must therefore run unto our good God, and beseech him that when we are fallen, that he will relieve us through his fatherly goodness, as he is always ready to do, and that he hath promised he will govern us, in supporting of us, until such time as he hath despoiled us of all the imperfections of our flesh. And according to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the face of our good God in confessing our faults, beseeching him that it would please him to give us a taste that we may feel what a pleasure he doth us, when he communicateth his word familiarly among us, and that he will instruct us thereby, not only to understand to discern betwixt good and evil: but that we may also be sure and certain of his love and good will towards us: to the end that we living under his charge and conduction, might run unto him,

that in the midst of the miseries and wretchedness of this world, he will make us blessed, that we may come to everlasting bliss, and the glory immortal, which hath been purchased for us once for all by our Lord and savior Christ Jesus his son. And that when he hath once set us into the right way, that he would keep us therein more and more, until the time that he hath brought us into his heavenly kingdom. That not only, etc.

THE SECOND SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

BETH

- 9 Wherewithall shall a young man redress his way? in taking heed thereto according to thy word.
- 10 With my whole heart have I sought thee: let me not wander from thy commandementes.
- 11 I have hidden thy promise in my heart: that I might not sin against thee.
- 12 Blessed art thou O Lord: teach me thy statutes.
- 13 With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.
- 14 I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies: as in all manner of riches.
- 15 I will meditate in thy commandementes: and consider thy ways.
- 16 My delight shall be in thy statutes: and I will not forget they words.

UPON SUNDAY LAST PAST I declared unto you in sum the argument of this Psalm, the use thereof, and the instruction that we may gather by it: to wit, that a faithful man is here taught to stir up himself to the reading of God's word, and thereby to confirm himself accordingly. David himself hath done this, who of all others was the most excellent: how much more then ought we to do the like? even we I say, which are so rude and ignorant, and far from so much profiting in the school of God as he? But because we are so cold, and have need to be spurred forward like Asses: Behold why David here sheweth us, what profit and commodity we may receive by this continual study, if every of us will apply ourselves to see and hear that which God hath manifested unto us in his law, and in the holy Scriptures: As here he saith, *Wherewithal shall a young man redress*

his way? in taking heed thereto or standing upon his guard *according to thy word*.

He sheweth us here, that if we be desirous to order our life as it becometh us, to have it rightly governed, and to be pure and simple, we must hold that way which GOD hath set before us. For we must not trust unto our own wits. Neither frame and fashion unto ourselves such a way as shall to us seem best: but to suffer God to rule and conduct us, and to obey him simply and plainly. To be short, David signifieth unto us, that all the wisdom and perfection of our life, is to follow GOD, and cleave unto his will. True it is, that this sentence at the first sight may seem to us too common, and as it were more than needeth. For we will say, what is he that knoweth not this, and will not confess it, I will not deny but that it is an ordinary thing to confess it: But in the meanwhile, how few are there which are persuaded of that which is here spoken: or if we imagine such a thing in our head, where is the practice of it? I fear me, we shall find it in a very small number of us. Let us not therefore think that this rule which the spirit of God hath set before us, is in vain, for it is for the amendment of our life according to his word, and to make us to understand, that without it, all is but dung, and filth, that we have all erred, and that we hold no way, although we think all to the contrary. But we are to consider, why he especially speaketh here, of a young man. For we are sure that God hath given his law as well for the great as the small, for the old as the young: that when we shall begin to be taught it even from our youth, we must hold and continue it to the grave. Wherefore then doth David strain this doctrine of the law to young men? It is not for that it reacheth not unto the aged: but there are two reasons why he so spake. We know the hot affection that is in youth, and that there is such an heat in us, as that it seemeth it can no way be kept in. And because it is a hard matter, to repress the hot and exceeding boiling affections of young men: David especially sheweth, that the word of God is the best remedy to repress the same. As if he should have said, It is very true, that young men are reckless and do err, yea like unto wild beasts which cast no doubts, so hot and furious, as that it is almost impossible to bring them to any good pass, or yet to restrain them. For when we think to have surest hold on them, then are they farthest off, but if they shall be advised and counseled to be ordered and governed by God, no doubt of it they will be greatly daunted. And although their passions and affections do greatly exceed, yet shall a

man see in them some modesty, and a quiet and courteous behavior. The mischief then is, that young men will not be subject to God: for if they would, they should find a good means in his word, yea, and the same very sufficient, to remedy all their vices. And it tendeth to this end, to declare unto us what virtue is in the word of God, even to suppress the most outrageous passions that may possibly be within us. And thus much for the first point. The second reason is, that David his meaning is chiefly to show unto the younger sort that they had great need to be held short: for otherwise they would exceed more and more in all mischief: for their nature is the rather more and more inclined to evil, because it hath little advice and small wisdom. His mind therefore is to advertise them of this necessity, because they should be more careful to bestow their study upon the word of God. And to be brief, his meaning is to advertise the whole world in general, that we ought betimes to enter into the school of God, if we will be taught according to his will. We know what Solomon saith in the book of Ecclesiastes, (^{<211201>} Ecclesiastes 12:1) that we must not tarry until we come to old worn years, and then to remember God and think upon him. But that we should begin so soon as God hath given us wit and discretion, and to continue it unto the end. Lo here, a doctrine which ought thoroughly to be marked of us, for we see from whence the springhead [*source, cause*] of all the excess and wantonness, which do now reign, and have in all ages reigned in the world cometh, because that God is not obeyed, for if that were so, we should have a bridle to keep us in awe and in good order, so that we would suffer ourselves to be ordered by the doctrine which is contained in the holy scripture. If we then would humble ourselves and be subject to God as to our Master, all things should be as well directed as we could possibly wish. But why do we not so? The world forsooth [*in truth*] will not obey God as becometh it, neither will it be brought to this reason. Behold then the cause why we see all things so confused as they are. So it is that we are altogether inexcusable, seeing that our God so offereth himself unto us, and declareth unto us that if we will follow his word, that all things shall go well with us, that our way shall be pure and clean, and that our life shall be true perfectness itself. And when God giveth such a testimony unto his law, all mouths must be stopped, and we must be cast down headlong, when as we know that we thus rebelled against our God, who is always ready truly to guide us. And thus much for this. Moreover, if our affections be so contrary, that our lusts and affections be like wild beasts, that we cannot repress them: let us know that our God will give

power and strength to his word that we may be joined with him, if so be that we will direct ourselves to that mark. And to prove it to be so, he here speaketh especially of the corruptions of youth, which (as I have already declared) are more excessive and disordered than they are in the aged. But so it is that both great and small might very well be brought to this pass, to suppress their inordinate affections and lusts, if so be they would give that honor to God which unto him appertaineth [*pertains*], that is, if they would follow his word. Furthermore, we are here to note the exhortation which we have already touched, to wit, that it is David his meaning to manifest unto us that we ought betimes to be God's scholars, and to suffer him to rule us, and to continue and hold us in this study all the days of our life. Let us not then tarry until we come to the grave's brink to become wise in this behalf, as we see these scornors, which make themselves merry, and outrage in mocking of God, saying, Well sir, we shall have leisure to repent time enough. For if we may have but one hearty sigh, care away Sithens [*since*] then this is most sure that it is Satan which eggeth [*incites*] them thus grievously to abuse the patience of God: let us beware that we be not so bewitched. But let us follow that which is here set down, to wit, that we may be God's scholars even from our youth. And above all things let us consider, that young men have here a special lesson to learn, as before hath been touched. For David here declareth (<197322> Psalm 73:22) unto them, that they have a great deal more need to be restrained, than any of the rest. It is very true that we are before God always, even as young children: Yea, I say that the elder sort of greater experience, and such as appear grave and wise to the world, are without all doubt before the majesty of God very fools and idiots. We hear also what David confesseth of himself in another place, where he saith, that he was like a calf, and a beast, without reason or wisdom. And if it went so with him, with him I say, that was so excellent a Prophet, what shall become of us? I say then that the elder sort ought greatly to profit in this school of God's wisdom: and yet this is no vain thing, whereunto David here especially exhorteth the young men. And why so? For as I have already said, this age is so without any consideration, as nothing can be more, and is much subject to the temptations of Satan, and of the flesh. And on the other side, over and besides that, there is neither judgment nor wisdom in young men, insomuch that they are so stirred up with heat, as that their boiling affections break out: Yet instead of having some modesty, and to take in good part the admonitions which might be given them, they will be the

more lofty and stubborn, which might take better occasion to be more grieved in being reprehended or rebuked.

And that this is true, we see at this day how all things are out of order. This is sure, that the true virtue which should be in youth, is modesty: and that the younger sort ought to know that since they are not furnished with wisdom and discretion as the elder sort are, they ought to hear them, and not to be given over to their own will and wit. This is the most principal wisdom that ought to be in young men. But what? they are at this day past all shame. By this we may see that the world is even as it were utterly desperate, and that we are grown to the fullness of all mischief and iniquity. For we shall see these beastly and graceless boys and wenches, which scarcely are able to wipe their own noses, as we say, yea and that might yet be under the rod ten years, like peevish wretches as they are, that whensoever they shall be spoken unto, will make no reckoning of whatsoever is said, but pout and mowe [*grimace*] at it, counterfeiting the very Apes and Monkeys, as daily we may see. And when we see such extreme pride in this people, what shall we say but that Satan hath even possessed them? and that they will show themselves as indeed they are, to wit, without all amendment? So then, this point is so much the more to be well considered of, when as he saith: *Wherewithal shall a young man address his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.* True it is, that a great many which have need here to be told this gear [*doctrine*], care not for filling of their ears with any such matter, they have knowledge enough to keep themselves from the Church: For they have the thing which they desire when they may be at the Tavern, playing and Dancing. But what? It is certain that this doctrine will not leave them uncondemned when as God crieth unto them, as he witnesseth by Solomon, (<200120>Proverbs 1:20-23) where he bringeth in Wisdom saying, I have cried out, and put forth my voice in the streets, I have bidden both great and small, to the end that men might hear me, and none hath vouchsafed [*granted*] to receive me, nor yet to give me lodging. When God declareth unto us, that our life shall be well ordered if we keep his word, surely as many as fly from this doctrine and admonition, shall render an account at the last day, because God hath called them. And also because they have not only been deaf, but also have added this mischief, to fly from the admonitions, which God's word admonished them of, to bring them again into the way of salvation, from which they were strayed. It is especially

said, *Yea, by taking heed thereto according to thy word.* David his meaning is here to express unto us, that we may make ourselves believe, that we have wisdom and discretion enough. But yet it shall profit us no whit at all, without we will be governed and ruled by God, according to that which hath been before said. Now it followeth:

With my whole heart have I sought thee: let me not wander from thy Commandments.

David here maketh a notable confession, which is not common to all men, That he hath sought God with his whole heart. For although we have a desire to go to God, yet it is so feeble as is lamentable, seeing we are withdrawn with so many vanities, by reason the world hath such dominion over us, and yet ought not to retire ourselves from any good devotion, when as we have had a thorough feeling thereof. There are very few of us that are able to say with the prophet David, that we have sought God with our whole heart: to wit, with such integrity and pureness, that we have not turned away from that mark, as from the most principal thing of our salvation. It is very true, that David had not yet any such perfection, but that he slacked in the fight against the prickings of the flesh, and went back.

Saint Paul also confesseth (^{<450719>}Romans 7:19, 20) that he went to God as it were halting [*waivering*], that he did not that good which he would and desired, but that he was encompassed with his natural vices, to do the evil which he condemned. David was not without such temptations: but howsoever it was, it is most certain that the principal matter whereto he bent himself, was to serve God. Now as I have before said, we are all far from this example. For as many of us as at this day are best affected, may be letted [*prevented*] and hindered by a number of vices, vain cares of this world, and with lusts and desires of the flesh, that if we should remove our foot every day to go one pace forward, it were much and yet it may come so to pass oftentimes, that we would draw back again to the place from whence we came. And yet notwithstanding, David, after he had protested that he sought God with his whole heart, besought God that he would not suffer him to decline from his Commandments. Hereby let us see what great need we have to call upon God, to the end he may hold us with a mighty strong hand. Yea, and although he hath already mightily put to his helping hand, and we also know that he hath bestowed upon us great and

manifold graces: yet is not this all: But there are so many vices and imperfections in our nature, and we so feeble and weak, as that we have very great need daily to pray unto him, yea and that more and more, that he will not suffer us to decline from his Commandments. For although David protested that he sought God with all his heart, nevertheless, he addeth, yet suffer me not O Lord to go wrong from thy Commandments: What shall we do then? Let us also learn to walk carefully: for since he is the God which giveth us that good mind to will, and that also giveth us the power to perform, and all of his mere favor and grace: we ought (saith Saint Paul) (<503512> Philippians 2:12) to walk in fear, and to keep good watch, to the end that Satan taketh not us unprovided, and that he enter not within us.

And lo what is the cause that we have seen some men which have made a great show of holiness for a time, and have seemed to be more like Angels than men, which at length have grown to outrage: and have so greatly exceeded their bounds, as that GOD even forsook them, like desperate men. And whence then proceedeth this? Verily from their own security and negligence, because they thought themselves to be very perfect. But Paul is clean contrary to this, for thus he saith, (<500312> Philippians 3:12) I have not attained as yet to that full perfection, nevertheless I have done what in me lieth. When he saith, I have done what in me lieth, he declareth that there was that humility in him, whereof he spake in the place before by me already alleged: and this humility importeth, that we should call upon God as David did, as he sheweth unto us here in this place.

It followeth: *I have hid thy promise within my heart: that I might not sin against thee.*

When David speaketh after this manner, I have hid thy word or promise in mine heart, he well declareth, that if we have but only a wandering knowledge, that the same will not hold us in, but that the Devil hath by and by won upon us to oppress us, with temptations, and in the end to cast us down headlong. What must we then do? It is not enough that we have been at church, and heard what hath been there said unto us, and that every of us hath mumbled up unto himself some one thing or another, but the word of God must be settled in us and be hid in our heart, to wit, that it may there be resiant [*residing*] and continually abiding: and to have received it with such an affection, as that it be as it were imprinted in us. If

this be not so, sin will reign in us, for it hath by nature his habitation with us: For all our senses are wicked and corrupt, all our wills and desires are enemies unto God, unless God's word be well hidden in our hearts. Moreover, we are to understand, that David here vaunted not himself of his own power and strength, as though he were in admiration thereof: but the spirit of God speaking by his mouth, intendeth to give us a glass, wherein we must be confirmed, to wit, that we must not have only our ears beaten with the Doctrine of salvation, and receive it in our brain: but that it should be hidden in our heart, to wit, that we should lay it up as in a Treasure house. For this saying, to hide, importeth that David studied not to be ambitious to set forth himself, and to make a glorious show before men: but that he had God for a witness of that secret desire which was within him. He never looked to worldly creatures, but being content that he had so great a Treasure, he knew full well that God who had given it him, would so surely and safely guard it, as that it should not be laid open to Satan to be taken away. Saint Paul also declareth (<540119> 1 Timothy 1:19) unto us, that the chest wherein this treasure must be hid, is a good conscience. For it is said, that many being void of this good conscience, have lost also their faith, and have been robbed thereof. As if a man should forsake his goods and put them in adventure, without shutting of any door, it were an easy matter for thieves to come in and to reave [*deprive, steal*] and spoil him of all: Even so, if we leave at random to Satan the Treasure which GOD hath given unto us in his word, without it be hidden in this good conscience, and in the very bottom of our heart as David here speaketh, we shall be spoiled thereof. He addeth immediately after:

Blessed art thou O Lord: O teach me thy statutes.

After he had said, I have sought thee with mine whole heart: he addeth, *Blessed art thou O Lord: O teach me thy Statutes.* David sheweth in this verse, that the request which he made here afore, is not founded or grounded of any merit or desert which he pretended to have. In very deed, at the first sight it might be said, that David meant that God would not forsake him, because he had sought him, and thereupon conclude that man must first begin to go on, to prevent [*precede*] God's grace, and then that God will afterward aid him. Ye see here what men may imagine, but this is not David's meaning and purpose. And to prove it to be so, it is most sure, he attributeth it not to his own power and strength, that he had sought God with his whole heart, for we must first be touched with the

spirit of God, when as we have any such affection. And why so? For by nature we have all strayed from God, and all our force, power, and study, bend themselves to estrange us from him. And therefore we must come unto him in such sort as is declared unto us in many places of the holy Scripture. David then was prevented [*anticipated*] already by God's grace, and he only requireth of God to continue the same in him which he hath begun, for he knew right well that he had great need thereof. As if he should have said, I know very well O Lord, that thou hast already mightily put to thy helping hand by thy holy spirit, when as I sought thee: in very deed I had never done it, without I had been conducted by thy holy hand, neither is this yet enough, except thou continue the same in me: and when thou shalt so do O Lord, all praise and glory shall be thine for the same, because thou hast done it of thy mere favor and grace. By this then we may see, that David here meaneth not to glorify himself as being puffed up with his own virtues and merits: But because God deserveth to be blessed and exalted to the end that we should render unto him all honor and glory. See now wherefore he assureth himself that he will teach him, and that he shall be more and more confirmed in that doctrine which he hath already learned. For when he saith, Teach me thy Statutes O Lord: it was not because that he was altogether rude and ignorant, that he could be now a Novice, which was a Prophet, had charge to instruct others, and was also a King. David then spake not as one that was unlearned: but he knew well enough that all this was not sufficient, without he profited still more and more. Now if David spake after this manner, I beseech you what ought we to do? Whensoever then that we would obtain this grace at God's hands, to be instructed in his statutes, let us bring this reason unto him, and ground ourselves upon this, to wit, that he be blessed and praised. And above all things, let us understand the great need we have hereof: that is, that although we have already been instructed in the holy Scripture, that we must be Scholars unto the end, and to pray unto God daily to increase our faith: I mean such chiefly as are appointed to preach the word. True it is, that it were a marvelous great presumption for any man to come into the Pulpit, and to usurp the office of a Preacher, except he were well studied in the holy Scripture. But so it is that we go up in the Pulpit daily, with this condition to learn, when as we teach others. And being thus, I do not only speak that I might be heard: but for mine own part I must also be the Scholar of God, and that the word which proceedeth from my mouth might profit myself likewise, otherwise cursed am I. Let us then note this

by the way, that they which are most perfect and ready in the Scriptures, are arrogant fools, except they acknowledge that they had need to have God for their Schoolmaster all the days of their life, and to be more and more confirmed, after the example of David. In very deed these things very well deserve to be spoken of more at large, but that I respect one thing, that in handling of this Psalm by parcels, it may be imprinted the better in our memory. For as I have said in the first Sermon which I made on Sunday last past, that it is not without cause, that the spirit of God would have this Psalm to be made according to the Letters of an ABC because everyone should learn it as perfectly as their Pater Noster, as we commonly say. Seeing then that our Lord God would that we should have this Psalm perfectly, and for our own use, it is also good and necessary that the handling of it be pure and simple, and so to follow the plainness of the text, as that we might understand as it were word by word, whatsoever is contained therein. It remaineth now, that every of us understand what hath been handled, without looking after any longer repetition. Nevertheless I will so endeavor myself to be short, as that (God willing) the words which I shall utter shall not be very dark, especially to those which be attentive.

It followeth: *With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.*

David sheweth here the accord which ought to be betwixt God and us: to wit, that god hath instructed us, and when we have heard that which hath been said unto us, that everyone should say Amen, and that there be a sweet harmony and accord betwixt him and us, without jar or contradiction. Lo here in sum that which is meant in this verse. Now in the meanwhile we have to note, that David declareth that he contenteth not himself alone with following of God and cleaving unto him: but that he laboreth and desireth as much as in him lieth, to stir up his neighbors likewise, and to bring it so to pass, as that God might be served with a common accord, throughout the whole world. He then that will have a true zeal to honor God, will not think only of himself, but will have an eye everywhere, and seek by all means possible that he can, to redress those which are wickedly given, to stir up those which are cold and negligent, to strengthen those which are weak and feeble, to entertain those which are already in a good forwardness [*readiness, earnestness*], and to make them more forward [*earnest*]. Lo here whereunto all the faithful have an eye. For the Lord our God teacheth us upon this condition, that every of us think

not only particularly of himself, but that we should also have a mutual care one of another, and whensoever we shall have this zeal, let us understand, that God hath created the whole world upon this condition, that we all should be obedient unto him. But we must well weigh the order that is here set down: For David beginneth not with this sentence, That with his lips he hath told of all the Judgments of the Lord's mouth. For he hath said before, that he hath hid them in his heart. The thing which David said to be hid in his heart, he soon after declareth it with his mouth, wherein he showeth that every of us ought to begin with himself. When we mean to instruct and teach our neighbors, we must not say unto them, Go you before: but, Come next after me, or else hard by me: and having care all to go the right way, we should all at once labor to go together to our God, to be conjoined unto him in true faith. And I speak it to this end, because we shall see many who in this behalf can very well prattle and babble, and would seem to be the greatest doctors in the world. But what of all this? Let us in the meantime look into their lives and conversation, and we shall find in them nothing but infection and stench, nothing else but mocking of God in all they go about and do.

We must therefore follow the order which David here holdeth: to wit, that the word of God be hid as a Treasure in the bottom of our heart: and afterward when as we shall have this affection, let us endeavor ourselves to draw others also thereto, and go altogether with one accord to honor our Lord God: and that he which hath been better taught than any of his neighbors have been, let him confess that he is so much the more beholden and bound unto God, to do that which is here showed unto us by David. For although we are not all Prophets as he was, yet for all that, this was spoken to us all in general, Admonish ye one another. Saint Paul (<520514> 1 Thessalonians 5:14; <510316> Colossians 3:16; <580313> Hebrews 3:13) speaketh it to all the faithful and to all Christians. And that we should also know that this belongeth and appertaineth [*pertains*] to us: and chiefly as I have before said, that they which are most forward [*earnest*], should lay forth the grace which was given unto them for the common building up of the Church, and instruction of their neighbors. It followeth:

I have had as great delight in the way of thy testimonies, as in all manner of riches.

Here David declareth that having weaned himself from his earthly affections, wherewithal we are overgreatly entangled, he wholly travaileth to come to God. For it is impossible for us to taste the sweetness contained in the word of God, to take pleasure in this doctrine of our salvation, and to be altogether given thereunto, before such time as we have cut off from us, all our wicked lusts and affections which reign too much in our mortal bodies. It is like as if a man would have land to bring forth Corn, which were altogether full of thorns and weeds. Or what is he that would have a Vine grow upon stones and rocks, wherein is no moisture? For what is the state of the nature of Man? Forsooth [*in truth*] it is as barren land as possibly can be. What are all our affections, but bushes, thorns, and weeds, which choke and make all the good seed of God nothing worth? So then, it is not without cause that David here matcheth riches with the word of God, and this avarice wherewith we are led and inflamed, against the desire that he had to follow God, and to walk after his word. As if he should have said, Alas Lord, it is true that I am given to the vanities of this world as well as others are: But yet have I chiefly desired thy word, and have even striven with myself to subdue all the evil affections of my flesh. Here we see what doctrine we have to gather unto ourselves out of this place: to wit, that if we will be the good scholars of God, and take delight in the way of his testimonies, we must first subdue the lusts of our flesh, and not learn to be given to worldly things, neither yet to be nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in that which we imagine to be the highest point of our felicity: but that we might understand to contemn riches, and all other things whatsoever, which might withdraw us from our God and our savior Jesus Christ, to make no more account of it than of dung and dirt, as Saint Paul saith.

(<500308> Philippians 3:8) And yet it is most sure that David contemneth not the riches which he had. For being a mighty rich king, as we know, yet he cast not his Gold and silver into the bottom of the sea, but used of the abundance and store which God had given him: yea we see what an excellent and beautiful house he had, as the holy history telleth us. But yet he followed the rule which the Scripture setteth down unto us: which is, that he so used the goods of this world, as though he never had them. We must therefore pass through this world, without staying ourselves altogether in it, as Saint Paul exhorteth: (<460731> 1 Corinthians 7:31) that if God give us abundance of riches, we might know how to use them, without having our hearts imprisoned in them: and yet notwithstanding to

be poor in spirit: to wit, to be ready to forsake all whatsoever, as often as god would have us to be rid of them, and to have always one foot ready lifted up to go unto him, whensoever it shall be his will and pleasure to take us out of this world. But it is not without cause that David hath spoken here of the abundance of riches. For we see it maketh men covetous, which is the springhead [*source, cause*] of all mischief, as Saint Paul saith (<540610> 1 Timothy 6:10) Forasmuch then as we are so much given to the goods of this world, and that we hold ourselves accursed if we have not wherewithal, and them to be blessed which are well furnished with them: let us keep well the lesson which is here taught us: to wit, that all our desire must be in the way of the testimonies of God, as in all manner of riches: to wit, that all our delight and contentation be wholly in them. Now in the end David goeth on and saith, *I will meditate in thy Commandments and consider thy ways. My delight shall be in thy statutes: and I will not forget thy words.* This is the conclusion, to confirm the matter which we have already spoken of. For David here speaketh of no new matter, but protesteth as he hath begun: That his delight shall be always in the commandments of God, and in the doctrine contained in the holy Scripture, and that he will bestow his whole study therein, and so continue the same and never forget the desires which he hath to profit in the obedience of God. If David now hath thus said, let us understand that it is not enough for us to be well affected to serve God, and that for the performing thereof that we have already sufficiently traveled: but we must also be pricked forward, that we might always go on. For even the very faithful, never run with so fervent and hot a desire, but that they continually draw one leg after them, and never come unto God but in halting [*waivering*] wise. What is there then for us to do? Forsooth [*in truth*] we must protest with David, never to forget that which God hath once declared unto us, and also never to cease to prick ourselves on, to the end there might be greater vehemency in us to go unto him, with a more fervent desire and bolder courage. So that at the end we may grow to this perfection, whereunto God calleth and allureth us: that is, that being uncased from out of our flesh and nature, he might fully conjoin us unto his righteousness that thereby his glory may shine in us.

And according to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the face of our good god, acknowledging our innumerable sins, by which we continually provoke his heavy wrath, and indignation against us.

Beseeching him that it would please him to make us to feel our sins and iniquities, more than evertofore we have done, to the end we might seek for such remedies as he hath ordained for us in exercising ourselves about the reading of his holy word, and the daily Preaching thereof which hath granted unto us. And furthermore not to forget to stir us up to call upon him, to the end that by his holy spirit he might to put his helping hand even in our hearts, and not to suffer the doctrine which we hear by the mouth of his Preachers, to become unprofitable unto us, but that it may have the full power and strength: so that we may from day to day be confirmed therein: and more and more learn to forsake the world, and all whatsoever may withdraw us from the union and conjunction of our Lord and Master Jesus Christ, who is our head. And that he will not only show unto us this favor and grace, but also unto all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE THIRD SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

GIMEL

- 17** Be beneficial unto thy Servant: that I may live and keep thy word,
- 18** Open mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.
- 19** I am a stranger upon Earth: hide not thy commandments from me.
- 20** My heart breaketh out: for the desire unto thy judgments always.
- 21** Thou hast destroyed the proud: cursed are they that do err from all thy Commandments.
- 22** Remove from me shame and contempt: for I have kept thy Testimonies.
- 23** Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy Servant did meditate in thy statutes.
- 24** Also thy Testimonies are my delight and my counselors.

IT SHALL GREATLY HAVE PROFITED US, if so be we have learned what the end of our life is. For, for that cause, hath God placed, and bringeth us up in the world: and yet few there are which think upon it. True it is, that every man will say, that it is good reason we should do homage to GOD for our life and being, because we hold all of him: and that we should glorify him with so much of our goods as he hath largely bestowed upon us. But what of all this? When as we have confessed that, it is but to show our ingratitude and unthankfulness: and yet no man maketh any account hereof. Lo here, wherefore the holy Ghost, seeing us so tied to the world, putteth us in mind to what end we live here. As here David maketh this request to God to obtain that benefit of his Majesty: *That he might live and keep his word*: As if he should have said, I desire not O Lord to live

for myself alone in this world, to receive here my pleasures and commodities: but desire it to another more precious and excellent end than that: to wit, that I might serve thee. Even so then, as often as we are desirous to live, we must remember us of this request which David maketh: That is, that we should not be like unto brute beasts, living we know not to what end: but that we should always aim at this mark, to honor GOD. For without this we are more miserable than all the rest of his creatures. Every creature will follow his own natural inclination: and albeit that brute beasts have an hard and irksome life, yet notwithstanding they are not in their kind so tormented and grieved as we are. We know and feel by experience, that our evil desires and lusts, are like hot burning furnaces, so that we need nobody to persecute and vex us, for there is none of us all, but can tell well enough how to grieve and vex ourselves one with ambition, another with covetousness, and some with fornication and adultery. So then our life should be very accursed if we looked no farther. But we must always aim at this mark, to serve God, and to keep his word. For when as all our affection and love shall rest in it, then shall our life be blessed. But contrariwise, when we are so brutish as to desire nothing else but to live here a long time, and to have none other care but of our body, and this temporal life: the longer we live here in the world, the more do we heap upon us the malediction and curse of God. Let us then keep in mind this prayer which David here maketh: to wit, that he beseecheth God to bestow that benefit upon him, that he might keep his commandment all the days of his life. As if he should have said, Alas my God, I see us to be so perverse and forward, as that none of us all thinketh to what end we live. And we are so given to all sin and wickedness, that we do nothing else but more and more provoke thy heavy wrath and indignation against us. Suffer me not O Lord to be one of that company, but grant unto me thy grace, that my life may be ruled and governed as it ought to be: that is, That I may employ myself wholly to serve and honor thee. It followeth by and by after.

Open mine eyes, that I may see the wondrous things of thy law.

Here he declareth that it was not without cause, that he made this request unto God: For if it were in our power to follow the word of God, and keep it, it were mere hypocrisy and feigned [*mendacious*] holiness to make any such prayer. For we crave at God's hand that which we have not: and in our Prayers we must always confess our poverty and want [*lack*]. Were it

not a mockery think you, to crave of God the thing which I have already? I shall beseech him to give it me, and I have it already in my possession? It is most true, that we must crave that at God's hand which already we have. And why so? Because we are certain that we cannot enjoy it, nor yet use the same without his grace and favor: And that the use thereof shall never profit us without he bless it, even as we desire of him our daily Bread. And although the table be covered, and the meat set ready on the board, yet we desire of God to make it nourishment for our bodies.

Whereby, as I have before said; it shall profit us no whit at all, without God bless it through his grace and liberality. It is very so that we do crave it, by reason of our continual confessing of our want [*lack*] and need. So then, it cannot possibly be, that this was in David his own hand and power, to keep the word of God. And he sheweth it to be so in this which followeth, *O Lord open thou mine eyes*. As if he should have said, Alas dear father, it is so far off that I am able to keep thy word, as that I should not be able to understand any whit thereof, if thou guidest me not thereto: For it is thou which must both begin the same, and also perform it wholly in me. This is the way and means for us to understand what to do: For many there are which know the thing that is good, and yet for all that they utterly refuse it. Now David declareth, that he is not only void of all power to keep the word of God: but also that he is without all understanding, except it be given him by the holy Ghost. Let us note well who it is that speaketh, Even David a most excellent Prophet. And yet for all that we see that he declareth (yea and that boldly) himself to be ignorant, without GOD instructeth him. Neither doth he here speak of any worldly instruction, as we would imagine of the things which we knew not of before. David confesseth that all that, would serve him to no purpose at all without God added thereunto a notabler or more excellent thing: to wit, that he did enlighten him with his holy spirit. Sithens [*since*] then it is so that David, who was an excellent Prophet, did know, that he could neither by reading nor preaching understand that which was requisite unto salvation: what shall become of us, which are yet far from that forwardness [*readiness*] that was in him? And let us not think that through our own labor and industry, and by our own sharpness of wit, to come so far as to understand the secrets of God, but let us know that we had need to be enlightened with the grace of his holy spirit, to open our eyes, for without it we are poor blind souls. Now if this were well understood, we should never see such a pride amongst us as is, that every of us is wise

enough to govern himself. It is an easy matter for us to make protestation that God hath given us his word: and yet for all that we shall still be blind, and know nothing, until such time as he openeth our hearts and minds. For when nothing else shall govern us but our own sense and natural reason, what beasts and Calves shall we then be? See then how we shall be better instructed in humility, when as the doctrine shall be imprinted in our hearts. True it is, that this was not spoken in vain, but to the end, that we should be admonished after the example of David, to present ourselves before God: and in confessing ourselves that we are not capable to understand anything, without that he put to his helping hand, let us beseech him to open our eyes by his holy spirit. And because it should not seem strange, that David desired to have his eyes open, he declareth, that the wisdom contained in the law of God, is too high for our capacities, yea although we think ourselves to have never so sharp and fine wits. And therefore he saith, *O Lord open mine eyes: that I may see the wondrous things of thy Law.* Wherefore useth he this word wondrous? It is, as if he would have save [*but*] said: Although the world taketh the law of God to be but a light thing, and seemeth to be given but as it were for simple souls, and young children: Yet for all that there seemeth such a wisdom to be in it, as that it surmounteth all the wisdom of the world, and that therein lie hid wonderful secrets. As much is said of the Gospel, and that not without great cause. And in very deed, that which at this day is most plainly declared in the Gospel, was before contained in the law: only these were darker shadows, than they are, which were since the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. And yet notwithstanding, there is no change or alteration in this wisdom, as God also is not mutable. It is not then without cause that all the holy scripture is called wisdom, (^{<490310>} Ephesians 3:10) and that the Angels of heaven themselves do wonder thereat. (^{<600112>} 1 Peter 1:12) If then the Angels be astonied [*amazed*] at the secrets contained in the holy scripture, I beseech you tell me, what reverence deserveth it to have among us mortal men? For we are but poor worms upon earth, creeping here below. If there be comparison made betwixt us and the Angels, what shall it be? See how the Angels are wonderfully ravished to see the wisdom of the word of God, and yet we make no accompt [*account*] of it, but esteem of it as a base and childish thing. The more therefore ought we thoroughly to mark this saying of David, that the doctrine of the law is not as we take it to be: to wit, a thing of small value, or a common and ordinary doctrine, but a wonderful wisdom, wherein are such secrets as

ought to ravish us with admiration, because they far surpass our wit and reason. But what is the cause that we so lightly esteem of the law of God? that is to say, his whole word? Herein the common proverb is verified when we say, A fool regardeth nothing. Which proverb we declare to be rightly verified in us: For many of us make no estimation of the holy scripture, and it seemeth to us, that, that which we read there, is too common: and this is the reason, because we know not what it is, ne [*nor*] yet the great and abundant treasure hid therein. But such as have once known what the Majesty of God is, which he showeth and declareth himself to be there, and do see whether it is, that God calleth and allureth them, and do also understand and know the large and sweet promises offered unto them therein, such I say, will say with David, O Lord, thy law is wonderful. And so consequently will desire that their eyes might be lightened, confessing themselves to be blind, until such time as God hath aided them with his holy spirit. Now it followeth,

I am a stranger upon earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

When David did put to this verse, he meant to confirm the matter which before he touched, that is to say, that he desired not simply to live, as if his life had been dear and precious unto him, without any other respect: but he had a further meaning. For he saith by and by after, I am a stranger in the world: therefore hide not thy commandments from me: They which make their continual nest here according to their own fancy, and think to make their heaven in this world, these men I say, have nothing to do with the commandments of God for their salvation. For they are safe enough if they may eat and drink to be glutted, that they may take their pleasures and delights, that they may be honored, that they may be in estimation and credit, lo here is all that they desire or wish to have. Yea forsooth [*in truth*]: For they look no further, but to this corruptible and transitory life. These men I say are not greatly troubled, nor yet have any care of the commandments of God, but when as they shall be taken from them all shall be one to them. When as the covetous man, the whoremonger, the drunkard, the ambitious person, shall hear no preaching of the word at all: neither any talk of God, nor yet of Christianity, nor of life everlasting. He in the meantime ceaseth not to pursue his own way. Yea, and it is to them a loathsome and unpleasant kind of speech to hear God spoken of, but had rather have no mention in the whole world made of him. And therefore it is not without cause why David requireth, not to have the commandments of

God taken from him, and this is his reason: to wit, because he is a stranger on the earth. As if he should have said, O Lord, if I had none other consideration but of this present life, I should be even accursed, and it had been better my mother had been delivered of me as of a dead body, and that I had been an hundred times plunged in hell. And why so? For we are here in this world but as pilgrims and wayfaring men: and we pass to a more excellent life: as to that also wherein we repose our whole trust. Seeing then, O Lord, that I am a stranger in the world, let not thy commandments be taken away from me. Now in this part is contained a very profitable doctrine, and exhortation for us, for we know how cold we are, where indeed we ought to have an ardent desire to be taught the word of God, and to be more and more confirmed therein. And I beseech you how careless are we? But what is the cause hereof? No doubt of it, we must always even search and look into the depth and bottom of this corruption and mischief: for when we see any vice in ourselves, we ought to inquire from whence the cause proceedeth, to the end we might find remedy for the same. Now the reason is, because we are blind, and do suppose our abode should be here still upon earth, and every man imagineth himself to have here everlasting life. Wherefore when we are thus given to the world, and think ourselves to have here an everlasting inheritance, lo this is the cause of our thus contemning of God and his word, or rather that we care no whit at all for the seeking out of the doctrine of our salvation. What must we then do? Forsooth [*in truth*] we must look a great deal further than to the world, if we will come unto God, and be exercised in this study whereof mention is here made, and to say with David, O Lord, because we are strangers in this world, to wit, that we are to pass here only, and that nothing can be shorter than our life is here, let not thy commandments be taken away from us. On the other side, David his meaning here, is to signify unto us, that he was but as a poor pilgrim and wandering man, without he were conducted and guided by the word of God.

And this is a very fit similitude for the purpose. We know that a man in a strange country, will think himself to be a strange and forlorn man, so that if he hath not a conduct and guide, he knoweth not what shall become of him. Even so fareth it with us, if we be not directed and conducted by the hand and power of God. And why so? Because we are as strangers here in this world. It is very true, that we are but too much tied unto our

affections and will, and yet out alas, our sense and wits are so confounded, that we know not what way to take or hold, except we be showed it. Lo here the meaning of the similitude which David here useth, in saying that he is a stranger in the world: which is, that he complaineth that he is a strange and forlorn man, and therefore beseecheth God to guide him by his word. Now it followeth.

My heart breaketh out, for the desire, unto thy judgments always. When he saith, that his soul breaketh out, it is to protest, that he desired not that thing of God which we have heard, either for fashion's sake, or countenance, as many do, which beseech God very often to enlighten, confirm, and guide them, in the truth of his word: but in the meantime, they never seek after it as they should do. Now, this is but after a sort, and God will not be thus mocked. For in thus doing, we do nothing else but profane his holy name, when as we make such requests, as proceed not from a true affection and desire. Lo here, wherefore David saith, that his soul brake out: For this word importeth as much as if his soul had utterly fainted. My soul then fainteth for the desire which it had to thy commandments. Wherefore here are three things to be considered of.

The one is, that if we will obtain at God's hands to be conducted by him, and to have his word to be our way and direction, we should not make such an hypocritical nor cold prayer unto him, with mocking of him thereby: But with such a true desire as carrieth us even out of ourselves, and to make no such accompt [*account*] of this present life, but to be well advised, to shoot at an higher matter. And thus much as touching the first point, which here we have to note.

The second is, that this desire, ought not to be only as a wavering desire, but an ardent and an hot desire. For he saith, That his soul hath fainted. And why so? Let us here a little consider, what our appetites and lusts are, when we turn ourselves away from God, and give ourselves wholly to worldly things. They are so excessive and inordinate, that it is even pitiful, being without end and measure. But if we have a lean desire, and such a one as I know not what, to walk according to the will of God: this desire would be as soon allayed, as a drop of wine put into an hundred times so much water. I beseech you what shall that be? shall it taste anymore as wine? Even so forcible should the good affection of a faithful man be. If this affection be not fervent, and very vehement, it shall be soon choked

by the corruptions of our carnal passions and affections which (as I have before said) have neither measure, modesty, nor temperance. See then for the second point what we have here to note in this behalf, to wit, that it is not enough that we have a mean desire to serve God, for that would be very soon quenched in us, and be made nothing worth. But we must be so attentive thereto, as that we may be able to say that our soul fainteth, and languisheth, that our power and strength droppeth and melteth away as it were until such time as God relieveth us, in granting that unto us which we require of him. The third point which we have here to note is, the firmness and constancy in this our desire. And see here why David is not contented with this saying, that his soul is broken out: but he saith, *Always*, As if he should have said, this was not a blast of wind, but a rooted affection in his heart, and that he persevered therein. Now these three things are most necessary: For we see in the first place that we are as it were by nature inclined to vanity, because that being so addicted unto the world, we think no whit at all of heaven. We ought therefore to be so much the more very attentive to this doctrine, and to have a burning desire to follow the word of God: and besides this our affection ought to be so vehement, as that it might be able to have the dominion over all our affections, which hinder us to cleave unto our God, and even to be marvelously ravished therewith. Now it had need to be mightily strengthened with the power of the spirit of God: For our lusts being too mad and furious, if God stretched not forth his arm unto it, what should become thereof? And put the case that we had a good desire, surely it would very soon vanish away in us. We must then be wonderful fervent therein, and afterward, when we shall have such a good and steadfast affection, we must be wonderfully in love with the word of God, not for a day, nor yet for a short time, but even so long as we live. It followeth soon after.

Thou hast destroyed the proud: cursed are they, that do err from all thy commandments. David addeth hereto another reason, whereby he is more inflamed to pray unto God, and to address himself unto him, to be taught in his word: to wit, when he seeth that he hath so rebuked the proud: For the chastisements and punishments which God layeth upon the faithless and rebellious, should be a good instruction for us: As it is said: That God hath executed judgment, and that the inhabitants of the land should learn his righteousness, it is not without cause that the Prophet Esay (<232609> Isaiah 26:9) also hath so said: for he signifieth unto us, that God

hath by divers and sundry means drawn us unto him, and that chiefly when he teacheth us to fear his majesty. For without it, out alas, we shall become like unto brute beasts, if God lay the bridle in our necks, what license we will give unto ourselves, experience very well teacheth us. Now God seeing that we are so easily brought to run at random, sendeth us examples, because he would bring us to walk in fear and carefully.

And for our part, when we see God to chastise the wicked and disobedient, we should by them take example and instruction. Lo here (in sum) what David saith. Thou O Lord, hast chastised the disobedient: as if he should have said, True it is, O Lord, that I have desired, even with a vehement affection, and true constancy, to cleave unto thee, and to thy holy commandments: But yet had I need to be more thoroughly instructed, that I might beware of the punishments which I have seen with mine eyes. When I have seen that thou chastisest the proud, I have been by and by humbled thereby: so much discipline have I received by it, see then now why I do beseech thee, that I might be more carefully and diligently instructed in thy law. If now it was behooveful for David (who was already so well instructed in the law) to be thus aided for the drawing of himself to God, to wit, that he seeth the unbelievers punished and God to lay his hand upon them: I beseech you tell me, had not we need of such instruction, and also of a great deal more? And so, as oftentimes as we shall plainly see, God to send his chastisements into the world, to punish sin, we ought greatly to consider thereof, and to understand that it cometh not by adventure or chance (as we commonly say). And when GOD so striketh the proud and disobedient, let us consider that he meaneth not to punish their persons, and bodies only, but to teach us, to have a greater regard to ourselves: that we might be humbled, to the end the like fall not upon us. For God doeth us great pleasure, when he punisheth others, thereby to teach us to take heed: as also it is great wisdom for a man to beware by the harm of another according to the old proverb. And so also meaneth God. Let us then consider of the favor and grace which he showeth unto us, when as he setteth forth his judgments before us, it is to advertise us of our faults, to the end we should the better walk in his fear, to obey him: yea, and that he punisheth others for our amendment, as I have already said. And especially he addeth, *Cursed are they that err from thy commandments*, or that go wrong. By this he farther declareth and expresseth that which we have already showed, to wit, how he hath been

taught to walk according to the will of God, by the punishments which lighted upon the proud and disobedient. And here he maketh this general conclusion. That all they which err from the commandment of God are accursed. Whereupon we are to gather first of all, that the particular judgments of God ought not to serve us for one deed alone: but that we should apply it for a general instruction all the days of our life. As how? When as we see God punish one person, O, we must not stay ourselves upon such an act, to say, that God punisheth but one person which deserveth it: but we must conclude and say (according to that saying of Saint Paul) (<450211> Romans 2:11) There is no respect of persons with God. Now when he hath punished such a fault, we must then say, that this fault displeaseth him in as many as do commit it. As in another place he showeth, Sithens [*since*] that God so grievously punished the children of Israel for Idolatry, we must conclude that he utterly abhorreth Idolatry. As greatly also abhorreth he Lechery, murmuring, and disobedient persons, and horrible and wicked covetousness. And all this (saith Saint Paul) (<461006> 1 Corinthians 10:6-11) should serve us for an Image or pattern, to the end, that when we see the like come to pass, we should remember us of that which is contained within the holy scripture, and apply it wholly to our own use and profit. And thus much as touching the first point, which we have here to note: to wit, that if God punisheth a man, we must gather out of it a general instruction, and conclude, that all they which go wrong from the commandments of God are accursed. Now we have to touch the second point, which is also notable: that is, we must not tarry until such time as God scourgeth us, but being advertised by that which he hath showed us afar off, we might prevent the punishments and corrections, which might light upon us in the end. And this is it which we must gather unto ourselves in general, of that which hath been spoken. That all they which err from the commandments of God, are accursed. Moreover, let us also in the third place learn, that all the happiness which we imagine, when we are far from God, is nothing but accursed, and that in the end the sentence of our Lord Jesus must be accomplished, Cursed are ye which laugh, (<420625> Luke 6:25) for ye shall weep, and your laughter shall be turned into gnashing of teeth. Let us then understand, that whiles the poor world maketh itself merry and that it seemeth to become even to the full abundance of the wishes and desires, and that it hath obtained the chief felicity, that it is even then under the greatest and chiefest curse. And why so? For all they which stray from God, are accursed, because that he is the

fountain of all goodness, and without him there is nothing but all misery. True it is, that for a time he suffereth the infidels and unbelievers to make themselves merry, that we might think them to be the happiest people in the world, but what of that? It will all return to their greater confusion. It followeth soon after,

Remove from me shame and contempt: for I have kept thy testimonies.

Here David commenceth a new suit unto God, to wit, that he would hold him in his innocence and purity. And it is not without cause that he so doeth, for we see that they which serve God with their whole heart, are contemned, and despised, yea, they are most shamefully slandered. For we see even at this day, that he which walketh simply, he shall by and by be called an hypocrite. All they which would serve God, are thus cried out upon, O these hypocrites! O these mortified! See here how the purity and simplicity of the faithful is despised and naught set by. For the devil possesseth the contemnners of God in such sort, as that they vomit out their blasphemies, not only against those whom they purpose to oppose themselves, but even against God himself.

But this mischief and corruption is not of a day's hatching: and therefore we are thoroughly to consider the saying which David here setteth down:

O turn from me rebuke, to wit, suffer me not O Lord, to be lightly esteemed of men, because I have kept thy testimonies. We see then that the sum of this verse is this: That David desireth GOD to uphold and maintain his purity. Now the cause is incontinently added,

For Princes also did sit, under the shadow of justice, *and speak against me.*

Now this was a great temptation to David, that he was not only mocked and scorned at the Taverns and Inns, being there blazoned by dissolute Jesters and Scoffers, and talked of in the streets and marketplaces, but even in the place of Justice (which ought to be holy) it could not therefore be chosen but that they also would utterly defame and slander him, and condemn him to be as it were a most wicked and cursed man. When David then did see, that he was thus unjustly entreated and handled, he maketh his complaint unto God: and saith, O Lord the Princes and Governors themselves do sit and speak evil against me: *And yet for all that I have kept thy Testimonies.* Here in sum we are to gather out of this place, that if it so

fall out, when as we have walked uprightly and in a good conscience, to be falsely slandered, to be accused of this and that, whereof we never once thought: yet ought we to bear all things patiently, for let us be sure of that, that we are not better than David, although we would make never so great protestation of our integrity and purity. David walked both before God and men so faithfully as none of us all is able to do, and yet we see that he was subject to these slanderous reports. Let us then be patient, when the like shall happen to us. But let us also follow his example in that he saith, that is, that we should not be discouraged: seeing ourselves to be so evil and unjustly recompensed at men's hands, that we forbear not for all that to exercise ourselves in the commandments of God. And how should we come by that patience? we must come to that which he there speaketh of, to wit, that we take all our whole delight and pleasure in the commandments of God. It is the thing which he often beateth upon before by me touched, and therefore it shall not be needful to stay upon it any longer. Let us only understand this, when David saith, that all his pleasure was in the commandments of GOD, that we (after his example) must do the like. He added, *They are my Counselors*. Lo here a sentence worthy to be weighed of us, when David calleth the commandments of God his counselors: For in the first place he meaneth, that he might scorn at all the wisdom of the most able and most expert men in the world, how goodly and gay shows soever their counsels seem to be to those, which so exceedingly commend them, and are also commended of all in that he was conducted by the word of God, and governed thereby. Lo what he meaneth here by the first point. The second is, That when he shall be so governed by the word of God, he might not only say that he was truly wise, but that it was so much, as if he had all the wisdom of all the men in the world, yea and a great deal more, put even in one man. When any one man mistrusteth his own wit, he will ask counsel, and arm himself the better, and when he shall have used such counsel, as everyone shall soundly give him, he will hold himself a great deal the better resolved. David then declareth unto us, that if we will not be without good counsel and advice, we must follow the statutes and ordinances of God. But what? few men at this day are able in truth thus to say. Every man will say the best for himself he can, and yet it shall be all but a mere mockery. How many of us are there which will be contented to be governed as he was, by this counsel? We shall hardly find one among an hundred. How do we justly promise ourselves rightly to know that GOD hath spoken unto us? And

let it be that we are in the right way, what assurance have we of it? It cannot be chosen but that the least let [*hindrance*] in the world will trouble us: Our spirit always greatly desireth to be contrary to God, we have greater regard to the vain opinions and fantasies of men, than to the heavenly doctrine, so that we lend our ears to whatsoever men babble, and are so carried with every wind, that we know not what it is to hold ourselves to the counsel of God. And so let us be advised to make our profit of this sentence, beseeching the Lord to grant us that his grace, that we may be governed by him, and that with such humility and reverence, as that whatsoever is set before us in this world, we may always go on our ways, in true and invincible constancy. And according to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the face of our good God, in acknowledging our faults: beseeching him that it would please him to govern us in such sort, as that we look not down here on the earth, nor yet stoop down to the corruptible things of this world, but that we might continually aspire unto this heavenly life, whereunto he daily calleth us by his word: And for performance thereof to suffer us to be truly united to our Lord Jesus Christ, yea, and that with an inseparable bond, as we may always follow the way which he hath showed unto us, until such time as we be come to that immortal glory, whereunto he hath gone before us, to gather us all up unto him, and to make us partakers of that blessedness, which he hath gotten and purchased by his death and passion and whereof he will make us inheritors with him in the kingdom of heaven. That he will not only grant us this grace and favor, but also unto all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE FOURTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

DALETH

- 25** My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken me according to thy word.
- 26** I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.
- 27** Make me to understand the way of thy commandments: and I will meditate of thy wondrous works.
- 28** My soul melteth with very heaviness: raise me up according unto thy word.
- 29** Take from me the way of lying: and grant me graciously thy law.
- 30** I have chosen the way of truth: and thy judgments have I laid before me.
- 31** I have sticken unto thy testimonies: O Lord confound me not.
- 32** I will run the way of thy commandments: when thou halt enlarge mine heart.

DAVID SHOWETH UNTO US in these eight verses what the joy and contentation of the children of God ought to be. And this is a doctrine for us, most profitable. For there is not that man which longeth not to have the thing that may content and delight him: but there is none of us which holdeth the true means. So much the more therefore ought we rightly to record the lesson here contained: to wit, that all our rejoicing is accursed, and will come to an evil end if we look not to God and to his word. Lo wherefore here he saith,

My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken me according to thy word. David confesseth here that he was driven to an extremity. For behold what he meaneth by this saying, That his soul (or life) cleaveth unto the dust: As if

he should have said, O Lord, there is nothing that I more looked for than my grave, I am like to a poor castaway and forlorn creature. Now whether or to whom should he have recourse? Even unto God, he desireth to be restored. And how may that be? according to the promise which he hath received. We see then whether, and to whom we must have recourse in all our necessities. And thus much for the first point. The Second is, when that we shall have had our refuge to God, we might find in him wherewith fully to rejoice us. Thus much then for the second. The third is, That if we will obtain to be restored at God's hands, we being as it were dead and confounded, should look unto his promises: For behold he will give us encouragement to come unto him. We have here then a good admonition and very profitable: that is, That as often as we shall be overwhelmed with all the misery that can be, we should yet look unto God, because that then he will seek after us more than ever he did before, willing us to come unto him. But here we are to note, that there is not any so great a misery which ought to let [*hinder*] and stay us from coming straight on unto him: For David confesseth that he was become as a dead man. When then we shall be even as it were at the last cast, as we say, that we can no more, that we should be as a man would say, oppressed and overcome with sorrow and grief, yea and that the grave even gapeth [*opens wide*] to swallow us up, let us not for all that cease to beseech God to restore us. For it belongeth properly unto him, when he hath appealed and brought us to death's door, to restore and quicken us again. But we are to understand that we must not come unto him after an hypocritical manner: we must not require him to restore us and yet have our minds wandering here and there, neither yet must we seek for that thing in the world, which we make countenance to seek for at his hands: We must not make us two ways to the wood as we say, but our whole delight and contentation must be in God and in his grace, that it sufficeth us to have him only, and to feel his mercy and compassion towards us: and when we have gotten that, to be contented only therewith. But because we cannot come unto God, without he himself draweth us, when as we desire him to restore us, and to stretch out his hand unto us, we must add thereto this saying here expressed, to wit, that he will quicken us according to his word. Now by this, as I have already said, we are taught that in the midst of death we find salvation and health, because the promises of God never fail us. It followeth in the second verse,

I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

Here David allegeth another reason that GOD heareth him, to wit, that this is not the first time that he had heard him, neither yet that God is merciful and liberal, to grant unto his faithful, their petitions and requests. But we in very deed must, in continuing the matter which we are here in hand to open, be thoroughly assured and resolved, that it is not in vain, when as we make our prayers unto God, neither yet that we lose our labors, but that our prayers shall profit us. We must therefore be fully resolved herein. And how must that be? Forsooth [*in truth*], David even very now alleged unto God, his promises assuring himself that he received them through his mere mercy and goodness. And this is no foolhardiness. Even so then, let us in no case fear to come unto God boldly and cheerfully upon this condition, yea so long as we build upon his promises. We must not come unto him according to our own fantasies: neither must we allege and say, my God, I present myself here before thy majesty, because I think or suppose that thou oughtest to hear me: this were too fond and lewd arrogance: but to say, Alas my good God, it is very true that I am not worthy to come near unto thy presence: and although it shall seem to me that I might approach to thee, yet must I pull back that foot again: Nevertheless, since thou biddest me to come unto thee, and hast commanded me to call upon thee, and promised also for to hear me: Lo here my God the cause which maketh me so bold, not to doubt to come unto thee, because I believe thy word. And now O Lord, I stand in no doubt that thou wilt not receive me, when as I thus build upon thy promise. After David hath used this kind of speech, to stir himself up to pray unto God, and also to obtain his request, he addeth, *O Lord, I have acknowledged my ways, and thou heardest me*. As if he should have said, Over and besides thy promise, my God, there is another reason which emboldeneth and encourageth me to come unto thee: to wit, the experience which thou hast showed unto me of thy great goodness. I never required anything of thee in my necessity, but thou didst hear me: to wit, but that thou satisfiedst my request, but that I have felt how thou hast relieved thy servants, and hast always been ready to succor [*help*] them in their distress: Yea, O Lord, and that thou hast not tarried nor waited until they came unto thee, but hast even offered thyself first unto them. Seeing then it is so that thou hast showed thyself to be so good and liberal, O, I now doubt not but that thou wilt continue the same thy goodness: Wherefore I beseech thee teach me thy statutes. See here a text worthy the marking:

For, as I have before said, we must not come unto God doubting and wavering: but with full resolution, that he will hear us.

And how is that? O, we have a most sure and infallible testimony: to wit, he hath promised to be near unto all those which shall crave and beg of him in truth: we may then say, we beseech thee, O Lord, to have regard unto us according to thy word. It is very true, that we are unworthy that thou shouldest be careful over us: But so it is, that having thy word and promise, we may boldly come unto thee: and besides, let us add thereto the experience which God hath already showed unto us: that he never forgetteth his, but preserveth and keepeth them, and always watcheth over them. And why so? That we ought to be much more heedful than we are of all the benefits of God, to the end we might come to this consideration of the reason which David here bringeth in: to wit, that we might say unto God, that he hath heard us. Now there are very few of us that can do this. And why so? Because that when we are in any distress, we never think to call upon God, yea although the grief or disease press and grieve us never so much. And yet if we do then call upon him, it is so, that as soon as we have escaped the danger, we will not acknowledge it to be God that hath had pity and compassion upon us, but is quite out of memory and trodden clean under foot. Because then we remember not the benefits of God, Lo what is the cause why we cannot say, when we come afresh to pray, O Lord, thou hast heard me. For (as I have before said) our unthankfulness hindereth us that we cannot have any such experience and practice to pray unto God incessantly. And see also what is the cause of our so cold and faint prayers: for if we were ready to call to mind the graces of God: O, we should be sure and certain to be always fenced, when as we meant to present ourselves before him, to say, Alas my God, this is no novelty unto me: neither ought I, Lord, to think it strange to present myself before thee, for thou hast granted me free access and liberty: this is not the first time that thou hast done me good, no, I have felt thy favor by experience even from my youth: and when as I shall speak of the number of times which thou hast heard me, I shall find them infinite: I may very well then repose and put all my trust in thee, hoping that thou wilt continue thy goodness towards me, as thou art always ready so to do. Now because we are so unthankful unto God, as not to acknowledge his benefits as becometh us, and as to him appertaineth [*pertains*]: Lo here, why we cannot benefit

ourselves by this confession in truth, to confirm our hope to come unto him, as should be good for us.

Moreover, we are to note, that we must not deal with God, as with mortal men. For if any man hath done us a pleasure, we may truly say, as we commonly do: I shall be the more beholding unto you, because you have already bound me thereto, this shall come in amongst the rest: But yet if we shall have borrowed much of any man, we shall be ashamed that we have troubled him so often. But the case standeth not so betwixt God and us. And why so? For God is never weary of well doing as men are, and besides he never diminisheth his substance when he doeth us any good. If any man bestoweth his goods liberally upon us, he hath so much the less: if he give his word for us: he will say, this is all that I can do for you. But God so aboundeth in riches, that it is like to a Spring which can never be drawn dry: and the more that is drawn out of it, the greater abundance is to be seen. So then, we must not be afraid to come unto God, when as he shall have bestowed upon us store of wealth and that we shall be so much bound unto him, as is possible to be thought: but the same ought to make us the bolder, as David here declareth unto us. And of this are many like sayings in the Scripture.

O Lord (saith Jacob) I was never worthy of the benefits which thou hast bestowed upon me: but yet thou hast so bountifully dealt with thy servant, as that I must needs call upon thy name continually. (<⁰¹³²¹⁰> Genesis 32:10)

See then, how GOD moveth us to come familiarly unto him, by reason that he sheweth himself so liberal, and hath his hands wide open, to the end he might give us whatsoever we stand in need of. And when as he shall have continued thus all the days of our life, we ought the boldlier to call upon him as David himself sheweth us here by example. And now let us mark his saying:

I have declared my ways, and thou heardest me: teach me thy statutes.

David here protesteth that God hath given ear unto his particular matters, to wit, when as he was perplexed and full of sorrow, he then called upon God. Lo what this word, *Way*, in the Hebrew meaneth, where it is said, I have acknowledged my ways, and thou answeredst me: to wit, heardest me. Hereupon he desireth that God would teach him his Statutes: to wit,

that he would show him the right rule to live well. Here we are to note, that God yieldeth his consent even unto us, and that he will assist us in all our several needs. We see that our Lord Jesus hath taught us to ask our daily bread, which importeth all that concerneth this transitory life. Even so when we have anything to do or to treat of, God granteth unto us this privilege and license to come unto him: yea if we should step on but one pace, or but remove our hand, we may come unto God, beseeching him to direct and conduct us. Let us then mark this inestimable goodness which God useth towards us, when he seeth well that we have showed unto him all our ways: to wit, all our desires and smallest matters. If a man had his brother or dear companion, he durst hardly show himself so familiarly, for fear he would be importune upon him, as God giveth us leave to come unto him. What bounty is this? Now when we see that God maketh himself so familiar in our small affairs: so much the more ought we to beseech him, after the example of David, that he would conduct us according to his law: to wit, that he will grant us his grace to live in such sort, as that we may follow the rule which he hath set down here unto us. See then, how that by the less, we must come to the greater, as by particularities we must come to generalities. From the less to the greater, say I, is this, That if God giveth unto us our daily bread, let us also crave of him health for our souls. If God will so humble himself, as to advise us: when we have anything to do amongst men, about the earthly affairs of this transitory life, let us also beseech him to do us this good, as to conduct us likewise according to his law. Lo here how we may come from the lesser to the greater. We may also descend from particularities to generalities, when as we shall say, O Lord, thou hast heard me in such a thing, which is a special matter: now by a more forcible reason, I may call upon thee for a thing which may serve me all the days of my life, which is, that when thou hast set me into the way of salvation, thou wouldst keep me therein, and that thou never forsake me, until such time as thou hast brought me unto that end and perfection, whereunto thou hast called me. It followeth, *Make me to understand the way of thy commandments: and I will meditate of thy wondrous works.* Mark here the third reason which David allegeth to obtain of God, that he might be taught in his law. *O Lord*, (saith he) *make me to understand the way of thy commandments, and so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.* As if he should have said, O Lord, if it be thy good pleasure instruct me according to thy will, and it shall not serve for myself only: but also for my neighbors: for I will endeavor myself to bring also others unto thee.

And thus we ought to use the graces and gifts of God: to wit, that they be not as it were buried in us, but that we may also profit our neighbors: and to communicate them unto such, as they may do good unto, to the end that God may be honored, and that they all may serve to the common salvation of the members of our Lord Jesus Christ. But here we have in this Text to note, that it is impossible for us to instruct others, except we have been before the disciples and Scholars of God. There are a great many which will put forth themselves, as if they were sufficient and able Clerks enough to teach others: And in so thrusting in themselves, they have not once known what they ought to understand, either for themselves or yet for any others. Let us then consider the order which is here observed: to wit, that every of us do acknowledge our own ignorance. David was a most excellent Prophet, and yet notwithstanding he besought God that he would make him to understand the way of his commandments. Yea, but had not he the Law written? Wherefore then desired he that which he had already in his hands? For he knew well enough that to read, to preach, and to hear, was not all that was needful: For unless God open our ears, we shall never be able to understand it. And therefore it behooveth that he enlighten us, or else we shall never be able to see the brightness thereof, albeit it lie wide open before our eyes. If David made this request (as we have already heretofore entreated) I beseech you what shall we do then? Let us then even so confess our ignorance, and beseech God that it would please him to teach us. See now that we must needs be first scholars: before we usurp the office of a Master: and before we thrust ourselves in, to speak unto others, that we hear God first speak unto us, and that we be grounded in his word, that we may protest as Saint Peter (^{<600411>} 1 Peter 4:11) telleth us, that it is the word of GOD which cometh out of our mouths.

Whosoever speaketh, (saith he) *let him speak the word of God*. For it is no reason that a mortal man should extol himself, and prefer his own dreams and fantasies. And although that this sacrilege be overcommon in the world, it behooveth us to have great regard thereto: and that we all keep silence, and that both great and small, ignorant and wise, the simple and learned, give ear to the word of God, and suffer themselves to be taught by him: and after that, every man according to those graces which he hath received, to communicate them unto his neighbors. And when any of us shall be better instructed in the word of God than any of our brethren, we ought so much the more to exhort them that have need thereof to reprehend and rebuke those which make default, and to instruct the

ignorant and unlearned. For our Lord God bestoweth not his graces liberally upon us, to the end we should hold them fast locked as it were in a chest: but that we should make them common to others, to set forth and commend them to other according as opportunity shall serve, and also according to the dispositions of those to whom we addict ourselves to teach, are contented to hear us. Moreover when David saith, *That he will speak of the wondrous works of God*, Let us mark that he doeth it not of any ambition, or vainglory, as many do, which could be very well contented that we should hear them, when as they shall do nothing else but babble at random of the word of God. And why is that? It is because they profane it, without having any reverence thereto. For we see that the most ignorant will be most bold, according to the old saying, None so bold as blind Bayard, or, A foolish man doubteth no peril. Whensoever any would go about to teach them, O by and by the word of God shall be nothing with them: For ye shall have them always to have answers ready coined in their sleeves. There are then which would be accounted great Clerks, who notwithstanding show themselves not to know what holiness, and Majesty the word of God carrieth with it. But contrariwise David telleth us, that if we will instruct and teach our neighbors, that we ought first to understand the law of GOD to be full of wonderful and strange secrets: to be so high a wisdom, as that we ought not to presume to take on hand to handle it without all modesty and sobriety. Let us then learn, if we will be good Doctors and teachers, to proceed in all humbleness and fear, knowing that the least sentence in the scripture surmounteth our understanding, and that we are too dull and blockish to attain unto so high wisdom, except the Lord our God guideth and leadeth us thereto. Lo how that both scholars and masters and as many as are hearers, and speakers, ought to come with great reverence when as they mean to handle the word of God. It followeth soon after:

My soul melteth with very heaviness: raise me up according to thy word.

Here David more clearly expresseth that which we have already touched: to wit, that the abundant joy of the faithful consisteth wholly in this, that God is merciful unto them, and knowing him to be such one, they are comforted by his grace, nothing doubting of his good will. And to prove it to be so, David saith in the first place, *My soul melteth away with very heaviness*, as if he should have said, that all his power and virtue was clean gone from him. For this similitude here, is also very well set down in

diverse places of the Scripture. We have gushed and burst out like water. So then, see how David is here become as a forlorn man, so thrown down and humbled, as that he is clean void of all strength, and all other things whatsoever, and thereupon beseecheth God to comfort him. Now here we are to note that he speaketh not of the feebleness of his body, to say that he was humbled by sickness, and yet his soul to be lusty and strong: but he saith that he is melted away with very heaviness, as if he should have said, that he was utterly overthrown. And thereupon he desireth to be comforted, and that by the word of God. Here then we see, that when God shall mortify us, we shall be as men forlorn: and that not only all our force and strength in this present life shall be of no value, but also our souls and spirits shall be as it were humbled and cast down, to this end that we might boldly call upon God after the example of David. Let us not fear then that God will forsake us, but let us rather learn to beseech him to comfort us, for David hath showed us the way unto it, neither went he so on of his own proper motion, but it was the spirit of God which pushed him forward thereto. Wherefore, having so good a guide, let us not fear, to be frustrate and void of our petitions and demands, so long as we follow the doctrine herein contained. Now returneth he to the first Argument which we have already touched: to wit, *according to the word of God*. Wherein we see, that all the assurance and certainty which we ought to have in our prayers to God, is, to look unto that which he hath promised us. For they which trust unto themselves, and think there is sufficient in them, why God should hear them: it is most sure that they shall never open their mouths to desire anything of God: or if they do, it shall be all but mere hypocrisy: As in Popery, where we are not taught the promises of God. True it is that they will babble much, mumble over a number of Pater Nosters with a mixture of Aves, yea and will also direct their Paternoster to the Puppet of *Saint Agatha*, or some other Saint, as if it were to God. Now this is nothing else but beastly to profane the name of God. And therefore I have said that the principalest point that we ought to use in praying unto God, is to lay before him his promises saying, O Lord God it is true that we rightly deserve to be rejected of thee, but seeing thou invitest and callest us, shall we go from thee? Is it not meet that we should do thee this honor, as to give credit unto thy word, and to hold it for steadfast and sure? Sithens [*since*] then it is so, that we have thy promises, we may boldly trust unto them, considering that they are true, and because we cannot but have them granted unto us, we only rest and stay ourselves

upon them. Lo here the meaning of David in this verse. Now he goeth on and saith,

Take from me the way of lying: and grant me graciously thy Law.

Here he acknowledgeth, that although he were already exercised in the law of God, and in his knowledge, and that although he were a Prophet to teach others, nevertheless, that he was yet subject to a number of wicked thoughts and imaginations which might always wickedly lead him from the right way, except God had held him with his mighty and strong hand. And this is a point which we ought here rightly to note: For we see how men greatly abuse themselves. When any of us shall have had a good beginning, we straightways think that we are at the highest: we never bethink us to pray anymore to God, when as he hath showed us that favor to serve our turns: but if we have done any small deed, we by and by lift up our sails, and wonder at our great virtues. To be short, we think straightway that the Devil can win no more of us. This foolish arrogancy causeth God to let us go astray, so that we fall mightily, yea that we break both arms and legs: and are in great hazard of breaking our necks. I speak not now of our natural body, but of the soul. Let us look upon David himself: (<091101> 1 Samuel 11) For he it is that hath made proof hereof. It came to pass that he villainously and wickedly erred, when as he took Bethsabe the wife of his subject Ury, to play the whoremonger with her, that he was the cause of so execrable a murder, yea and that of many: For he did as much as in him lay, to have the whole army of the Lord and all the people of Israel to be utterly overthrown. Lo then too great negligence and security in David: and see also wherefore he saith, *Alas my good God, I beseech thee so to guide me, as that I may forsake the way of lying.* This is the whole sum, that David (although he exceedingly profited in the law and word of God) acknowledgeth that he was subject and apt to be carried away and abused: that the devil might sundry ways beguile and deceive him: that he might be seduced through many temptations: allured by the lusts of the flesh: and oftentimes fall, were it not that God did take from him the way of lying. Lo here a point which we ought thoroughly to mark, *O Lord*, saith he, *take from me the way of lying.* It is spoken to this end, that every of us might know our own want [*lack*]: to wit, that we should enter into ourselves, and meditate after this manner. Go to now, I am as a poor, wretched, and so frail a creature as is possible: my faith so very weak, and the lusts of my flesh so strong, as that they might have suddenly oppressed me. Alas my

God, sithens [*since*] I am so weak and feeble, I must needs be assisted by thee and by thy power and might. And again how many are our enemies which molest and grieve us? how mighty and strong is the Devil? How great and infinite are the means wherewith he assaileth us? and when he shall assail us with his Darts and arrows, it is impossible for us to escape them, we shall become then like unto the Lamb in the throat of the Lion. When we shall thus have understood these our wants [*lack*] and needs, then may we say with David, *O Lord take from me the way of lying*. Now he showeth the remedy when he saith: *Cause me to make much of thy Law*, or *grant me thy grace that I may keep thy law*: For the word which David useth, importeth mere favor and free gift: As if he should have said, it cometh of thy mere favor and grace, that thou givest me thy law. See here the remedy which our lord and Savior useth, when he would withdraw us from the law of lying, to wit, that we should keep his truth: For the truth of God is sufficiently able to encounter all the subtleties and sly practices of Satan, to withstand all temptations, and to vanquish and overcome all the lusts of our flesh. The truth of God then will suffice against all this. And this is it which Saint Paul (<490610> Ephesians 6:10-12) speaketh of, that when we shall be strengthened in the doctrine of the Gospel, that then we shall have wherewithal to be lusty and strong, and become valiant Champions to fight under the ensign of our Lord Jesus Christ, and triumph over all our enemies. So then, will we be far from hypocrisy? will we be delivered from lying, from all the subtleties of Satan, and from all the deceits of the world? Let us beseech God then to grant us his law, and to do us that good that we might be instructed therein, as we are here taught by the example of David. Now after all this he maketh his protestation. *That he hath chosen the way of truth, and hath cleaven unto the testimonies of God, that he hath followed his judgments*: and hereupon he beseecheth him, *not to be confounded*.

Here now we see, that when we beseech God to give us his law, to deliver us from temptations, to suffer us not to be deceived neither by Satan, nor the world, that we do it with such a true desire, as David showeth us here, in this place. For there are many which may say with their mouth, O Lord I would gladly resist all temptations. But what? They compound with the Devil, conspire with him to set themselves against God, flatter themselves in all their iniquities, and desire wholly to give themselves to all wickedness. Are not here I beseech you fair and proper petitions which we

make with the mouth, when as the heart bendeth itself altogether to mischief, and iniquity. Is not this I pray you to mock God? what other thing else is it? Let us then learn to say with David, *O Lord, I have chosen the way of truth, and have sticken to thy testimonies*. When he saith, that he hath chosen the way of truth, he meaneth that he desired nothing else, but to follow that which was right and good, as God had showed it unto him. When he saith, that he cleaved to the testimonies of God, he declareth what truth that is whereof he made mention: For men many times imagine unto themselves certain fantasies in their heads, and think the same to be the best and most sure foundation in the world, and that there is no other reason, truth, nor wisdom, but that which they have conceived in their own brain. Let us now beware of that, and assure ourselves that truth itself is enclosed within the word of God, and that that is it, which we must seek: And not to have us think that to be the truth, which we in our own fantasies do judge to be good: but even then have we chosen the way of truth, when as we shall stick to the testimonies of God, when we shall understand and know that it is he only which may lead us straight, and that we have done this honor unto his word, to be ruled thereby all the days of our life. Lo, how we should follow the way of truth. Now when David hath made all these protestations, he desireth that he may not be confounded. As if he should have said, My GOD, since that it is so that I desire to obey thee, suffer me not now to be confounded, that I be not scorned, and supposed to be as a vagabond and without a guide. Lo here a place which ought diligently to be marked: For I beseech you, when we shall be desirous to cleave unto God and his word, when we shall have preferred the same before all our lusts and pleasures, yea above all whatsoever shall seem good and right in our own eyes: if we shall then I say be put to confusion and shame, what shall become of us when we shall lay the rein of the bridle in the neck of all our desires, and take from God all his authority? Deserve we not to be utterly confounded? No doubt we do. So then, let us weigh the first part of this doctrine, that we must not let our tongues walk against God: For he knoweth how to be right well avenged thereof. How many do we see at this day to become after this manner so beastly, as that it is shame to see their brutishness? and what is the cause? They have cast off the yoke of God, they have not vouchsafed [*granted*] to do him that honor, as to be governed by him: It is meet then that they be confounded in the open sight of the world, that they may be pointed at, that even young Children may perceive their beastliness, as are

very well worthy so to be served. And so lest we fall into such shame: let us pray with David, that it would please God to make us so to stick unto him and his word, and we never be confounded. Now to conclude with these eight verses apart, David saith,

I will run the way of thy Commandments: when thou shalt enlarge mine heart. When he saith, That when God hath set his heart at liberty, he will run: it is to show unto us, that when our hearts are enclosed and fast shut up, that we are not able so much as to remove one of our fingers to well doing, until such time as GOD gladdeth [*cheer*] us, and showeth us a merry countenance. Now David in this first place declareth unto us, that we are able to do nothing except God stirreth us up thereto. And although he hath already solicited and admonished us, yet that is not all. We should cry out and Alas: and pour out some sighs and groans. But because God will be served with a cheerful mind, and not with an evil will, so long as we are fast shut up, we cannot once stir out of the place, to go on forward in the way of salvation. And how can we then run? When as he shall have set our heart at liberty: to wit, that he shall have so disposed and ordered us, as that we should freely bend ourselves, and fully and wholly yield our affections unto him. For otherwise, we having our hearts fast shut up shall always become the bondslaves of sin. It is very true, that while we are in this world, we never run so fast nor yet so perfectly, as is required, yea we shall many times go as it were halting [*waivering*] where indeed we should make haste. But thus it is with us, that whensoever he shall govern us with his spirit, and that we shall be under the conduct of our head and Captain Jesus Christ, we may say with David, that we do not only walk in his commandments, but that we also run in them: Yea, so that our affection be not hypocritical, and that our zeal be also fervent to addict ourselves unto our good God, since he hath placed us in the world to this end, to obey him, and to glorify his holy name. And according to this doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the face of our good God, in acknowledging our sins: beseeching him, that it would please him to make us to feel our sins and iniquities more and more, and that it would also please him to make us so to remember them, that we may learn to acknowledge how necessary it is for us to be more and more increased and confirmed in his graces which he bestoweth upon us, to the end that in allowing and esteeming of his benefits as it becometh us, we may render unto him our humble and hearty thanks: beseeching him also to continue us in such sort in his holy

vocation, as that we may be glorified in the latter day in having fought a good fight, and that we may enjoy the prize and reward of the victory, to triumph in our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us beseech him that he will not only give us this grace, but also all the people and nations of the world, etc.

THE FIFTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

HE

- 33** Teach me O Lord the way of thy statutes: and I will keep it unto the end.
- 34** Give me understanding and I will keep thy law: yea I will keep it with my whole heart.
- 35** Direct me in the path of thy Commandments: for therein is my delight.
- 36** Incline my heart unto thy testimonies: and not to covetousness.
- 37** Turn away mine eyes from regarding vanity: and quicken thou me in thy way.
- 38** Establish thy promise to thy servant because he feareth thee.
- 39** Take away thy rebuke that I am afraid of: for thy judgments are good.
- 40** Behold I desire thy commandments: quicken me in thy righteousness.

THESE EIGHT VERSES here contain the Prayers which we have already before seen: to wit, that David prayeth to be taught in the law, that he might the better serve God. Now upon this we have to note, that this is not all to hear and to be taught by preaching unto us, that the same is as it were from the truth of GOD: but we must also be taught by the holy Ghost, yea and that two manner of ways. For when God shall have enlightened us, to the end we might know that it cometh from him, it behooveth that he imprint in our hearts a desire to cleave unto it, for without that we shall do clean contrary, as naturally we are inclined.

So then, although it be not superfluous to read and hear: yet will it profit us nothing at all, except the holy Ghost teacheth us: yea and that to discern as well between good and evil, as also to be well and rightly

affected, to walk according to the Commandments of GOD. Which thing is sufficiently confirmed unto us in the person of David: For (as we have heretofore declared) he was a most excellent Prophet.

Now it appeareth that he was not only sufficiently instructed for himself, but GOD had also ordained him to govern and instruct others: this was the Doctor of the whole Church. And yet notwithstanding, he confesseth himself to be utterly ignorant and blind, except God directed him by his holy spirit. Yea, and he declareth unto us most plainly, that he had need of these two parts of the grace of GOD, here by us touched: to wit, to be taught to know that which is good: and afterward to have his mind framed to continue therein.

This circumstance also is specially to be noted, that David in making his requests herein contained, was no Novice: For God had already instructed him by his holy Spirit. And that which is more, he declareth that he had already desired to follow God, and to obey his Commandments. Wherefore then is it, that he prayeth afresh, but only that he felt in himself great weakness in this point, and that he was but in the mid way?

Let us then understand, that even they which are enlightened by the spirit of God, and are well affected, ought not to content themselves herewith, as if they were already come to a full perfection: but rather to acknowledge their weakness, that they are not grown to that forwardness [*earnestness*], but that they may fail, and that it is God which causeth them to persevere and to be more and more confirmed. Lo here, what we have yet to observe, by the example of David. Now let us follow the words which he useth, to the end the effect of this doctrine may the better be imprinted in our memories:

Teach me O Lord the way of thy statutes: and I will keep it unto the end.

Here David declareth that he hath well begun to serve God but he right well feeleth that we are so frail, that we can never come home to the mark, without God strengtheneth us: wherefore he hath recourse unto this high and mighty power, by which God remedieth the vices that are in his chosen, which he knoweth, not to be in their nature. We see then, that when God stretcheth out his hand unto us, so that we have already been instructors and teachers of our neighbors, yet that we must not presume of our own power and strength, but stand always upon our guard beseeching god with all humility and reverence, that as he hath well begun in us, so he

will perform and go through with the same. David said not, O Lord, I have strayed. But he hath very well said heretofore, that he was by nature a wandering sheep: and so shall we see him to be: And yet notwithstanding our Lord had already brought him into the way of salvation, yea and had bestowed upon him excellent graces. But yet he knowing that he might err an hundred times in a minute, without God held him with a mighty hand: prayeth to be instructed anew, as if all the rest which he had done had been nothing. So then, when as God shall have bestowed upon us his graces, let us not be negligent and secure to lull ourselves asleep, as though our state and condition were not to be amended. But let us rather think with ourselves and consider, that he which hath been taken and holden for a good and virtuous man for the space of ten or twenty years might be seen overcome in a matter of nothing, were it not that God assisted him.

Lo here how the faithful, after that God hath liberally bestowed upon them great graces, ought always to walk in fear and humbleness, knowing that they are subject to many temptations, which they are never able to resist if God continued not the same in them, as well to instruct them, as also to aid them with his power and strength, and to fortify them more and more, as before I have said.

And here we are diligently to mark this saying, *And I will keep it unto the end*. As if he should have said, My God, I have already followed thy commandments for a certain time: but what shall become of it, if thou doest not always put too thy helping hand unto me, as thou hast already done? I may in one minute fall into a great and horrible confusion. O Lord, I beseech thee therefore, that as thou hast begun well in me, so to perform the same thoroughly. By this we see what a devilish arrogancy that of the papists is, wherewith they are puffed up, when as to their seeming, that a man, after God hath once stretched out his arm unto him, can by and by work wonders of himself: and is sufficiently able to overcome all temptations. But let us rather understand and know, that even as it is God that must begin to set us in the right way, so likewise that we cannot continue and abide therein, without he always hold us by his mighty hand, and never to suffer Satan to seduce us, neither yet to be wickedly led, by his subtleties and wiles. And thus much as touching the first verse. Now it followeth:

Give me understanding and I will keep thy law: yea I will keep it with my whole heart.

Here David declareth unto us in the first place, what our true wisdom is: to wit, that we should walk in the fear of God: as also it is said in the scripture, That the fear of God is true wisdom: In sum, we have here the confession of David, that all they which withdraw themselves from the obedience of God, are people void of wit, judgment, wisdom, and reason. In very deed we shall never have the world to judge thus of it: For we will say, lo this is a witty fellow, this man is very wise, when he is able to beguile his neighbors, and craftily invent, how to give himself to all iniquity. Such is the wisdom of this world. But in the meanwhile let us note this by the way, that these words are not spoken without cause, to wit, that all our wisdom and reason consisteth herein, that we walk in the fear of God, and seek after his will, yea and to hold us to it. In the second place as David hath already protested, that we are not capable to understand the law of God, and the contents thereof, if we be not taught from above, that is, by the holy ghost: he also addeth, that he can have no good affection nor desire to give himself thereto, until such time as his heart be reformed.

The law of God may seem to be but a common thing, yea we ourselves do see that the proud men of this world condemn it as a thing too common: But yet, as David hath before said, God hath set down unto us in his law wonderful secrets, which he here repeateth not in vain, that it must needs be that in receiving the spirit of God from heaven, he should be conducted, to the end to follow the commandments of God. Now he namely saith, *That I will keep, yea that I will keep it with my whole heart.* This is no superfluous repetition, when he saith, That I will keep, yea that I will keep it with my whole heart. For behold what it is that abuseth a great number of men, so that they cannot be reprehended by men, that their life is not so dissolute as that they may be pointed at, and be not brought to rebuke and shame: Lo these men be like little Angels. They make themselves believe, that they are more than just before God: they feel themselves guilty in nothing. For this cause then David having said that he will keep the law of God, declareth, that it is not so common a thing to do as we take it.

And why so? For saith he, he must keep it with his whole heart. When he meaneth to show unto us what the good keeping of the law of GOD is, and such an observation as God requireth of us, it is not only meant that our feet and hands should be seen to be well ruled and compassed, that our sins and iniquities should be so apparent, as that they might be condemned in the sight of the world: this say I, is not all, as to use such an observation. But we must (saith David) keep the law of God with our whole heart. When as we shall be never so little affected or desirous thereto, it shall be a great deal more worth than all the substance in the world. But we must beware that we have not a double heart, that our desire be so cold and feeble, as to say, very well, I would gladly that God would bestow his grace upon me that I might follow his commandments: and thereupon, to show ourselves weary and slothful: but we must have a true sincerity to walk therein with all fullness and integrity. But I beseech you what is he that is able to attain to that perfection? It is so far off that there should be any such uprightness in us, as that we are not able to think once a good thought, except God changeth our perverse nature, which before should be repugnant and contrary unto his righteousness. Wherefore, in sum, David, after that he had prayed unto God that he would instruct him, to the end he might keep his commandments: addeth, for a more ample confirmation:

That I may keep thy commandments with my whole heart. As if he should have said, O Lord I know that we men, as we are puffed up with pride and arrogancy, do think us to have accomplished and fulfilled all the whole law, when as we have set a good countenance of the matter, and have made some appearance or show to the world: if there were no more in it but this, yet should it be enough for me, considering that all our members do so rage in wickedness, as that it is very hard to hold them in. But all this should be nothing. For it should be all but mere hypocrisy: and because that thou hast respect to the heart, all my carnal passions and affections must be pulled down and myself in such sort renewed, as that I may be wholly conformed unto thy righteousness. Alas my God, and if I must be brought to that, I see it to be an impossible matter. And so thou must needs put thy helping hand unto me, that I might be taught by thy holy spirit. It followeth in the third verse,

Make me to go in the way of thy commandments: for therein is my desire.

Here we see that which hath been touched, to wit, that David prayeth not unto God that he would begin to set him in a good way: For he was already entered into it, he had already walked in it a good long season. And indeed, this desire is a very great furtherance unto us, when as we may pray unto God to beseech him to govern us, and we ought to prefer this felicity or blessedness before all the things in the world. And herein let us show ourselves to have greatly profited. Now David protesteth, without hypocrisy, that he hath kept the commandments of God: Nevertheless he beseecheth the Lord to grant unto him power to persevere therein, and that he may come to the perfection thereof. Wherein we see that it is not enough that when God hath begun and set us in a good way, that we may ever after do whatsoever seemeth good in our own sight. We see here to the contrary, that when God shall have taught us, and that we have been apt to learn from the beginning: nevertheless that his grace should be made void every minute, without he did continue it. And so in the first place, when as God shall have instructed us, to make us to come to a good understanding and knowledge, he must also grant unto us a good affection and desire. And hath he given us that? It is also meet that he continue the same in us, and make us desirous to walk in his commandments. Finally after that he hath given us to will, he must also give us to perform as Saint Paul saith, that he do all in all, but not to reward this good will or any other good preparation which is in us, but to do it according to his pleasure, to wit, of his free mercy.

Moreover, let us on our behalf consider, when as we would obtain any such grace at God's hands: to wit, to lead us into the way of his paths, that our hearts be there settled as that we be not so accursed as to forsake God, and to set light by him, to quench this light which he shall have put in us. For otherwise, if we be always given to the vanities of this world, as commonly we are, and that we make no accompt [*account*] of the graces which God shall bestow upon us: it is good reason, that he take them from us, and set us clean without them, yea and that he take his holy spirit from us, although we had been before endued with the same. He added soon after,

Incline my heart unto thy testimonies: and not unto covetousness.

Here we see how it hath already been taught, that God must have the government of all the parts of man: that it is not enough that he give him a

good wit, to the end to judge that which is good, but his courage and mind must also be tied thereto. He hath said before, Give me understanding: and by and by, Incline my heart unto thy testimonies. And to what end should he incline it? Let us here note that it is the office of God, to incline our hearts unto his ordinances, or else, they would go clean against the hair. For if we were disposed of ourselves to walk according to the will of God, to hold and conceive whatsoever is written in his word, David needed never to have made this request, or else he should speak it feignedly [*dishonest*] and after a lying manner. When then he besought God to incline his heart to well doing: it is as much, as if he had confessed and said, It is not in me, O Lord, neither yet in any mortal creatures, to walk as thou hast commanded, for our hearts are altogether perverse and wicked. There is nothing in us but rebellion and treason against thee, we shall never be able to walk in thy obedience, nor never place ourselves therein, except thou puttest to thy hand, and inclinest our minds and hearts thereto. We see then what the condition and disobedience of man's nature against God is, until such time as he hath softened our stony and flinty hearts and that we have learned to bear his yoke: to be short, that our hearts be so abased and humbled, as that we have learned to hate that which is evil, and to desire that which is good. Lo, what is declared unto us in the first place.

Now when David speaketh here of covetousness, he sheweth unto us that these things can abide no fellowship together, as to follow the word of God, and to be given to the goods of this world. In very deed, he putteth in here one kind for all the whole. But in the first place, let us note, that in opposing against the keeping of the commandments of God, that, which he knew to be clean contrary unto it: he meaneth to declare that we are entangled with so many vices and desires, as is most lamentable. And to say the truth, what are the appetites and desires of men? when as we shall have called out every of them by their self, we shall find nothing in them but a mere contrariety to resist the Lord our God. For look how many thoughts and affections are in us, they are even so many men of war to fight against God. So then David acknowledgeth, that he cannot serve God, until such time as he be cleansed, for all his evil desires, and vicious affections, and therefore he beseecheth God to expel out of him, that perverseness which he felt in himself, that he was overmuch given to covetousness, and to such other like things. And thus much for this first point.

Even so, when as we would follow God, let us understand that we cannot do it without great conflict: to wit, until such time as all our passions are mortified. For our heart will never place itself rightly, until such time as our nature be brought under. True it is, that we must not serve God either by force or constrainedly. Yea, but let us see how we do serve him. Are we thereunto inclined as of ourselves? Alas, it is nothing so, until such time as he hath renewed in us our mind and will. For so long as we remain in this our nature, all our senses are stirred up to do evil: so that, as I have before said, we shall never be able to serve God, in captiving [*subjecting*] our affections, and holding them in, as prisoners: to the end we be not letted [*hindered*] to follow that which God hath commanded us.

Let us now come to the second point. Because that some vices are greater than other some, and sithens [*since*] that every man may be given more to one vice than to another: let us keep good watch, and ward, and stand upon our guard. If there be any man that feeleth a vice to reign in himself, let him understand and say, lo a combat even ready at hand: and so let every other man do the like. As how? If a man have a great number of servants under him, he will appoint every one his task: he will appoint to one man this thing, to another that thing, and every of them must bestow himself accordingly as he is appointed. Even so is it in an army: Some are appointed to wait upon the ordinance, some other are harquebusiers [*def. soldiers with charge of portable yet heavy matchlock guns fired from a support*], some are horsemen, and other some armed pikes, or otherwise. Now every of these must have regard whereunto to apply himself, and the same is looked for at his hand. Even so it is with us, when as any vice warreth against us: for it is as much, as if God addressed us to be exercised therewith, to the end we might fight against it. No doubt, there is not that man which hath not in himself some one root of all kind of wickedness, and this is a bottomless pit wherein we are all confounded. But yet, as I have before said, there are vices which more plentifully do abound in one more than in another. Every man therefore ought to have great regard, whereunto his nature is most inclined, and so much the more enforce himself to resist all those temptations, wherewith he may be most crushed and shaken. And that which is more, we must have respect to those wicked affections and thoughts, which might in any wise deceive us by occasions offered us.

It is not like to be true that David was naturally covetous, neither yet do we find that he was so. But we read that he was a king, that he had a fertile and plentiful country, and that he might have gathered together exceedingly, as we also see he did. When men come to wealth and riches after that manner, it is great peril, but that they will give themselves too much thereto, where before they had them in contempt. Even so then, it may be that David had a care to desire to be more wealthy than he was, although as the scripture witnesseth, that Gold and silver was then little set by: For he had such plenty of them, as that gold and silver were no better accounted [*accounted*] of than lead or earth. He then seeing himself to have so great occasions to be given and drawn unto covetousness, was the more careful to pray unto God to deliver him from it. We have now to gather out of this place a good and wholesome doctrine, that they which are chosen to dignity and honor, ought to have great regard that they be not overtaken with ambition, whereby they might show themselves to be both mighty and noble touching the world. And again, that they which are wealthy and rich, be not given over unto their wealth, as in another place of the Psalm (<196210> Psalm 62:10) is said. If thou abound in riches, set not thine heart on them. And also that they which might be overtaken with their pleasures and delights, should keep an hard hand on the bridle, and be well advised that they abuse not the goods which GOD hath bestowed on them.

Lo here, say I, in the first place how every man ought to bridle his nature, to the end to resist and withstand the vices and sins, whereunto he is inclined. And next, as everyone having lets [*opportunities*] or occasions to cause them to exceed, they ought to keep so much the better watch over themselves. For, as I have already said, albeit that every of us is given more to one vice than to another, yet for all that, we are every of us contagiously infected with them all, and there is not that man which can exempt himself from the same. Now it is true indeed, that David here speaketh namely of covetousness. And why so? Because it is a vice which breedeth exceeding many mischiefs. And it is not without cause, that Saint Paul (<540610> 1 Timothy 6:10) calleth it the root of all evil: For after that a man is once given to the pestilent covetousness of the goods of this world, he maketh an Idol of his money, riches, and possessions. He is so violently carried away with them, as that he will never be satisfied. He is like unto a bottomless depth which never will be filled. And afterward it maketh him

to be full of cruelty, having neither pity nor compassion of his neighbors, making neither conscience nor doubt to fall out with God and the world, so that he may have them, all shall be one to him. Let us note then, that if there be any vice which hindereth us from the serving of God, this is it: to wit, this covetous desire of getting worldly goods. Now David (after he hath spoken specially of covetousness) saith,

Turn away mine eyes from beholding of vanity: and quicken me in thy way.

When as David prayeth that his eyes might be turned away, lest he beheld vanity: It is as if he should have said, Alas, my God, I had need to withstand a thousand temptations, yea and they are infinite which may come before me, and that the devil may present me with: to the end I might be wickedly led, from serving of thee, if there were nothing else but this, it must needs be that I must have been vanquished a thousand times, if thou haddest not instructed me, and that I had been strengthened with thy mighty hand: And yet O Lord, behold two gates open to receive in the enemies. I beseech thee, O Lord, that whensoever we shall be assailed with an huge army, and being not of ourselves able to resist them, and that instead to be in some most sure place, where we might repulse and beat back our enemies, the gates shall stand wide open to let them in: to what purpose were all this? Even so is it in this case, for the two eyes of man are as it were the two gates wherewith the enemies enter. And to what end shall it be, when as we shall have neither power nor ability to resist, and go out against them. And so, since we have enemies even lurking within ourselves, and that we are not only weak, but that there is nothing else but weakness in us: and are also thrust out as it were for a prey to Satan, when we shall see these two gates stand so wide open unto all the assaults wherewith he assaileth us, we have very great need to pray unto God (after the example of David) to turn away our eyes, lest they behold vanity. Let us then understand, that the meaning of David is to declare unto us in this place, that the eyes of men are always bent to behold vanity: that is to say, that they are ever carried away to all evil, to all wicked concupiscences, until such time as God turneth them away. Yea, and our eyes are not only gates to receive all evil: but are even messengers also. As if the gates were not only open, but that there were also traitors within, to give intelligence to instruct the enemies. Lo where and which way you must come: and which way you must enter. Even so is it with our eyes: our eyes receive on the one side the enemies, and on the other

side, they send messages even from the bottom of the heart, to envenom and poison us all over. So then, we see how necessary this request is for us all, as David hath made before us. But according as every man most profiteth in the knowledge of God: so much the better comprehendeth he this doctrine: and they which know and understand least herein, shall be they which will presume greatliest of their own power and strength. But contrariwise, when God shall have given, and liberally bestowed upon us many of his graces, it should be to this end, that we might so much the better understand our miseries and calamities: beseeching him to remedy the same, and to make provision for us against all our evils and vices. Now he addeth,

Quicken thou me in thy way, as in the end he saith, quicken thou me in thy righteousness. This may be interpreted two manner of ways: *Quicken thou me in thy way*, to wit, O Lord, make me to walk in thy word, that I may live. Or else: O Lord, give me strength, to the end I may follow thy word. We know that when we withdraw ourselves from God, we cannot but commit all iniquity, for which is the way of life but even that which God showeth us, and calleth us unto? All they then which forsake the word of God, go astray, and run headlong unto death, and into everlasting destruction. Even so, it is not without cause, that David desireth to be quickened in the way of the Lord: as if he should have said, that all they which forsake the Lord, and the way which he showeth them, are undone, and utterly overthrown. But according to the true meaning of the place, we are to note that David his meaning is rather to signify unto us, that all men of themselves, are as it were dead, that they have no power nor strength when there is any question of walking according to the will of God.

True it is, that in all evil, we are therein too puissant and strong, and so diligent in it as in nothing more: to be short, there is not that he, which is not therein too able: But when we mean to walk according to the commandments of God, we are not able once to remove a finger: our arms and legs shall be clean broken: to be short, we are not only weak in this, but also utterly dead therein.

The Papists will confess, that men are weak, and not able to satisfy the law of God, except they be aided: and think it sufficient enough, if God give them a sign to aid their weakness, as if a man should reach his hand to a young infant, and say unto him, come hither my pretty child, and he

cometh, and the other maketh semblant [*appearance*] as though he would take him by the hand to lead him, and yet suffereth him to go alone by himself. Lo how the Papists have diminished the graces of GOD. But contrariwise, the scripture telleth us, that we are as dead men, to wit, that there is in us no strength nor ability at all. And therefore David desireth to be quickened in the way of the Lord. As if he should have said, O Lord, my life is altogether given to wickedness. For all my power and strength bendeth and displayeth itself thereto. Even so, O Lord, since thou grantest unto me a clean contrary kind of life: to wit, that I endeavor myself to serve thee, grant me now, O Lord, that I be earnest and fervent, where before I was very slow and dull, yea, even altogether weak and impotent. Now he goeth on and saith:

Establish thy promise to thy servant, because he feareth thee.

When as he desireth God to establish his word in him, and with this addition that he may fear God, he confirmeth the requests which he had before made. Now we ought to carry this point always in mind, that when we mean to pray unto God, we must lay our foundation upon his promises. We must desire nothing of him, but that we are already assured that he will give it us, that he hath of his own good will promised us without our requiring thereof first. For it were foolhardiness to present ourselves before the Lord our God, and to make our petitions after our own pleasures: but it is meet that God himself prevent [*precede*], and speaketh first unto us. Hereupon then we may assure ourselves to pray when as we have his word for it.

According to which reason, David after he had made his requests as we have heard, addeth, *O Lord, establish thy word in thy Servant*. As if he should have said, O Lord, I desire nothing of thee, but that which thou hast promised. And lo it is it that maketh me so bold to come unto thee, because I know that thou art faithful, and wilt to do unto me even as thou hast promised. Wherefore as the promises of GOD ought to give us an entrance into our prayers, and always to go on: even so also after that we have prayed, let us call to mind his own promises, to the end we may be assured that it shall not be in vain, that we have required of him. And why so? Because that God of his own free good will hath bound himself unto us, there is no doubt but that we shall obtain, considering that he will

accomplish whatsoever he hath said, for he cannot fail us. Lo then the meaning of the beginning of this verse.

Now when David saith *that he may fear the Lord*, he meaneth not that he would here allege his merits: but he doth it to this end, to declare that he hath followed the same vocation whereunto he was called: and yet notwithstanding he showeth, that he could not walk in the fear of God, but by the virtue and power of the holy ghost, which was continually in him. And even so must we also do. For whensoever we shall feel any good zeal in us, we must not brag upon it: for what have we that we have not received: according to the saying of Paul? For what is it that should separate us, that we should not be like unto the most wicked? cometh it of our own nature? no surely. It must needs be then, that it is God which hath put to his helping hand. And so, whatsoever goodness is in us, it is a testimony of the good will which God beareth us, and that he will be our father and Savior. Lo here why David setteth this foremost, as though he would ratify the promises of God. Now he concludeth,

Take away my rebuke that I am afraid of: for thy judgments are good.

Behold I desire thy commandments: O quicken me in thy righteousness.

We shall never be able to know, what the rebuke which David here speaketh of is, except we have regard whereunto all his whole drift heretofore tendeth, and to what end: to wit, that God would defend and keep him, and also guide him, as it were with his hand, to the end that as he had begun well, he might also in like manner persevere and continue. Now the shame which all the faithful ought to fear is, that God suffereth them not to be confounded: that when they have for a certain time walked well, they might not in the end give themselves to wickedness: that the latter part of their life might manifest that it was not well and surely rooted within, but was hypocritical and dissembled.

Behold the rebuke which David feared, to wit, that after he had walked well, that God would not leave him as a confounded man: And namely he saith, *For thy judgments are good*. As if he should have said, Alas, my God, so that I follow the same which thou hast commanded me, although that men speak evil of me and slander me for it, all is one to me, when as my conscience shall be pure and clean, and that thou art my warrant and witness, it is enough for me. Behold then, O my God, the rebuke from

which I desire to be delivered, to wit, that thou suffer me not to be wickedly given, nor that I depart from thy commandments: but let my life and conversation be agreeable to thy word. O that sufficeth me: and let men speak what they list [*desire*], their judgment is false, and I appeal from them.

Then to conclude he saith, *My delight is in thy commandments: O quicken me in thy righteousness.* The righteousness of God oftentimes is taken for the grace which God useth towards his children, or at the leastwise wherewith he conducteth them. But he setteth down righteousness here, for right, and equity. He hath said before, *quicken me according to thy word:* Now by and by after followeth *righteousness.* Neither must we think this to be strange, for we have showed here before, that David speaking of the commandments of GOD, after that he hath used his term namely of these words, ordinances and statutes, he taketh other words. As in this place, after he hath said, *quicken me in thy word,* he saith soon after, *In thy righteousness.* And he maketh also this request, *that he might be conducted in the way of the Lord.* Whereby he would show, that it is not enough that we be well affected, but that God must increase the same in us, yea, he must conduct and quicken us, as here he telleth us. For it is so far off, that of ourselves we can do any good, that we are not able once to think a good thought, as Saint Paul saith.

Lo then, how David desired to be quickened: but that was in protesting that he was as touching himself and his own nature, but as it were a condemned man.

And herein must we also do the like. For we must go unto our good God as men condemned in ourselves, beseeching him that he would quicken us. And when he shall have caused us to feel his grace, and that we have stayed ourselves thereon, let us say, we beseech thee O Lord, that since it hath pleased thee to begin in us well doing, that thou wouldest also perform the same in us. And according to this doctrine let us prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our faults: Beseeching him that it would please him to make us feel our misery and wretchedness, whereunto we are given whiles we live here in this world: to the end we may walk so fearfully and carefully as that we may be able to perceive that we have received some favor and grace from our God, and that in following the right way which he hath showed unto us,

we may daily more and more aspire to the end which he hath set before us, which is to attain to that immortal glory, to conjoin us unto our head and captain our Lord Jesus Christ, after that he shall have despoiled us of all the vices and imperfections of our flesh, and clothe us with his righteousness. And that he will not only grant us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the world, etc.

THE SIXTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

VAV

- 41 And let thy loving kindness come unto me, O Lord: and thy salvation according to thy promise.
- 42 So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers: for my truth is in thy word.
- 43 And take not the word of thy truth utterly out of my mouth: for I wait for thy judgments.
- 44 So shall I always keep thy law: yea for ever and ever.
- 45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy commandments.
- 46 I will speak of thy testimonies also even before kings: and will not be ashamed.
- 47 And my delight shall be in thy commandments: which I have loved.
- 48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved: and my study shall be in thy statutes.

THE BEGINNING of these eight verses contain a request which David made unto God, that he felt the accomplishment and performance of the promises which god granted unto him, and after which he hoped. As if he should have said, O Lord, declare unto me, that the promise which thou hast made unto me to do me so much good, be not in vain, but that thou wilt make me feel indeed, that thy word and promise is most certain and true. Now, that he founded himself upon the promises of God, appeareth by his thus saying:

And let thy loving kindness come unto me, O Lord: and thy salvation, according to thy promise.

So shall I make answer unto my blasphemers: for my trust is in thy word.

Wherein also we see that Satan craftily goeth about to overthrow his faith, as if God had made it nothing worth. So then, First of all we are to note, that David feeling himself pressed down, runneth unto the promises of God. And this is a point very profitable for us. For behold how we must put the word of God in practice, when as we have learned it, that when we come to the fight, and Satan assaileth us on every side, in such sort as that it might seem that all the world had conspired against us, and that we see nothing but destruction round about: Even then, I say, must we run unto the promises which God hath made us, and make account of them, and so apply them to our own use, that then we may feel the power and strength of them. Now it shall be an easy matter for us, when as we are at rest and quiet, to receive whatsoever God hath said unto us. And why so? Because our Faith all that while shall not be exercised and troubled, so that we shall never be able to feel whether we have believed in good earnest, until such time as we are tried. Lo, Why I have said that this place is worthy the marking, that David speaketh not without cause when he saith, So shall I make answer unto those that go about to shame me. For by these words he protesteth, that the wicked contemned, despised and mocked him, as if he had been a very fool, in trusting so much unto God, but yet for that, his faith was not shaken. And see how Satan assaileth us with temptations, when as the wicked and ungodly speak reproachful words of us: insomuch as we have thought it to be wonderful strange gear [*talk*], because that we having heard the so honorable and excellent promises of God, thought ourselves straightways to be rapt and carried above the clouds, and yet this same our persuasion proved nothing at all so, as it made a show to the outward appearance: Even so likewise came it to pass in David, as we may especially see in the twenty and two Psalm.

And our Savior Christ also, who is the very true pattern and mirror of all the Children of God hath sustained and abiden [*endured*] such combats. Very well (said they unto him) he trusteth in God, Let him now see whether God will hear him or not. Let us then note, that David hath not devised and made here any vain speculations, as an idle body might do, which never had been tempted nor distressed. But being so mocked by his enemies, that his faith seemed to be overthrown, and he himself in great hazard utterly to be destroyed, then came he for refuge to the promises of God, saying: My God, thou hast given me thy word, which cannot fail me: Lo wherein is all hope and trust. Even so also ought we to follow this

doctrine, to wit, when the world on the one side shall deride and scorn us, because we have overlighly credited God, and that Satan shall travail all he can to turn us clean away from the certainty which we have had: yet let us not cease to say, O Lord, it is thou which hast spoken, and in thee is all our hope and trust.

Moreover, as we are to call to mind the promises of God, when as we are assailed by Satan and the ungodly: Let us also note (as hath been heretofore treated of) that this is it whereon we must build all our requests: For if we will earnestly pray unto God, and obtain that which we pray for, we must not pray in the air, and say, O Lord I pray unto thee for such a thing, and I would it might so come to pass. For this were overrash and too great boldness to think to make God subject to our wills, to bridle him as we list [*desire*], and to desire him to grant us whatsoever shall please our appetites: but it is his word that must lead us, and be our Cresset [*lantern, illuminating iron vessel*]: and we must refer ourselves wholly to it, and altogether rest thereon. Behold, say I, after what sort our prayers are allowed, to wit, when as we pray not to God for that which seemeth best in our own eyes, but when as we be fenced with that which he hath promised us.

And this is it, wherein we differ from the Painims [*pagans, heathens*] and Infidels. For we see that the Turks and Idolaters do greatly pray unto God. But after what manner pray they? Forsooth [*in truth*] even at all adventure: so that they know not what they do. But contrariwise we must pray unto him, with full assurance that he will hear us. But from whence shall this certainty proceed, if we have not the truth to go before us, and say: behold the Lord, who calleth us unto him? And then when we come unto him, this is no foolish presumption: But we come in such sort unto him, as he hath commanded us.

Let us then see what we have yet to note in this place, when David setteth down here the promises of God, by which he is bound unto him: *O Lord*, saith he, *let it be done unto me according to thy word*. Now here is a very profitable point to be considered of: to wit, after that we are once assured, that God hath promised to do that for us which we shall ask of him, we must no more doubt, that it shall be so: but that the thing is fully concluded upon, so that we are ever sure and certain thereof. For when God speaketh unto us, we are very sure, that he will not deceive us: he will

not give us fair words, and then deceive us, as men many times do, dealing very liberally with their tongues, but yet notwithstanding very close fist: But God dealeth not in such sort. Let us then come before him without distrust, Have we his word? Let us then hold the thing as already performed. And so when David saith, *according to thy word*, he signifieth unto us, that he was not only assured, that God is faithful and liberal, that he meaneth not to abuse us when as we trust to him: but showeth us, that this certainty which we have of the truth of God, should not make us weary, to say, that we be as it were even overwhelmed. But we must rather be careful and diligent to pray unto him.

There are some men which will indeed say, that they believe the promises of GOD, but since, say they, he knoweth what we have need of, what need we to be importune upon him.

Now these men indeed, very well declare that they never understood what faith and hope are. For if we received the promises of God without hypocrisy we ought to be thus earnest and zealous, to pray, and have recourse unto him, saying, O Lord God, when as thou hast assured me of thy bounty and mercy, it is to this end, that I should call upon thee in my need. And that I see the necessity which urgeth and presseth me, I must needs come unto thee as thou hast called me by thy word. Behold then, that all the promises of God should serve us instead of so many spurs to prick us forward, in making our prayers unto him. Let us now come to the words of David.

Let thy loving mercies, or thy graces, come unto me O Lord, and thy salvation.

After that he hath laid his foundation whereupon to build, he desireth one selfsame thing in two words, which to the outward appearance are divers and sundry: to wit, the graces of God, and his salvation. And yet notwithstanding David meaneth nothing else, but that god would show himself to be his Savior. Neither is there anything here spoken superfluously: For it is as much as if he had said, O my God, I beseech thee that according to thy promise, thou wilt make me feel thee to be my savior and father. But yet in the meanwhile, he expresseth unto us whence this salvation which we must wait for, and which God hath promised us cometh, and that is, of his mere good will. For men cannot otherwise choose: but that they will ever wrongfully take upon them something or

other, which appertaineth [*pertains*] nothing unto them, and always to be foolishly and arrogantly bound unto themselves. Now David, clean contrary, sheweth here, that all the salvation which he hopeth after and desireth, cometh from another springhead [*source, cause*], than from the virtue and dignity of men: to wit, even from the mere goodness of God. So then we see, that as before he hath spoken of the promise, even so also he here addeth and expresseth the cause, which moved God to bind himself so unto us: to wit, *his mere mercy*.

By this we are admonished, that when we are to call upon God, we should always have regard unto these two things: to wit, the grace of God and his free mercy, and after that his promise. God is good and liberal, and see why it is, that he with pity looketh upon us: and beholding us with his eyes of compassion, vouchsafeth [*condescends*] to receive us, yea and calleth and allureth us unto him, and also emboldeneth us to crave of him, to the end he would help and succor [*aid*] us in all our needs and necessities. Now this goodness should lie hidden in God, were it not that he made us to feel it by his promise: For God sheweth himself unto us, to be such a one as indeed he is, he layeth his heart wide open, when he rendereth us a testimony of the love he beareth us.

Lo here why I have said, that in all our prayers we ought to have these two considerations: The one is, that God is so good and loving, that although we be poor and miserable creatures, and nothing else but dung and stench, yet for all that he ceaseth not to love us, and to have great care of our salvation. And since we are come to the promise, which is a sure testimony that God is such one we should no more doubt what affection he beareth us, whether he be our friend or enemy, seeing it is so that he is very well willing to be bound unto us, in declaring unto us that he is our father, and taketh us to be his Children.

Now David maketh such a request as we have already touched, to the end he might answer those which wrought him shame. Although he saith word for word, *To the end I may answer these which work me shame*. Here David declareth, that when God shall have aided him, that then he shall be able to withstand all his enemies, put by all the injuries and scorns of the unbelievers and faithless which they did lay before him, to the end to shake and crush the faithful and to destroy them, yea and utterly to make their faith nothing worth, if it were possible for them to do it. By this we

are let [*made*] to understand, that if we make our prayers to God, whensoever it shall happen all the world to assail us, and that it might seem we should be plunged in hell an hundred thousand times, yet we might stand sure against all our enemies: yea verily, for God will never fail us, whensoever we shall desire and pray him to perform his promises unto us, and make us feel his goodness for our salvation. Moreover if we have wherewithal to resist the wicked and ungodly which come upon us to daunt and quail our faith, we shall have also wherewith to withstand Satan. For when men shall persecute us, or deride the promises of God, and labor all they may to turn us away from them, it cometh not of themselves, but it is the Devil which pusheth them forward. Even so then, we may fight and win the victory against all the combats of Satan, if we will pray unto God, after the example of David.

This is also to be considered and noted which here he addeth, when he saith, *My delight is in thy word*. He declareth what signs and tokens he desired of God here before, that he would do unto him as he had promised. For I have delight therein, saith he, would we then have God his promises to take place in us, to open the gate that we might come unto him, that they might be as keys to give us an entry, to the end our requests and petitions might be received? we must then join hope therewith. And lo what is the cause why we feel not the power of the promises of God as we ought: the reason is, for that we have no hope nor trust in them. It is most true, that god for his part is always true of his word: and although we are miserable faithless people, yet will he never falsify his faith which he hath given to us. But what? Surely we are unworthy ones to feel such a pleasure. In very deed, god hath promised to pour his grace upon us, as also he offereth it unto us: But yet are we utterly unworthy thereof, without we believe his promises, would we that god should do unto us according to his word? we must then receive his word, and embrace it by faith: as also the Apostle (^{<580402>} Hebrews 4:2) treateth thereof. And thus much as touching these two first verses.

Now it followeth: *Take not the word of thy truth utterly out of my mouth: for I wait for thy judgments.*

When David saith, *O take not the word of thy truth out of my mouth*: He meaneth not, that it sufficeth to magnify God with his tongue: and to make many goodly protestations before the world: but he presupposeth, that

when he hath witnessed of the truth of God with his mouth, that it must also be grafted within his heart. And indeed, David speaketh not here like an hypocrite, as they do which would seem to make a goodly show before him: and think themselves well enough and in good case, when as they are openly supposed to be very faithful, well thought of, and taken to be very honest men, this think they is all that is to be required. But David hath not proceeded after this manner: For when he saith, *Take not the word of thy truth out of my mouth, O Lord*: It is as much as if he had said, O Lord, do me not only this grace, that I trust secretly in thee, that I stay me upon thy promises, that I stand sure against all the assaults of mine enemies, but namely and chiefly even before the face of men: that my faith might declare itself, that by this means I might guide and instruct all those which would come unto thee: and contrariwise that I might withstand all those which shall go about to overthrow this spiritual hope of mine, which I have in thee and in thy truth. And when thou O Lord, shalt have deeply rooted thy word in mine heart, let it also be oftentimes in my mouth, that I may magnify thy name before men.

We have then to learn out of this place, that in the first place we must be assured of the truth of God, yea although that men perceive it not in us: And again although every man would keep it so secret to himself, as that no man in all the world knew thereof, yet GOD and his Angels do know, how true and certain we esteem it to be, and also how we yield thereto, the honor which unto it appertaineth [*pertains*], and to be such indeed as deserveth to be holden for true and faithful. And thus much for the first point. Now for the second, Let us advisedly consider to edify our neighbors, that they might be confirmed by our example, and all with one accord to trust in God, that the wicked and ungodly might be ashamed that we might vex them, that we have wherein to glory, notwithstanding all their windlasses, privy devices, and whatsoever mischief else they are any way able to imagine against us, and thinking to make us as profane as themselves, yet that we may be able to cast them off, after the example of David. Lo then, the word which he desireth to have always in his mouth, to confirm all those which would trust in God, and to confound all them which deride and scorn his word and truth. But what meaneth he by this saying, *Forever*? That is, that he being as it were forsaken of God in all his afflictions, was as one that were dumb and could not speak, as he complaineth in another place. And indeed, so long as God sheweth unto us

no token of his grace, although our enemies deride us with open mouth, yet we are not at that liberty to confute them and stop their mouths. David then being thus tempted a long time, desireth that the confession wherewith he might be able to magnify God, might not to be taken from him forever. Wherein we are to observe, that if God sometimes leaveth us confounded after the manner of the world, instead of being dismayed, we ought to beseech him that he would not suffer our mouths to be stopped forever.

Now he repeateth it over again: *For my hope is in thy judgments*. It is not without cause that David still maketh this protestation: For as I have already said, behold what power and efficacy the word of God causeth us to feel (according to that place which I have alleged out of the Epistle to the Hebrews) when we have therewith hope also, which hangeth upon faith. It is true that God stretched out his hand unto his people, when he brought them out of the land of AEgypt, to the end he would bring them into the promised land. But what? the people stayed not themselves upon God, and therefore it was meet that that promise should be void, yea and that justly unto such a faithless people. God had no long time to find out such a wonderful and marvelous strange means as that man could not possibly conceive, how that might be brought to pass which he had spoken. But this availed them nothing which were faithless: For lo they being excluded from such a benefit: are deprived of that promised inheritance. Let us then learn, that when we would have God to open his hand unto us and deal liberally with us, to have us to feel his mighty power, and that we might perceive the fruit and benefit of his promises. It is meet that we plant them deeply in our hearts: that we may say after the example of David, *My hope O Lord is in thy judgments*. For this word *Integrity* or *judgment*, we have here before already declared, signifieth nothing else but the doctrine contained in the law of God, yea although he here useth diverse and sundry words, yet do they tend always to one and the selfsame end. Lo then whether we must refer the judgments of God: to wit, that that which we read in the word of God, and that which is preached unto us out of the same, we must understand and know to be sure and certain Statutes and ordinances, and so well ordered as that they cannot be bettered, and therefore to have all our hope and trust in them. Now he goeth on and saith,

So shall I always keep thy law: yea forever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy commandments.

David here maketh protestation not only of his good affection and integrity, but also sheweth the fruit and benefit that might come unto him, when as God shall have so holpen [*helped*] him and that he shall have put in proof the fruit of his faith. Lo then how this place must be expounded: O Lord, when I shall once have known thee to be my savior and felt by proof thy mercy: then will I keep thy law a great deal better: As if he should have said, I shall be continually confirmed in thy obedience: and that shall greatly help me, to make always forward [*ready*]. And to say the truth, all the graces which we receive from God, should conduct and lead us a great deal further, that if we have already been in a good way and forwardness [*earnestness*], it is to this end that we should continue in it, and go on more and more, until such time as we come to the end.

It is very true that God in conducting us, looketh not for any recompense. For he will lightly pass it over: but this is spoken for our use and instruction. And when we pray unto God, we ought to seek after all the things that can be which might confirm us, that we should not doubt but that God would hear our requests, and that we should also understand and know to what end we ought to refer those benefits which he bestoweth upon us, and that we receive at his hands. Now then, when David saith, *I shall always keep thy law: yea forever and ever*. By this we have to note, that accordingly as God liberally bestoweth his benefits upon us, that our faith should be so much the more strengthened in him, that we ought the rather to be inflamed with a true desire and zeal, to yield ourselves fully and wholly to him, to cleave to his righteousness, and to keep his law and word. And I would it pleased God that this might be deeply imprinted in our mind. But what? we see the unthankfulness, which is as it were in us all. For God never ceaseth to do us good, and will daily give us new matter to trust in him, to love and serve him. But whatsoever he doth for us, it availeth us nothing, for we are always cold as ice: there is no zeal in us, no not so much as any motion, so that it seemeth we are altogether senseless. And the rather ought we to meditate upon this Doctrine: For it is the right remedy to amend our so great liveness [*wickedness*] and coldness.

Let us then learn, that when David saith, *I shall keep thy Law, O Lord*, that by this he meaneth, that accordingly as God putteth unto us his

helping hand, and that we have had proof of his graces, that we receive the fruit and commodity thereof, which we have hoped for in his promises: that it ought to serve us for a more ample and large confirmation, and that we ought a great deal rather to be stirred up to love God, and to serve him, and to yield us unto his word, in sum as here it is said, to keep his law. But yet there is a great deal more to be considered. For David speaketh not here of a blast of wind, as some shall be very forward [*ready*] for a little time: But he saith, *I will always keep thy law: yea, forever and ever.* Wherein he sheweth, that we ought to have such a remembrance of the benefits of God, that it never slip from us. For as I have hereof already spoken, we shall see some in this behalf, which shall be moved for a little while, when as God shall have delivered them from any danger, and hath bestowed upon them some favor and grace: they shall have a very good taste and feeling, and say, Alas, how greatly am I bound and beholden to my God? Lo a man would think that these men were well affected. But in the turning of a hand, no doubt it is soon forgotten: or at the least if they remember it a little while, they wax cold again and think no more of it. Since then it is so, let us mark, according to that which is spoken in this place, that it is not meet that the remembrance of God his benefits should at anytime be wiped out of our hearts: but let us beseech him to make us to keep his law forever and ever: and in such sort to instruct us, as that we desire none other thing of him, but to stick unto his majesty, and to his righteousness. It followeth:

That he will walk at liberty: because he seeketh his Commandments.

To walk at liberty, signifieth to go at a man's own will and pleasure: For like as when we are in a narrow and straight room, we know not which way to turn us, but think ourselves clean penned up: Even so also are we overnarrowly held in, or else surely we look about us to see if we can find which way to get out, and so do remain in perplexity or doubt. And is this the assurance and joy that we must have in the law of God. What? is this it? David contrariwise saith, *That he will walk at liberty*: to wit, that he will boldly walk the broad beaten way, as we say, after he hath sought the Commandments of God. This is also a thing which we ought well to observe and keep. For the holy Ghost by the mouth of David meaneth rightly to show us, that when we are desirous to have our life ruled by the commandments of God, to suffer him to be our leader and guide, and give unto him the conduct of all our affairs and businesses, that he will so frame

himself unto us, so far forth as he shall know to be good and expedient for our salvation.

And this benefit which we receive by the knowledge hereof is inestimable: to wit, that we may walk at liberty, That is to say, that we are delivered from many doubts and griefs: that we cannot be utterly overthrown and cast down, although we happen to be pressed with some griefs: because we always conclude thus, that we cannot be overcome, seeing God holdeth us with a mighty and strong hand. And in very deed what is the cause, I pray you, that men are so oftentimes tormented, but only that they submit not themselves unto God? It is very true, that there are very few which know this, but this is the very cause: For when as we shall have looked somewhat nearer the matter, we shall find that nothing so much hath hindered us, as our own unthankfulness: But because we will be otherwise, in not yielding unto God the honor to govern us, and wholly to rule our life, nor yet become his subjects, it is meet we should receive the hire due for the same. For men when anything is in question that they have to do, will straightways enter into their own speculations, they never make question to have recourse unto God, nor to call upon him, but every man will do what seemeth best to himself. And therefore it is meet that God pay us in such money as we deserved, that he put us, I say, in such doubt as that we shall never be able to know what shall become of us, so that the anguishes shall force us to say, What shall become of this matter? Which way shall I begin? And what shall be the end and issue hereof?

Behold how we see the miserable and wretched world, daily so fast shut up in straits, as that it seemeth that we are more than cast away. And what is the cause hereof? Even the men which have built unto themselves such Mazes. For it is even they themselves that are the cause of their so great torments. For David hath here declared unto us, that as many as seek the Commandments of God, do walk at liberty. It is very true, that the faithful although they endeavor themselves all they can, to obey God, and suffer him to govern them, yet for all that they are not void of marvelous griefs and vexations that they are many times at their wit's end and know not what to do, but yet they come unto God, and lay all their care upon him, as it is written in ^{<193701>} Psalm 37. And there they find themselves discharged and unburdened. And so go they daily on: for they are assured that God can never fail them. Behold then, how we may be very well tempted with many sorrows and griefs, neither can we be exempt from a

great number of disquietnesses: but yet God will always unburden us of them, as it is said in another place of the Psalm, that when we have been for awhile fast shut up, yet God will set us at liberty: as also Saint Paul saith in the second to the Corinthians: *It is very true*, saith he, *that we are oppressed with many torments and griefs, but yet we continue not in sorrow and pain: For God will always deliver us, and will give us a good and joyful issue, so that in the end we shall be able to overcome them.*

See then what is declared unto us in this place, where it is said, *I will walk at liberty, O Lord, because I seek thy Commandments.* Even so let us know, that when our life is miserable and wretched, and that we must needs live in pain, torment, and sorrow: that all cometh by reason of our sin, because we present not ourselves before GOD, suffer us not to be conducted by him, put not our lives into his hands, neither do we come willingly to seek for remedy, after we have once known our grief: that is to say, to desire God that it would please him to take us into his custody, without hoping or waiting for any other thing, but for that which he telleth us out of his word. For when we shall so do, there is no doubt, but that he will make us to walk at liberty. Now it followeth:

I will speak of thy Testimonies also even before Kings: and will not be ashamed.

Behold a declaration of the matter which we have already touched here before: For David making this request, not to have the word of truth to be taken out of his mouth forever, had regard to two things: that is to say, being able to speak, after that GOD in bestowing his grace upon him, had opened his mouth, had confirmed the Children of GOD by his example, and brought them unto him in showing them the way, and in the meanwhile had foiled the wicked and despisers of God and of the Law, the scornors of his hope, and the blasphemers of God: yet was he able, I say, to beat them back, and make his part good against them all. And this matter he manifestly declareth, whereas he saith, *I will speak of thy Testimonies*, because GOD should no more take the word of truth out of his mouth.

Now besides this, that God giveth unto us matter whereof to speak freely, yet must that come from him, as we hear, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath spoken of: that it is the holy Ghost which guideth our tongues, that it cometh not of ourselves, to be able to answer our enemies that there

needed but a small gale of wind to overthrow us. So then, it is meet that God should use his power that we might be confirmed by him: For when as he shall put his word in our mouth, we may speak before Kings and Princes, and never be ashamed. As if he should have said, O Lord, thy word ought to be of such power unto us, as that we may foil our enemies, yea how great and mighty soever they be: albeit they should be such as were able to astonish and fear all the whole world, yet let our Faith be overthrown, through their mightiness, and pomp: knowing that when as they shall think to swallow all up, yet that we be left still always as Conquerors, yea even because we have regard to it.

Now here we are to note, that when God maketh his truth forcible in us, it shall be sufficient to hold us up, yea, notwithstanding all the Combats that the Devil shall stir up against us, and that the whole world opposed itself to the contrary. And it is not without cause that this is spoken, for whereon is our faith settled? Even upon the truth of God. Let us now compare God with men, and with all their works and virtues. Let us take Emperors and Kings: and let all their glory and pomp be set forth to the show, and let God be set right over against them: to wit, whether men with all their mightiness and great boasting, are able to surmount God, to reverse his will, or to make void his power and virtue? Oh, it is very sure they can never be able to do it.

So then, let us consider with whom we have to deal, and remember this saying of Saint Paul,

Thou knowest (saith he) to what end thy belief serveth.
(^{<550314>} 2 Timothy 3:14)

When then we shall have our eyes so fixed upon GOD, who hath armed us with his infallible truth, we may be able to withstand and fall out with all whatsoever that lifteth itself up to the contrary: We shall have no occasion to fear the world, for GOD is sufficiently able to overcome all the scruples and griefs which the Devil shall raise up against us. And thus much as concerning this point.

Moreover we see that when there is any question to make confession of our faith, it cannot be that men shall be able to abash and fear us with all their power and might: As at this day we see, when as they would gladly make us to tremble. What I beseech you Sir? (will they say) you are but

even a handful of people. Do you think yourselves wiser than all the Kings and Princes of the world? You see that all the world, are against this doctrine which you hold and profess: and what do you think to do? True indeed, that at the first sight, this were even enough to shake us, yea were it not that we knew, and were very certain: but when we look unto God, then all this gear [*whimsical mockery*] vanisheth into smoke: these are but Bladders puffed full of wind: and the least pin's point, will empty them. In very deed these will be great fraybugs [*objects of fear*], but yet it will all prove nothing. Behold these Frogs, behold these Pismires [*ants*], yea, behold these Flies and Gnats, for they are all no better than very vermin and worms, when as they shall lift themselves up thus against God.

So then let us learn, yea let us learn to stay ourselves so upon God, as that when we shall be called to make confession of our faith, since it is so that it is GOD which hath spoken, let all the creatures in the world be nothing to usward: let us not be ashamed, and let nothing hinder and stop us, from maintaining of his word. In the end David concludeth and saith,

My hands also will I lift up unto thy Commandments, which I have loved: and my study shall be in thy statutes.

These two verses here need no long declaration, for we have already had the same sentences: and yet notwithstanding David sheweth us, that it is not enough to think of this Doctrine for a time: but we must all the course of our life profit ourselves therein more and more.

Lo here the principal point which we have to note, that we must take pleasure in the commandments of God which we have loved: to wit, that we ought to learn to conceive such an affection and desire to follow the word of God, and to stick thereto, as that we should be fully resolved to say, In very deed, this is the most sweet and amiable thing that possibly can be, to subject ourselves under the yoke of our God and to bear it: and therefore we must draw in it, and obey him. Have we done this? We must then instead of a number of foolish vanities whereunto we are inclined, yea, and in place of the wicked affections and allurements of Satan, learn to take pleasure in the word of God, so that we may protest in truth (after the example of David) that they are the commandments of God which we have loved. Moreover let us mark well this sentence, when he saith, *My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments*. For this is as much as if he had said, O Lord, I will not only protest with my mouth that I love thy

word, but I will also lift up my hands: yea, as we commonly say, I will lift up my hands to the caky [*def. form or nature of a cake*] God. By this he letteth [*makes*] us to understand, that if we would serve God as becometh us, that it is not enough for us to witness the truth of God with our mouth, but we must also show by our good and godly life, that which we protest with our mouth, and that there be an accord and sweet harmony between the one and the other. True it is, we shall find some doubts when as there shall be any question of following God: but this sentence is to be noted, when he saith, I will lift up my hands. And to know that when God shall see, that it shall surpass our force and strength, let us pray unto him to grant us that grace, that we may lift up our hands unto his commandments, to wit, so high as we can possibly, to the end we may take hold of his grace and virtue, better than heretofore we have done. Lo in what manner we ought to do in this case, that not presuming of our own power and strength, we might pray notwithstanding this good God, to make his grace so forcible in us, as that it may settle and reign there, and to have us know that it is not in vain that he calleth us unto him and giveth us his truth. Which thing no doubt he will do so that we reject not his grace, which he so freely offereth unto us. And according to this holy doctrine let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our faults, beseeching him that it would please him to open our eyes, to the end we may know our wretchedness, and the miserable condition wherein we stand, that we might return to him: yea, and that with a certain confidence, that he will perform that which he hath promised us: that we be not frustrate of our hope, when as it shall stay upon him, and in his truth, but that he will more and more strengthen us therein, until such time as we come to the perfect knowledge of things, which we yet know not but in part. That not only he will grant us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the world, etc.

THE SEVENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

ZAIN

- 49** Remember the promise made unto thy servant: wherein thou hast caused me to put my trust.
- 50** The same is my comfort in my trouble: for thy word hath quickened me.
- 51** The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.
- 52** I remember thine everlasting judgments, O Lord, and received comfort.
- 53** I am horribly afraid for the ungodly which forsake thy law.
- 54** Thy statutes have been my songs: in the house of my pilgrimage.
- 55** I have thought upon thy name, O Lord, in the night season: and have kept thy law.
- 56** This I had: because I kept thy commandments.

DAVID HERE, MAKETH A REQUEST unto God, which we are all wonted to make: but not with such affection as he doth. For we cannot protest, after his example, that all our joy, in the midst of our adversities, is in meditating and studying of that which God hath showed unto us by his word. And that it is so, we see that whensoever any of us shall endure and abide any grief, whether run we then for refuge and aid? For both every of us faineth [*willeth*] himself a comfort, as best pleaseth him. For very few of us rest upon God and trust in him, nor yet lean upon his promises: yea, we shall find none almost which doth it. And see why we cannot crave of God, as David doth, *Which remembereth him of the promises, that he hath made us*. And therefore it cannot be that this was set down in vain. Let us therefore note, that God sheweth unto us, from whence we must receive

our comfort and consolation in all our afflictions: to wit, because he hath bound himself unto us, and that he hath witnessed unto us, that he will have pity and compassion upon those which will call upon him in their miseries, and holding us to that, we should be as it were quickened: that is to say, that although we were oppressed with afflictions even to the uttermost, so that we were as it were almost dead, that this only point might suffice us: certainly to know that God will not forsake us. And for doing hereof, we are to observe two points: The first is, that we rest neither upon ourselves nor yet upon creatures, setting our hope too fondly here and there: but let us know, that our life and all our felicity consisteth in God, and that there it is which we must seek after. Lo then the end, whereat we must begin, if we will have true comfort in our adversities. And contrariwise, we see how our minds wander and go astray, and that is, because every of us faineth [*welcome*] unto himself foolish and unprofitable confidences: for if we knew the thing that is in God, it should make us never to turn away from him, we should nevermore wander after creatures, for in them is nothing else but vanity. And therefore we ought to have the greater regard unto this doctrine: to wit, that if we will be delivered from all evil, we must still look unto God. The second is, that we are to crave of God, that he would have pity and compassion upon us, and deliver us from all our afflictions: yea and that we may come unto him by reason of his promise. For without God call us unto him, we cannot come unto him but unadvisedly. For it should be too great presumption for mortal men to take upon them such boldness, as to come unto God, without he gave them leave, and exhorted them so to do. We must then have the word which God giveth us, by which he testifieth unto us, that he is ready to receive us, and willeth us also to come unto him. Lo what this verse importeth, when David saith, that the comfort which he received in all his adversities, was, that he was quickened by the word of God. By this he showeth, that he not only waited upon God, to be saved by him, but that he had respect, namely to his promise: for without it (as I have already said) we can have no access unto God.

In the meantime, we are to note, that this word, *to quicken*, importeth a great matter: to wit, that the word of God should have this power and strength, that if we should be as it were forlorn and desperate, that it would comfort and restore us, and that we should receive life through it. In very deed, this is a hard matter to put in practice: but we must not think

that David hath spoken anything here, but even as indeed it was. For in making of such a protestation, his meaning is to instruct us after his example, what our duty is. And that which is more, the holy Ghost meaneth here to show us, that the word of God hath not taken deep root in us, except it quicken us: to wit, that it plucketh us as it were out of the grave, when we are cast down and that we can do no more, giving us fresh force and strength, to be as it were men brought back out of hell, as if he took us by the hand lifting us up into a lusty courage. And thus much for this verse.

Now here above, David maketh his request, *That God would be mindful of his word, which he had given him: wherein* (saith he) *thou hast caused me to put my trust.* Here David showeth us, that when the faithful do glad and comfort themselves with the promises of God, and be as it were restored, it is not done to the end that we should become cold and blockish: but that we ought rather to be stirred up the more to pray unto God. Whensoever then we shall be oppressed with any adversity, lo what the remedy is that we must take: to look unto the promises of God, and to think of that which he hath testified unto us of his own good will. Hereupon let us boldly confirm ourselves, and return as it were to life, if that we have been in death. But after that we have made the promises of God so forcible, as to take courage, and to be fortified therein, we must oftentimes fall to our prayers and offer them to God, beseeching him to perform his word. And since it is so, that he is faithful, let us be sure that we shall not go away empty, if we believe his word: but that he will perform whatsoever he hath promised. See then, that after we have meditated of the promises of God, and trusted to him, let us make our prayers many times and run unto his majesty for aid, beseeching him to accomplish that, which through his infinite goodness he hath showed unto us, and never forsake us, but to declare the same to be so in effect and deed. This is it that David here meaneth by this sentence. *Be mindful, O Lord, of thy word and promise.* David speaketh here according to the grossness and weakness of man's understanding. For it is most certain, that God never forgetteth that which he hath said, so that he needeth to be solicited, to be put in mind of it as mortal men are, which promise much at random, and never remember it after. Now we must not imagine God to be such one, but suffereth us to stammer after our own fashion, when he deferreth the accomplishment of his promises, so that we know not who is the cause of the let: God, I say,

then suffereth us to speak after our own guise, and say, *be mindful, O Lord*, that is, we beseech thee to show unto us by the effect, that thou hast not forgotten the promises which thou hast made to us. Thou O Lord, art not like men, who after they have determined upon any matter, never think after of that which they have said. Wherefore, O Lord, show not thyself to be like mortal men: but when thou hast spoken the word, let it be done, and forthwith executed.

See then how we must proceed, that after we have once known to stay ourselves upon the promises of God, we must beseech him to show unto us by proof, that so many as put their trust in him, shall not be deceived. Now he saith, *Thy word towards thy servant*. And this sentence is worthy to be well weighed, because that there are very few, when any mention is made of the word of God, which understand and know that it is spoken to them, and without they know that, all is to no purpose. We may read the Bible an hundred times over, but we shall never have any taste of the promises of God, or certainly if we learn anything out of it, that shall no whit assure us, to conceive a true certainty of our salvation except we know that it is to us which God speaketh, that it is we even we, I say, whom he would make to feel his mercy and fatherly love. If we conceive of the promises of God as hanging in the air, that God hath spoken, and we know not to whom, to what purpose shall this be? What benefit shall we reap by this? So then, let us thoroughly consider of this doctrine, *Be mindful, O Lord, of thy servant according to thy word*. David applieth unto himself the promises which he had received, for he knew that they appertained [*pertains*] unto him, because he doubted not that he was the child of God: for having received them with such a faith, he saith, O Lord, Thou hast not spoken to this body or to that body, as though I knew not to whom: but I am out of all doubt, that thou meanest to call me unto thee, and hast declared unto me that I shall be partaker of all the benefits which thou hast promised unto the faithful. Lo then, after what manner we must do herein.

So likewise, when it is said in the holy scripture, (<540115> 1 Timothy 1:15) that this is a true and undoubted saying, that God hath sent his only begotten son, to save all miserable sinners: we must include it within this same rank I say, that every of us apply the same particularly to himself: when as we hear this general sentence, that God is merciful. Have we heard this? Then may we boldly call upon him, and even say, although I am a

miserable and forlorn creature, since it is said that God is merciful to those which have offended him: I will run unto him and to his mercy, beseeching him that he will make me to feel it. And since it is said.

That God so loved the world, that he spared not his only begotten son: but delivered him to death for us. (<430316> John 3:16; <450832> Romans 8:32)

It is meet I look to that. For it is very needful, that Jesus Christ should pluck me out from that condemnation, wherein I am. Since it is so, that the love and goodness of God is declared unto the world, in that that his son Christ Jesus hath suffered death, I must appropriate the same to myself, that I may know that it is to me, that God hath spoken, that he would I should take the possession of such a grace, and therein to rejoyce me.

We see now, how we must practice this sentence, that we may say unto God, *Think upon thy servant, O Lord, according to thy word.* If any man will reply, that it cannot be said, that God hath spoken to him, when as he speaketh to all in general: let us consider, that God offereth his grace to men in common, to the end that every man might afterward enter into himself, and not to doubt being a member of the church, but that he hath a part and portion of that, which is common to all the faithful. And where it is said,

Rejoyce thou daughter of Sion, for behold thy king cometh towards thee, (<380909> Zechariah 9:9)

all the faithful in general ought to receive this promise, and that all also, even from the greatest to the least, might know that God offereth himself unto them, and allureth them, to the end that this promise might be performed and perfited [*perfected*] unto them. And see why the sacraments are not administered unto us in common: but to everyone severally. We will never baptize the whole Church with one baptism: but everyone will be baptized in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. And what other thing is meant by baptism, but a confirmation, of all the promises of God, which he hath given in common to the whole body of his church. See then, how the promises are special in the virtue of baptism. And so is it in the Supper. For when we come to receive the bread and wine in the Supper, our Lord Jesus declareth unto us, that as he once for all shed his most precious blood for our redemption, and salvation, that his body also

is our meat and nutriture. Lo then, how we ought to be fully assured, that it is to us which God speaketh, and that he also offereth his mercy to us in common. And see why David also addeth, and saith,

The same is my comfort in my trouble: for thy word hath quickened me.

For this is the right and true use whereunto we ought to apply the promises of God: to wit, that where it might seem that we were discomforted and castaway, yet should we not but have a firm courage, and an invincible constancy. For else we should greatly dishonor God, since he hath told us, that we should not despair, but that he would be our savior unto the end. Whereupon we must conclude, that so often as we conceive any distrust in our adversities, so often do we blaspheme his majesty. For we cannot do greater injury and despite unto God, than to accuse him to be a liar, and think him to be disloyal or unfaithful. Now if we think God to be true and faithful, we must hold it for a full conclusion, that he will never suffer us to be frustrate, so long as we put our trust in him. Now by this means we shall live even in death.

Let us therefore thoroughly consider of this sentence which David hath here couched, that God having promised him to be his savior, hath quickened him in this, yea in the midst of his afflictions, as if he had said, O Lord, since it is so, that I have a testimony of thy good will and love, I ought not to be discouraged, nor fainthearted, for whatsoever may come to pass. Now it followeth, *The wicked, or proud have had me exceedingly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.*

Here David sheweth his constancy in resisting the temptations and combats wherewith Satan assailed him. For behold how our faith shall be rightly and duly approved: to wit, when as we shall be assailed, and when as the devil shall think that he hath gotten the better of us, yet must we persevere and still continue to trust in God: lo, I say, a good proof of our faith. And this is it that David meaneth to signify in this place: for it is an easy matter, when as we shall have no temptations to trouble us, to take a taste of the promises of GOD, and to hope that he will do that which he hath spoken. But when as we shall be tormented with afflictions, then the devil cometh and putteth us in mind of many irksomenesses, and fantasies, as if God were retired and gone far from us, and that the wicked and ungodly make a mock at our simplicity: when I say, that we are so assailed: then must our faith show itself, whether it be true or not. And if

then we shall constantly persevere without being vanquished and overcome, O see now a sure and certain sign that we have believed in good earnest and not hypocritically, that we have not taken his word in vain, but it hath been lively rooted in our souls. Let us then well note, that if we will have a true proof of our faith, and learn to speak in truth, that we have trusted in God, and his promises: it is meet that we should feel very boisterous assaults: and yet for all that, we have not been forsaken and left, until such time as we withdraw ourselves from God.

Moreover David speaking here of the wicked, calleth them the proud: neither doth he so entitle them without cause: for it is the property of all those which trust not in God. For it cannot be chosen, but that a man which putteth not his trust in God, must needs grow proud, and swell therewith like a toad. And why so? For when men do know themselves to be such as indeed they are, they must needs be cast down and humbled. And this common proverb which reigneth even among the faithless, saith, he that knoweth himself, maketh very little of his painted sheath. Now we will speak this with the mouth, but yet it is to our condemnation. Nevertheless, it is God his will that all men should know this, because there should be no excuse. In sum, this is very true, that if men knew themselves, they should be humbled, and utterly discomfited. Hereupon they would come to seek God, and hide themselves under the shadow of his wings, they would have recourse to him, to be aided in all their necessities. Contrariwise (as I have already touched) it must needs be that all the faithless be full of arrogance and presumption, to lift themselves up against God, to promise wonders as of themselves, where in very deed they have nothing, neither yet are anything.

See now wherefore David in this place speaking of the faithless and enemies of God, calleth them proud. And it is not only here, but the holy scripture useth this speech throughout. And hereupon also it is that the Prophet Abacuc saith,

That a man shall live by his faith. (<350203> Habakkuk 2:3)

And he setteth down to the contrary, that they which lift up themselves, and in such sort foam out their pride, shall never take hold: they may well make a fair show, but it cannot be but that they must needs fall down headlong. We see then, that the Prophet comparing the faithful with the faithless, giveth this title and quality to all those which put not their trust

in God. That they are puffed up, and presume without measure. Even so then, let us note, that if we will render a true testimony of our faith, we must needs be cast down in ourselves, and be truly humbled. And contrariwise, if we feel, that pride puffeth us up, let us conclude, that we have as yet profited very slenderly in the school of God, and that if faith reigned in our souls, that this pride should there be corrected. See then, how we ought to put this lesson in practice.

Moreover, let us also note, that they which so lift themselves up against God, contemn and despise their neighbors, that all they which presume upon their own power and strength, knowing not, that their whole blessedness lieth in the mere grace of God, these men I say, cannot be but cruel: and will be fierce and malicious against their neighbors. And therefore, after that we shall have learned to humble ourselves before God, let us use such courtesy and gentleness unto men, as that we practice that which Saint Paul speaketh of: to wit,

That every man esteem of his brother better than of himself.

(<500803> Philippians 2:3)

Let us not study to go about to advance and esteem of ourselves, in rejecting and naught setting by of others, but let us acknowledge the benefits which God hath bestowed upon everyone of us, and confess the infirmities and vices which be in ourselves: to the end we might be humbled, and rather commend and praise others. Let us now come to this complaint, and protestation which David maketh:

The proud have had me exceedingly in derision: yet have I not shrinked from thy law.

When he saith, that the proud have had him exceedingly in derision, there is no doubt, but that he meaneth that they derided him for his simplicity, because he put his trust in God. Very well say they, he thinketh that God should dandle him in his lap, but we now see what is become of him.

Lo the combats wherewith Satan daily assaileth us. When as the ungodly do see the children of God in any misery and calamity, they rush even upon them at the first dash and say, ha, ha, this man thinketh that God ought to watch over him, and that no sorrow nor grief should come upon him, and now we see what is become of him. And because he hath heard him speak, he thinketh that God should never forsake him. But we see

now what cometh of it. It is very true, that the ungodly of their own motion and inclination, will soon vomit out such blasphemies: but surely this cometh a great deal farther off, for it is Satan that putteth it into their minds and pusheth them on thereto, to the end to shake their faith, and utterly to overthrow it.

Now this is not the first time alone that David hath been thus assailed: for this was an ordinary thing with him: as we see throughout the whole two and twentieth Psalm, (^{<192208>} Psalm 22:8) and since he hath put his trust in God, say they, let him now save him: and let us see whether God will help him or not. And as David was grieved with these torments there is no doubt but that Jesus Christ hath abiden [*endured*] like conflicts.

And since that this appertained [*pertains*] to the son of God, we have to note, that it cannot be chosen but that it must spread itself throughout his members, and that every faithful man must be exercised with such temptations. And therefore, if we see the wicked, and the enemies of God jest and scoff at us when as we are in affliction, taking occasion thereby to lift up their horns, and to deride us, let us not yield for all that: but let us remain firm and constant, since that David hath showed us the way: and not only he, but also our Lord Jesus, unto whom we must be like: and therefore we must be of a lusty courage to follow him. And thus much for the first point. For the second, let us note that we have not war with men, when as the ungodly do so rise against us, and vomit out such mockeries: the same say I, cometh not from them: but it is Satan that casteth his darts at us, and meaneth mortally to wound us. And to put by these blows, we had need to be armed with the word of God, which is our sword, with the buckler of faith, and the Helmet of hope: even as Saint Paul

(^{<490606>} Ephesians 6:6, 17) exhorteth us to do. Mark well this point: we must not be too tied unto men, when as they shall thus grieve and vex us: but we must look a great way farther: to wit, unto Satan, who by such assaults and combats goeth about all he can to overthrow our faith, if it were possible for him to do. Now the protestation which he maketh, is well worthy the noting: for after he had complained of these rebukes and mockeries of the ungodly, he addeth, *yet have I not shrinked from thy way, O Lord*. Let us then conclude, that since we have the word of God, that if all the world, should conspire against us to turn us from it, we ought to abide steadfastly in it, and to be fast tied thereto, and to cleave so hard unto it, as that we might never be pulled away from the same. To this end

ought this protestation to serve us: to wit, to strengthen us in constancy, that we might know, that if David was so steadfastly settled in the hope which he had: that the truth of God is not at this day diminished or decreased.

It behooveth us then to make the promises of God forcible, and to be so sure and certain, as that we be not shaken, nor moved, for all the scorns and mocks which the wicked can make at us. Let us also mark, that David speaketh not here of one combat, or of a word cast out at random, as sometimes it may escape from the mouth of a Scoffer or Jester among the wicked. But it must needs be that the holy Prophet was thoroughly soaked in them: as he himself declareth, that they derided and scoffed at him, and that exceedingly. Let us apply this to ourselves, that we quail not, nor faint for one conflict, wherewith Satan shall assail us by his substitutes: but that we persevere in all conflicts, that when we shall have made an end with the first, to be ready and pressed to enter into another, never altering or changing, our determination nor will, come there whatsoever shall come; that the scoffs and scorns of the wicked, yea and whatsoever Satan shall craftily invent against us, hinder us not from steadfastly abiding and continuing in faith, without turning or writhing us away from the law of God, after the example of David, as here we have heard him make thereof protestation.

And if there were such constancy in David, having the law only, we that have the doctrine, which is given by him, and by the Prophets after him, by our Lord Jesus Christ, and his Apostles: we then which have a great many more convenient helps, than David had, should we be shaken and crushed, when as the devil, the wicked, and all the girdards [*raging snarling ones*] and firebrands of hell, shall assail our faith? There remaineth now no excuse for us, seeing he hath done thus. Let us then learn to help ourselves with the means which God hath given us, and putteth into our hand, so that this word be not vain and unprofitable unto us, but that it serve us indeed as it ought. Now he addeth,

For I remembered thine everlasting judgment O Lord: and have received comfort.

Here David declareth that he is confirmed (over and beside the word) in all the judgments of God, which is the thing that we must also do, after that we have meditated upon the promises of GOD, by which he testifieth that

he is near unto all those which call upon him, after that we have known that which he declareth and pronounceth, to humble and overthrow the wicked, in showing them to be their judge: that over and besides this, we would acknowledge as at all times we have need, how he hath holpen [*helped*] and sustained his, how he hath delivered them out of all the miseries they were in: and besides, how he hath stretched forth his arm against the wicked, and contemners of his justice. See, I say, how we must link together the works of God with his word, for the more notable confirmation of our faith.

And this is it which David meaneth in this place: for he speaketh not here of the judgments of God as he hath done before, and as he will hereafter: to wit, for his statutes, and commandments: but he meaneth the acts and deeds which GOD in all ages hath done, to show himself to be judge over all men. It is very true, that such judgments as God hath put in execution, are contained in the Scripture. But by this which is here spoken of them, we are warned how we ought to read such histories: that is, that God never forsaketh his faithful: and although for a while he slacketh, yet will he not leave the wicked unpunished in the end. David then meditated on these judgments: and exercised himself in them. And so we are to remember, that when we have made the word of God forcible, to resist Satan, and all the assaults wherewith he shall assail us, we must also know, that God hath not only spoken, but hath likewise showed by experience, that his word is no vain thing, but that the execution thereof is at hand.

And therefore, when as we shall see that God shall put to his helping hand before our eyes, and shall give us so many testimonies of his judgments, it is no reason that we should overslip it: but should have our eyes open, and acknowledge these things as they are declared unto us: when as also we shall feel any of GOD his grace towards us, that we ought to imprint the same surely in our minds. Lo how we must follow David, in that which he saith, *O Lord, I have remembered thy judgments.*

Moreover, when it is said, that he hath called to mind the judgments of GOD from the beginning of the world, I pray you, what excuse shall we be able to make, if we overslip that, which he setteth before our eyes? For when as at this day GOD should hold himself as if he lay hidden, that we should have no token nor proof, that he should be the judge of the wicked and ungodly for to confound them, and the Savior of those which trust in

him, and call upon him, yet that which is contained in the holy Scripture, and that which we read to be done before we were born, the same, I say, might suffice. But now since God declareth himself unto us, and sheweth unto us his presence, and all this to be cast under foot through our unthankfulness, must not we needs be more than culpable or blameworthy? In sum, let us mark, that here the holy Ghost accuseth us of negligence: for if we were such as indeed we should be, we should apply our study to read the holy Scriptures, where God sheweth us his judgments as it were in beautiful glasses, and all for our instruction and profit. See then, how we ought to link together that which is written, with that which we daily see before our eyes, and to be confirmed throughout all the histories, in such sort as that they might serve as it were to seal up the word of GOD, that it might be of a great deal more strength and force, and to magnify the same when need shall be.

Now have we so remembered the judgments of God, and are we so exercised in them, yea even in those, I say, which were made before we were born into this world? Whatsoever then that we shall now perceive and mark, and whatsoever also shall be declared unto us so long as we live, we ought by a more forcible reason, so much the narrowlier to consider, and to be a great deal the more confirmed in them, and not to be like unto brute beasts, when as god stretcheth forth his hand, and giveth us some testimonies, that it is he alone which so helpeth us: when as I say, God sheweth us this, we must think on them in good earnest, and so stay ourselves in them: to wit, that we make not account of them as vain speculations: but to apply all the Judgments of God to our use, since it is to this end and purpose, that he sheweth us them. For when we shall read that God revealed himself to Abraham, and that he did help him in such a necessity: Let this be our conclusion, Very well, that which God did unto his servant Abraham, is to assure us, that he will do the like for us, and therefore we must even now run unto God for refuge and succor [*help*]. See how all the testimonies which God hath left unto us in the holy Scripture of all his wonderful works, ought to serve every of us for aids and helps. Now David setteth down soon after.

I am horribly afraid for the ungodly which forsake thy law.

Here David protesteth that he hath resisted another temptation over and besides that which we have already seen. This is already a very sore and

hard combat to abide, when as the wicked mock and scorn us, as if God had deceived us, as if we had been too simple and foolish to put our trust in him. Lo here a great trouble for miserable and wretched weaklings, yea and that such as it cannot be chosen, but that they must (at the least) be moved and astonied [*dismayed, filled with consternation*]. But this temptation which here followeth is none of the least to overcome: as when we see all the whole world addicted and given to wickedness, that whatsoever we do, is as it were to conspire and to lay a platform to provoke God his wrath, to distrust him, to reject all his graces, and to tread them clean under foot. When then we shall see men so estrange themselves from God, even to make open war against him, it goeth very hardly, if we be not as it were utterly overcome. And yet nevertheless it is, as David here protesteth: that it is so far off that he gave himself wickedly, seeing the corruptions to be such as they were all over, as that he was horribly afraid for the ungodly which so forsook the law of God. Wherefore, let us learn to be thus horribly afraid, so often as we see men exceed in wickedness: Let us learn, I say, to have recourse unto God, and as it were in gathering our wits unto us, that we might conceive an horror and fear, when as we see such monsters, and such things so committed against nature. If this hath been always a necessary doctrine, it is at this day most necessary: for let us a little behold what a general confusion there is, when as we shall see the order and doings of the Papists, we shall find it to be a most hellish outrage. And amongst us alas, where the word of God should be of great power and force, yet we see how the more part will not only alter and change the law of God, but desire nothing more than even utterly to abolish it. What is to be done then? It is not enough that we follow not the wicked and ungodly in their impiety, and not to link in with them as their companions, but we must be horribly afraid, because we know that they must perish as miserable and wretched creatures: and therefore we should be grieved and vexed: but yet a great deal the rather, when as they see them make open war against the majesty of God. For these are matters too monstrous, to see mortal men lift themselves up against their creator, and in very good earnest to fight against him. Lo then, what is here showed unto us by the spirit of God under the example of David. And in this let us see, whether we ought to cover ourselves: with such horrible, yea and most detestable filthiness and uncleanness, when as any talk shall arise of the contemning of the majesty of God, and of the discrediting of his law or word, whether we ought I say, to make countenance as if such talk were

nothing, whether we ought to support and maintain the same: and to pass it lightly over, as though we cared nothing at all for it, or that it no whit appertained [*pertains*] unto us. Now if in this behalf we shall do so, it is a sign and token that there is neither zeal nor affection in us. And herein we show ourselves not worthy that God should take us for his children: For we must remember that which is written,

The zeal of thy house hath even consumed me, and the rebukes and slanders which have been laid upon thee O Lord, are come upon me. (<196909> Psalm 69:9; <430217> John 2:17)

When then we shall see the name of God to be contemned and made no account of and shall see the wicked to cast him clean without the doors, in such sort as that they will make no more reckoning of the law of God, without all question we must not dissemble and hold our peace, and make account as though it were nothing: but if we be the servants of God, it shall behove us not only to be touched, but also to be horribly afraid, and to be as it were forlorn men when as we see such abomination, that it should in such sort fall out, as to have the name of God to be so contemned by his creatures. Now for a conclusion David saith, *Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my Pilgrimage.*

This was yet another great temptation to David as well as the other, that it so fell out as that he was once driven out of the country of Judea and was far from the temple of God, and dwelt among the Pagans and Infidels. Now he saith, that notwithstanding all this, that he was not estranged from God, nor yet from the knowledge of salvation: but contrariwise, that he was the rather stirred up to sing praises unto God, and those Psalms which God did put in his mouth, yea even such as were taken out of the law. For we have to note, that David made not the Psalms, as a new doctrine nor yet as a doctrine separate from the doctrine of the law: but drew them from it as out of a Fountain.

So then it is not without cause that he protesteth here that the Statutes of God served him for Psalms and for songs, yea instead of his Pilgrimages, that is to say, in a strange Country in the midst of Infidels, when he was as it were banished from the Church, that he could not be in the Temple to make confession of his faith, yet was he not for all this wickedly addicted. Now here, they which are travelers, are admonished of their duty. For albeit they see a great many of enormities committed in the world,

nevertheless they are steadfastly purposed to hold themselves in the fear of God, and to walk in a pure and sound conscience, albeit they are mingled amongst the infidels. As behold even the very Christians which are in the Papacy, although they are there prisoners, having no doctrine preached unto them, without liberty to serve God publicly, and to make confession of their faith as they would: yet do they not exceed and outrage with the rest in these villainies which reign amongst them: but confirm themselves the best they can to the word of God, take all their delight and pleasure therein, and make the law of God their song, which maketh them to withdraw themselves from all the vanities and corruptions which they commit, so that they keep themselves within this compass.

Moreover, if they which are in a place where the word of life is not taught, and do so, yea even great store of offenses wherewith they may take occasion to be drawn to wickedness, and to be corrupt with the rest: these, I say, be inexcusable, but are commanded to take their delight and pleasure in God, and in his law, and to encourage themselves, taking the holy songs to exhort them to well doing, what shall become of us, when as we are in a place where the Bell ringeth to call us that we might be admonished by the word of God, to be instructed to call upon his name, and to make confession of our faith? When GOD then calleth us unto his School, and openeth his mouth to instruct us, I pray you, are not we worthy of most horrible condemnation, when as we shall do altogether preposterously in that, whereof David here maketh protestation. As we shall see very many, which can never be merry, but when as they shall deafly hearken unto God: and if they come to a Sermon, it is only to hear their condemnation. For whatsoever is said unto them, and laid before them to bring them into the right way, they soon forget what hath been said. Must not these minds then be violently carried with a marvelous fury? Yes, without all doubt. And therefore let us keep in mind the conclusion which David here maketh: *That he remembered the law of God unto the end.* As if he had said, Behold what is the cause that I being a miserable vagabond, cast out of the Temple, and driven out of my country, did yet never but stay upon thee. And after that, being assailed by the Infidels, have persevered in the consideration of thy law, and delighted myself therein. Even so also must we do. For if we see many offenses and many things which might withdraw us from the law of God, let us overcome all that in the virtue and power of the promises which God hath made us, that by them we might be

confirmed in his love and bounty, to the end we fall not into such a confusion, as we see the wicked and ungodly fall, and daily cast themselves.

And according to this doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good God in acknowledging of our offenses: Beseeching him that it would please him to make us better to feel, what taste we ought to take in his holy promises, and to be exercised in them, that we might valiantly fight against those vices which might hinder us, to stay upon his protection, and that by the power of his holy spirit we might overcome all offenses and griefs, to the end that being fortified by his grace, we might not have any access to Satan, whereby he might win and get of us: but that we constantly persevering in the holy vocation of this good God, might follow our course until such time as he shall take us out of this world, to bring us unto that heritage, which he hath prepared for us before the beginning of the world, and also which Jesus Christ hath purchased for us with his most precious blood. And that he will not only grant unto us this grace, but also to all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE EIGHTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

HETH

- 57** Thou art my portion, O Lord, I have determined to keep thy law.
- 58** I made mine humble petition in thy presence with my whole heart: O be merciful to me according to thy word.
- 59** I have considered mine own ways: and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.
- 60** I made haste and prolonged not the time to keep thy Commandments.
- 61** The hands of the ungodly have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.
- 62** At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee: because of thy righteous judgments.
- 63** I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and keep thy commandments.
- 64** The Earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy: O teach me thy statutes.

THESE EIGHT VERSES next before contain none other thing but the protestations which David maketh in giving himself wholly to God, and sticking unto his law: except two requests which he maketh in the second verse, and in the last. Now (in the first place) he saith that his sovereign good, and chief felicity was, in that he was resolute to keep the law of God. It is very true, that some do expound this thus, that David calleth God, *his inheritance*. But when as the matter shall be well weighed and considered, the meaning is this, that he setteth his whole felicity in this, that he is fully determined and resolved (as already hath been touched) to follow that which God had showed and taught him. Now this word

Portion in the Scripture is taken for inheritance: and inheritance is taken for the chiefest and most desired thing that man hath. And so, it is as much as if he had said, That every man might divide it as he would and listed [*desired*]. As we see the desires of men to be sundry and diverse, one draweth one way, another. And indeed (saith he) every man wisheth as he fantasieth, but as for myself, I desire none other blessedness nor felicity but to content myself with the law of God, and when I have this, I have gotten a good and an excellent inheritance.

And now we see the sum and effect of this first verse, it remaineth that we gather out thereof such Doctrine as is therein contained. For when we hear David speak after this manner, there is no doubt of it, but that the spirit of God declareth unto us where it is, that every of us must fully and wholly assure himself. And this to do, we must have regard to the desires wherewith we are allured by nature, for one man is given to be ambitious, another to be covetous, another to be lecherous. In such sort as that men are carried away with their desires, as here before we have declared. It is meet therefore that we retire ourselves from all these vain and perverse desires and lusts and to fight against all whatsoever may hinder us to come unto God: and when we have thus repressed our passions and fleshly lusts, let us then desire nothing else, but that God would draw us unto himself, link us unto him, and grant us the grace to keep his Commandments.

But we are oftentimes to note, that David speaketh here of a conclusion, which he holdeth for most certain and for no light motion: as when we have sometimes a desire to go unto God, yet it lasteth not long: for the flesh also pricketh us on the other side, and withdraweth us from that good, whereunto we had willingly bent ourselves. It is not enough then to have a little desire, which soon waxeth cold, or rather, which waxeth even dead through contrary temptations: But we must hold a sound and steadfast conclusion, as David here speaketh, *I have fully determined*, saith he. He putteth in the word, *to promise*: But the Hebrews do take it to be fully resolved, to stand firm and constant in a matter, to the end not to vary or change.

Now (in sum) let us note, that so long as men give themselves to worldly things, they do nothing else but wander: they know not wherein their felicity consisteth, but we must come to this conclusion here set down

unto us, to keep the Commandments of God: and then shall we never have occasion to have a desire to these miserable foolish worldly things, which fly about in the air, which suffer themselves to be carried after their frivolous and vain desires. For we shall be assured to choose a good portion, when as we shall be so united to God, by the bond of his word. Now as we have already touched, the second verse containeth a request which David saith he continually made:

I made my humble petition in thy presence with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

Now in saying, that he continually prayed unto God, herein he sheweth us what the manner is to pray well: that we should be constant to follow it, and not to be weary, not that God needeth to be importunately urged, but it is to exercise our faith, and the better to try us, whether we seek all our felicity in him or not. For it is so, that the holy scripture requireth constancy in our prayers, especially and above all other things, and not to pray unto God this day, and quite forget him tomorrow, but we must continue, if we will be heard. And lo wherein we must show ourselves to have trusted in God, that is, that although it seemeth to us that he hath stopped his ears, yet for all that we must not cease to go continually unto him, and pray unto him an hundred times as much as we did before: knowing it to be no superfluous labor, when as we have thus prayed. Lo here as touching the perseverance whereof David in this place speaketh: Now let us see what the substance of his prayer is, *O Lord* (saith he) *be merciful unto me according to thy word.*

The request is general: But David sheweth the very springhead [*source, cause*] of all the benefits which we are to crave of God, and which also he liberally bestoweth upon us, as well for our souls as for our bodies: to wit, that he is merciful unto us. For God oweth us nothing, neither can we bring anything with us whereby we may be able to say that we can provoke ourselves to do well: But this is the whole sum, that he useth it towards us of his mere and free liberality. Let us then mark that David his meaning is to show, that when God reacheth forth his hand, liberally to bestow upon us so many benefits as we receive of him: that the same proceedeth and cometh even from his mere goodness. Lo why he saith, *O Lord be merciful unto me.* Wherefore, whatsoever thing we desire of God we must always come with this mind to trust in his goodness. As how? we must desire

God to pardon our offenses, and to assist us with his holy spirit: we must beseech him that we be not overcome with temptations: that he will give us his grace, whereof we are empty and naked: that he will feed us: that he will heal us when we are sick, that he will keep us out of danger: or we may make any other or particular prayers whatsoever. All these requests must be drawn out of the Springhead [*Source*]: to wit, that he giveth us this of his own goodness, and that we know why it is that God giveth us so many benefits, as well for this present life, as also for the health of our souls: to wit, because he hath pity and compassion upon us, and that we are miserable and poor Creatures, without he inclined himself to be merciful unto us.

To be short, before we enter into all the particular prayers which we make unto God, let us begin at this end, and let it be the foundation whereon we must build: That God hath pity and compassion upon us. Now because we should be assured in our prayers, David addeth this which he already before said: to wit, *according to thy word*: For if we desire of God that which seemeth good in our own eyes, and that we have not his promise, that he will hear us, this cometh of presumption: and therefore we must come humbly and soberly with our Prayers, and not after a wandering and careless manner, neither must we come before God with a shameless face, and boldlier than we would come before men: but to come unto him in such modest and sober manner: as that nothing escape our mouths without good warrant, which thing we are not able to do, except we be assured that all our Prayers are according to his heart's desire, and that he alloweth, and ratifieth them. And how shall this be done? When as he shall have said, that we should not follow our own brain, giving the reins to our own wits: but that when God shall say, Lo what I would have you to crave of me, come unto me, and make your requests in this sort: O, according to those promises of God, we may assure ourselves to come unto him after the example of David and say, *O Lord be merciful unto me according to thy word*. And this is an holy presumption, and such one, as God alloweth. Now we ought the better to note this doctrine, when we see that it hath not only been obscured and darkened in the world, but also utterly made void: As at this day it is in Popery, for when they pray unto God, they pray at all adventure. And especially, this is one of the points that the Papists strive most about, that we must not assure ourselves (when we pray unto God) that he heareth us: but remain in suspense. Forsooth [*in*

truth], but the scripture telleth us that it is not possible that the man which is thus floating, as the waves which are tossed with the wind and tempest, should obtain anything. It telleth us that when we come unto God, that we must come with faith, hope and boldness.

And so then, (as I have already touched) this is an holy and a commendable presumption, that when we stay ourselves upon the word of God, to set down in sum that he will accomplish that which he hath promised us: For we hold him as one bound unto us: not that he is anything in our debt: but because that of his mere liberality, he stoopeth so low, as to declare unto us that he would, that we should have this liberty and leave to present ourselves so before him, with such boldness, and assurance, as already I have declared. And thus much for the second verse. In the third it followeth:

I have considered mine own ways: and turned my feet unto thy Testimonies.

This protestation is worth the noting: For we are admonished, why it is that men so greatly flatter themselves in their own follies and devices, and make themselves believe, that they will make their Prayers unto God albeit they rest not upon him, trust not unto him, neither yet follow that which he hath commanded them, but only their own imaginations.

And that forsooth [*in truth*] in such sort, as that they think a man should offer them great wrong, if he said, that all is lost labor which they have bestowed: and that they greatly tormented themselves to no purpose, except they did know that God heard them. It is most true, that everyone will say, And how so I beseech you? wherefore will not God think well of that which I do, since it is my final intent to serve him? no, no, God forceth not of all this. And what is the cause that men so arrogantly strive and spurn against God? It is because they call not their ways to remembrance: For if they had this consideration and wisdom, to look narrowly unto their doings, and to think thus with themselves. How shall I do? In what case am I? I must not go astray, but keep a sure and certain way and good mean: and to consider how to live: and above all, I must do thus much, as that God be not disappointed of the sovereignty which he hath over his.

So then, when as men look well to their ways, it is very certain and sure, that they will wholly give themselves to follow the word of God, and

therein take all their delight. And this is it that he saith on the contrary part, that he would turn his feet to the testimonies of God. Wherein he sheweth to all men by his example, that they should walk as God hath commanded them, and not to be ruled after their own head and brain. For see from whence this madness cometh, which possesseth as it were all the whole world, that every man will serve God as he thinketh best: It is because we turn not our feet unto his Testimonies.

Now we ought so much the more to practice this which is here declared: to wit, to look to our ways: that we should know that seeing that God hath placed us here in this world, that he hath not done it to that end that we should do whatsoever our senses would lead us unto: But our life must be ordered and ruled. And whence must we have this rule? Even from the word of God. And when as we shall be so careful as to order and rule our life, there remaineth no more for us to do, but to follow even whither our God calleth us. Lo the testimonies of God, lo his truth which he hath declared unto us: Lo, there must we place and set ourselves. We must never hereafter make any more question to wander any longer, and to discourse and say, why should not this be good and commendable? No forsooth [*in truth*], not so, let not us follow our own fantasies, neither let us be wise in our own conceits: but let us consider with ourselves to hear our God, and obey him, lo then the effect of this third verse, where it is said, That David looked unto his ways, and that he turned his feet to the testimonies of God: to wit, to the law, where God hath declared his will. Now he addeth:

I made haste and prolonged not the time: to keep thy Commandments.

He continueth his purpose: but he sheweth that this his affection was not slow, *I made haste* (saith he) *yea and that without delay*. Now it is not without cause, that David putteth to this: for we see how straightly we ought to deal against our own appetites: yea even they I say, who are best affected to serve god, do yet come as it were halting [*waivering*], trailing either an arm or a leg after them, as we commonly say. And what is the cause hereof? We carry about with us such a number of corruptions, as that the very weight of them maketh us to go exceeding slowly so that we have much to do to go on. And we know, and have too great experience how weak our nature is, when as we intend to do well.

Let us then understand and know these two things, and we shall never think it strange, that we are so slow and slack to follow God as indeed we are: yea even these two things (I say.) For behold, Satan will never cease craftily to go about to imagine whatsoever he possibly can to cause us to draw back, he will set bars and pitch Hays before us, he will lay Bushes, Thorns and evil favored stumbling blocks whatsoever which any way may hinder and let us: that if we mean to march on but only three paces, we shall be violently carried away to turn on this side and on that, not knowing what shall become of us. Again, we shall be solicited and moved by our inordinate appetites, to draw us clean awry. For if we will wholly put our trust in God, the Devil will draw us to the contrary and make us to give ourselves up to this worldly pelf [*property, riches*], and so consequently to all the rest. Seeing then, that we are drawn and haled with so many Cart ropes, yea and are of ourselves so feeble to do good, even burning after wickedness: Alas, no marvel though we be slow to follow God, but yet for all that we must needs fight. It is no question but that we flatter ourselves, when as we see such slackness in ourselves and say, indeed it is very true such is the state and condition of our nature, and again our infirmities are so great as that it is an impossible thing for any man to discharge himself as he ought. O dear brethren, let us not build upon such a foundation, but let us fight against our vices, and take and get unto us strength and courage, against all the stumbling blocks and ambushes which Satan shall lay against us, that we may break all the bands and Cords wherewith he holdeth us bound. See I say how we ought to do in this case. For, let us not think but that David was a man, passionate as we are, and felt in himself great infirmities: neither made he protestation of this in vain, when he saith, that he hasted and made no delay to do the Commandments of God. And so let us haste, after his example, when God speaketh, and let us bow down our ears to hear him, and lift up our foot to obey that which he shall say unto us.

Lo then what David meaneth to declare unto us in this place: to wit, what readiness ought to be in all the children of God, to hear his word, and to receive it, and not to defer from day to day: For we know not what time God will give us the grace to offer his word unto us. They which in such sort delay the time, do make their account that God is greatly bound and beholden to attend upon them. Now we see how he scorneth such our arrogancy, when as we pray unto him with such terms and conditions.

Wherefore, we ought a great deal the more to force ourselves, to the end to attain to that perfection, after the example which is here set down unto us, to run without delay so often as God shall have mercy upon us. It followeth soon after, that David was not given to do wickedly notwithstanding all the wrongs which the wicked had done unto him, and had persecuted him with all the griefs and conflicts which he had sustained.

Albeit (saith he) *that the hands of the ungodly have robbed me: yet have not I forgotten thy law.*

This is not here put to without a cause. For we shall herein see very many which are peaceable and moderate enough, when as they be not grieved, but suffered to run their own course. But if any trouble overtake them, and that they be molested, behold then are they given to do wickedly, then alter they their determination and purpose, and change their copy. So then, because men are so easy to be drawn to evil, although before they followed the thing that was good: see wherefore we ought diligently to note this place, which David here addeth. For it is as it were to ratify that which he hath before spoken of the readiness to follow the world: because that that had not been enough, without he had been so confirmed in it. For although the Devil had so lain upon him, even to have discouraged him, yet was he not without hope, continually to make his part good against him.

And so must we also do in this case. When our Lord then shall set us in the way, and shall give us some good motions: let us beseech him so to confirm us in the same, as that when the Devil shall go about for to assail us, we might repulse and overcome all the assaults wherewith he shall assail us: and always to continue and remain in our determination and purpose without change. Lo the thing which is here declared unto us.

And we are also to note that there are two temptations, which we must resist, when as we shall be grieved and injured. The first temptation is, that when we are injured, we are by and by moved to render the like: Mark I beseech you the state and condition of our nature. Now since God commandeth us to fly that which is naught, and to do that which is good, even to love our enemies, we had need to be very well armed and furnished with these texts of the Scriptures. For we shall never be able to attain to the end to overcome any such temptation nor desire of revenge, except God putteth to his helping hand. We think it also lawful to do evil, when we see ourselves compassed with nothing else but evil, and wickedness, if

we look into the order and government of the world, we shall see one man exceed in lechery, another to be an horrible blasphemer, one an extortioner and usurer, and another a deceitful bargainer, one in this thing, another in that: and very many estranged from God, and become near neighbors to Satan, violently carried to this and that. When as then we are thus encompassed with evil and iniquity, we think that we may take leave to do wickedly.

Lo how the children of God may be tempted, and how we see also an infinite number to be as it were daily deceived. And therefore let us note, that if we have at any time been boldly affected to come unto God, and that he hath reached forth his hand for a season, to have us to come unto him, that yet this is not enough: But we must hereupon endeavor ourselves to gather unto us new force and courage, to the end the Devil might not shake us when as he shall raise up against us troubles and vexations, and lay a great number of stops and stumbling blocks in our ways. We must therefore be armed against him, to the end we forget not the Law of God, whatsoever come of it.

And here we are to note this circumstance, that David doth not only say, that he was grieved by one man alone, nor yet by two or three, but he saith, *The congregation of the wicked*. When he saith, *The whole congregation*, this is very much: if there had been but a small number, it had been enough: But he saith, *The whole congregation*, signifying that he was assailed on every side, that he was like a sheep among Wolves, Lions, Bears, and other wild beasts of raven: and yet for all that, that he always put his trust in the Lord.

Now if we shall look well into ourselves, how few shall we see which have not been overcome with the least temptation that hath come unto them? there shall need but one man to oppose himself against us, and lo we are by and by carried to do wickedly, now we know not that this cometh from God. To be short, the least fly which flieth before our eyes (as we say) is even enough to turn us quite out of the right way. And surely we may be greatly ashamed so suddenly to change our copy: where before we made great show of following of God, and by and by to go clean against the hair. And we think this may be a most lawful excuse, when as we can handle the matter thus, to say, that we were carried to do wickedly through some temptation. It is so far off that this excuse should go for payment, as that

it is neither worth ware nor money. But we must say with David, yea and that truly as he hath done, That whensoever the whole congregation of the wicked shall assail us, let us not cease to persevere and continue in the law of God. And namely he saith, *That they have robbed him*, which is yet the most grievous and sharp thing that can come to a man, and which might soonest make him to quail. For it may be that the wicked will go about to molest us, and yet come not to the end of their enterprise: but David saith, that he was put out for a prey, that he was as a wretched forlorn creature, and assailed on every side: and yet that he forgot not the law of God. And in so saying, it is as if he should have protested and said, that he had always one self and the same affection to follow the law of God.

Now let us return unto that which we have before touched. For this is no small temptation, that God suffereth us to be so molested, grieved, and tormented. When GOD suffereth Satan and his supposts [*followers, subordinates*] to take this course, this should as it were discourage us an hundred thousand times. And in very deed this is Satan his policy, as we see in Job. For when Satan meant to show, that it was an easy matter for Job to serve God, *O*, saith he, *he is well at liberty, and liveth quietly, he is rich, and therefore it is a very easy matter for him, to praise God: but whensoever he shall have lost all that he hath, all his substance, and be vexed with many annoyances and torments, we shall then see whether he will bless God yea or no*. Lo then how God proveth us, when he suffereth the wicked to molest and trouble us, that they are even come to this point to set their foot upon the very throat of us. By that he meaneth to prove us whether we love him in good earnest or not. And therefore we are the rather to mark this doctrine. For it is impossible for us to serve God as we ought, without we have this constancy whereof David here speaketh: to wit, that when we shall be afflicted in any sort whatsoever, we must not cease to pray always unto God, that we may be able to yield ourselves wholly to him. Lo what is the sum and effect hereof. And by this we are taught, that neither afflictions nor any such other like things ought to stay us from praying unto God, to the end we might always walk in his obedience. For if he permit us to be afflicted in our flesh, we must not therefore say that his love is diminished towards us, neither that he hath little care of our salvation: let us only attend and wait to see the end and issue of our afflictions, and in the meanwhile continue to walk according to

his word, and never forget his law, howsoever Satan soliciteth us to the contrary. Now it followeth by and by after,

At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee: because of thy righteous judgments.

Lo here an excellent protestation, which also hangeth upon that, whereof we have already treated in the first verse. For there David protesteth that this is our true and very perfect felicity, when as we give ourselves to GOD and to his word.

Now he saith here, that *he rose at midnight to give thanks unto God, even because of his righteous Judgments*. As if he should have said, I have already declared, O Lord, that my portion is to have thy word, and to have possession thereof: which if I have, I am blessed, and most blessed: And now, O Lord, suffer me not to be unthankful for such a benefit, and privilege, which thou hast given me. He allegeth also unto him his righteous Judgments. We have here before declared what the meaning of these words import: to wit, *the Statutes of God*: which are to govern us in such soundness as that our life shall be plain and honest, David then, saying *that he praised God because of his righteous Judgments*, signifieth, that he thanketh him for that, that he was taught in his word, knowing it to be a singular benefit. We are now to note this saying: For we see what our unthankfulness is, not only for all the benefits of GOD, but principally and chiefly for this, that God hath so declared himself unto us by his law, Prophets and Gospel, and yet we never think of all this: and that which is worse, that although he meaneth to overcome our malice through his goodness, and offereth himself unto us as a father and Savior, yet do we fly as far from him as we possibly can. It is very true that we will make semblance to seek him, as it were for our discharge, yea and that shall be too, when as we shall be thereto forced: But yet if we were at our own liberty and choice, we would come as far aloof as were possible.

Now when we seek God in this wise, it is not to come directly unto him, but only to say, Lo I am well affected unto GOD, I am one of those which seek him.

And indeed, when God goeth about to draw us unto him by his word, how may we be able sufficiently enough to understand so notable a benefit? Wherefore let this doctrine be well marked, seeing it is so very necessary

to correct and amend our so great villainous malice and unthankfulness? and that we might hereafter learn to praise God, because it hath pleased him to make us partakers of this inestimable treasure, to wit, the doctrine of salvation: that his meaning is to rule and order our life, that we might not be like wretched strayed sheep, to be cast down headlong into the bottomless pit of hell. Here is likewise an ardent affection expressed in this saying, *That David arose at midnight*. As if he should have said, that the day was not sufficient enough for him, but that in the time of his quiet rest, he lifted up his mind into heaven to give thanks unto God. In this he signifieth that he continued praising of God without wearisomeness.

Now then, if we will rightly follow the example of David, we must not give GOD thanks when we think good, and when we shall have remembered him once in fifteen days, or I know not when: or else when as it shall be for fashion's sake, as when the Bell ringeth to cause us to come to the Sermon. But it must be always, for we must both in the evening, and morning, and also at midnight, have our minds waking to give him thanks. He addeth,

I am a companion of all them that fear thee: and keep thy Commandments.

By which he signifieth, that he hath sought all the means possible to give himself to walk in the fear of God. We have here to note, that David was an excellent man, even like an Angel among mortal creatures: and yet for all that, it was needful for him to accompany himself with faithful men, men of good example, and pure, and holy in life and conversation. And why so? To the end he might be always the better confirmed in his vocation and calling, and not to be withdrawn from the same by evil example. Now (as I have already touched) if David had need hereof, what shall become of us, who are so inconstant and mutable in all our doings? Lo then the first point which we have to note in this place: to wit, that David protesteth, that although the holy Ghost assisted him, and that he felt himself confirmed, as we have seen, nevertheless, he yet sought other helps to continue and hold him in the fear of God: as the companies which were most meet for him, to cause him to follow his vocation, and not to withdraw him from it, seeing there must be nothing that must pull us aside from the right way. Now he meaneth to signify further, that he joined himself with men that feared God, to the end also that he might serve him as he ought. For we are bound to stir up one another through mutual exhortations and good

ensamples. It is meet then that we have these two considerations: in the first place we are to consider to follow those which can advance and further us in the right way, who can profit us more and more in the fear of God, and after that, we must also labor to profit those with whom we shall be likewise conversant, inciting them by all means possible, to follow the right trade, wherein God shall have set them, to the end he may be honored with one accord: and that every of us might say, come, let us go, and let us travail and take pains to cause others to go with us, that we may altogether honor the Lord our God. Now the conclusion of the eighth verse, is the second request.

The earth O Lord is full of thy mercy: O teach me thy statutes.

Here we see how necessary a thing it is for us to be always praying to God, beseeching him more amply to instruct us, that we may acknowledge him better than heretofore we have done: yea, and that specially, when as we think we know all that is to be known, that we thoroughly consider, that we have yet great need to profit continually more and more. For which of us, I pray you, dareth be so bold as to compare with David? Lo so excellent a Prophet, as that he is like unto an Angel of God: we see also how God hath revealed unto him his secrets, as if he had been taken up into the heavenly kingdom: and yet he having such excellent gifts as we know, desireth notwithstanding to be instructed in the statutes of God. And which is he amongst us that hath not greater need of them? So then when as we shall be greatly learned in the word of God, not only for ourselves, but also to instruct our neighbors: let us for all that be contented to yield ourselves to be taught of him, to beseech him to grant us his grace, that we may daily profit more and more. And therefore we ought the better to note the reason, which David setteth first down, *For the earth, O Lord, is full of thy mercy.* As if he should have said, thou O Lord spreadest abroad thy fatherly goodness over all creatures: we see how of thy mercy thou feedest the beasts of the field, we see the trees flourish, the earth bring forth her increase, thy goodness spreadeth through heaven and earth, and how is it then possible, that thou shouldest not do good unto thy children? I am one of that number which call on thee, and that put their trust in thee. Seeing thou art so loving and merciful to all creatures, thou shalt not forsake me. The reason, here set down, serveth David for a confirmation, that he should not doubt to obtain the request which he had made. And so as oft as we desire God to instruct us in his statutes, the

goodness, wherewith he overspreadeth all his creatures serveth us as a foundation, whereon to build all our petitions. And since that God hath given us this grace to allow us in the number of his children, and to show himself to be our father, let us be sure that he will not refuse to give us those things which he hath promised. And according to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the Majesty, etc.

THE NINTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

TETH

- 65** O Lord, thou hat dealt graciously with thy servant according to thy word.
- 66** O teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.
- 67** Before I was troubled I went wrong: but now I keep thy word.
- 68** Thou art good and gracious: teach me thy statutes.
- 69** The proud have imagined a lie againt me: but I will keep thy commandments with my whole heart.
- 70** Their heart is as fat as grease: but my delight is in thy law.
- 71** It is good for me that I have been in trouble; that I may learn thy statutes.
- 72** The law of thy mouth is better unto me: then thousands of gold and silver.

IF WE BE OFTENTIMES FOOLISH and unadvised in a great many causes, it may chiefly appear when we mean to pray to God: for then if there be but one drop of wit or reason in us, it will show itself: but we discover, our own folly in that behalf, more than in all the rest of our actions. And what is the reason? Forsooth [*in truth*] we will behave ourselves more modestly, whensoever we shall crave anything at the hands of men, than when we come before the majesty of God: for we go on headlong thereto, not knowing what we ought to desire of him: but even pour out at all adventure whatsoever shall come into our mouths. And we should then the rather call to mind our lesson, to the end we might know the order rightly how to pray. For we profane the name of god, and shew ourselves too much to contemn his majesty, if we beg at his hands any other thing than that, which he hath declared unto us to have liking of, in such sort as that

his will be always preferred, and our desires thereby chiefly ruled. Now we are here advertised, that above all things we ought to pray unto God that he will teach us, and cause us to understand his will, accordingly as he hath declared unto us in his word: and to open our eyes that we may do it, so that we might understand that which is comprehended therein.

And this is the sum and effect of these eight verses, which here we have now to handle. For David demandeth of God none other thing but to know the contents of the law, and the doctrine thereof, that he might be ruled thereby, and his whole life framed thereafter.

But in the first place he remembereth God of all the benefits which he had already received from him. For that is it which must give us trust and confidence, when as we come to make any prayer unto God. And indeed there is nothing in the world which giveth us a better access, nor that doth more readily assure us to be heard, than when we behold his benefits bestowed upon us. And how must that be? Thus must every man consider with himself and say, I have found heretofore by experience the bounty of my God: yea, I have had as great proof hereof, as is possible. And therefore it were unreasonable that I should mistrust him, and stand in any doubt that he would not now grant me that which I desire of him: considering that I have so good a proof of his love, that he is always ready, liberally to bestow upon me his benefits. When then I shall have received so many benefits of him, should I now think with myself, how is it possible that this thing should come to pass? to wit, that I should obtain that which I am about to pray for? If we shall stand in this doubt, we shall do God great wrong, and show our great unthankfulness unto him: for he never doth us any good, but it is to this end and purpose, that we should be partakers of his mercy and grace, which he will continue unto us even to the end: for he is never weary in liberally bestowing his benefits upon us, as men are wont when as they bestow bountifully of any, and by and by pluck their heads again quite out of the collar. But God is no such manner of one, he is a well that can never be drawn dry. Lo then whereunto this tendeth which is here spoken in the first verse: *O Lord, thou hast dealt graciously with thy servant*, David spake not this to the end to measure himself, that he would have God never hereafter to bestow anymore benefits upon him: But clean contrary, that because he had had already so great experience of the grace of God, he was fully resolved, that he should also feel his benefits to come. For God is no changeling: and as I have

already said, his grace is never lessened, but he will always increase it towards us. And so let us learn after the example of David, that as often as we are to pray unto God, to consider with ourselves, and call to mind, the benefits which we have received from his hand, that the same might be as it were an entrance for us unto prayer, and thereupon to conclude, that seeing God hath showed himself heretofore liberal: we should feel him also to be the same, ever hereafter unto the end.

Now namely David addeth, *According to thy word*: And not without cause: for this is not all that we ought to know, that God hath done us good, and that all that we have, proceedeth from him: but we must put this confidence unto it: to wit, that he hath done it according to his word. For like as meat, although it be good and sweet, hath no savor nor taste, but is altogether unsavory without salt: even so likewise the benefits of God, will have no perfect taste, that we might savor them as appertaineth [*pertains*], if it be not, that they be salted and seasoned with faith and belief, and to know that the graces and benefits which GOD hath bestowed upon us, have been according to his word and promise. And why so I pray you? For if we shall not have the word of God and his promises: yea and although (as I have already said) we might very well make our petitions unto him, and come before him, in building ourselves upon this, that he hath already aided us of his mere favor and goodness: yet should we not for all that, be assured that he will always do the like, nor yet abide constant therein, that when he hath begun, that he will finish it, we can never be able, I say, to have any such certainty without his word. And why so? when God saith unto us, go to now, and hearken unto me, I will be your father, and show myself a savior towards you, and you shall find me to be such one forever: after that we have felt the proof and effect of these promises: we may then very well apply his benefits to that use whereof I have already spoken: hath God done me good but for a fit? hath he done this only, but by the way of talk? and will he not now hold and continue it? no, not so: but he hath done it according to his word. Doth the word of God stand but for a day or for a month? No, it remaineth and abideth both in life and death. Let us then conclude, that the benefits of God are everlasting, and that he will continue them unto all those that are not unthankful. Lo this sentence which David addeth is not superfluous, but of great weight, when he saith, *O Lord, thou hast dealt graciously with me, according to thy word*. If we will then be confirmed by the benefits of

God, which we have heretofore received: and when we shall make our requests, that we would have him to hear us: we must join his benefits with his word, and even to speak properly, like unto confects [*preserved fruit or seed*] closely wrapped up together in savory salt, for otherwise we shall never be able to feel any such taste of them, as to apply them to such an use, to build a true certainty of faith in him. Now David having used such a preface, addeth,

O teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

Here David desireth God to give him true wisdom, that he might know what he had to do. And why doth he so? he setteth down the reason which is that, that we have already seen, *for I have believed*, saith he, *thy word*. Now it seemeth to imply, that they which have believed, are sufficiently instructed, that they have, I say, true understanding, and so great wisdom, as they need not to pray unto God, to enlighten them anymore. Wherein consisteth and standeth all our wisdom but in faith? when as we receive the word of God, and being taught by it do rest us in that which he saith unto us? Lo this is our full and whole perfection.

Now David protesteth, *That he hath believed the word of God*: wherefore then desireth he to be taught, as if he were without knowledge and ignorant? Now here we are to note (as we have touched this morning) that we believe the word of God two ways: to wit, our faith must be distinguished in two parts: not that we mean to divide, and dismember the same, but to make a distinction of it, as is comprised in her own nature's kind. From whence then taketh faith her beginning? Forsooth [*in truth*], she must despise herself to receive whatsoever God shall say, we must suffer him to be master, and to acknowledge whatsoever cometh from him, to be good, holy, and just: that before he hath spoken unto us, we be already prepared and disposed to obey him: and albeit we know not yet his will, nevertheless to have this resolution with ourselves, doth God speak? Well then, we must not only give our ear and attention: but also receive without contradiction, whatsoever shall proceed out of his holy mouth.

Lo here what is the first part and condition of faith. Now there is a second part and condition: to wit, the instruction which God giveth us, after that we are come unto him with that reverence that Scholars ought to come to their master: for we are more fully and soundly taught of him. This is it

that David desireth. He protesteth *That he hath believed the word of God:* that is to say, to have known the majesty contained therein, to have obeyed it, and to have yielded himself subject unto the same. When he had made this protestation, O Lord, saith he, now that I have felt the power and virtue of thy word, and have chiefly been desirous thereof, grant me this grace that I may comprehend it.

Lo here a notable place and worthy the noting. For in the first place we are advertised, that we shall never profit ourselves either in the Gospel, or yet in any part of the holy Scripture, if we have not this modesty with us, as to yield ourselves to God: with this persuasion, that the same which we accompt [*account*] to be good and faithful with us is nothing in respect of that which he meaneth to do therein on his behalf: considering that he hath showed it unto us: For we are simple and ignorant, and cannot conceive the things which are necessary for our salvation, until such time as we have yielded our minds to this reason. And lo wherefore there are so few scholars of God at this day in this point. For how many shall we find at this day, which have their mind so humbled as it ought? But the greater part are arrogant fools, we shall find very many in this behalf, that will make no more accompt [*account*] of the word of God, than if a mortal and seely [*silly*] man had spoken. Forsomuch then as men come thus to God with such a pride, let us not wonder although he leaveth them without wit or reason: and although the Sun shineth bright before their eyes, yet remain they continually blind, and grope about, as it were in the dark, and wander about even to the hazard of their neck breaking. We must not be abashed at this, although God depriveth them of his grace, since they will not submit themselves unto his word. Even so, when as this shall be in us to attribute unto God the authority and honor which he is worthy of, we may after the example of David, hope that he will instruct us more and more: and also make this request unto him. For this is the first degree and step of all Christian wisdom: to wit, to humble themselves in such sort, as that they be ever ready to receive whatsoever God shall say unto them. When as they shall be thus prepared, they cannot do amiss, nor yet fear that God will ever forsake them: but that he will spread forth his power to maintain them, as he hath therein promised them to do. And thus much as touching these two verses. Now it followeth,

Before I was troubled I went wrong: but now I keep thy word.

Here David signifieth that he was more daunted, than ever he was, because God corrected him: As if he had said, In very deed, O Lord, amongst all the rest of the benefits which I have already alleged, this is one, that thou hast made me to know myself through affliction: lo, it maketh me to keep thy commandments. Now when we tell God thus of the graces which he hath bestowed upon us that we might be prepared to serve him, it is for this cause that he might increase and augment them more and more in us, until such time as he hath brought them to their perfect end. Now we have to note in this matter, the order which David keepeth, O Lord, saith he, *I confess that I have erred*. The first point, is this confession which he maketh: for when God findeth us to be untamed and hard to be kept in array, it is meet that this our stubbornness should be pulled down, and he to show his authority over us, to the end we might soon after feel his clemency. And therefore, David knowing that he was once very wild and untamed, and had not walked in such fear of God as became him, confesseth, that although he had been taught, yet that it was needful for God to set him in array, and to keep him in good order. *O Lord* saith he, *I confess that I have erred, yea and that was before thou haddest chastised me: but now I keep thy commandments*. By this he signifieth in effect, that which I have touched: to wit, that he was already prepared in this wisdom of the knowledge of God: yet he always prayed that he would augment this grace in him, and confirm him therein until such time as he were thoroughly made perfect. In the meanwhile we have to note, that David was not a man altogether wickedly bent, nor yet so untamed as a great number of the contemners of God are. It is very true that he committed very grievous and extreme offenses, were it but this adultery which he committed with Bethsabe Vrie his wife, which was so horrible an act, as that he deserved even for that to be utterly forsaken of God. And after that, he became so proud when he would have mustered the people, as that he was violently carried with a vain and foolish arrogancy, clean forgetting who it was that had advanced him unto this royal seat: and instead of doing homage unto God for such a notable benefit, he determined with himself to have escaped away on horseback. Lo what grievous and shameful faults these are. But if we look into the course of his life, we shall find that he was a man of a continual singleness very teachable and full of courtesy, following the vocation of God, and wholly given thereto. Now herein appeareth a great difference between a man which outrageth all the days of his life, and him which committeth some particular evil, showing

nevertheless in all the rest of his life a fear of God: As it may happen, that a man shall serve God all his life, and yet in the meanwhile may somewhat fall, and perhaps very grievously: as we see to have come to pass in David. Now we shall see others to be very wicked, and to despise God all their life long, delighting altogether in wickedness. But David never was such one: and yet for all that he confessed that he had erred, before such time as God had visited him with afflictions. And if this came so to pass in David, alas what shall become of us poor wretches? So then, let us understand that afflictions, are more necessary for us, than bread and drink.

We crave of God that he will feed and nourish us. It is very true, and he giveth us leave for to make such request: but yet we must not leave out the principal point: to wit, we must beseech him not to make us so fat, as we, make pampered and restive Jades, to wince and kick at him, but that being governed through his bountiful goodness, we might be easy and tractable to be guided according to his will. So it is (as already I have said) that we ought indeed, to be tamed through afflictions: or else we should always become like unto savage and wild beasts.

And to prove that it is so, we see our nature so rebellious, as is most pitiful: and our affections such terrible beasts, as that we are not able to hold them in any good order: insomuch that if God slack the reins, and lay the bridle in our neck, it is out of all question that we will be very stubborn and rebellious against him: and in such sort outrage, that we will desire nothing else but clearly to overthrow all justice, equity, and right. To be short, it will be out of all doubt, that we will even jusile and spurn against God, when as we shall live at our own pleasure, and in great prosperity.

Now there is none other remedy to help this matter, but to have God to afflict us, for this is the only means, by which he keepeth us in subjection and in awe, otherwise, if he leave us in rest and at quiet, it were impossible but that our nature should stubbornly rebel against him. If we carry away this lesson well, we should never be so grieved with the afflictions which he layeth upon us as we are: but we should take another manner of consolation in all our miseries and adversities than we do: knowing that although they be bitter medicines unto us, yet that they shall turn to our health. Let us choose whether we will be like wild and mad beasts, straying from the way of salvation, yea even like very frantic men to lift up ourselves against God, rather than to be chastised with his rods, and to be

so conquered as that by the same means he might order us to live in his obedience.

Since then we be so profited through afflictions, as that the gain which we get thereby is not heavy and grievous to bear, let us comfort ourselves therewith, attending the issue which God shall give unto us. Moreover, let us also have in memory, that we must not be incorrigible, after that God hath lift up his hand to chastise us, and hath rebated our foolish and inordinate appetites, neither moil and groan as we are wonted, as if he did us great wrong: but let us suffer ourselves to be chastised and afflicted after the example of David. Lo, the very savage and fierce beasts, yet for all that at last they may be made tame, when as a painful and industrious man shall take them in hand, which can tell how to rule them.

Behold the untamed horse, of nature fierce and stout, and yet for all that he suffereth himself to be handled and led, turneth with the bit, when he shall have a man upon his back which knoweth how to ride and tame him. I beseech you, ought not we to be greatly ashamed, when as our God shall employ himself to order us, and win us unto himself, and yet cannot compass it? So then, let us after the example of David, strive to profit ourselves under the rod of God, to the end we might keep his laws, after that he hath scourged us. Now it followeth soon after.

Thou are good and gracious: teach me thy statutes.

David here repeateth again the same petition which we have heard. And it is the very same which I have already touched: to wit, that amongst all the prayers which we must make unto God, this is one of the most principal, to desire him to instruct us in his word: that we be not given in such sort to that which concerneth this present life, and our bodies, as that we think no whit of the glass of our souls. Now this glass is it which consisteth in the word of God.

So then, let us not forget this so great a benefit, when as we are about to pray unto God, that we have this in a most especial remembrance, that we may be instructed in his statutes. Now over and beside this request, David useth the same reason which he hath set down in the first verse: that is when he saith, *That God is good and gracious.*

It is very true, that they are two sundry sentences: but yet they proceed from one selfsame springhead [*source, cause*], and the meaning also

tendeth to one and the selfsame end. He hath said, thou hast dealt liberally with thy servant: and here, thou art good and gracious. There he hath said, even according to thy word: and here he hath put them in both: so that we may see, that this verse is but a confirmation of that which we have seen in the two first: that David alleging to GOD, his bounty, which he used towards his, even according to his nature, beseecheth him that he would teach him his Statutes. Now he addeth,

The proud have imagined a lie against me: but I will keep thy Commandments with my whole heart.

This is alleged for two reasons: the one is, that by it David sheweth the need which he hath of God his help, and to be confirmed in his word, yea and to be instructed in the same. And why so? Forsooth [*in truth*] to withstand temptations. As if he had said, Alas my God, if thou instruct me not, and guidest me by thy holy spirit, what shall I do? For I am not without temptations, when as I shall have but mine own will which ever striveth against thee: But I have also enemies without, which oppress and grieve me: Wherefore I have very great need to be guided and governed by thy hand. David then considered that it was needful for him to be chastised of God: to the end he might a great deal the easier obtain his request.

Now in the meanwhile he meaneth to show that he made his prayer without hypocrisy: that he came to GOD in very good earnest, and with a pure and sincere affection: as if he had said, O Lord I desire not to be instructed in thy law and Statutes for fashion's sake: but because I esteem of this good that is in it, and for that I know this to be the most sovereign felicity that we can have. And to prove that it is so, although the wicked have assailed me, and taken great pains to draw me to do wickedly, and have bent all their force and power thereto: yet have I kept thy commandments. By this he hath made good proof how greatly he loved the word of God, when as he loathed it not whatsoever they craftily and maliciously practiced against him.

See then the two reasons which we have here to note. Now (in the first place) when David speaketh here of the proud, let us remember that it is the title which the Scripture commonly attributeth to all Infidels and contemners of God. For from whence cometh this villainous and beastly impiety, that men will not bow themselves under the hand of GOD, but are hardened, and lift themselves up against him? It cannot be chosen but

that this must needs be an horrible pride. Even so then this infidelity is it that giveth to man as it were Horns which he so naturally esteemeth (although indeed it be less than nothing) and thinketh the same to be wonderful. And contrariwise, let us mark that it is only Faith that must induce us to humility, and which frameth and fashioneth us therein, considering this swelling of our hearts, our growing in presumption, like unto swelling Toads. There is nothing I say, that can amend this vice, but Faith alone. The reason is, because that Faith bringeth us unto God.

Now when as we know what the righteousness of God is, Let us then come unto ourselves, and we shall find in us nothing else but iniquity: when we shall consider of the Wisdom of God, we shall see that all whatsoever we thought to be good reason, to be nothing else but vanity and folly. So then, when men do wonder and look at the brightness of God, they then learn that they are no better but dung and filthy stench, are even angry and displeased with themselves, and greatly ashamed of their own filthiness. See then, that humility proceedeth from faith. And therefore David saith, *that the proud*, to wit, the wicked and Infidels *imagined a lie against him*. Let us then know, that pride is engendered of men, and that they bring it with them into the world so soon as they are born, that it groweth and increaseth unto full age, until such time as God correcteth it by his holy spirit and by Faith. And so when as we shall see the contemners of God, and the wicked who know not what it is to be ordered by GOD, when we shall see them, I say, thus outrage: let us not think it strange, seeing it is the course of nature.

Moreover, let us well note that David speaking of the need which he had of God, sheweth us by his example, that the more we are vexed with temptations, that so much the more bold we ought to be, to beseech him of his aid, that he will reach out his hand to uphold us, and not to suffer us to be overcome. And this is specially to be noted: for when we are grieved with any temptation, we know not that the same is to make us run to God, who is the only remedy by which we must be delivered.

And so the Devil may very easily enter into us to overthrow our faith, since it is as it were put out there unto him as a prey, and besides we vouchsafe [*allow*] not once to receive the remedy which is offered us for our help. So then, let us keep the order which David here setteth down: to wit, that if we be assailed with great and very strong temptations, that

then it is high time for us to have recourse unto God, beseeching him to save us, and to remedy our faults, which else would lead us to everlasting destruction. And thus much for this.

Now we have soon after to note: that we shall make good proof of our well willing to serve God, if we resist the temptations. If the wicked go about to draw us unto wickedness, and yet we stand fast and sure, then is our Faith and constancy well approved. And this is spoken, to the end that no man should flatter himself, for we think this to be a sufficient excuse, and that God should also be well contented therewith, to say, that we were drawn to do wickedly by the means of some other. See I pray you, will everyone say, I was once in a very good forwardness [*earnestness*], and desired to live according to the will of God. But when I see the world so perverse and wicked, and that all men were given to so many vices, it was impossible for me to escape, but that I must do as other men did. When we shall allege for ourselves such excuses, we think that God should hold himself well contented therewith.

But contrariwise, we see here that the faithful never cease for all that to serve God: when all the whole world go about to hinder and let [*prevent*] them: that although the wicked invent never so many lies, and lay never so many stumbling blocks in their way to cause them to turn and decline from the right way, yet do they still stand firm and sure. And see also how we must be fain [*obliged*] to do, that if we will faithfully serve our good God, we must not cease to pursue our vocation, yea although the wicked bent all the force they were possibly able to make against us, to turn us clean from the way of salvation.

Now if this admonition hath been always necessary, it is more needful at this day than ever it was. For we see that the world is grown to a monstrous heap of all iniquity, that we are not able to step forth one step, but that we shall meet with great store of evil and dangerous encounters, which might weary and withdraw us, and carry us to do wickedly in all kind of things. Therefore we ought so much the rather to practice this doctrine, That the wicked have imagined lies against us: but yet that we have kept the law of God. For the lies which the proud and the enemies of God do imagine against us, are not of one kind. For sometimes they will seduce us under the color of Friendship, sometimes they will charge us with a great many of things to make us fainthearted, sometimes they will

make such a confusion of all, that we shall not be able to discern between white and black. We must then be so much the more well advised, and stand the surer upon our guard. And although the devil transform himself so into diverse manners, let not us leave to keep the law of God, yea and that with our whole heart: which is a thing that we ought diligently to mark. For if we have but only some little and feeble affection to follow God, we shall soon be very weary thereof. Our heart therefore must be wholly addicted thereto, for else we shall never be able to make our part good against Satan. Now it is said a little after,

Their heart is as fat as grease: but my delight is in thy law.

Here David maketh a comparison between the contemnners of God, and those which desire to serve him. And why doth he so? He showeth, that the cause which so induceth the Infidels to contemn GOD, is the dissolute and brutish life which they lead: because they are as fat as an Hog in his sty, that hath been fed with Acorns and Barley, and that lieth wallowing on an heap in his own grease. He is so very fat and heavy that he is not able to get up: and although he be already a marvelous fat and heavy beast, which desireth nothing else but draff [*def. refuse of grains after malting given to swine*] and swill, yet will he be far fatter and heavier, when as he shall be styed [*penned*] up and so fatted. Even so fareth it with these cursed contemnners of God, which have no regard unto everlasting life, but are wholly given up to their God the belly. They wallow themselves in their own grease, as a Swine which hath his groin always in the trough. Now contrariwise David saith, that all his delight hath been in the word of God. Whereby he doth us to wit, that although God had made him fat, yet that he wallowed not for all that in his own grease, but delighted in that spiritual gift which was given him, because that God had taught it him in his School.

Lo then what we have to gather out of this place: that although we see the greater part of the world contemn God, yet must we not be abashed thereat. And why so? Let us well consider wherein men do put their chief felicity: and we shall find them to be like unto Oxen, and Swine, desiring naught but to live here in this world, without looking any farther. Now we must have a farther regard, if we will serve God as to him appertaineth [*pertains*]: to wit, that we take such pleasure and delight in the word of God, that we be no more given to the world, as we are overmuch. And

although God giveth us abundance, yet that we have our ease and commodities in this world, let us not settle our minds on them, but know that all these are but petty small means and necessities: but let us labor to go to the principal, and acknowledge him to be our Father and Savior: And when we know him to be so, then let us climb up unto him, and to that everlasting life, whereunto he inviteth and calleth us. Lo I say, what we have here to retain.

Moreover if God tameth us by affliction, Let us come to that which David addeth, to wit, *That it was good for him that he had been in trouble.* Although then that God pulleth back his hand, and that instead of gently entreating us, he handleth us roughly, instead of sending us plenty of wealth, he causeth us to suffer hunger and thirst, instead of giving us health, he grieveth us with diseases: that being vexed with many anguishes and torments, so that we know not what to do: yet must we always look to the end, to be comforted with David, in saying, It is a good turn for me O Lord, that I have been in trouble, *That I may learn thy Statutes.*

Now since it hath so fallen out, that David was afflicted, to the end he might be the better disposed to learn the ordinances of God, what shall become of us, which are full of worldly vanities? Let us then know that we had need to be corrected by the hand of God, and to be tied short, if we will profit in the doctrine of salvation. Lo then, how we must practice the admonition of David. And when we shall have so done, we may conclude and say with that which is set down in the last verse, to wit: *That the law of God is more dear unto us than Gold or Silver.* And this is it that we must do in this point, we must esteem and make much of the word of God, as it is worthy and not to stay ourselves on the things of this world, but to look always farther off: to wit, unto heaven. When then we shall have profited ourselves thus by the afflictions which God shall send us, he will bestow his grace upon us by little and little, that we shall so esteem of his word, as that we shall wholly stick to it. And let us beseech him, that it would please him to despoil us of all our wicked fleshly desires and affections, and to cause us to crave none other thing but that he will reign and live in us.

According to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses: Beseeching him that it would please him to take from us the wicked affections which might

turn us away from him, and from his service: and that we might forget all whatsoever might turn us from the right way of salvation, that we desire nothing but that we may attain to that everlasting life, which we look for in heaven. That it would please him not to suffer us to live here like brute beasts, not knowing to what end we were created in this world: but that we might acknowledge him to be our Creator, our Father and Savior, that we might subject ourselves unto him as his creatures, and obey him as true and faithful Children, until such time as he shall take us out of this world to make us partakers of that everlasting bliss, and immortal inheritance, which he hath prepared in Heaven, and which is purchased for us by our Lord Jesus Christ. That he will not only grant us this grace, but also unto all people and nations in the world, etc.

THE TENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

IOD

- 73** Thine hands have made and fashioned me: O give me therefore understanding that I may learn thy Commandments.
- 74** So they that fear thee, when they see me shall rejoyce: because I have put my truth in thy word.
- 75** I know, O Lord that thy judgments are right: and that thou hast afflicted me unjustly.
- 76** I pray thee that thy mercy may comfort me: according to thy promise unto thy Servant.
- 77** Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.
- 78** Let the proud be confounded, for they have dealt wickedly and falsely with me: but I meditate in thy Commandments.
- 79** Let such as fear thee, and know thy Testimonies: turn unto me.
- 80** Let my heart be upright in thy Statutes: that I be not ashamed.

WE OUGHT TO HOLD AND KEEP this rule and order in our prayers to God, not to measure his affection and love after our own imaginations and thoughts but to acknowledge him to be such one as indeed he is, and as he sheweth himself unto us to be. And lo why he saith by his Prophet Esaiah, (<235508> Esaiah 55:8, 9) after he had declared, that he would have compassion to save his church, *Think not (saith he,) that I am like unto you, for there is as great distance between my thoughts and yours, as is between Heaven and Earth.* Let us then measure the goodness of God after our vain imaginations: But (as I have already said) let us know that it is not in vain, which he declareth and testifieth unto us, that the good will and love which he beareth us, are infinite things which we must behold by faith only. And it is to the end that we should come unto him with greater

boldness to call upon him, not doubting but that we shall obtain whatsoever we crave at his hands, yea even as much as shall be expedient for our salvation. And according to this, David here setteth down, that God had made him. As if he had said, I come not unto thee, O Lord, as we commonly come unto men. I set not down any merit or worthiness, whereby I have bound thee unto me: For thou art beholden nothing at all to me: but I talk of thy benefits which I have already felt, to the end I would have thee to continue them unto me. For behold the true and very perfect nature of God: to wit, his nature is always to spread upon us his graces without ceasing: as he is a fountain which never can be drawn dry: even so must we not fear that he diminisheth or lesseneth them, neither yet is sparing of his benefits, for he hath plenty enough to continue them without end or ceasing. Let us then thoroughly consider this argument which David here useth: to wit that he telleth God that he is his Creature, to the end he might teach him, yea even to understand his law. We have here then to note, that David putteth not in himself here, simply in the rank with all the rest of his creatures: but cometh before God, as a man fashioned after his own image and likeness: *Thy hands* (saith he) *have made me and fashioned me*: that is to say, Thou hast granted me O Lord to be an inhabiter in this world, yea, and hast made me a reasonable Creature. Since then it is so, O Lord, that thou hast already begun so gently to entreat me, I beseech thee that thou wilt continue it.

Now we see what a kind or vein of speaking we must use, to be assured that God will hear our requests: to wit, that we must lay before him his graces, which we have already received of him. For that ought to make us to hope that like as he hath begun, so likewise will he go through with it, until such time as he hath brought his work to perfect end. Now, if we desire god to give us understanding to comprehend his law, inasmuch as he hath made us mortal men we have so much the better occasion to do it, in telling him that he hath adopted us to be his children, and taketh us to be as of his household. Now, when as we have this advantage and privilege, our confidence ought to be so much the more certain, that we should not doubt but that he would augment those graces which he before had bestowed upon us. And so, to the end we might profit by this place, we have to gather briefly three points: The first and principal which we are to wish is this, that God will instruct us in his law, that we be not so given

either to the goods of this world, or else to the pleasures of the body, and to all the rest, but that we might always have regard to our spiritual health.

As touching the first, we are to desire that this affection may reign in us, to the end to keep all the rest in good order, which violently might carry us away: to wit, that we should desire to be the right Scholars of God. And thus much for this. Now immediately after followeth the means to beseech him, that he will bestow upon us his grace to be taught in his law: to wit, because he hath made us to this end, and not like unto Oxen, Asses, nor Dogs, which are brute beasts, and nothing but corruption: but that he hath imprinted in us his image, and ordained us to everlasting life. Seeing then that he hath created us after this manner, let us trust in him, and beseech him, that he will continue and make perfect that, which he hath begun in us. But we shall have the greater courage to make this request unto him, when as we shall be brought unto him in the second place, that over and besides that he hath made us men, he hath chosen us also to be his children, hath made us partakers of this divine wisdom, which is contained in the Gospel, hath showed himself to be our father, and called us into the company and fellowship of his Son Christ Jesus, that we might be members of his body. When as then we may charge God with this. Lo this is a far greater approbation of our Faith: and we ought to beseech him with much more certainty and assurance, without doubting that it would please him to hear us. And thus much for the second point.

The third is, that although God hath taught us, we must not by and by think that we are such great Clerks, and so well learned, as that we need not to desire him to confirm us more and more in his knowledge, and to be always like unto prentices and young novices. As in very deed they which have most profited, should always be thus humbled, not to think that they had attained to the greatest abundance of knowledge: But that they had only some little taste and smattering of the wisdom of God, that they had need to have him to increase it always in them more and more.

Now if David made this request, yea and that in truth knowing that he had great need to be instructed of God: I pray you what arrogancy shall this be in us, when as we shall presume to have our brain so full stuffed, as that we needed no more instruction? that we should content ourselves with that which he had learned: ought it not to be said that we are most arrogant? And so, let us after the example of David, all the days of our life pray unto

God to teach us, and that we be never weary of being taught of him, until such time as he hath despoiled us of this mortal body: For so long as we shall remain in this body, we must needs be compassed about with black and thick clouds of ignorance, from which he will then deliver us, through the brightness of his coming. Now it followeth soon after,

So they that fear thee shall rejoyce to see me: because I have put my trust in thy word.

David bringeth in here yet another reason, for the obtaining of his request: to wit, that the faithful will be glad seeing that God hath heard him. And this is a place greatly worth the marking: For we are let [*made*] to understand by these words, that when God bestoweth any benefits upon any one of our Brethren and neighbors, we ought not only to acknowledge this goodness in this act simply, but wholly apply it to our own use, that it may serve us for our better confirmation: that we might understand, that we shall be no more refused, than he which hath already obtained his desire. And why so? For God is equal and just to all those which call upon him unfeignedly [*honestly*]. He saith not, that he will do good to one and not to another: but we have a general promise which extendeth itself to all without exception: to wit, that if we come unto him for succor [*help*], and that in truth, that he will be very ready to receive us: yea, that before we shall open our mouths he will stretch forth his hand to give us whatsoever he knoweth to be good and profitable for our salvation. Since then that this promise is general, if we be not too unthankful, we must needs believe that God will hear as well as those whom we have already seen him to have heard heretofore: and we must take their example for our better confirmation of the promises which he hath made unto us. See here, why David saith, That they which fear God, shall see him, and in seeing him, will be glad of it: yea, and we are thoroughly to consider of that which followeth: *for I have put my trust in thy Commandments*. As if he had said, They shall find nothing in me why thou hast showed thyself so loving and liberal, when as thou hast taught me by thy holy spirit, but because I have put my trust in thy word. Now thy word, is come to all those which fear thee. So then, let them know that the same which thou hast done to my person, appertaineth [*pertains*] to them also, and may apply it to their own use. This is said for a better confirmation of that which I have already spoken: to wit, that if God hath gently dealt with any of our neighbors, that he hath had compassion upon him: we are to conclude, that we shall

feel him to do the like unto us. And why so? Because he hath given us his word: which is true and will never deceive us. Let us then put our trust in him, and we shall feel the like of that which we have seen in others that have gone before us, and showed us the way, and have given us an example to repose all our trust in the goodness of God, having the promises which he hath offered us. Lo here the meaning of David in this verse. Now it followeth,

I know O Lord, that thy judgments are right: and that thou hast afflicted me justly.

David thinketh good to speak here a common thing, That he knoweth the statutes of God to be right. For what is he that is so accursed, which will confess that? Yea, even they which dare blaspheme and speak evil against God, when they shall be pressed thus far, yet will say, that the holy scripture is a doctrine that cannot be amended, and that the law of God is the rule of all equity. The very wicked then, will speak thus well of it: but yet there are very few which have this consideration imprinted in their hearts: to wit, to make this estimation of the law of God, as to say, that whatsoever is contained therein is just. And why so? That is first, by reason of the contrariety that is between our wit and the wisdom of God. And next, by reason of the contrariety of our wicked lusts, and affections, with the bridle which he holdeth us, to rule us according to his pleasure, and in his obedience, when as men will take counsel of their own head, that they think to control thereby, whatsoever God speaketh in his word: we then agree even like fire and water. For all our wisdom is but vanity and leasing [*falsehood*], when as we shall oppose and set ourselves against the holy Scriptures, the doctrine of the Law, and whatsoever is contained in the Prophets and the Gospel. As we see at this day, the world will in no wise subject itself thereto. From whence come all these controversies and dissensions throughout all christendom? Forsooth [*in truth*] it is because that men will be overwise, and will never honor God in such sort, as to say, Although O Lord our own wits lead us altogether preposterously, yet must we needs be ruled by thee. And because that we are not able to attain to this reason, it cannot be chosen but that the tile shards must needs fly about and the world be infected. See then, what is the cause that letteth [*preventeth*] the bigger number to confess both with heart and mouth, that the judgments of God are right: to wit, that all perfection of wisdom is in his law, in his Prophets, and in his Gospel: that it must needs fall out, that

we ought to do him homage in all this, knowing that it is impossible to find any one jot therein contained, to be amended. For although we very well know, that the judgments of God are right, to wit, in such sort as that our wits and minds might thereby be confirmed, that we might judge it to be so: yet it so standeth nevertheless, that behold our lusts and passions, do violently withstand God, and are ever against him. As how? An whoremonger shall be vanquished that his whoredom is wicked and abominable. A drunkard shall condemn his drunkenness: and shall never be able to say, that the vice whereunto he is given is a virtue. And so much may be said of the swearer and thief. But yet it is so, that such kind of people cannot give God the glory, saying, that his law is right: For they murmur against him and are very angry, that they have not the reins of the bridle laid in their neck, and giveth them not all the liberty that may be to do what themselves list [*desire*]. No doubt of it, if it lay in their power, they would pluck GOD out of his seat, that he might have no authority over them. Lo what men's affections and desires are. So then, we shall find a very small number of people to be like unto David, which will say in truth and without hypocrisy, I know O Lord that thy judgments are right. When he saith, that he hath known, he meaneth that he hath gotten new understanding which he never had before, as if he had said, I have O Lord profited so much, that I have clean given over mine own wit and reason. For I know it to be blind, because that men will always lift up themselves above measure. But now O Lord, thou hast brought me to this point, that I will no longer be governed by mine own head and fantasy: I will not trust to myself to know whether the matter shall be good or not, but I will rest me on that which thou sayest unto me. And thus much for the first point.

And a little after he saith, Although mine affections are clean against thy law, that they are ready to cast me quite out at the Carts arse [*ass*], as we say, yet for all that O Lord, I have bridled all my passions, yea and that through thy mighty power beseeching thee to continue and hold them as prisoners, until such time as thou shalt fully have delivered me from them. Lo how David practiced this knowledge which he said he had of God by his word. And let us after his example continually record this lesson: Let us bestow all our study both evening and morning upon it, to the end we may say that we have known, that it is that, which GOD hath commanded us, yea to follow it. But David doth not here set down this simple knowledge of the word of God: but goeth on farther: to wit, that God of

very faithfulness, *had caused him to be troubled*. Now is this far harder than the first.

It is very true, that we shall have great conflicts before we can be able to submit ourselves to God, in such humility, as for to know and say, that he is only wise: But yet, they which know this, think not his chastisements to be gentle and gracious, but are impatient, and conceive some grief, that maketh them to grind their teeth. Now David joined these two together, to wit, that he did not only make much of the word of God, but also of the punishment which he sent him: as if he had said, O Lord, I do not only suffer myself to be taught by thy word, but to be chastised also with thy hand: and I beseech thee to scourge and beat me with thy rods, so often as thou seest me to do amiss, and to cause me to amend, showing thyself a most loving and pitiful Father towards me.

We have here now a very good admonition: to wit, that first we must learn to be ruled after the will of God, to receive his word without contradiction, that we reply not according as it pleaseth our own wits and affections, neither to make any noise when we hear God speak: But let him have such authority over us, to make us so silent, as that we may know that whatsoever he saith unto us is just and true. And thus to do, let us learn not to be so sleepy and sluggish, as we are by nature in our vices and sins, and specially in this vice of ambition, having always a greedy desire to be advanced.

Let us rather know that God is the Master of the humble and lowly: and let us therefore humble ourselves, and not look so big and be so foolish haughty, which doth nothing else but cast us headlong into destruction, when as we advance ourselves higher than becometh us. Let us rather be advised to bridle all our Lusts and that which holdeth us as it were captives as Saint Paul saith. For what is the cause that so many people at this day do set themselves against the Gospel? It is not, because they know not this doctrine to be good, and that they judge not so of it: But yet are they not therein thoroughly persuaded to say, Lo how we must live: Every man will do whatsoever himself thinketh to be good. We must then needs confess that the judgments of God are right, that we learn to hold all our passions in bondage: that we suffer ourselves to be condemned by him, and to be rebuked for all our vices and imperfections as becometh us. Now can we do this? to wit, are we become subject and obedient to the word of

God? We must also submit ourselves under his hand, to strike us when it shall please him, and lively to understand that we have done amiss, confessing that he hath justly chastised us, or as here it is said, of very faithfulness.

This is the sum and effect, that he is just in punishing of us, as he is wise in teaching of us: the one hangeth on the other, that is to say, the second hangeth upon the first. For whosoever shall come to this humility that David speaketh of, to know, that in the word of God there is but one holy doctrine, one infallible truth, one so perfect equity, as can be no perfecter: he that shall have known this, shall by little and little have wherewith to be fortified to receive the corrections with a meek spirit, and not to be grieved, and to kick against the prick, as we are wonted to do. Let us now then suffer God to rebuke us, yea and to correct us, seeing he doth all this for our profit and health. And this is the sum and effect of this verse. It followeth next after,

I pray thee that thy mercy may comfort me: according unto thy promise unto thy servant.

Here David maketh a more general request, than that which before we have seen. He desireth God to instruct him: and now he addeth, O let thy merciful kindness be my comfort. As if he had said, O Lord I have besought thee for a special and particular thing, but I add now, that thou wilt be merciful unto me in all and through all, that thy mercy be extended upon me, that I fail in nothing. Thou knowest what is necessary and profitable for me: O Lord let me feel thee to be gracious and pitiful all manner of ways. Lo what difference there is between the first request which we have already seen, and this second. Now this is a point worth the noting. For (as we have before said) see the first which we ought to have in a singular recommendation, and that is, that we may be taught by God, and not to be taught only by words, but that he will also lighten us with his holy spirit, to make us know, that it is his word which guideth us. See here, I say, the very right way to salvation. Now have we made this request? we may crave of God that he will not let us fall in anything whatsoever, that his mercy may comfort us. But yet here we see how that David was not comforted nor yet rejoiced but only in God, knowing that all the joy that we have here below shall be accursed, when as we have no regard unto our Creator. And yet for all this, see how commonly we are

wonted to rejoyce and comfort ourselves, that is, even to forget God, and to turn our backs upon him. Now accursed be such joy, for the issue thereof can be none other, but as our Lord Christ Jesus saith, (<421328> Luke 13:28) That it shall be turned into weeping and gnashing of teeth. Howbeit, the world is waxen drunk, for whatsoever is said unto it, it maketh no reckoning thereof, but utterly refuseth all good and sound doctrine. Indeed this is true, that this same was not written in vain: but that we shall be so much the more inexcusable, when as we shall have the example of David, except we follow it. See then for this first point, that after David had compassed the whole world both above and beneath, he found no rest to comfort his spirit and soul, but at such times as he made his repair unto God. And there I say, he found wherewith to rejoyce and comfort himself: finding nothing else but unquietness in all living creatures. Now he soon after setteth down, how we ought to rejoyce and to be comforted in God: to wit, through his mercy: for if God should deal with us according to our deserts, we should have no cause wherefore to rejoyce, but rather be confounded with very horror and fear. When as God shall declare himself to be our judge, alas, which way shall we be able to turn us? Must we not needs be cast headlong into the deep pit? If it be said that we must appear before the majesty of our God, what shall become of us which suck up iniquity even as the fish sucketh in water, as it is written in the book of Job? (<181516> Job 15:16) Wherefore, let us know that if we will rightly rejoyce, and find sure rest in our consciences, we must betake ourselves to this free mercy of our God, that he declareth himself pitiful unto us in that he seeth us to be miserable and wretched creatures, and to put forth our hand unto him to receive his mercy. Now David in the end sheweth whereupon he buildeth himself, in making such a request:

According unto thy word, made unto thy servant.

Lo whereupon we must build and settle ourselves, when as we will come unto God, to be heard of him: to wit, upon his mere mercy, as we have here above said. But are we already come thus far forth? And if we be, yet is there another point farther required: to wit, we must assure ourselves that the graces of God shall adorn and garnish us, so we seek them according to his word. And to prove it to be so, mark I beseech you, for it were marvelous great presumption in us, to come unto God, without we had his promises for it, and to desire of him anything, and say, O Lord, I have need of this and that. Go to now, here is already some occasion which

causeth us to come unto God. And again, O Lord, thou art good and gracious: lo this is another thing also which augmenteth our courage and boldness. But because we are so far from God, that we are not able to come near his majesty, without he come down unto us: we must then, before we can have any access to make our prayers unto him, lay this foundation which is here set before us: that is to say, the word of God, when as thereby God witnesseth unto us, that his mercy is always ready, that he there layeth it before us, and offereth the same there unto us. There remaineth now nothing else, but that we receive it by faith, and that there we declare our faith through our calling upon him. So then we see, the order which David here setteth down, that is, that he bringeth us to God, to the end we might take our whole contentation, repose, and rejoicing in his mere goodness. And since, that he hath received us through his mercy, let us beseech him that he would look unto us with his eyes of pity. For the third point, he showeth us how we ought to make such our petitions, that is, because God hath bound himself unto us of his own good will, and hath witnessed unto us that he will be near us. When then we shall come unto him in this sort, let us not doubt but that he will hear us and grant whatsoever we shall desire according to his will.

And namely he saith, thy word made unto thy servant, to the end he would declare to every of us that every man should apply the promises of God particularly unto himself. And not to use the manner of the Papists, to say, It is very true that God hath promised this and that, but we know not whether the same belongeth unto us or not. And these are no fools, which say thus, but this is the doctrine which they teach in all their Satanical and devilish Schools and Synagogues. Lo here the very doctrine of popish doctors, that the promises of God are uncertain, and that we must receive them as things hanging in the air, not to take them generally, to say, I doubt not but that GOD speaketh the same unto me. But contrariwise, we must conclude as David here doth, and say O Lord let it be done unto thy servant according to thy word. He saith not, according to thy word, I know not to whom, nor unto such men of which number I am not, so that I cannot build upon it: but he saith, according to thy promise O Lord, made unto me. Let us then learn by his example, that when we desire the Lord God to assist us, to charge him with his promises, yea and let us apply them unto ourselves, and believe that they are also spoken to every of us in particular, and generally unto all: I mean unto all the faithful.

When as the Lord our God saith, I receive all sinners to mercy: let everyone say, O Lord, I am one of those miserable and wretched creatures, and therefore I come unto thee, charging thee with thy promise made unto me. Lo how we must behave ourselves herein: for else, we shall but wander in the holy scripture all the days of our life. It followeth immediately after,

Let thy tender mercies come unto me that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

In this verse we may very well see, that David was as it were estranged from the mercy of God. Now this is a very notable point to be considered of: for what is the cause of our distrust, yea even to close up the gate against God for that we would not come unto him, but only because we think that God hath estranged himself from us, and that we should be thereby confounded. It is very true that he will sometimes cause us to feel them, as if he had clean turned himself away from us, and all because we first forsook him: but yet we must notwithstanding return unto him, and not be discouraged, but follow the example of David, that although the mercies of God to the outward appearance and in our judgment be far from us, and in such sort, as that we may well perceive it: yet must we never cease to say, O Lord, let thy loving mercies come unto me: surely to the outward show, and so far as I can judge, they are far off me: but yet O Lord, I know that thou wilt in the end make me to attain unto them: yea and although thou manifestly showest me them not, yet notwithstanding I will wait and surely look for them, with an assured faith and hope.

Moreover, when he saith, that I may live: that is to signify unto us the same which I have already said, to wit, that although his wit and spirit, stayed itself upon creatures, yet that he was but as a dead man, and whiles he thought God not to be near him, he supposed himself to be but as a forlorn man. And indeed although we had all the world on our side, and had GOD against us, and were sure that he neither loved nor favored us, all the rest would turn but to our ruin and destruction. And if we esteem not thus of him, must it not needs be but that we must be bewitched by Satan, and carried violently away, when we shall content us only with these worldly things, and never have regard unto the springhead [*source, cause*] and fountain of all goodness: to wit, the bounty of God? But in the meanwhile let us note this, that although we be dead for a time, after the example of David, yet shall we be quickened, so that we come to God, beseeching him not to hold back his mercies far from us. Now he saith in the end, *For thy*

law is my delight. By this we are admonished what it is that we must crave at the hands of God in good earnest, forsooth [*in truth*] that his mercies may remain with us: to wit, when as we are conformable to him and to his word.

Let it not now abash us although we feel so little taste of God his mercies. And why so? For what is he that will acknowledge it? We are so beguiled with these false deceits of the world, that we think we may triumph by them, that we shall be exceedingly blessed when as we shall have all things after our own heart's desire. But in thus doing we can condemn God and his grace. We must not then be abashed if we be set besides that which appertaineth [*pertains*] to our salvation, and that God suffereth us to languish in wretchedness and misery. And so let us learn after the example of David, to be as it were rejected of the word of God, and to be as it were estranged from it to crave in good earnest, to cause his mercies to return unto us: to wit, that he would grant us this grace, to let us in such sort understand what need we have of his favor and aid, that notwithstanding that we have declined from his commandments, yet that he would grant us for all that, to feel his mercy, although he hath held the same from us for a season. Now it followeth,

Let the proud be confounded, for they have dealt wickedly and falsely with me: but I meditate in thy commandments.

Here David setteth down another reason, to confirm himself continually more and more, that he shall obtain that which he prayeth unto God for: to wit, because the wicked do persecute him: whom he calleth the proud. And this is the sentence which we have already heretofore treated of, neither will the time suffer us to stay any longer upon it. It shall therefore suffice us for this time, that faith only is the thing which bringeth us within the compass of humility, when as we know that there is nothing in us but wickedness, and that we are thereto tied, by the just judgments of God. When I say, that the faithful know this, it pulleth down their high minds, they are no more arrogant nor presumptuous, to lift themselves up against God, and their neighbors. Contrariwise the wicked and enemies of GOD are called proud: for the pride which they use against GOD, engendereth also cruelty against their neighbors.

As many as will humble themselves before God, will also be very gentle to their neighbors: but they which have a fierce and high mind to stand against

God, must needs likewise cast their poison against their neighbors. And for this cause David saith, let the proud O Lord be confounded, for they go wickedly about to confound me. Whereby we are admonished, that although the wicked vex and grieve us never so injuriously and without cause, yet we are thereby taught to have the rather a great deal more trust that God will have mercy upon us. And why so? because it is he which granteth our request: and when as we shall make it unto him, it shall not come of ourselves, but he shall be author thereof. So then, when as we shall be grieved and injured by malicious and cruel men, let us go boldly unto God, and beseech him to have pity and compassion upon us. Now he addeth, that he never ceased to meditate upon the testimonies of God, although he was so afflicted. And this is an excellent admonition for us, that when we are tormented both from heaven, and on the earth, that God on the one side, to the outward show, estrangeth himself from us: and we on the other side are so forsaken, that we are trodden under men's feet, besides a thousand other villainies done unto us: when as, I say, we shall be so vexed and grieved. We must learn after the example of David to meditate of the testimonies of God, and there to seek our whole comfort, for that is the very means by which God meaneth to pluck us out of all our anguish and griefs which might any way trouble us.

That now which followeth, hath been already handled: to wit, that men which fear God do turn unto him: to say, that they will keep him company. And in the end he setteth down this conclusion:

Let my heart be upright in thy statutes: that I be not ashamed.

Now like as in the first verse he desireth GOD to give him understanding that he might learn his Law, here he desireth that he would grant him affection. Whereby we may see, that this proceedeth from us and from our nature: to wit, to be very poor blind fools, until such time as God openeth our eyes.

And thus much for the first point. But yet understanding only shall not serve. God must make our hearts pliant unto his obedience, and place us so with himself, as that we have none other desire but to serve him. Let us then learn to pray unto him as David here hath done: for after he had desired him to give him understanding of his law, he desireth him also to give him a pure and a sound heart: yea and that we should also do the same in virtue and truth, not doubting but that when God hath bestowed upon

us some graces, that he will also increase them more and more, and have compassion upon us, so that we be obedient unto him in our behalf, and yield him the homage and authority which unto him belongeth.

And according unto this doctrine, let us in all humility prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him so to touch us, as that we might learn after the example of his Prophet, how to make and present our requests unto him, and to bereave us of all our earthly affections, which we feel to be most violent against us, to the end that our mind be not withdrawn through them from his righteousness, but that we submit ourselves wholly unto his holy will, desiring nothing else but to have him to govern us: to the end that being fortified by his holy spirit, we might persevere unto the end to resist those temptations which shall grieve us, to obtain the victory above said, and come to the triumph which is prepared for us in heaven above. That he will not only grant us, this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE ELEVENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

CAPH

- 81** My soul fainteth for thy salvation: yet I wait for thy word.
- 82** Mine eyes fail for thy promise: saying, when wilt thou comfort me?
- 83** For I am like a bottle in the smoke: yet do I not forget thy statutes.
- 84** How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou be avenged of them that persecute me?
- 85** The proud have digged pits for me: which are not after thy law.
- 86** All thy commandments are true: they persecute me falsely: be thou my help.
- 87** They had almost made an end upon me on the earth: but I forsook not thy commandments.
- 88** Quicken me according to thy loving kindness: so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth.

IF WE COULD RIGHTLY CALL to our remembrance the promises of God in our afflictions and miseries, it were sufficient enough to make us patient. And by this means we should render a true proof of our faith: but so soon as we are grieved with any affliction, we by and by wax fainthearted, because we forget all the promises of God: which to our seeming, we had long before very well understood and learned: Now we should not at the least be forgetful of them, when need requireth, yea, and that when we are thereby enforced. And for that cause we have here a very excellent lesson for the purpose, and worthy the noting, for David doth not only teach us as a Prophet of God, what our duty is, and what the power and virtue of our faith ought to be: but sheweth us also the way by his example, how we must be patient in all our adversities, and how we ought not to fall

from that: to wit, that we always have our eye fixed upon the promises of God. For that shall be enough to entertain and keep us, in such sort as that we should patiently wait for his saving health, yea, even in calling upon him. But that we might the better profit by this doctrine, we are here to note, that the two first verses are both of one and selfsame substance, save that the order of the words are changed. He saith in the first place, *My soul fainteth for thy salvation*, That is to say, O Lord, I have longed, albeit the afflictions and miseries which I have abiden [*endured*], were very great: and lasted long, and that I see neither end nor issue of them, yet nevertheless I rested altogether hereon, that I always trusted, that thou wouldest be my supporter and aider. Now he addeth the reason how he could so faint: to wit, because he trusted unto the promises of God. In the second verse he saith, *That he hath failed for the promise of God, yea even looking for this promise*, and that he hath said, *When wilt thou comfort me?* And in the third he handleth that which before he had spoken of: to wit, that although he had been as it were parched and dried, *even as a skin bottle in the smoke*, so that there remained neither moisture nor substance in him but dried up with very miseries, *yet that he had not forgotten the testimonies of God*.

We see then now what the sum and effect of this is, which is here showed unto us: to wit, that there is but one only means to cause us to be constant and patient, when as we are afflicted, and that our adversities do ever long last as we imagine: that is, to be mindful of the promises of God, and to have them deeply imprinted in our hearts. For if that be so, it will not cost us much to be patient: and although it be an hard matter, yet we shall at the last come to the end of it. Let us then now mark, from whence our impatience springeth, and what the reason is why we are so oftentimes overcome with temptations: or else, when as we shall have for a time resisted them, yet in the end we are confounded and fainthearted. Truly, it is because we forget the testimonies of GOD, and turn away from his word. In very deed, this at the first sight may seem to be a common matter with us. And to say the truth, every man will say, that we ought to remember them, and that it is the only remedy to comfort us. But we shall the oftener do it, when as we shall have learned this lesson which is here set down unto us, and that we record it all the days of our life: For this is one of the principalest points that is to be required in all Christians, that when they perceive that God hath laid his hand on them, that they be as it

were almost cast down: yet that they might comfort themselves in staying of the promises of salvation which God hath promised them. But yet, let us thoroughly consider the word which David here useth: *I have longed* (saith he) *after the salvation, and I have hoped*, or after that I had hoped, *because of thy word*.

The second part of this verse, is as it were the foundation whereon David buildeth. Let us understand then this hope which we ought to have in the word of God, as David had: For without that, it is impossible but that we must be confounded. For although it seem in the judgment of men, that there is in us some virtue and soundness to endure and suffer patiently, yet shall it not be such a true patience as GOD alloweth. And why so? For we shall never bear him that affection to obey him, without we comfort ourselves that he loveth us, and that we trust to his bounty.

A man, I say, shall never be disposed to obey God, and to glorify him in afflictions, except he have a taste of the bounty, and fatherly love, which he beareth us. Now how can it be that we should be fully persuaded that God loveth us, and procureth our wealth and health, when as he afflicteth us, without we be armed with his promises? For it is impossible for us to know the truth of God, except he declare the same unto us in his word. Let us learn then, as I have already said, that the patience of the faithful cannot be built, but upon faith and hope in the promises of God. Lo then what we have to note in this place.

Now David having laid such a foundation, buildeth thereon, saying, that his soul longed after the salvation of God: when he saith that his soul longed, he meaneth not that he was so forlorn, as that he had in the end given him clean over: nor yet that Satan had gotten any advantage of him: but that word, *to long*, is taken in the scripture, for that which notwithstanding is conjoined with such obedience as we ought to yield unto God, staying and settling ourselves upon him. As how? Saint Paul saith,

That we ought to hope beyond all hope as Abraham did:
(^{<450416>} Romans 4:16-18)

to wit, we must surmount all our wits and imaginations, when there is any question of our belief in God. For if we will measure the promises of God by our own wits, what shall become of it? our faith then must exceed and

go beyond all the wisdom of men, as here it is said, *That his soul hath longed*: which is as much as if David had said, it is true O Lord, that according to man's reason, I was utterly forlorn: yea I was so oppressed with miseries, as that I could bear no more: but when I was in the midst of death, I ceased not for all that until I was arrived at a sure haven: to wit, thy aid and help. Now he namely speaketh of God's succor [*help*], because it shall go very hard, but that we will wander, look above, and beneath, both before and behind, to see if we can find ready help.

But if the trouble last long and we see not which way to get out of it, but that it is like a bottomless pit: although before we somewhat trusted and hoped upon God, yet for all that we shall then be driven and egged, to seek for aid here and there, we know not where. And how so? Is it not possible for me to find remedy? Because, I say, we are so dull, and the hope which we have in God, passeth so lightly away from us, and melteth, and runneth about, this way and that way: David for this reason saith, *That he hoped for the salvation of God*. Hereby then he showeth, that although this occasion was offered him to seek after other helps, and to cast his eyes upon creatures, and to forsake God: yet that the temptations had not so won upon him but that he always remained constant in this resolution, that it was God which must relieve his need. Now hereupon he addeth,

Mine eyes fail for thy promise, saying: when wilt thou comfort me?

I have already said that this verse containeth no new or strange thing, but David changeth only the order of the words. For when he saith, *That his eyes sore longed after the word of God*, he meaneth none other thing but this, that although all his wits were troubled, and that he was as it were blinded with the multitude of afflictions which he endured, yet that he always stayed himself upon this word of God, and never ceased calling upon him, saying: *O when wilt thou comfort me?* By this he showeth us, that if we have a true faith settled upon the promises of GOD made unto us, when as it shall please him soon after to afflict us, we must not by and by be angry, biting the bit as Mules do: but let us yield him true obedience, saying: *O Lord, when wilt thou comfort me?* We must then suffer and abide thus to do: to wit, that when we beseech and require God, to help us according to his promise, we must also desire him, to show it us by the effect: and we must remain firm and constant, until such time as he causeth us to perceive it: for although he delayeth his aid, and holdeth it as it were

in suspense, yet must we be fully persuaded that he hath not forgotten his office, which is, to comfort us. By this means we shall find in the end the fruit of our prayers. Now he fully and wholly explaineth in the third verse following, when as he sheweth it to be no small matter to be thus cast down, had not the word of God sustained, and upheld him, but that there was great reason in it. I am, saith he, like unto a Goat's skin wherein oil, or wine is put, hanging in the smoke, and so dried and parched, as that there was neither substance nor moisture left in him. David useth this similitude, to show that his afflictions were so great and excessive, as that he was without all strength, and without hope of life. Now he addeth notwithstanding, *That he did not yet forget the statutes of God.*

Lo an example which we ought to follow, neither must we allege here our infirmity: for David was a passionate man as we are: he might very well have fainted, if God had not strengthened him. And how so? Having the promises, he hoped upon them: knowing that God continueth his benefits towards his children, because they should have recourse unto him: he called upon him, for that he had already found mercy and succor [*help*] of him: God so holp [*helped*] him through his holy spirit. Now, have not we at this day the same promises which David had? Yea, have we not more large and ample promises? Have not we a great deal more familiar access than David had, because that Jesus Christ is declared to be a mediator more manifestly, than he was under the law? When God then rendereth us such a testimony of his good will, that we may freely come before him to pray unto him, to the end he might help our necessities: I pray you what excuse shall we make, if we come not boldly unto him as David did, and be constant to persevere in the same purpose, seeing that God offereth the selfsame means, to fight against whatsoever may turn us away from it. Moreover, is the power of God lessened since that time? Doth he not at this day help all his faithful with his holy spirit, as he did under the law? Yea, doth not he say that he will increase the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ, more than ever he did at that time?

There is nothing then but our unthankfulness which hath shut the gate against God, so that his graces can have no access nor entrance into us. It is very true, that he will say enough unto us, but we will stop our ears: he will make us fair promises enough, but we will soon forget them: or else if we keep them in mind, it shall be but a ranging imagination, neither shall it have any deep print, or yet lively root in us. Because therefore, that we

esteem not of the promises of God, lo the reason why we are so suddenly cast down, even with the least temptation that may come. How exercise we our faith in prayers? what readiness and zeal is there at this day amongst Christians in calling upon the name of God? Alas it is so cold and feeble as it cannot be more. And so see why God hath plucked back his hand from us, because of our infidelity, so that we feel not his help as we should. The more deeply therefore ought we to consider of this sentence here, when David declareth *that he was clean dried up, and yet for all that forgot not the promises of God.*

Let us now go and vaunt ourselves to be good Christians, that we have greatly profited in the Gospel, and yet when as we shall be touched with any little, yea, and that with a very light affliction, we shall be so amazed as it is wonder. Alas what should become of us, if we should be as David protesteth he was? that God threatened us through stitch, that there were but one drop of substance of life, and that it should seem that we were even as it were dead. If then there were such a kind of parched dryness in us, what should become of it? But what? herein resteth the fault, that every man flattereth himself, and we also think that GOD should submit himself to our flatteries.

But it is not in vain that this example is here set before us. Let us exercise ourselves then better than we have heretofore done, and call to mind the testimonies of God. When as we shall be parched, and so dried, as that it might seem we had not one drop of life, let us notwithstanding, meditate yet more than ever before we did of the promises of God, to the end we might get us new force and strength. Now when David had thus spoken, he addeth,

How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou be avenged of them that persecute me?

The proud have digged pits for me: which are not after thy law.

Here David pursuing his purpose maketh mention of the griefs which he endured, that is, the wicked and ungodly persecuted him wrongfully, and that he being retired to God, as to his safeguard, found no succor [*help*] of him at the first dash, but that God held him at a bay, as a forlorn man. Now hereupon he rightly sheweth that his faith was not clearly quenched, nor yet lessened: but that he still continued in prayer. And in the end

concludeth, that he will yet better remember the word of God, when as he shall be so restored by him, and raised up again as it were from death. Let us then note, that David here setteth down a certain manner and order to show us, that when God, to the outward show shall seem to estrange himself, yet we must take heed that the same keep us not from having recourse unto him. Now it may very well seem, that God sometimes thinketh not of us, but specially, when he shall suffer the wicked to run whither they list [*desire*], and let them do whatsoever they desire.

Now this is a terrible temptation. And why? For on the one side we look that if God took us for his children, and loved us as he testifieth, should he not by and by have compassion of our miseries? should he not put forth his hand to help us? when then he suffereth us to be thus unjustly trodden under foot, it is a sign that he hath forsaken us, and that he hath no care of us, nor of our health. Lo here a very hard and grievous temptation. And the second is, that it should seem that God doth not his office, How is that? Behold how the ungodly fall out with him so that it seemeth they would give him open defiance. For is not this to make war against him, when as they give themselves license to do wickedly: that whatsoever can be said unto them, they can never be brought to goodness? And yet God maketh semblance as though he had no care of their wicked dealing. These we see are two marvelous dangerous temptations. And this is the cause namely why David hath here recited his persecutions, which he abode at the hands of the wicked.

Now it is so, that he being in such conflicts, having to fight against these two temptations, which I have noted, sheweth right well that he remained still conqueror. And see why he saith, *How many are the days of thy servant? when wilt thou be avenged of them that persecute me?* David signifieth that he made not this request until such time as he was driven to this extremity, that he was no longer able to abide it. As if he should have said, Alas, my good God, wilt thou help me after I am dead? For thou seest that I have already abiden [*endured*] so much, as it is not possible to endure more: thou seest me even at the grave's brink: It is now time, or else never to help. But yet I perceive no succor [*help*] coming from thee. And what is the cause? When wilt thou do it? It cannot be chosen but that David had as it were an intolerable affliction, when he called upon God in this manner. Wherefore we are so much the rather to meditate on this place. For although God suffereth us to be afflicted but for a little while:

yet the same lasteth so with us, as that we being vexed even to the uttermost, will say, I know not where I am, nor what to do herein. What is the cause why God deferreth his aid so long? For instead to call upon him, it is out of doubt rather that we murmur, yea and moyte [*dispute*] as it were secretly against him. Now the right remedy to overcome these temptations, and not so to murmur against God in our afflictions, is this, to call upon him with full assurance, beseeching him to grant us his grace, that notwithstanding all the afflictions which he layeth upon us, yet that he leave us not for all that to hope after that which he hath promised us. And this is it which David declareth yet more fully, when after he had said, that the ungodly had gone about to dig pits for him, which is not after his law, he addeth, and saith,

All thy Commandments are true: they persecute me falsely, be thou my help.

Here he expresseth what the injuries and outrages were which they had done him, *They have* (saith he) *digged pits for me*, yea and he protesteth that they did it unjustly, that he never gave the wicked occasion to hurt him: but that he had walked in a good and pure conscience. Yet saith he, *They have gone about to circumvent and compass me round about.* We see then that David had no small assaults, but such as were even deadly, that it was without all question that he must be utterly confounded: yea and although he never hurt any of them, that it might be said, that he had injuriously persecuted them, yet had he always his recourse unto God. So then, we may now be better confirmed in the doctrine which we have heretofore handled: to wit, that to whatsoever extremity we are driven unto in our afflictions, we shall bring them to a very good end, when as we being fenced with the power of the spirit of God, do look unto his promises. Now let us see why he addeth and saith, *Thy Commandments are true, they persecute me falsely, O help me.* David setteth down here three points, The one is that God is true: and after he addeth a protestation of his good conduct and guidance, and of the malice of his adversaries: Thirdly, he calleth upon God in his afflictions. Now as concerning the first, he sheweth us, that although Satan to shake us, and in the end utterly to carry us away subtilely and cunningly goeth about to deceive us, we must, to the contrary, learn how to know his ambushes, and to keep us out of them. So often then as we are grieved with adversity and affliction, where must we begin? See Satan how he pitcheth his nets, and layeth him ambushes to induce and persuade us to come into them, what saith he,

dost thou not see thyself forsaken of thy God? where are the promises whereunto thou didst trust? Now here thou seest thyself to be a wretched forlorn creature. So then, thou right well seest that God hath deceived thee, and that the promises whereunto thou trustedst, appertain [*pertain*] nothing at all unto thee. See here the subtlety of Satan. What is now to be done? We are to conclude with David and say, yet God is true and faithful. Let us I say keep in mind the truth of God as a shield to beat back whatsoever Satan is able to lay unto our charge, when as he shall go about to cause us to deny our Faith, when as also he shall lie about us to make us believe that God thinketh no more of us, or else, that it is in vain for us to trust unto his promises. But let us know clean contrary, that it is very plain and sound truth which GOD saith unto us. Although Satan casteth at us never so many darts, although he have never so exceeding many devices against us, although now and then by violence, sometimes with subtlety and cunning, it seemeth in very deed to us, that he should overcome us: Nevertheless, he shall never bring it to pass, but that we shall have the truth of God, to be sure and certain in our hearts. And thus much for the first.

The protestation which David maketh, ought to stir us up to walk in such sort with our neighbors, as that we give them no occasion to hurt us. But to live plainly and simply one by another. The wicked may very well hurt one another, yea and even destroy themselves: but in the meantime, the Children of God must have this testimony always with them, that they will neither do nor yet procure them any hurt: but are grieved and sorrowful to see them run headlong into destruction.

When this mind shall be in us, then shall we have an excellent entrance to call upon God: but contrariwise, if we render evil for evil, being molested by our enemies, and enforce ourselves to do the like, and cry quittance (as we say) with them, our cause will quite be overthrown. And why so? For if we shall be so vengeful, it is impossible for us to trust and believe that God will help us. Yea even then I say, when we shall have a good and just quarrel. For God will discharge us if we shall not have a good conscience: and although some there, are which would both wish and do us hurt: We must say, O Lord, this is injuriously and falsely done. But (as I have already touched) let us have such a testimony in our hearts, that although they which persecute us are the instruments and limbs [*mischievous agent*] of Satan and do it of mere malice: Let us not clean contrary purchase them

any hurt or displeasure. Then may we call upon God with David, knowing that he will never fail those which are wrongfully persecuted. Lo then the meaning of these three points which are here touched. Now after that David had thus spoken, he addeth,

They had almost made an end of me upon the Earth: But I forsake not thy commandments.

See here a sentence worthy to be well weighed. It is very true that David expresseth that which he had before spoken, *I have not* (saith he) *forsaken thy commandments O Lord, although I was as one clearly dried up, and as a man utterly forlorn, yet for all that have I not forsaken thy Commandments.* Now it must needs be that David resisted two temptations in continuing so firm and constant in the obedience of God. The first was, that he might have been brought into some distress. The second, that he might have been bent to have done wickedly. And why so? seeing that the wicked had unjustly persecuted him, he might have been revenged of them. Lo the two assaults which was meet and convenient for him to sustain and keep off. Even so must we follow his example: For when men shall unjustly molest and grieve us, and that they shall not only do us one injury, yea two or three, but that our trouble shall continue without end and without ceasing, let us yet learn to be patient. And chiefly, when as there shall be no question of abiding a little damage, or small grief: But that we shall be mortally persecuted, and our life to be as it were desperate, to be already as it were in the very throat of the Wolf, yea to be already even as men swallowed up and devoured. When as we shall be brought even to such a pass, yet let us not cease to say with David, *I have not forsaken thy commandments.*

And so that we might the better practice this doctrine, and apply it to our own use and profit, let us learn to have recourse unto God in all our afflictions, calling upon him to be our warrant and safeguard. And in the meanwhile, although we be wrongfully molested, let us beseech him to grant us his grace to yield ourselves unto that which he hath commanded us: to wit, to love our enemies, to do good unto them which seek to do us all the hurt they can, to pray for those which slander and wish us as much evil as is possible. Lo here we must meditate upon the Commandments of God, although we be as it were consumed on the earth.

Now here we are to note, that it was not without cause, that David saith, *that he was almost consumed*: For this shall even so come to pass in us, when men shall judge and condemn us, and that we have already received sentence of death in ourselves: as Saint Paul saith in the second to the Corinthians. (<470109> 2 Corinthians 1:9) Even so David being as one condemned to death, and seeing no likelihood to be delivered, ceased not for all that to call upon God. So likewise must we do, knowing that he will never forsake us: for see what the cause is, that God oftentimes keepeth back his helping hand from us, but even when we prevent [*precede*] him by means of our own lightness and inconstancy. For so soon as we are grieved somewhat more than we are wonted: we straightways conclude and say, O, all is naught: we are clean undone: it is past all hope. When we after this sort prevent [*precede*] him, it is like unto a man that would cast himself into his grave before he is dead, and so smother himself. After this manner, say I, do we, preventing [*anticipating*] by this means that aid, which God hath deferred to give us, until the time be come, which he knoweth to be most meet. Let us then well consider, that when God shall defer the aid which he meaneth to give us, although we seem as dead men, and our life desperate, yet that he can restore us again in the minute of an hour, although in the sight of men we were even as the pictures of death, yet that he leaveth us not without life inwardly. For as we see in Winter the trees to be as it were dead, that we can perceive neither sap, leaf, nor nothing else: yet there is life hid in them. Even so fareth it with us: For when we shall be still and quiet attending for aid at the hands of God, we are sure that when Winter is past: to wit, the time of our afflictions, that God will give us life, which was before as it were hidden. Now to conclude the Psalm he saith,

Quicken me according to thy lovingkindness: so shall I keep the testimonies of thy mouth.

We see here, that David speaketh as one that were dead, when he saith, *O quicken me*, he sheweth then that he was not beaten softly with the rod, or with a mean affliction: but was punished even to the uttermost. For he was so dried up, as before we have said, that there was no substance at all left in him. Lo what was the cause why David after this manner made his petition.

Let us learn then, not to flatter ourselves, when as the Lord our God shall visit us with any little affliction, that we think to have done even sufficiently, if we call upon him: But if we shall have done so an hundred thousand times more, yet that we must not give over praying and calling upon him. And herein may be seen the hypocritical dealing of men: For they are so womanishly minded and tenderhearted, that they think themselves to have wrought a million of miracles, when as they have sustained never so little adversity, no not worth the value of an hour.

Moreover if they be overladen with any adversity they may be bold, as they think, clearly to forget both God and his word. But our good God will not have us to proceed in this sort: For he setteth before us here, the example of David for our instruction, but yet he hath set it forth unto us for this end and purpose, that we should not cease to continue to call upon him in our adversities: yea were our afflictions never so great, and lasted never so long, yet that we should notwithstanding continually persevere in prayer.

To be short, let us understand, that David made this prayer at such time as he thought not to have lived any longer, but that he was as a dead man, when he saith, *O quicken me.*

Moreover we may see, that his constancy was not like a puff of wind, but that he persevered therein. For although his troubles contained, that he was as it were in a very deep pit, whereout he was not able to get: yet ceased he never but to trust that god would deliver him out of it: and thereupon called on him, and received great courage. Namely, he desireth *to be quickened* according to the loving kindness of God. For we must also be at that point, if we will be heard, to know that God is bound unto us of his mere grace and favor: and that we also must have recourse unto him, if we will have him to accomplish his promises unto us. Men must not then abuse themselves, to look unto their own doings, nor yet to have regard unto worldly means: But that they seek for the same in GOD, and in his mere goodness and free gift, for the which he will hear them, and receive them also unto himself. In the end David protesteth, *that he will keep the testimonies of the mouth of God.* Now let us not understand hereby, that he had not kept them before: For we have seen the clean contrary. But this is to signify, That seeing in the midst of the afflictions which I have sustained, thou hast always given me the grace to persevere in faith, and

that I have continually called upon thee, Satan hath not shaken me, to cause me to do wickedly, since then, O Lord, thou hast given me such constancy at the time that thou wast estranged from me: by a more strong reason, when thou shalt be mine aid and succor [*help*], and shalt restore me, I shall have a far greater constancy, to keep the testimonies of thy mouth. See then, how that in the midst of all our afflictions we must glorify God, not doubting of his faithful dealing, that he will perform whatsoever he hath promised, have pity on us in the end, and confirm us more and more to keep the testimonies of his mouth: knowing that he will continue to do that unto us, which he hath already once showed us.

And according to this doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves in the presence of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses: Beseeching him that it would please him to open our eyes better that we may behold the power and virtue of his word, and thereon to stay us: in bereaving us of all the lightness and inconstancy, which might turn us away from it, desiring him also not to suffer us to wander this way and that way, as commonly we are wonted, to turn us from the right way, as we are by nature overmuch inclined thereto: but being fully resolved, that it is not in vain which he hath declared unto us, that he will assist us in all our necessities, which we shall crave of him in true faith: yea not only in our small and mean afflictions: but even when as he thinketh we should be utterly overthrown: knowing that he will accomplish for our profit and health, whatsoever we may hope after, and behold with the eyes of faith. Let us beseech him that he will not only grant us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the Earth, etc.

THE TWELFTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

LAMED

- 89** O Lord, thy word endureth for ever in Heaven.
- 90** Thy truth is from one generation to another: thou hate layed the foundation of the Earth and it abideth.
- 91** They continue even to this day, according too thy ordinance: for all are thy servantes.
- 92** Except the Lord had been my delight: I should now have perished in my trouble.
- 93** I will never forget thy Commandments: For by them thou hat quickened me.
- 94** I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy Commandments.
- 95** The ungodly laid wait for me: but I will consider thy testimonies.
- 96** I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding large.

WE SEE HOW CHANGEABLE MEN ARE. It is very true that when we shall talk of the shadow, we may say that it removeth and changeth every minute of an hour, so that it resteth not: but if we look well and thoroughly search out that which is in the mind of man: we shall see there a great deal more vanity and change, than is to be seen in the very shadow. And that which is more, David saith in another place, that if man were laid in one school, and vanity in another, that vanity which is nothing, would weigh down man greatly. And we shall not need to stand long disputing of this: For every man by his own experience can testify what it is, and what it can do, albeit there were nothing written nor yet anything thereof contained in the Scripture. What resteth there then for us to do. Forsooth [*in truth*] we must seek for our constancy elsewhere than in ourselves.

Now God giveth us a very good means if we will take it, which is, to build and settle ourselves upon his word. And for this cause it is, that the Prophet Esaiah saith, That the word of God endureth forever: (<234008> Isaiah 40:8)

He had spoken before of the frailty and fickleness of men, as that nothing could be more: and although it might seem that there was some strength in them, it is yet incontinent clean parched and dried up, that it vanisheth away into less than nothing: But he concludeth and saith, *That the word of God abideth forever*. So then, see the means, how that men (although they be transitory, and have no constancy at all in them) shall notwithstanding have a perfect constancy, and sure estate: to wit, when as they shall stay themselves upon the truth of God and his word. According to this, it is here said, *Thy word O Lord abideth forever in heaven*. Some expound this, as if it had been said, That because the heavens have continued long, they render a good testimony of the truth of God. But here David namely speaketh of the heavens, because we see by them a more manifest sign of the Majesty of God than we see here below on earth. And indeed in that we are rude and earthly, we had need to have God to guide us, and to lift up our minds when that he would have us to think on him: to the end we might forget the world, and all the corruptible things here beneath. See then the reason why David in this place maketh the seat and house of the word of God in heaven, because we had need to look a great deal more higher than into our own senses, when we would comprehend how God is true and faithful. When we would feel the certainty and assurance of his word, we must enter into a more deep consideration, than our sense is able to bear, and not look so into the visible thing, or into that which we conceive on earth.

He addeth, *That the truth of God is from generation to generation*. As if he should have said, It is true, O Lord, that men are here very circumspect and advised, and we see also how things have their alterations, so that there is nothing which is not wavering and inconstant: we are as it were in the whirlwinds and tempests: and if at some times things be in peace and at quiet, it lasteth not long: and although the creatures be peaceable and at quiet, yet are the men never at rest, but are continually chafed and troubled. But thy truth, O Lord, is sure and certain, which can never be shaken through the alterations and changes which here we see, no otherwise but by the lightness and inconstancy of men, when as they do

nothing else but wander here and there. True it is, O Lord, that all this impairerth no whit the certainty of thy truth and word.

Lo here in sum, the meaning of David in this place. Now he bringeth in a proof of this sentence, to wit, That *God hath laid the foundation of the earth, and it abideth*: that is to say, That the order of nature hath her course, and so continueth without end. And why so? *Forsomuch as God hath appointed them*: because that he hath so declared it, and that all creatures are subject unto him. This disposing and ordering must needs continue in his estate. And although we see all things to turn on this side and on that, yet God always giveth us some visible sign, to show us that he never altereth nor changeth his purpose. And chiefly, that his truth is never subject to any change.

We see now in sum what the substance is that is contained in these three verses.

Now that we may apply all this to our use, and to make our profit hereof, let us learn to have recourse unto the word of God, so often as we shall be astonished, and know not what shall become of us: to wit, all the days of our life: For there passeth not one quiet day over our heads, wherein we are not moved to think either of this thing or of that. Sometimes the temptations are easy to overcome: but after, we shall see some appearance of danger, that shall trouble us a great deal more, yea and some one threat or other we shall have that shall even abash us. And if that were not so, yet should we have occasions enough in our heads to make us unquiet, that we should not need to be otherwise troubled: but every one of us hath in himself store of tempests and storms, so that if there were nothing else but our own very fantasies, they would be so many whirlwinds, to make us never to have quiet minds. Now see then a good remedy, that is, Let us know, that although we are environed with a great number of dangers, although there be no certainty in our life: although there is always an hundred deaths before our eyes, yea that we thought the devil should swallow us up every minute of an hour: yet must we be peaceable, and hold ourselves quiet and still, because that God hath laid the foundation of our salvation in his word: and that he hath promised to keep our life. When then, we shall have the word of God, to certify us, that he hath care both of our souls and bodies, let us know and be certainly assured that herein consisteth all our constancy.

So then, let us rightly apply this doctrine for our instruction, that when it is said, that the word of GOD is permanent in Heaven, that his truth showeth itself from age to age, and so continueth, that it is namely spoken, to the end that we should be patient in the midst of all the troubles, griefs, and anguishes, which we may have, being shaken amidst so many dangers: and also, seeing the endless and incessant changes which are here beneath, and nothing else but all unquietness. Let us then see, what is here to be considered for the first point: we must not seek to take our rest in this world, for we shall never have it here: But let us always have our recourse to the truth of God.

Moreover, let us see if we can rightly practice this doctrine, that nothing hinder us, but that we may live in peace and tranquillity in the midst of the most great and dangerous confusions which may light upon us. Let us also see, that whether the winds blow in this corner or in that, that there be garboils [*confused and disordered states*] of war, that there be pestilence and famine, and such like, that it seemed we should perish a thousand manner of ways: yet all they which settle themselves upon the word of God, will never be but certain: For they shall feel both in life and death, that they are in his hand and protection. And having this confidence with themselves, they will make no reckoning of all whatsoever shall come unto them: as we see Saint Paul (^{<450838>}Romans 8:38, 39) commandeth us to exalt ourselves against all things present and to come, so that we be fully resolved, that God loveth us. When this shall be in us, and we shall have hereof a good testimony in our own consciences, through Faith and the word of God: Lo how we may assure ourselves, and solace ourselves in the midst of all our troubles and confusions which here we see: and by that means be never at peace and rest, and not to be greatly troubled for anything that may come unto us the next day. And why so? For hath God, who hath declared himself unto us to be our Father, spoken it but for a day only? whereas he hath testified unto us, that he will have our salvation in his hand? is here any time limited?

Now we see to the contrary, that God saith, That he will never forsake us. Our hope then must stretch itself clean beyond the world, and so we shall not be tossed with the winds and tempests which shall blow against us, to make us turn back, when as we shall have a sure foundation upon the word of God. And as concerning this proof which David addeth, saying, *That God hath laid the foundation of the earth*, the same is but a little taste

which he giveth us of the truth of God. Now it is not enough for us to have this taste only, to know whether God be faithful and that his truth is everlasting. For to prove it to be so, we see that neither heaven nor earth, but are subject to corruption, and that all must pass, only the word of God is said to last forever. And it must needs be so: for else what should become of our salvation? It should be corrupt very soon.

Let us not once think then, that David his meaning here is to make a comparison, and an equal proportion, of the continuance of this world, and the constancy which we see in the order of nature, with the truth of God. But he sheweth unto us that even in these corruptible things, we might the better perceive how faithful GOD is: and if he be true in these things on the earth, what shall he himself then be? I beseech you tell me, from whence hath the earth her foundation? It is founded both upon the water and also upon the air: Lo her foundation. We cannot possibly build a house fifteen foot high upon the firm ground but that we must lay a foundation. See all the whole earth is founded only wavering, and as it were hanging, yea, and upon so bottomless depths, as that it might be turned upside down in the minute of an hour, and the whole substance of it utterly overthrown. It must needs then be, that there is a wonderful power of God showed in the conserving of it, in the same sort it standeth. And that is it which is here showed unto us: to wit because that God hath said, That the earth was in the midst of the world, and that it was so laid as it is: hereby we know what the certainty of his truth is. But we must here forsooth [*in truth*] compare the less things with the greater, as we say. How from the lesser to the greater? I will show you by example, If I say we did see such excellency in the body of a man, as that it might be thought to be even the very image of God: whereby we know the thing that is written, that God hath ordained man to be the chief of all his creatures, and given him great dignity, nobleness, and power over all living creatures. (<190806> Psalm 8:6) Even so also, in praising that which is in man, we may descend from the body to the soul: and this is from the highest to the lowest, and from the less to the more: So likewise is it in this place, when David setteth before our eyes the order of nature: This is not (as I have already said) to measure and compare the truth of God, with such a measure: But to the end we might reason and say, If in these frail and transitory things which are subject to corruption, we see such a constancy because it is God his will it should be so: What shall we then say of his truth, which surpasseth all the

world? When then we shall make such a comparison, between the state of the world, and the truth of God, we may certainly conclude, that God sufficiently granteth us wherewith to settle ourselves upon his word, we must not be so inconstant as to let our Faith be shaken, so often as we shall see the world tossed with any troubles, but rather to take this place which is here showed unto us by David for our refuge. And this is the sum of this place. Now it followeth afterward,

Except the Lord had been my delight: I should now have perished in my trouble.

David here speaketh this of his own proper experience and knowledge before he spake of the truth and excellency of GOD in general, and saith that it was in heaven: and afterward he proveth it by visible things, which is very manifest unto us, and which God pointeth out unto us, as it were with his finger. In the third place he saith that he speaketh not of unknown things, that he might dispute of them at random, but that he had rightly practiced that which he had spoken, because that he was preserved by the word of God. And therefore he now showeth us, where we ought to seek for this word, whereof he had generally spoken heretofore. For we may use this name of the word of God, and yet it may be hidden in the air, or amongst the Clouds: But because he hath given unto us his word familiarly, and communicateth the same with us daily even in the holy scripture: Let us consider, that in giving honor unto the word of God. We say that it is infallible, Let us not imagine it to be an unknown word, but let us go unto that, which God at all times hath given to his servants: and that is it which is contained in the law. See then, how God hath first declared his word unto us, wherein our salvation is altogether certain.

Now here we have to note in this strain, that David having had such experience, deserveth well to be heard, and that they are no vain words which he here setteth down beforehand: But that God also would have it so, to the end we should give the more credit unto it, and that we should no whit doubt of anything that he teacheth us, when as he himself hath made proof of all that which he before had spoken. And thus much for the first point. The experience then whereof David speaketh should very well serve us instead of our Seal, by which GOD meaneth to make the Doctrine of his Prophet to be of so much the more antiquity. And thus much for this.

Moreover, let us learn rightly to understand, how sure we ought to be of the word of GOD, not to seek for the certainty thereof without ourselves, but rather in our own Consciences. It is true, that we ought thoroughly to look both above and beneath, to make the testimonies which GOD giveth us to serve our faith, to the end we might be certified of the truth of his word, as already we have heard: but yet the principal point is this, for every man to enter into himself, and make such accompt [*account*] of this certainty of the word of God that it may take such root in our souls, as that we may there feel it to be such as here it is said: to wit, that it never be shaken, although the whole world should be confounded, and that it is the same which must give us peace and rest, notwithstanding it seemed, that all were utterly overthrown. We must then acknowledge the effect and accomplishment of this certainty, which the Prophet here attributeth unto the word of God. In sum, it is as much as if he had said, that no man is able rightly to feel how God is faithful, and his word certain and sure, without he hath a true faith and belief thereof within his heart, and the same to be discharged of whatsoever is contrary to his salvation. As namely he saith, *that he should have perished in his trouble, if he had not delighted in the word of God*. David here sheweth what experience he had: to wit, that he was so afflicted, that he was as it were even in the gulf of Death.

Now if the word of God bringeth us out of the grave, quickeneth us in death, and preserveth our health, notwithstanding that it seemeth to be swallowed up in the gulf, do we not see a good proof given us from God, how firm and sound it is? So then, let us well consider (as we have already said) that since we have known the power of the word of God, to be such as it is here showed us, we may in such sort resist all the greatest temptations which the devil is able craftily to work against us, so that we shall be able to escape as it were both from death and the grave. And thus much for this.

Now for the second point, David sheweth us how it is that we are preserved in all our afflictions by the word of God, how our life shall be safe, and our health assured thereby. And that is if we delight therein: to wit, that we be so comforted with the love which GOD there sheweth us and wherewith he certifieth us, that since he hath adopted us for his children, he will therefore always show himself to be our father. Wherefore we may boldly recommend our souls unto him, and he will receive them, so that we shall not perish, having all our refuge so unto him. If we then

content ourselves so, the word of God will give us life in the midst of an hundred thousand deaths. But if we hear it without having any such affection, that we taste not of the promises of God, or else that we always somewhat distrust and doubt, to reason how it goeth, and afterward wander after creatures, or else build upon ourselves, if we be so changeable, we shall never feel any virtue of the word of GOD, but may be overthrown an hundred times: the least affliction in the world, shall be as a gulf to swallow us up: that we shall not need the main sea: but even a finger depth of water to smother and drown us, if it were not that we had learned of David, to be assured of the love which God beareth us: and that by his word.

So then, let us understand what the true delight of the faithful is, and that which preserveth them from death, and quickeneth them: that is, when they are contented with the love of God, to set their whole felicity there, to have him to be merciful and favorable, to have this privilege to have recourse unto him, being assured that he will hear them. See, I say, how we should be quickened by the word of God. Now when that David hath declared the profit which he received by the consideration of the law, he addeth, *That he will never forget it*. Wherein he protesteth that he will not be unthankful to GOD, as we are accustomed.

Now although we are not without a great number of vices, yet is this one of the greatest, that we do not only so oftentimes suffer the benefits of God to escape out of our minds, but we are also so wicked, as that we desire nothing more than for to bury them: we think we should have never time enough utterly to forget them. See, I say, the state and condition of our vile and corrupt nature. And therefore, David in this place protesteth, that *he will never forget the commandments of God, because he hath been quickened by them*. And moreover, he speaketh it not only for himself, but sheweth unto us by his example, what our office and duty is. When God then shall have thus aided us in our afflictions, that he shall have raised us up even from the grave through the might and power of his word, and that we shall feel such a benefit, let us never forget it, but be always mindful thereof. And yet David meaneth to show unto us a farther point: to wit, that because the word of God hath already profited him, that he will esteem of it and have it in great price for the time to come. Knowing that it is not for a time only, that we must be preserved and comforted by the word of God, but forever and ever. This might seem for us to be very

obscure, were it not declared unto us more at large. See now then what David his meaning is. If a man be as it were cast down, not tasting of the promises of God, and when it shall be laid before him, that although God afflict his children, yet that he doth it not utterly to overthrow and destroy them: but to the end to call them to repentance, that afterward they might feel his merciful goodness. If a man then be thus admonished by the word of God, it may be, that this admonition will serve him to no purpose, because he himself seeketh not after the remedy which is set before him, and so is made void of this comfort which is here touched, and by that means the power of the word of God turneth into all evil to himward. What is then to be done? Let us mark well that which David here speaketh, that he will never forget the commandments of God, because he hath been quickened by them. As if he should have said, when as thou hast once preserved me by means of thy word, that thou hast given unto it this power and property, that I being as one dead, and out of the world, have been thereby fully restored to health, then hast thou taught me what I ought to do all the days of my life: that is, I must meditate upon thy word, I must exercise myself therein, and I must continually study to think upon the testimonies, which thou of thy fatherly love hast bestowed upon me, to the end I might hold me contented, and be sure that thou wilt never forsake me. The use, O Lord, then that I feel by thy word, hath caused me to apply the same to my profit all the days of my life: to the end I might be able to resist whatsoever Satan shall craftily go about to work against me, and to persevere in thy fear and love, whensoever the wicked and ungodly shall make war against me. Thou then, O Lord, hast showed me that thy word ought always to be before me. For that never loseth his power and strength: neither is it a thing that is consumed and worn by much wearing. A man may soon make an end of a loaf in eating it, but when he hath so done, he must look for more bread. And in continual drinking of wine, the hogshead will be empty: but when as the word of God hath served to quicken us, it still remaineth sound and whole, without diminishing any whit at all. So then, let us learn after the example of David, to make estimation of the virtue and power which God hath given to his word, and never forget it. Now he addeth by and by after,

I am thine, save me: for I have sought thy commandments.

The ungodly laid wait for me to destroy me, but I will consider thy testimonies.

After that David had made such protestation, he committeth himself to GOD, even declaring that he hath sought his commandments. And so he speaketh not only of the time past, but remaineth always constant in this purpose. Now we have here to consider of three points: the one is, the request which David maketh to God, *O save me*: The second is, the reason why he desireth God to save him, *Because* saith he, *I am thine*. And afterward he sheweth how he is god's, that is, *for I*, saith he, *have sought thy commandments*. And thus we see in the first place, how God offereth himself unto us, and that he desireth nothing else but to hold us in his protection, to have care of our salvation, yea so that we come unto him after the example of David.

And I beseech you, what privilege is this, that we have such liberty to come unto God, and to commit ourselves into his hands? whether we wake, or sleep, whether we labor either in the town, or in the fields, that God is as it were a watchman over us, to keep us? Yea, and that he hath not care over our souls, to keep them from the ambushes of Satan, but also that his fatherly providence and love extendeth itself even to our bodies? When God then, I say, giveth us the liberty, that we may make such request unto him, I pray you tell me, is not this an inestimable privilege? But we never a whit think of this: as may well be seen by our slackness and weariness in prayer to God at this day. And yet for all that, it is not without cause that David setteth down here this request: but to the end that we should know, that in praying to God, he will grant us the grace to commend ourselves wholly unto him, no more also should we have too great a care over our life: for we being assured of his love, should be contented with all the rest whatsoever. And thus much for the first point.

Now for the second we are rightly to consider, that if we will have God to be our warrant, and to be under his protection, we must needs be his, and may say truly, as David here doth.

It is very true that God keepeth his creatures, who are not worthy thereof, as he also causeth the Sun to shine as well upon the good as on the bad, and that it is of his own goodness and mercy that the wicked do live: but yet to their utter destruction. And when it is here said, *to be kept by God*: It is such a keeping and preservation, as that the issue thereof is both good and healthful. And this is not done save only to such as are truly the possession and inheritance of God, and his true household servants and

children. Will we have God then to receive us into his protection and to be our protector? Will we have him to take care and charge both of our souls and bodies? Let us first be his. And how shall we be his? Forsooth [*in truth*], we must come to the third point: to wit, to seek his testimonies. Lo then how God will take us for his possession: for he even then alloweth us for his children, when as we put our whole trust in him, seeing that he hath so familiarly called and bidden us, and hath certified us by his word, that he will never forsake us. If then we so seek the testimonies of God, and stick unto them with a sure faith, let us never doubt but that he will allow us for his household meiny [*attendants, company*] and children, And then we may well say with David, save me O Lord. See I say, in what manner we ought to come unto God, if we will be sure to have him to protect us. Now David addeth,

The ungodly have laid wait for me, to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

Whereby he doth us to wit, that although God is steadfastly purposed to be the protector of the faithful, yet that they are not without a great number of griefs and troubles, subject to many sorrows: and be marvelously, entrapped and thereby think, that they cannot choose but to fall into the snares of the ungodly. And besides, the subtleties of Satan are great: and again, all the ungodly which serve Satan, and are led by his spirit, cease not to invent subtleties and deceits, to entrap the children of God, by lying in wait for them. David his meaning then here, is to declare unto us, that although God preserveth us, it is not therefore to be said, that we are without molestations, and temptations. But what? So it is that the word of God ought to suffice us, as he saith, *I will consider thy testimonies*. As if he should have said, O Lord, I have made this my buckler and fortress, which is, that thou hast promised to be my savior: and hereupon have not forced for all the treasons, that all the ungodly can conspire against me. It is very true that they have laid a platform to betray me, yea, and it seemeth that I am already within their claws and teeth, ready to be devoured: but thy testimonies, O Lord, have so strengthened me, as that I have not fainted. Let us learn then to fight in this sort against all the subtleties of Satan, and malices of men, and notwithstanding that they shall go about to destroy us, yet let us fasten our eyes upon the word of God, attend upon it, and therein persevere unto the end. Now for conclusion David addeth,

I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad, or large.

The word then which David useth, signifieth sometimes perfection and sometimes accomplishment: because that the things which are come to a perfection, have an end. Now he saith in sum, that when he hath thoroughly considered of all things, that there is nothing in this world which hath not an end, and that is not consumed by continuance: but that the word of God is plentiful: that is, it extendeth itself unto all the creatures of God, and over all whatsoever we are able to see. See here a sentence very like unto that which we have seen in the first verse. David then by this conclusion confirmeth the saying which before he held: to wit, that *the word of God is everlasting*. Although that we here see marvelous alterations, that we see the world tossed with so tempestuous whirlwinds, as that there is neither end nor measure of them yet shall we have in the midst of all these troubles an everlasting abode in the word of God, which will assure us of all together.

Let us not then measure our salvation by the present estate of the world, and as it seemeth now in our eyes, whereby we may well perceive and discern the same. And why so? Because that all things here below have an end, as we have said, that heaven and earth shall perish: but God hath given to us his truth, which is of such an everlastingness, as that it surpasseth both heaven and earth. It behooveth us then to be lifted up and rapt with this eternity of the kingdom of God, so often as his word shall be spoken unto us, wherein consisteth all our salvation.

And according to his holy doctrine let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledging our innumerable offenses, by which we cease not daily to provoke his heavy wrath and indignation against us:

Beseeching him that it would please him to cause us to feel our wretchedness more than heretofore we have done, to the end we might be displeased with our sins, and seek for remedy, where it is showed us: to wit, that seeing there is nothing else in us and in all creatures, but vanity, that we beseech the same good God to confirm us in his promises: that all our study be wholly there: knowing that all our life resteth in them, to the end we search no other where but there where he hath promised we shall find it, that is, in his word. That it would please him so to make us taste

and savor the power and strength thereof, as that we may be wholly given to serve him, and that receiving us into his holy protection and conduct, he will not impute unto us so many vices and imperfections as are in us: but that he will support them through his goodness, until such time as he hath despoiled us of all together. And that it would please him also, to use the like grace and favor towards all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE THIRTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

MEM

- 97** O Lord, what love have I unto thy law? all the day long is my study in it.
- 98** Thou through thy commandments that made me wiser then mine enemies: for they are ever with me.
- 99** I have had more understanding then all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my study.
- 100** I understood more then the aged: because I keep thy commandments.
- 101** I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I might keep thy word.
- 102** I have not declined from thy judgments: for thou diddest teach me.
- 103** How sweet are thy words unto my throat: yea, sweeter then honey unto my mouth.
- 104** Through thy commandments I get understanding: therefore I hate all the ways of falsehood.

WE SHALL SEE in this behalf a great many which will not stick to brag, and say, that they have greatly profited in the word of God: but yet if we look into their lives, we shall see and find that they have profited as much, as if they had never read, nor heard, one word of the holy scripture. Moreover, all the goodly and gay protestations which they shall make, tend to none other end but to get themselves estimation and credit: there is none other thing in them, but a foolish and vainglorious show, that is, they desire to be commended and praised, as though they were the most able and worthy people of all others. Now when we will say that we have profited in the school of God, first of all we ought to show by our life and conversation

whether it be so or no. For this is the true testimony whereunto we must hold us. God teacheth us not to the end we should do nothing else but prattle and babble: but he instructeth us in what manner we ought to live. He then which shall lead a dissolute and wanton life, declareth manifestly, that he never knew either God or his truth. Moreover, the meaning is not that we should set forth ourselves, to be had in estimation of men, or to get us reputation and credit: but we ought rather to glorify God, knowing that we are so much the more beholden and bound unto him, in that it hath pleased him to bestow such his grace and favor upon us, as that we surmount others in learning, for that cometh not unto us by reason that we are sharper witted, or that we have gotten it through our own industry: to know, I say, the way of salvation, but it is a free gift which cometh unto us from above. Furthermore, when we shall acknowledge this to come from God, it is then great reason that we should draw our neighbors with us, and like as we are in a good way, even so ought we to be desirous to have everyone to follow us.

Lo to what intent David declareth in this place, that he hath loved the word of God above all, and that by it he hath been so well taught, as that he surpassed his masters, and enemies, and all those which were in great reputation and credit. Very certain it is, that David is not here led by an ambitious or highminded spirit, meaning to be coyed [*soothed*] and clawed, and looking to be thought to have greater understanding than others: but desireth none other thing, save that the profit which he had received by the law of God, might be thoroughly engrafted in all men, and that it might be a thing common unto everyone. In very deed, since that we are all members of one body: we ought continually to labor and travail for the upholding and maintaining of it one with another: neither ought any of us to serve himself, and his own particular profit, but we ought rather to desire to have the graces of God to abound in all our neighbors, that every of them might have a feeling of them, and that when as we shall have enjoyed this common salvation, that we might all with one accord, and as it were with one mouth, glorify him. And besides, David sheweth soon after, that he was no babbling scholar, to show it only in mouth, to have many times turned over the leaves of the law of God, and to have very well understood it: but sheweth his life to be agreeing to his speech: and that God hath given him grace to walk according to his will. A great deal the rather ought we then thoroughly to consider of the order that is here set down in the

first verse: he saith, *O Lord, what love have I unto thy law: all the day long is my study in it.* The saying which David here useth, signifieth *speech and meditation*. And the verb whereof it cometh, signifieth, *to speak, to devise, to talk, or rather to apply his mind to anything, to be therein exercised, and studied*. Now there is no doubt, but that David spake here of a matter which is conjoined with meditation. For (as before we have said) it is not meant by them which make some certain show at their tongue's end, and yet to have nothing to be found in their life and conversation of the thing whereof they babble. He then was exercised in the word of God, and that not only for his own particular use, but to the end also to instruct his neighbors, and to communicate to them the matter which he had heard and learned. Now we see the sum and effect of this first verse. He protesteth that he hath loved the word of God, and that not after a common manner, but with a vehement zeal, in such sort as that it hath been his whole purpose and drift: as when we have liking of any one thing, we cannot hold from talking thereof, and continually to be thinking of it. As we shall see a miserable covetous man, never but hunting after his wealth: occupied about his lands, possessions, merchandise, and cattle: and must make provision for this and that, In like sort also is it with the whoremonger, and the glutton: and accordingly as every man's desire leadeth him, so must the tongue speak, and everyone apply himself wholly to that. See wherefore David addeth, that *he was continually exercised in the word of God:* meaning thereby to show, how greatly he hath loved it, as he hath indeed said. And now we see what the example is which is here set down before us: for David speaketh not this for himself, but telleth us what we ought to be, if we will have God to instruct us, and to have him to make us partakers of his truth, wherein consisteth our whole felicity and welfare: for if we wax cold, and make no accompt [*account*] of the word of God, we are not worthy that he should give us the least taste thereof. And for this cause, we must not marvel much, though so small a number at this day have profited in the scripture. Although every man desireth to be praised and esteemed amongst men to be very able and sufficient, yet for all that we see what ignorance is in the greater number. And therefore it is good reason that God should shut the gate upon us, so that we might not have so much as the least entrance into his word. And why so? For where is the love and desire that David here maketh mention of? Now when we shall know such a vice to be within us, we ought by and by to seek to amend it, and beseech God to put this coldness from out of our hearts, and that it

would please him to enflame us in such sort, as that we might learn to prefer his word before all our fleshly desires: that we be no more so much given to all these vain follies of the world, but that we may look unto the principal thing. Let us now come to that which followeth. He saith,

Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies, teachers, and ancients.

He setteth down here three sorts of people, with whom he compareth himself, and saith, that God hath bestowed this grace upon him to surpass them all. Now here David sheweth unto us, what profit shall redound unto us, when as we shall read the word of God, after his example: to wit, that we shall get thereby such wisdom as shall defend us from our enemies to be better learned than our teachers, and those which otherwise should have been instead of our instructors. To be short, that all the men of the world shall not have that which we shall find there, and that all the wisdom which is in all the creatures of God, deserveth not to be equal and comparable to it. Lo here in effect, that which he meaneth. Now we ought always to call to mind that which we have already touched. When as David here setteth down himself in the first rank, and saith, that he hath surpassed his enemies, teachers, and those which were the most wise, and of greatest understanding, that this is not to attribute anything unto himself, and to his own person: but to the end that God might be glorified in him: and that we might know what profit shall redound unto us by the word of God, when as we shall give ourselves unto it. We see then that David had no regard to himself, but meaneth rather to give us occasion to glorify God. And besides his purpose is to stir us up to the love, as we have already touched, which he had to the word of God: knowing the same to be so profitable for us. For what is the cause that we are so very negligent, as indeed we are, in giving ourselves to the study of the holy scripture: that we think it to be even labor and time lost if we only spend but one hour of the day therein? What is the cause of such contempt? Verily because we know not the profit that might come unto us thereby: for if we were thus persuaded that all our wisdom is and consisteth in the word of GOD, and that without it we are like unto miserable beasts: so that Satan hath caught and holdeth us fast bound in his grinnings [*noose-like traps*] and snares, and that we cannot err in all the whole course of our life if we know this: and again that it is sufficient that God hath taught us, and so have thereby such clear light, as that will never fail us, that we be fenced

against all the ambushes of Satan, and against all the villainies and deceits of the world: if then we were thus thoroughly persuaded that the word of God were sufficient against all this, it is most certain that we should be a great deal more in love, without all comparison with the study thereof, than now we are.

And therefore, let us well record this lesson, which is here set down unto us by David: to wit, that in the first place, we shall be wiser than all our enemies, if that we have the word of God always remaining with us.

Now when he saith, that *he was made wiser and had more understanding than his enemies*, he meaneth that he had so excellent a knowledge, as that God would not suffer him to fall into the ambushes and privy engines which the ungodly had laid for him, suddenly to be entrapped and caught by their subtle traines [*scheming lures, traps*] and policies. Lo already a wonderful profit which we receive by the word of God, that although we be encompassed with the wicked which seek nothing but our destruction, when as we do think that we should perish every minute of an hour, yet that we shall be guarded from all whatsoever, that they may any way attempt and privily lay in wait against us, so that we be instructed in the word of God.

Lo, say I, an inestimable treasure: but we must consider who they be that are our enemies. For we have not only to do with men which seek our hurt, dishonor, or that which might grieve us as touching this present life: but we have Satan, and all his favorers and maintainers, which are deadly enemies to our souls, who seek nothing else but our destruction: yea, not only as concerning the world, but to withdraw us clean away from the kingdom of God. Now it is very sure, that when the word of God shall remain and continue with us, that we shall have wisdom enough to defend and keep us from all such enemies. We are then thoroughly to weigh this saying: to wit, that if we apply the word of God to our own use, after that we have been instructed therein, we may be sure to walk in safety and without danger. And how so? Because God will preserve us against all our enemies: for although Satan pitcheth his nets to take us, notwithstanding all the marvelous policies of men, yea notwithstanding all our own crafts and deceits whereunto we are sufficiently enough inclined of ourselves, yet cannot we be assailed nor shaken, either on the one side or on the other: but shall be well fenced, when as God shall hold us with his hand, and that

we suffer ourselves to be governed by him. And besides our souls shall not only be preserved, but also whatsoever we have to do in this world: neither shall our enemies be ever able to hurt us, when as we shall have been thoroughly instructed. It is very true, it shall not be otherwise, but that they will molest us: as we see the faithful to be greatly troubled and vexed through the wicked and ungodly: but what cometh of it? We see that God in the end turneth all to their profit, and to the confusion of those which persecute them. Moreover, let us mark, when David saith, that he was made wiser than all his enemies, he very well sheweth that there were a great many of people, which sought nothing else but to destroy him: nevertheless he speaketh not so much for himself, as he seeketh to show a common example appertaining [*pertains*] to all the faithful. And this ought the more to increase our courage, to be more careful to profit in the word of God. And why so? we had need to be very well advised, and of good understanding, because we are continually to fight against Satan, and his companions, which will never cease to lie in privy wait for us. And since we see that the wicked are as hungerstarved dogs, and ravening wolves against us, their cruelty is insatiable.

Seeing then we see by experience, that the children of God must needs be compassed with enemies, and that there are many ambushes laid, and many wicked treacheries practiced against them: so much the more ought we to have our refuge to this word, which can only keep and defend us, in such sort as that our enemies can do nothing against us, but that we may be assured, as David here maketh mention. But we must note that which he saith, that he hath had the word of God continually with him: for so he useth to say, And that is to signify unto us that we ought never to depart from that which God hath once declared unto us, and not to be so fitching [*fidgety*], as the more part of us is accustomed to be. And there is not that he amongst us, which is not infected with such a vice: that although the word of God hath taken root in us, yet can we not hold ourselves from howling as the wolves do (as we commonly say) when as we shall be vexed with any temptation. But see how David sheweth us, that he abode steadfast and constant, whatsoever came of it, although he had a number of enemies which sought nothing else but to oppress and assault him with horrible temptations, he notwithstanding held the word of God forever: and whatsoever vexing and turmoiling he saw on the other side, he still held him to it. It followeth, *That he was wiser than his teachers: yea because,*

saith he, *that upon that was my whole talk*, or, meditation, *as the testimonies of God*. In this, and in the verse following, David meaneth, that there is no worldly wisdom, nor doctrine, which is worthy to be compared with that which we learn in the school of God. It is very true that we may well study the doctrines of men, and attain thereby unto some judgment, as ye know that learning doth fine a natural man's wit: but what shall it be, if we were the most perfect that is possible to be spoken of in all such knowledge: to wit, in whatsoever man can teach us? It is all but an ABC. For we come never a whit the sooner to heaven by it, but it abideth still in this present life. So that, as our life is transitory, and less than nothing: even so also must we confess, that all the sciences which men teach us, are no better than smoke: it is a transitory thing which is soon vanished. And as there is nothing everlasting but the kingdom of God, so also is there but one only truth which is a wisdom everlasting, and hath a sure and ever continuing foundation. See then what David his meaning is here to show us, that men may very well teach us, yea, but that shall be but as an ABC until such time as we are come to the school of God.

It cannot be denied, but that God teacheth us very well by the means of men, as indeed it cometh from him which we learn, when as men make plain unto us his truth, and lead us in the right way of the Scripture: but here, David speaketh of that, which might be taught him, without this doctrine which he hath learned of GOD, when as he hath been enlightened by the holy Ghost, and hath known what the secrets of the law are. When then he hath had this spiritual knowledge, he saith that all whatsoever he had learned of men, was nothing in comparison. Now he addeth for confirmation,

That he was wiser than his enemies.

Here, he doth not only declare, that the word of God instructeth us more perfectly, than all the Sciences in the world are able to do, but also scorneth the usage, experience, and subtlety of all whatsoever that may any way come from men, saying that it is all nothing in respect of this wisdom which we learn in the school of God.

Lo here a place right worthy to be noted and imprinted in our memories. For we see how men extoll and magnify themselves, when they have attained to any knowledge, to get themselves credit and estimation. For if a man be eloquent, and can speak gallantly, and write excellently, or that he

hath some other especial science or knowledge, he thinketh himself a marvelous man, and able to catch the Moon with his teeth, as we say. Seeing then it is so, that men are so rash and headstrong, that they persuade themselves to be wonderful men, if they have once gotten never so little knowledge in humanity, which passeth no farther than the outward elements of the world: by this we are so much the more to be admonished, to esteem this heavenly knowledge which is contained in the holy Scripture, which we can never be able to attain unto without it please God to instruct us: to the end that in the first place, none of us all should be proud of our good wits, nor yet of our other excellent aids, nor to be haughty in that we have greatly profited at School, have understood all the liberal sciences, and to be men of great experience. When then a man shall be the most perfect in science, and knowledge, that it is possibly to be imagined, yet ought we to learn to humble ourselves, and to cast all our pride clean under foot that the worldly knowledge which God hath given unto us to serve him, be subject unto his word. Shall we find a man that shall be most eloquent, most cunning and most excelling in every condition all others? That man I say, ought to do homage unto God for that which he hath received from him knowing that no worldly science or knowledge ought to shadow or darken him who far surpasseth the same, because the Heavens are far above the earth. In very deed both two proceed from the mere goodness of God. But to this point must it be brought, That whatsoever he be that shall attain to the true and heavenly light, must say, I am nothing O Lord: For all that which thou hast given me cometh also from thee, receive thou then the same as the most special thing above the rest. And since thou hast showed me that grace and favor to be instructed by thy word, work so in me I beseech thee, that all the rest yield such honor and homage as appertaineth [*pertains*] to this wonderful knowledge which I have learned in thy school.

See then, what it is that David meaneth to learn us by his example. And besides, when he saith, *That he is become wiser than his ancients*: It is to show us, that we ought to have such a certainty of our faith, as that when there shall be laid before us whatsoever shall be alleged of this world, that it be said, And what I beseech you? must not the ancient men be wise? They lived thus in the old time: There are a great number of persons: And we see a great many to be of the contrary opinion to this. If then they shall allege unto us men for their age, for their long experience and all their

study, and whatsoever else that may be said: What of all this? All that can be said, is nothing in respect of this word of God. So then, we see how David after he hath taught us the way unto humility, to the end we should present before God all the knowledge that is in us, he showeth again that the word of God ought to be of that authority with us, as that we should not fear to walk the way which he hath taught us, although we see all the rest of the world to go clean contrary. When as we shall hear that that may be said, And what I pray you? Is it possible that they which are held and accounted to be so wise, should err like poor and miserable beasts? yea, and that the same hath continued so many years? will any man say, that it hath no reason for it in all the whole world? Is it possible that this may be so? we ought not to trouble ourselves for all these speeches. And why so? I answer: hath god spoken the word? Then, I say, let man's reason and wit stay there, let it humble and make itself nothing worth, and let us confess with David, that there is one only word of God, which ought to bear rule over all, and that this word hath such an excellent wisdom in itself, as that it shall consume all the knowledge and wisdom whatsoever, that men think they have. Now like as the faithful ought to scorn that which men on their behalf shall allege, to the end to divert them from the obedience of God, and the certainty which they have in his word: so also let us learn, that the old men ought not to be opinionative against God, under this shadow that they have seen much: that they have seen many things even before their eyes: as many of them there are which in this point under the shadow of their age, would go beyond God, and remain in their opinion stiff and obstinate saying, What I beseech you? I have lived thus long and thus many years, and would you have me now to change my condition, and manner of dealing: It is for wild-headed young Gallants so to do, which know not what it meaneth. But since I have lived thus long: be it as be may, I will end my life so. See then how aged men will go beyond God. But in this place David showeth unto us, that when as we shall be young as he hath before treated, that although we have hot boiling affections, and that our wits are troubled with many hard matters, that we be without all consideration: yet if we be ruled by the word of God, no doubt it will make us peaceable and quiet, and cause our life to be rightly governed. And thus much for the younger sort. As touching the ageder [*older, aged*], it is foolish arrogancy in them, to build upon that which they have seen, and passed through their hands: but let them know that true wisdom which is, to be ordered by God, is common to all: and that therefore they ought to

apply and give themselves thereto in all ages. And for this cause it is that Saint John in his Canonical Epistle, after that he hath made a general exhortation unto all men, saith,

I speak unto you fathers, to the end you should have regard unto him who is the Father of all the world, I speak unto you young men, to the end you should call upon your heavenly father. And you old men, I send you again unto him which is from the beginning. (<620212> 1 John 2:12-14)

To be short, David sheweth unto us by this place, that the faithful have wherein to rejoice, when as they are taught in the word of God: that they have whereon to stay and assure themselves, knowing that they shall never want [*lack*] anything: that they ought not to be drawn neither this way nor that way, because they follow him of whom they held the doctrine. So then, they being settled hereupon, may be able to make their part good without any great ado: and when they shall see every man go about to withdraw them, let them pray unto God that he will give them the grace to hold themselves simply unto him. Lo here David his meaning. Now he addeth soon after.

I have refrained my feet from every evil way: that I might keep thy word.

Here David teacheth us, that they which are desirous to serve God and to stick to his word, are never without afflictions. But what is then to be done? We must be of a good courage to withstand all the temptations which Satan can any way assail us with, to withdraw and turn us from that which is good. *I have* saith he *refrained my feet from every evil way*. And had David need of this? he that was an holy Prophet, yea, and such a one as we see the holy Scripture to have reigned in, even from his youth: He then having received so excellent graces of God, being a mirror of all perfection, was it needful that he should keep himself from every evil way? It should seem that he was already utterly past going any evil way: Yea, but because he was a mortal man, he was not for all that without being encompassed with many vices and evil lusts against which he was to fight. And indeed, we see how God suffered David to fall once so grievously, as that his fall ought to be an horror unto us all.

Moreover, let us well consider, that if it was needful for David to fight against the temptations which might withdraw him from the right way, and

that he was with much to do, turned away from evil ways to serve God: every of us verily ought a great deal more to enforce ourselves: For we are nothing so forwards [*earnest*] as he was. For if he hath gone on an hundred paces, we have hardly gone on that way three or four. So much the more then ought we rightly to practice this doctrine, when it is said, that we ought to refrain our feet from every evil way. And to do this, let us a little behold how naturally we are inclined to wickedness. We need never once to remove our arms, legs, head, nor anything else within us to do wickedly: For we are altogether given thereto. And besides, we are as it were upon the ice. I pray you tell me, when a man is not able to hold himself up, that he shall have neither feet, nor legs, but that all shall tremble and be afraid, and shall be set upon the ice, and in a steep place, how is it possible for that man to hold himself up? In like sort is it with us: for first and foremost there is nothing in us but debility and weakness: and besides, what is our life in this world? Have we any firm or certain place to hold or stay us in? We are always upon the ice, considering the temptations which assail us on every side. And David also useth this similitude in another place: and yet this is not all, that we are upon the Ice: but the place is also steep to bring us downward. The more therefore have we need to pray unto God, that he will strengthen us, to the end we be not overcome of the evil: For otherwise, we shall never come to that end and perfection, constantly to abide by his word.

Now when David saith that *He kept himself from every evil way*, He meaneth not that he was so thoroughly preserved from all, but that he might be amended. For as we have already said, he fell so horribly, as that the very thought thereof should make the hairs of our head to stand upright. He meaneth not that his life was so perfect, as that he was able to say that he failed not in some one point, and that he had wholly fulfilled the law of God. That is not the intent of David. What is then his purpose? he meaneth simply that for the holding of himself in the obedience of God, and keeping of his word, it was needful for him to resist a number of temptations: to stand upon his guard, and to be watchful, or else that he should be thrown down headlong an hundred thousand times. And hereby he admonisheth us, that if we will follow the way of salvation, and take good heed that we be not turned therefrom, that there is no question of bending, nor of leading us here and there, but that we must remain constant

in the vocation of God, when we are once brought into it by him. It followeth anon after:

I have not declined from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

Lo in sum what David here saith, that because God hath instructed him, he hath not turned away from his commandments. When he saith, *That he hath been taught by God*, he meaneth not that he hath learned any such simple knowledge as is with us, when God showeth us that favor and grace, to have his word faithfully handled amongst us, his Gospel to be preached, or that we have Lectures read unto us, which are requisite to our salvation. For we shall have a great many hearers, which shall yet profit nothing at all, because it pierceth not their ears. David therefore speaketh here of such a manner of instruction as specially belongeth to God's chosen. For this grace is not common to all: but God bestoweth it on them on whom it pleaseth him: neither must we say that we are given thereto as of ourselves: But when as it shall please God to instruct us, the same proceedeth from his mere good will and mercy. So then, David saith not simply in this place that he was taught, because he had a Book of the law, and that it was made plain unto him: but his meaning is that he was enlightened by the spirit of God. And for this cause declined he not from the right way. Now he addeth in the end for a conclusion:

O how sweet are thy words unto my throat: yea sweeter than honey unto my mouth.

This sentence hath been already handled, and therefore we will no longer stand upon it. There are two things in the word of God which we ought rightly to keep: The one is, the majesty which God showeth unto us therein, to the end we should be brought to a reverence, whereby everyone should humble himself, and say, It is meet O Lord, that we tremble and fall down before thee. As also it is said by the Prophet Isaiah (<236602> Isaiah 66:2) that the spirit of God shall rest upon those which tremble at the word of God. The first duty then that we owe unto the word of God, is this reverence and fear. Because, I say, that God showeth there his majesty unto us, that we might be thereby abased and humbled: to be short that we should have it in great admiration. The second is, that it is sweet and amiable unto us. For we might in some sort very well fear the word of God: and yet for all that we should not be touched therewith as was meet.

And in very deed, you shall see very many which will not stick to say, Lo God, which speaketh, and therefore it is good reason that we should lay our cares unto him: But that they should be subject unto him, in all, and through all, they make thereof no novelty, but cast that far enough off. And that which is more, They would if it were possible, pluck him out of his Throne, and make void and cast off all instruction to the end they would not be so straightly kept in: to be short, that they would neither be subject to God, nor to whatsoever else might be said unto them. Now in the end he saith,

Through thy commandments I get understanding: therefore I hate all the ways of falsehood.

Wherein he signifieth unto us, that we shall never hate that which is evil, until such time as we know, what goodness is. It is very true that we shall sometimes see men to have a great desire to do good, forsooth [*in truth*] as they think: But indeed that is nothing: all is but hypocrisy, until such time as God hath so taught us, that we might know and discern in good earnest and say, Lo it is God that speaketh, and therefore let us see what it is that he saith unto us. And so after that we are fully resolved in his truth, then shall we begin to hate all the ways of wickedness: For it cannot otherwise be, but whatsoever is against God we must needs detest and abhor. For howsoever Satan endeavoreth himself to carry us to do wickedly, we ought to have this by and by in our minds. What, shall we estrange ourselves from our creator, whose we are? Shall the devil beguile us to make us renounce him, who hath so dearly bought us? And besides we also know, that the health of our souls, and all our felicity consist in the obedience of our good God. When then we shall be thus taught by the word of God, we shall hate all wicked ways. Without this, contrariwise, it must needs be that we should be wholly inclined thereto, and that the deceits of Satan shall please us: as we see it come to pass amongst the infidels, unto whom we shall be very like, without God restrain us with a bit. For if we walk after our own nature and fantasy, what shall become of all our wicked ways? And so let us learn, that we shall never be brought to that which David here speaketh of, until such time as we are instructed and understand it by the word of God, and the testimonies of his law.

And according to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, with acknowledging of our faults, beseeching

him to make us so to feel our wretchedness, as that we may learn to seek our felicity in him only. And because he so familiarly instructeth us by his word, let us not be so accursed as to reject this inestimable treasure whereof we may be possessed: but that being in possession thereof, we might increase daily more and more in the knowledge which he hath given us, and continue therein unto the end, and until such time as we shall attain unto that Heavenly inheritance, and to the full possession of that eternal rest which he hath promised us, after that we shall be delivered from all the assaults of this frail and transitory life. That he will not only bestow this grace upon us, but also upon all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE FOURTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

NVN

- 105** Thy word is a Lantern unto my feet: and a light unto my paths.
106 I have sworn and will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.
107 I am very sore afflicted, O Lord: quicken me according unto thy word.
108 O Lord I beseech thee let the free will offerings of my mouth please thee: and teach me thy judgments.
109 My soul is always in mine hand: yet do I not forget thy law.
110 The ungodly have laid a snare for me: But yet I swerved not from thy commandments.
111 Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage for ever: for they are the very joy of mine heart.
112 I have applied mine heart too fulfill thy statutes always: even unto the end.

IF WE DID thoroughly consider that it were very requisite for us to read the word of God, and to listen unto the doctrine taken out of it, we should not need to have the matter to be so much preached of, what profit and use we receive by it: For every of us should feel the same by experience. But because we are so cold and blockish in reading and hearing of that which God declareth unto us, it is meet we should be stirred up thereto some other ways, and be showed for what cause the word of God shall profit us, when as we shall be thus wise and of this mind, thoroughly to exercise ourselves, and to apply our whole study therein. And see why David pursueth this matter so diligently. For besides that which we have already seen here before, he addeth and saith, *Thy word is a Lantern unto my feet, and a light unto my paths.* Whereby he sheweth, that it is an inestimable

treasure which we shall receive when as we be taught by the word of God: to wit, that we shall never err all the days of our life, as the unbelievers do, who know not whither they go, but walk at random. David sheweth unto us, that when as we shall be guided by the word of God, we shall be without all danger of falling. Now because it is a very easy thing for a man to say thus, it seemeth at the first sight that this saying is so common, as that we need not to stay any longer upon it. But in the meanwhile us see how the world practiceth that which is here spoken. Indeed we shall see it all clean contrary, for there are very few that will abide to be guided by the word of God: but the more part reject it, and like rather to follow their own wills and desires, or rather can be contented to be governed as it pleaseth men, so that they will not suffer God to bear any rule or authority over them. Therefore us well mark what this importeth when as it is said, That the word of God hath been as it were a Lantern unto the feet of David, and as a light unto his paths. Now hereby he signifieth, that he meaneth not to be wise in his own conceit, but hath sought how he ought to be governed by the word of God, and so wholly held himself thereto.

Now if this hath been a necessary point for David, none of us think that we can go beyond him. And see also why Saint Peter(^{<610119>} 2 Peter 1:19) writing to all the faithful in general, telleth them, that they should do very well to be attentive and to take heed to the word of God, as to a light shining in dark places. By this Saint Peter declareth unto us, that it is not without cause that David hath used this similitude of a Lantern. And why so? For he saith, that we being in the world are as men in the dark: and to prove it to be so, I beseech you what wisdom is in any of us? Although that every of us esteemeth of himself enough, and a great deal more than needeth, yet for all that when as we shall be thoroughly known, we shall find all our understanding to be full of vanity and folly, and although we think ourselves to have a goodly light, yet are we in a deep dungeon of darkness. And besides, let us seek all the means possible to guide and govern us well here in this world, yet shall it be always but darkness.

Let us then understand, that it cannot be chosen but that we must be as strayed wild beasts without the word of God, and that without it there is neither way nor stay for us. And although we think ourselves to be wise enough, yet shall we be altogether abused: and when as we shall think us to be fully resolved, yet shall all our case and estate be but smoke. When then

we shall know this to be true, we may very well say with David, that the word of God is instead of a Lantern unto us. For what is the cause that we will not be ordered and ruled by God, but either by reason of our pride, or else because we know not our own want [*lack*]? Some of us are hindered through a vain foolish opinion which we have of ourselves, that we are sufficiently learned to judge of that which is good and profitable. Lo here is the very cause why we will not give place unto the word of God.

There are other some of us: that although we trust not so much unto our own wisdom, yet know we not what a misery it is to be here, as it were in a place of confusion, and that there is no stay of all the whole course of our life. And hereupon we contemn the word of God, and make no account of it. So then, we must come to this humility that being wholly thrown down as touching the presumption of our wits, we must suffer ourselves to be taught of God.

And besides that we might also know, that our state and condition is too miserable, until such time as we are lightened with this lantern. Now then, like as David sheweth unto us by his example, that we ought not to have any other guide, nor stay, but that which proceedeth from the word of God: Even so also sheweth he unto us, that if so be we be teachable of God and accept him as our schoolmaster, and submit ourselves to him, that we shall find light enough in his word, that we need not to fear to be confounded as though we knew not which way to turn us. For God will give us sufficient light in his word, to lead us to salvation. And this is such a comfort as cannot be sufficiently enough expressed: For as it is declared, that we are miserable blind souls, and that whilst we walk in this world, we are but in darkness, see how God putteth a remedy into our hands: that is, that we should hear him speak, and that we should learn to be ordered by his word: and that then, although this same world be a maze, although we have many troubles in our life, although the devil never ceaseth craftily to invent many deceits to turn us from the right way, yet we shall be assured to go straight, and to attain unto salvation. And by this we may see how Satan hath possessed the papists, when as they say, that the word of God is so dark, that we are never able once to bite at it: and that we ought not to stay ourselves thereon, because it is so uncertain a thing: and besides that it is also a nose of wax, which a man may turn what way he listeth [*desires*]. They shame not to spew out such horrible blasphemies. But contrariwise, let us trust unto the spirit of God, speaking

by the mouth of David: to wit, that if we be lightened by the word of God, we need not to fear falling: and that there is no rule so certain. For although the devil went about with a thousand deceits to turn us this way and that by crooked by-paths: yet must we be fully assured that the word of God is a lantern unto our feet, to lead us the right way. Nevertheless David sheweth unto us, how we should feel such a commodity coming unto us by the law of god: to wit, when as we shall receive it with hearty affection. For he saith,

I have sworn and will perform it: that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

Now here he sheweth, that if there be a wavering minded spirit, which readeth the Scripture for curiosity's sake, the same must needs remain and continue always blind and ignorant: as we shall see many of them which do nothing else but turn over the leaves, and wander in such sort, as that there is neither firmness nor yet soundness in any of them. And what is the cause thereof? Forsooth [*in truth*] it is, because they seek not God with a right and earnest affection. If we then will have the commodity, which David here speaketh of, we must come back again to the word of God, and apply all our study so courageously, as that we desire nothing else but to be instructed in this truth, and to submit ourselves wholly unto it. And yet David was not contented to say that this was his only determination: But saith, that he had sworn and was steadfastly purposed to observe it: For the word which he useth, signifieth, that I will establish it: to wit, I will wholly give myself unto it: for I am so resolute in this matter, as that I will never be turned away from it. Whereby he sheweth, that there is no question, but that we have certain small motions, which slip us, but we must have such a fervent zeal, as possesseth our whole mind: and after we must with this zeal be constant, because then we shall be able rightly to see those men which so trimly and fairly puff and blow at us. But what? This is but a false fire as we say. Now if we be truly affected to serve God, the same our affection must be firm and sure, that we may unfeignedly [*honestly*] say with David, that we have sworn, and are fully purposed to stand and abide by this matter. In very deed here may some question arise: For it should seem that David hath too much presumed of himself, to swear that he will keep the testimonies of God. For we are not able to promise anything, which is not in our power and strength. If a man shall thrust in himself to promise that which he hath not, he of right is to be accused of folly: for every man will say, that it is great arrogancy in him

because he hath passed his bounds. Now when as we shall have thoroughly considered hereof, we shall find that it is impossible for any mortal man, perfectly to observe the Commandments of God.

This should seem then at the first sight, that the oath which David here speaketh of, ought rather to be reprehended than commanded: But here are two things to be considered of: The one is, that when the faithful bind themselves so unto God, they lay not this foundation in their own proper strength, they look not into their own ability, but they desire of God to accomplish that which they have promised him. And why do they so? Now let us note, that here he speaketh of the commandments of God. And we have here already declared, that when David nameth the law, he looketh not simply to the Commandments, but also to the promises: and in these promises it is said, that God will circumcise the hearts of his children: He saith, that he will so lively touch them, as that he will bring them into his obedience. So then (as we have already said) the faithful bind not themselves to God to do anything of their own power and strength, but they desire him to fulfill whatsoever is wanting [*lacking*] in them, to supply their weakness, and to send such remedy as he knoweth best to be most needful and expedient for them. See then with what confidence David hath sworn to observe the Testimonies of God: he did it not, I say, of any vain presumption, that he had conceived of his own power and strength, nor yet that he was able to do it, no, he attributed nothing to his own strength: But sweareth and doth it, by reason of the promise of god, by which promise he declareth that he will by his holy spirit govern all those which are his. Lo whereupon David stayed himself. Now by and by followeth the second point: to wit, that David hath sworn to observe the testimonies, yea even staying himself upon that which God hath promised, that he will uphold us through his mercy, that although we halt [*waiver*] and that all the obedience which we go about to yield unto him be weak and faulty, because it is done but by halves, yet he not having respect to all our faults, meaneth to make a taste of the desire which we shall have to please him: and in effect, will accept our service as it is, dispensing with all the faults which shall be mingled amongst them. Which thing David considering, was able to say that he would observe the commandments of God. So then let us note, that when the faithful bind themselves to observe the word of God, they must not trust to themselves, nor yet be puffed up with a foolish opinion, that they have the power to do it: but they must

say, Accomplish thou this, O Lord, and then I will follow it: write thy law O Lord, in mine heart, and then shall I have a desire to serve thee: and besides, Let the faithful always remember that God will not handle them sharply: yea and although they fail in a great number of points, so that they are not able to observe one only point, nor jot perfectly: yet will he spare them through his free goodness and mercy. When the faithful and children of god shall have known thus much, and shall swear that they will observe the commandments of God: yet let them not cease for all that to fly unto the forgiveness of their sins, that they may feel the same to be a necessary remedy agreeable to the will of God, for the fulfilling of one part of his commandments. We see now then why David hath sworn to keep the Commandments of God, and that he will never change this purpose in his heart. Now he maketh two requests immediately after: whereof the one is to be quickened and restored. Wherein he showeth that which I have already touched: which is, that he was not led with a foolish presumption of his own power and strength. For he which desireth god to be restored, confesseth that he liveth not as of himself, but that he must needs live by the grace and goodness of God. And yet David maketh this confession more expressly, when he addeth the reason why he useth to make such request: *For I am very sore afflicted O Lord*, saith he. See then David who confessing himself to be troubled, and as it were utterly made nothing beseecheth god for to restore him. Shall we say that he trusted to his own strength? or that he attributed anything whatsoever unto himself? we see the clean contrary. So then, according to that which we have already declared, let us understand that he sware not upon any vain presumption: but because he knew that God would never fail him. And this is the reason why he took upon him this boldness. And that is it which he addeth: *According to thy word*: that is, according to thy promises. Now we ought thoroughly to consider all whatsoever that is here said, *Quicken me O Lord*, saith he. And thus much for the first point. Wherein he showeth that he liveth not as of himself, but desireth it of God. And afterward, he addeth the reason, saying after this manner, *I am very sore afflicted*. Whereby he declareth unto us, that we are not able to relieve and maintain ourselves, when as our strength faileth us, but that it is God which must put to his helping hand. And besides we may be assured that he will help us, and be ready to restore us, so that we will desire him, and call upon him, and have recourse unto his goodness. Lo here a mighty comfort for all the faithful, when as they find themselves to be so without strength, as

that they feel themselves to faint, to be clean cast down, and to see nothing else in themselves but death: yet may they be fully assured and resolved, that God will always be their watchman, to restore and quicken them. And why so? To wit, according to that which David addeth when he saith, *According to thy promises*. Then it followeth, that God hath promised to restore and quicken his, when as they shall be in death. And therefore we shall never be able to make our request in faith, as David here hath done, if that we have not the promises of God. For, as we have before said, it is a foolhardiness in men to put forth themselves to pray unto God as they list [*desire*], without being sure and certain of his will before.

See then the cause which moved David so expressly to set down here the promise of GOD. Now this promise was not made to him alone, this is no personal Privilege, as we say, appertaining [*pertains*] to one man only: But it is a general rule which we must hold, that God will raise up again from death those which are thrown down, and as it were made nothing: yea even when as they do call upon him, and acknowledge, that it cometh of his own pure grace that they ought to be so restored, and not otherwise. Now here is yet another request which he maketh,

O Lord, I beseech thee let the freewill offerings of my mouth please thee: and teach me thy judgments.

Here David desireth God to accept the praises which he shall render unto him. For the oblations whereof David speaketh, are nothing else but praise and thanksgiving, by which David acknowledgeth the benefits of God. And yet for all that, he in very deed looketh unto the common order of the law: For when a man hath been cured of a disease, or hath been delivered from some danger, or else that God hath endued him with prosperity, he cometh to the Church to make his oblation or offering, for an especial testimony, and to acknowledge how greatly he is bounden unto God. David had small regard to any such ceremonies, but yet he noteth and expresseth the end and the use, that is, that we should stay us upon the principal: for if a man should sacrifice a beast, that were nothing at all. And wherefore then served such manner of sacrifice? Forsooth [*in truth*] it was an aid and help: because it is needful that we should be always stirred up. And besides, this is a good advertisement to show us, that when we will give GOD thanks for his benefits which he bestoweth upon us, we must come unto him by the mediation of our Lord Jesus Christ: for we are not once worthy to

open our mouths to honor God, because our lips are unclean and defiled. And so we then knowing our unworthiness, must come unto our Lord Jesus Christ, and give thanks unto God by him, as also the author to the Hebrews (<580414> Hebrews 4:14-16) exhorteth us to do. For he namely declareth that unto us, that it is only Jesus Christ, which giveth us access unto God his father, to confess his bounty towards us: and otherwise, we shall but profane his name, yea he will not accept our praises and thanksgiving, but they shall even as it were stink in his nostrils. See then to what end the sacrifices are. But David notwithstanding showeth, that the principal end of the benefits of God is that our lips should open themselves to confess his goodness, when as we have proved and felt it. And that is it which he speaketh of in the hundreth and sixteenth Psalm, (<19B611> Psalm 116:11, 12) What reward shall I give unto the Lord: for all the benefits that he hath bestowed upon me? I will receive the cup of salvation: and call upon the name of the Lord: as if he should have said that he knew none other way to please God but to give thanks unto him, when as he had liberally bestowed all the benefits of the world upon him, in such sort as that he felt himself most bounden unto his goodness. Even so likewise will he be contented with us, when as we render unto him such thanks. Yea, but in the meanwhile let us consider that David knew, that if God had not freely accepted the praises which he yielded unto him, that they had been nothing worth, as we have already declared: but we have of this here a sufficient and manifest confirmation. What is the reason why David besought God to accept the praises which he rendered unto him? he did it not like an hypocrite. He confesseth then, that when he presented himself before God, to magnify his name, that he might very well have been put by, and his mouth to have been stopped. And why so? because that we profane the name of God seeing there can proceed nothing but filth and stench, from those which are altogether corrupt, neither can there be any one drop of goodness in them. And although God hath put into them any good virtues, yet they are so intermeddled with vices, as that it is lamentable. And therefore David knowing this to be so, prayeth God that his praises might please him. Now if David knew his unworthiness to be such, I beseech you, dareth any of us to say, that we are of our own power capable, to magnify the name of God, and to render him such thanks as to him appertaineth [*pertains*], without he of his mere free good will alloweth them, not imputing unto us the vices and imperfections which are therewithal intermeddled? and that he will also think well of our praises

and thanksgiving, yea although they deserve it never a whit? And besides, if we need to desire God, to accept our praises which we render unto him: I pray you what shall become of the rest? For it is most certain, that if there be any service which pleaseth God, it is even this when we come to do our homage for whatsoever we have received at his hands: and that we confess and protest that we have nothing but that we hold of him. When as we do this homage unto God, lo this is the service, which he chiefly desireth of us: Lo this is that sweet smelling sacrifice, which the scripture speaketh of. Now so it is, that when we would do this homage unto God, thereby to humble ourselves, yet may it be amended: in such sort as that we deserve to have it to be put by, and to be disallowed: what shall then become of our other mean services, and in effect, of all our whole life? Shall we now go and glorify him with our merits, as the Papists do, who lift up their heads against God with an whorish shamelessness: For they think that GOD is beholden to them: or else, although they have offended his majesty, yet after that they have reckoned with him, they think that they may very well recompense him with their satisfactions. Go to now, let us think thus of ourselves, that when we see that in the very best and most requisite, yea and as it were the very flower of all our good works, even of those wherein God guideth us, that they do nothing else but stink, except God himself cleanse them to make them sweet, and taketh from them the superfluities and filthiness which are in them. Now if of all our good works, yea even of the most excellent we are exhorted to crave pardon of God for them, what shall become of our gross and overmanifest sins whereof we are convinced, and whereof men, yea, and young children, may reprehend us? So then, see here an excellent place, which rightly abolisheth all vain and devilish confidences, wherewith we deceive ourselves, when as we think to stand before the majesty of God with our merits, and such other like gewgaws [*showy trinkets*] and trifling toys I know not what, thinking thereby to recompense him. And thus much for this verse. Now David afterward saith,

My soul is always in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

The ungodly have laid a snare for me: but yet I swerved not from thy commandments.

Here David protesteth as before, that he had such a resolute affection to follow the word of God, as that no temptations could withdraw him from

it. And see how we may say, that we serve God, without hypocrisy and in truth. For if we be easily and gently dealt withal, so we have no affliction, that our God handleth us as we would wish and leaveth us to our own pleasure, or else, if he so much favoreth us, as that we are not pressed with any griefs and sorrows: it is an easy matter then for us to serve and honor him. But when God afflicteth us, that it seemeth he would oppress and grieve us every minute of an hour, when we see death pursuing us on every side, that the ungodly are wholly about us, as it were ready to pull out our eyes, and our life so wretched, as that the world judgeth us to be as it were reprobates: when then all these temptations shall touch us, and yet we remain still constant praising of God, and holding us unto him, persevering in his obedience, and calling upon him, being patient in all our afflictions, until such time as he delivereth us: when we have all this, we may then say with David, that we have displayed and laid wide open our life to serve God: and this shall be a good and sure proof thereof. But if we have not this constancy, a great number may make a wonderful show of godliness before the face of the world, but all that shall prove nothing. And so, let us well consider of this place: for David spake not this for himself, but for our common instruction. And besides, if we will indeed profit ourselves by this doctrine, let us consider that if we sometimes see the apparent dangers of death, so that we be pressed down on every side, not to think it to be any strange thing. And why so? Because the same came to pass as greatly sometimes to David. For he saith that he was not without continual trouble. My soul (saith he) is always in my hand: my life is as it were I cannot tell where, it is put forth to abide all mischief, that it seemeth I were at death's door every minute of an hour. If David was always thus troubled, and yet persevered in the praising of God: I beseech you ought not we to be ashamed to be fainthearted, when as it shall please God to exercise us only but now and then? Even so, although afflictions oppress us, yet must we not cease to fight against them, attending and craving the help of God. And thus much for this. And besides, when we are thus assured, let us seek our comfort where it may be found, that is, in the word of God, and to be thus constant never to forget the law of God. Let us then consider and observe this doctrine. For it is not without cause that David saith, That although my soul be in my hand, yet have I not forgotten thy law. He sheweth us hereby, that as we are weak, so we should be soon shaken, and in the end thrown down, when as we should see ourselves laid wide open to death. We then having this understanding ought to stand

upon our guard, to the end the devil might never beguile us, under the color, that God had as it were forsaken us, and that we should be as it were in the shadow of death. Moreover, we see what doltishness (or rather beastliness) this is amongst the Papists, to take this place for proof of freewill. My soul is in my hand: to wit, I am able of mine own nature, and of my own proper strength, to discern between good and evil, and to do whatsoever I think best. If brute beasts could speak, they would speak a little wiselier than thus. For to what purpose should David say, although, O Lord, that my soul is in my hand, yet have I not forgotten thy law? He should altogether speak clean against nature. But as we have already declared, this is a kind of speech much used in the scripture, to say that the life of a man is in his hand, it is as it were in the wind, or I know not where. Let us now come unto the protestation which he addeth,

The ungodly have laid a snare for me: but yet I swerved not from thy commandments.

This sentence is like unto the other which we are about to handle. For he sheweth how his life was in his hand: to wit, that over and besides the afflictions which were directly sent him from the hand of God, that the wicked also persecuted him as well: and besides the violences, and outrages, that were done unto him, he had also secret ambushes laid for him. See then how diversely he is oppressed, and yet he never shrank from the law of God. In the end he addeth and saith,

Thy testimonies have I claimed as mine heritage forever: for they are the very joy of mine heart.

Now here he sheweth, how he was able to remain firm and constant without being withdrawn by any temptations: but that he always stood steadfastly in the law of God: that is, because he always chose it for his heritage, that is for his chief felicity. For this word *heritage*, in the scripture, is taken for the thing that men most desireth, and that which most properly belongeth unto him. To be short, it is such a similitude, as that is which is spoken of the Treasure: as if a man should call it, the sovereign good, the true and perfect felicity. See then at what end we must begin, if in the midst of death we will abide so constantly as David hath done, to keep the law of god: that is I say, to choose it for our inheritance. And how is that? First of all we must understand, that all the commodities whereunto we are overmuch given, are transitory, without certainty, and

without property. For we may want [*lack*] them every handwhile [*moment*]: neither can we enjoy anything be it never so justly given, but that we may be robbed of it betwixt this day and tomorrow. What is then the surest felicity which we can have, and may enjoy forever? it is even the word of God. And this is it which we ought chiefly to desire, and wherein we are especially to rejoice. Lo then how we must understand that which David here protesteth. That he hath chosen the word of God for his heritage.

Yea and he setteth it down by and by after, that it hath been the very joy of his heart. For until such time as we have had this taste in the word of God, that we truly joy in it, it is a sign that we never yet had any good affection thereto at all. Although we have known that our chief felicity lieth therein, yet are we not able well to keep ourselves in it, until such time as we have conceived, that it is that wherein we must delight, and in none other thing.

Now it is impossible that we should ever take any delight or pleasure in the law of God, except we did know that he declareth himself to us in it, that he is our father, and taketh us for his children, that we have a testimony that our sins are forgiven us, that we may have access unto him, and be able to call upon him in all our necessities. If God saith only unto us, lo what it is that I would have you to do, I would have you to take me for your God, and to serve me with all your heart: if we have but these two tables, to look into, to know what we have to do, shall the law of God delight us? No, but contrariwise, it shall fear us. We see then very well when David saith, that he took all his delight and pleasure in the commandments of God, that he had not simply the bare word of the law, to say that God commanded him that which he ought to do: but that he also joined the promises thereto, because that God willing his children to come unto him, promiseth to make them feel his goodness and fatherly love which he useth towards those that are his. To be short, he sheweth them that all their felicity consisteth in his only mercy. He saith in the end,

I have applied mine heart to fulfill thy statutes always: even unto the end.

Now when he saith, that he inclined his heart to observe the commandments of God: he sheweth us, what service it is that God requireth: that is a voluntary and willing service. See here yet a point which ought well to be considered of, to the end we should not think that

we are ever able to please God, when as we serve him constrainedly, as we see the miserable and wretched faithless do, which greatly torment themselves. And why so? For all that they do, they do it constrainedly because they would the better escape the hand of God, but when they come near unto him as well as they may, it is but as it were enforced and constrained, because he is their judge. Now if we have such a constant desire (as we term it) that we are enforced to do that which we are commanded: our whole case is little worth, and God will never allow of it. And why so? because he liketh of nothing else but of obedience, and would have us come unto him with frank and willing minds.

See then why David saith, that he hath inclined his heart to keep the commandments of God: not that he protesteth, that he hath done it of himself, nor of his own mind: but because that God hath given him both the will and the power to do the same. And to prove it to be so, we shall never see that David braggeth of himself in any one place, that he willed any good, being so led of his own proper mind: he will never say, that it was his natural inclination, but saith clean contrary, *I was conceived in sin*, saith he, (^{<195105>} Psalm 51:5) he reserveth nothing to himself but all that which is naught. When then in this behalf he protesteth that he had inclined his heart, he only showeth what the grace of God was in him. And for conclusion he addeth: *That he did it forever, or, even unto the end*, or, this is it which we have touched heretofore: to wit, we must not be like sudden blasts which pass by and by, but we must be constant, and that when we shall have once begun, we must pray unto God that he will continue the same our well doing which he hath begun in us, and to hold us by the hand until such time as we have finished our course. After he had said, *forever*, he addeth, *even unto the end*. It is very true, that the saying which he here useth, importeth sometimes, salary or reward: But in this place (as in the first verse of the letter, *HE*, he useth the selfsame saying) it signifieth but to the end: as if he should have said, we may alter and change our minds in other things: but we must follow unto the death, when God calleth us unto him, being assured that in this pursuit we cannot fail to come to the true end, without to fail and err forever.

And according to his holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God in acknowledging our faults: beseeching him that it would please him to make us so thoroughly to feel them, as that we may in all humility be able to crave pardon of him for them, groaning for all the

offenses which we have committed against him. And that in the meanwhile also we may have recourse unto him, beseeching him to remedy all our vices and imperfections: and so to confirm our weakness, as that being strengthened by him, we might overcome all the temptations wherewith Satan can any way assail us, that being more and more confirmed in his holy doctrine, we desire nothing else but to submit ourselves unto it, and to be squared by none other rule, but by that which he hath given unto us through his word. That it would not please him only to grant unto us this grace, but unto all people and nations of the world, etc.

THE FIFTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

SAMECH

- 113** I hate vain inventions: but thy law do I love.
114 Thou art my refuge and my shield: and I trust in thy word.
115 Away from me ye wicked: for I will keep the commandments of my God.
116 Establish me according to thy promise that I may live: and let me not be disappointed of my hope.
117 Hold thou me up and I shall be safe: yea and my delight shall be continually in thy statutes.
118 Thou hast trodden down all them that depart from thy statutes: for their deceit is vain.
119 Thou hast taken away all the ungodly of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.
120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee: and I am afraid of thy judgments.

WE HAVE SO MANY lets [*opportunities*] and stops both from above and here beneath which draw us on to do wickedly, or at leastwise which cause us to slack our serving of GOD, that whichsoever of us that is minded to do well, must remove from him all his wicked and evil affections, and all the temptations, which any way may come against him. See then why David in this place, meaning to protest that he loved the law of God, saith to the contrary, that he hated high enterprises, or rather wicked and crooked imaginations, or evil considerations. For the word which is here touched, signifieth a bough or branch: and by a similitude taketh it for the evil and wicked imaginations and devices of men which run this and that way. Now we see what a bottomless depth the spirit of man is, and how he wreatheth or windeth himself in his fantasies. This selfsame word

signifieth, the very height and top either of an high hill, house, or any other high thing. And thereupon also as by a similitude, the imaginative concepts [*conceits*] of men, when as they intend to bring themselves into credit, and go about to advance themselves, even as ambition ruleth our nature, until such time as God hath tamed us by his holy spirit, and humbled and made us gentle and meek. And now that we may have the true and natural meaning of this place, let us see in effect, that David protesting that he loved the law of God, saith, that he removed quite from him whatsoever might withdraw him from it. Now he speaketh not this here to the end to brag of himself: but rather that this example should be for our better instruction. For the spirit of God hath spoken it by his mouth to the end we might understand and know, which is the means whereby we might be wholly given to the service of God, and to take hold of the law with such an affection, as that our hearts might be as it were even fast tied thereto. For it is impossible, I say, that we should ever come or attain unto it, until such time as we have clean cut off the things which withdraw and turn us away both on the one side and the other: to wit, all our own fantasies and lusts: we must thrust out from us all whatsoever, for the love which we ought to bear to the law of God: we must also forget all haughtiness or pride, yea even studying how to separate ourselves from those which any way might draw us to evil: and not to communicate with the ungodly which are double hearted, full of hypocrisy, or else, such as are but vainglorious and of that pride which even moveth them to lift themselves up both against God and men: For their company will so corrupt us, as that being nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] amongst them, our hearts can never be so ordered and ruled in the love which we ought to have to the law of God. Now then let us keep well in mind this admonition, as a thing most profitable for us: to wit, as before I have said, that as we are inclined to commit a great number of offenses and villainies, which will withdraw us from the love that we ought to bear to the word of God, let us so much the more fly from whatsoever draweth us away backward. Yea and let us understand, that look how many our imaginations and affections are, that they are even so many cart ropes to haul and pull us away from this love: or else, they are so many poisons which Satan giveth us, to the end we should not once taste of the word of God, neither to be so amiable and pleasant unto us as it ought: but rather that we might be grieved and loathed therewith, and so to leave it, as if it were a grievous matter, and an occasion of heaviness. Since then it is so, let us be well

advised to purge our hearts of all earthly affections, if we will take in hand to love the word of God. And yet it is not enough that we have fought against our ungodly lusts, and fleshly fantasies, but we must also as it were gather our wits together: for hardly can we open our eyes to look about this way and that way, but that Satan will lay before us some evil and wicked stops and encounters. It is very true, that so long as we live here in this world, we cannot but both see and hear a great many of things: but yet must we bridle our senses. And above all the rest, we ought to fight against these strange, and counterfeit hypocrisies and affections, wherein we are nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*]. We must even hate deadly all this in our heart, to the end we be not hindered from the love of the word of God. And thus much for the first verse. Now in the second, David sheweth how we should find the word of God pleasant and gracious, that we might love it, that is, when as we shall trust to his word.

Thou art, saith he, my refuge and my shield: and I trust in thy word.

This is not added hereunto without just cause. For if there be none other doctrine in the law but to say unto us, Lo this must you do, we can never be comforted. For we shall find nothing in it but condemnation. When as god sheweth unto us what our duty is, we must needs be confounded, and know, that before him we are condemned and accursed, seeing that no man performeth that which he ought. So then, the word of God should be both bitter and grievous unto us, if there were nothing else contained in it but a rule to live well: But when God is a testimony and witness unto us of his goodness and mercy, and declareth unto us that from him we must look to receive our chief felicity, that he is pressed and ready to help us, that the treasures of his infinite goodness are open unto us: when I say, this shall be in us, then may we savor and taste his word, and conceive the love of it, when as we know that therein consisteth and lieth all our health and joy. Now then, when as we would profit in the word of God, and exercise ourselves in it, let us learn to receive the promises therein contained. And let us not be like unto them which think that God saith nothing to us in all the whole scripture, but do this, or do that: for then, this were a very thin and feeble doctrine. For if God were there as a Philosopher, to preach unto us of virtues, and to declare unto us, that we must be thus governed: we should have but a pitiful cold pull of it: and because we are altogether and wholly contrary to the righteousness of God, it is impossible but that we should be grieved and troubled with whatsoever shall be said unto us.

But I have already showed, that the principal matter which God declareth unto us in his word, is this, that he protesteth how well he loveth us in alluring us unto himself, to the end we should not doubt, but that he will be our father in all and through all, and that we should be bold to come before him: that when there is any question of our salvation, and of whatsoever else we have need of, we should not doubt but that he is ready to hear all our prayers, that his hand is always liberally bent, to the end to give us whatsoever we want [*lack*]. When we shall once know this to be true, then, as I have already said, the word of God shall be pleasant unto us. Lo now why David by and by addeth, *My trust is in thy word, O Lord*. This is also, in sum, our faith, which bringeth us to the obedience of God when I say that it is faith which bringeth us into the obedience of God. I mean, that after we have understood of his good will, that we are then stirred up to yield ourselves unto him. And until such time as he hath imprinted in our hearts the testimony of his love, and the benefit which he meaneth unto us, we shall fly from him as much as may be: and as often as this word of God shall sound in our ears, so often shall it grieve and torment us, as we see how the faithless do fear, when the word of God is spoken unto them: it bringeth unto them nothing but terror and fear, as if a thief or murderer were brought before a judge. But when as we have faith to stay ourselves upon the goodness of God, to call upon him as David doth here, our succor [*help*], and shield: we may call upon him with such a confidence, as that he will never be deaf, to hear our prayers: when then we are thus assured, we are forthwith won to love him, then delight we to yield our obedience unto his law. Now in following that which we have already declared, David again addeth,

Away from me ye wicked: for I will keep the commandments of my God.

Here he speaketh of the temptations which come unto us by reason of the ungodly who allure us, as much as in them lieth to make us to contemn God, and work so many offenses as that they break all good order, yea, even to leave the world naked and bare of all goodness. Forsomuch then as we are to live here amongst contemptuous and outrageous people, who have neither faith, trust, nor truth: and that these temptations are very perilous unto us: as we see what a great number of men are corrupt by them: David saith, *Away from me ye wicked, because I keep the commandments of my God*. Here we are to note, as before I have touched, that he speaketh not this, to make recital of his worthiness, or that he

allegeth it for his power and strength to win him reputation: but speaking by the spirit of God, he admonisheth us to live holily: to wit, that if we will walk in the fear of God, and be under his yoke, we must in the first place separate ourselves from the ungodly. Now this is an easy doctrine to be learned, but it is so slenderly practiced of us, as that we had need better to think of it, than heretofore we have done. If there were a great number of offenses in David his time, which were to turn the faithful away from the fear of God, and to lead them to do wickedly, in what case then stand we now? It is very true that we are come to the full measure of all iniquity. For if we do behold at this day the states and conditions of all men, it will seem that it is impossible for the world to be worse, that the devil so possesseth both great and small in towns and villages, as that it is a very hell and tormentory to see it. Even so then, how is it possible that a faithful man can persevere to live in the fear of God and in such soundness as he hath commanded, without he stand very sure upon his guard? without he keep a good watch? and chiefly except he separate himself from so great a number of corruptions? For at this day a man can come in no company, but that the talk shall tend to the dishonoring of God, with all ungodliness: or else the talk shall be so vain, as that it shall have no good savor, yea, and to make whatsoever good seed that is in any man, who is yet teachable, to be nothing worth. And yet many times this shall not be the greatest mischief: but a man shall hear the most cursed blasphemies that may be vomited out by these grinning hellhounds at this day, who are grown to the full measure of impudency, like unto shameless harlots, discovering their villainies not only against God and all true Christianity, but do also even like mastiff curs [*large dogs*] bark against all religion. This we see, let us then come to the greatest number of those which seem to be a little more tolerable, I beseech you what lesson or fruit shall we reap by them? We shall find some of them to use abundance of wicked traffic, crafts, deceits, or else outrages, violences, oppressions and cruelties against their neighbors. Another sort shall be given to lechery, and to such beastliness: another kind shall be gluttons and such like brutish people of life and conversation. To be short, turn which way soever we will, and we shall find nothing but corruption: so that if this doctrine hath been any time necessarily to be taught, it is at this most necessary and high time, since we are come even to so full a measure and bottomless depth of iniquity, let us then be well advised to depart from all those that work

iniquity, yea and let us chase them far from us, if we will faithfully and truly serve God.

It is most sure that we must needs be conversant with the ungodly, or else depart out of this world at once: but yet we must not keep them company so familiarly, as to draw with them in the same yoke. Let us take heed that we in no ways wind ourselves in with them: but that our life and conversation be so simple and plain, as that they be never able to bring us in, and to be infected with their vices. For we hear what the holy scripture saith that we had no need of anything to corrupt good manners. For as a little leaven soureth the whole lump of dough, even so when the devil can thrust in amongst us the least drop of corruption, lo all shall be perverted and come to naught. We see not at the first sight how the devil goeth about to beguile us, and therefore we ought to be so much the more watchful. Let the ungodly complain as much as they will, as we see at this day the murmurers and grudgers do, that they think themselves to be ill dealt withal, when as we will not be partakers of their filthiness. Now we know right well that they seek none other thing but to make wicked, whatsoever is well ruled and ordered, to overthrow whatsoever hath been builded up in GOD, and to bring souls to destruction. All this we know. Now if any man keep himself from this, hereat they are all grieved. How so? They say our company is eschewed. Yea, but give you the occasion that you may be followed, seek the right means to give yourselves to God, and follow you the right way of salvation, and the better sort will not absent themselves far from you, but will rather join with you. If they shall see you ready to march forward, they will say, Let us go together: If they shall see you go before, they will come after: if they shall see you tarry behind, so that you be entered into the right way, they will stir you up to follow them. But when as we see such kind of people to go clean backward from all goodness, and desire nothing else but to lead us to wickedness, yea to cast us down headlong with them into hell mouth, whereinto they run like madmen, what should we do but separate ourselves from amongst them, and retire us from thence, as David sheweth us. And namely he saith, *For I will keep the commandments of my God.* As if he should have said, These cursed men do right well show that they have no feeling nor knowledge of everlasting life, but that they live here like to brute beasts: Nevertheless for my part I will not go one foot forward with them, but will go towards my God. And out of this saying we are to gather a good instruction, to wit that

when we see round about us all people given over to wickedness, that it seemeth the world hath conspired to make the majesty of God nothing worth, that we declare by our lives and conversation, that we have no knowledge of everlasting life: when as then we shall see such impieties, it is even to this end and purpose to withdraw us quit and clean from our God. It is very true, that these are very dangerous offenses and temptations. But let us always be sure to abide firm, and steadfast, let us continue constant in this truth which once we have received. See then what David meaneth to express in this saying, *My God*. It is true that the faithful will often say thus. But when there is any question to make these comparisons with contrary things, the scripture useth not this saying, *My God*, so that it is to declare unto us, that nothing ought to make us waver: when we see the things confused in the world, when we shall see all whatsoever to be there perverted and overthrown, that there is neither anymore law nor order, that it seemeth unto us as it were an Hell, let us not for all that be shaken: Let us stand still upon our guard, as the Prophet Abacuc (^{<350112>} Habakkuk 1:12) thereof speaketh, our faith must serve us instead of a Tower, wherein we keep good watch, and yet to say notwithstanding, no, no, God will tarry with me, and then I need not to care for the whole world. See then that no temptations ought to quail us: being even enclosed amidst the impieties and abominations of the faithless, seeing we cannot otherwise choose but to be conversant amongst them. It followeth next after,

Establish me, or stay me, in thy word that I may live: and let me not be disappointed of mine hope.

Although David protesteth here above, that he trusted in God, and that this hope proceeded unto him from his word: yet prayeth he his majesty notwithstanding to establish him. Wherein he showeth us, that we shall never have so well profited neither in faith, nor yet in hope, but that there shall be always some want [*lack*], and remnant of incredulity and weakness in us, so that whensoever there shall be any question of coming to God, yet shall we go as it were halting [*waivering*] unto him. Now if David hath made such a request, I beseech you, have not we a great deal more need to do it as well as he? It is most sure, that he never spake it hypocritically. When he saith, *Uphold me, or establish me in thy word*: this is not to make a show that his faith was imperfect, and that he need not be strengthened: no, not so, but he knew well enough his own

infirmity. If he then who was as it were an Angel of God, had need to profit in faith, and in hope, and that he had been molten, and been quite consumed had not God thoroughly confirmed and established him: I pray you what shall we do?

So then, when as God shall have already showed us this favor to be surely grounded in his word, so that we are able to say that we trust in it, let us not cease notwithstanding to continue this request and say, O Lord, establish and confirm me. For when we shall well consider our weakness, we shall find that a very small thing will quail us, if God holdeth us not up with his hand and power. And afterward let us consider how boisterous the assaults of Satan are, what violence he bringeth against us: and are we ever able to withstand them, if that we be not daily strengthened? They then which shall have conceived a true hope in the word of God, let them know that they are yet but in the midway, and that they must always march further forward, until such time as they are come to the end thereof. Which thing shall never be, until they are uncased of this flesh, and are departed out of this present life.

Seeing then we cannot go forward as of ourselves, nor yet be strengthened, without God assist us: Let us beseech him after the example of David, that he will confirm us in his word. And afterward he addeth and saith,

That then he shall live: and disappoint me not, saith he, of my hope.

When he saith that he shall live, It is to show us, that all our felicities lieth in this, that we are thoroughly confirmed and fully settled in the word of God. When this shall be so, let us then fear no more. It is very true, that we shall never be but subject to a great many of miseries and afflictions for it cannot be otherwise but that this life must be full of afflictions, and many griefs and vexations. We are then to fight whiles we live in this world. And so we shall find a great number of miseries, and yet we shall not choose but to live still, when we shall be thoroughly founded upon the word of God: that is to say, our salvation shall be sure and certain even amidst all the afflictions which may come unto us. And so shall we have wherewith to be contented. For under this word, *to live*, David comprehendeth all whatsoever concerneth the welfare and felicity of men. He saith then, Although O Lord, I shall be taken as a miserable creature, and that indeed I shall abide many troubles which shall be grievous unto me: yet shall I have true life and salvation, so I be thus established in thy

word. Now he addeth a little more, Let me not be disappointed of mine hope: wherein his meaning is to signify, that God never suffereth his Children to be disappointed, when as they put their trust in him: But yet the case so standeth, as that we must so beseech him by reason of our weakness. For although we trust in God, yet for all that we go coldly unto him, and we shall find our faith to be always too weak and feeble.

To be short, our hearts shall be so shut up, as that the graces of God, as touching ourselves, shall hardly water it by dropmeal [*drops*]. It is very true that God for his part poureth upon us his graces abundantly: but we therein are nothing capable for the receiving of them. Wherefore, we are not worthy to taste and feel his aid in our need. What should this then be, if he surmounted not our hope, to help that which therein is wanting [*lacking*]? And besides we know that the Devil would soon overthrow all our hope, were it not that it is very well kept by an heavenly power, as also Saint Peter maketh thereof mention. For when he speaketh of faith, he saith not that men are the Guardians or keepers of it. For if that were so, it should oftentimes be violently taken from them. But that is a treasure which God keepeth in his own hands, and that by his own invincible power and strength. See also why our Lord and Savior Christ in the tenth of John, for our comfort saith, That the father who hath us in his hand, and through whom we are committed unto him to be kept, is mightier and greater than they all. Accordingly then as we know, the power of God to be infinite, so must we also assure ourselves of our salvation. And therefore it is, that we are to require of God as David hath done, that we be not disappointed of our hope.

Now in sum when we make such requests, it is to the end that the promises of God should be so much the more certain and better ratified unto us. See then what God saith unto us. Fear you not when as you shall put your trust in me, for I will neither deceive, nor abuse you, nor yet shall you be destitute of mine aid: but be you assured that my hand shall always be stretched out to succor [*help*] you. We have this promise made unto us which can never fail us. Now it behooveth that it be ratified and sealed in our hearts. And how is that? That in our prayers and supplications, we beseech God to accomplish and perform that which he hath promised, which shall be instead of a seal sealed within, to the end we might have such a certainty as is requisite: and anon after God showeth in effect, that he speaketh not in vain unto us. Lo, say I, what we ought to note of the

accord that is betwixt the promises of God and the prayers which we make unto him in desiring to make us feel by experience, that he is faithful in whatsoever he speaketh. Now David by and by addeth,

Hold thou me up and I shall be safe: yea and my delight shall be continually in thy statutes.

Now the word which he useth, signifieth sometimes to meditate, sometimes to speak: and therefore it may be said I will recite over thy Statutes. But the most proper sense and meaning is, I will meditate or study in thy Statutes, and therein take delight. Instead that before he hath said, *Establish me O Lord, or stay me in thy word*: Here he saith, *Hold me up*. Now this is no simple and plain prayer which here he maketh, but having spoken of the word of God, he speaketh of the power which he showeth towards his faithful. It is very true, that when we think that we have not one foot of ground to stand upon, that there is nothing but the sea under us, and darkness over us, that we should be as it were in a bottomless pit, and overwhelmed: yet we ought to stay and settle ourselves on the word of God. But when as our hope shall be thus exercised, and that we have done God this honor, to hold him for faithful, although we do not perceive any succor [*help*] to come from him: he will add a second grace, to wit, he will give us his hand, to be relieved by his power, and to be upholden by him, and will preserve us all the days of our life. Lo here then the meaning of David, when he desired God to stay him in his word, he saith, Hold me up, yea by thy hand and power. So then, let us learn to fly unto God, when as we would be in any good safety. For without it, as I have already said, we may very well for awhile assure ourselves: and think no evil can come unto us: But when as we shall be thus foolishly persuaded, to say peace and assurance, destruction must needs suddenly come upon us, and we to be utterly confounded. (<520503> 1 Thessalonians 5:3) But after we have waited and seen God to have appeared in very deed, let us learn to seek all our assurance in his word, to walk in his commandments, to take our whole delight in them, and in them to bestow all our study. In sum, David in this place declareth, That when as God shall have bestowed any benefits upon us, that we have proved his mercy, and fatherly affection: It is to confirm us more and more in his word, to tie all our senses thereto: to learn to forsake all vanities, which hinder and occupy our spirits in these wild affections wherewith we are carried hither and thither. That we then being retired from them might be

inflamed with such a zeal as David was to meditate in the commandments of God, and in them to take our whole delight. Now it followeth,

Thou hast trodden down all them that depart from thy statutes: for their deceit is vain.

Here in this place David considereth of the judgments of God, which he executeth upon the wicked: howbeit we are not always able to perceive them. For we shall oftentimes see (as it were against all God's forebode, as we say) the wicked to bear authority, and in such sort to triumph, as that they think it cannot be possibly amended, and suppose themselves to be the most blessed people in the world. And then for the while we shall see all things go clean against the hair. But after that the Lord God shall long time patiently have abiden [*endured*] all these abusers of his merciful loving kindness: it cannot be chosen but that at the last he must utterly destroy them. And so let us consider not to be so blockish as to forget the judgments of God: but let them rather instruct us after the example of David, to walk in his fear and to love his Commandments.

Now he saith in the first place: *Thou hast trodden the ungodly under foot, and all them that depart from thy statutes, for they imagine but deceit*, saith he. He addeth one reason, which we ought thoroughly to weigh: For what is the cause that the ungodly hearken not unto God, and so outrage against him beyond all measure: For if at any time GOD moveth them to repentance, through the admonitions of his word, they do nothing else but scoff and laugh at him: yea they are so shameless, as it is pitiful to see? What is the cause of this? It is because the wicked have their hearts fast shut up in their back warehouses, thinking thereby to beguile GOD, to escape his hand through their starting holes, and subtle devices, and they seeing themselves to be brazen faced, to cover their villainies before men, think that they shall easily enough put off the plagues and punishments of God.

See how the wicked do increase in their wiles, that they are even come to this point that they fear nothing at all of whatsoever they ought to be afraid. And this is it why the Prophet Isaiah (<230219> Isaiah 2:19) also saith, That they dig Caves in the earth for their defense, thinking that when their eyes are shut up, that their sins shall be no more seen, and that God shall not be able to find them. Accursed be you (saith he,) which thus dig deep pits.

Now David saith in this place, that all the subtlety of the ungodly is nothing else but vanity. It shall be forsooth [*in truth*] to great purpose for them, when (as they think) they shall through their hypocrisies shroud themselves and cover their wiles and subtleties: yet shall their devices be but vanity: for they shall be taken in the trip, as it is said in the other place, yea and in the end shall be fast shut up in all their deceits and inventions. Hereupon he saith,

Thou hast taken away all the ungodly of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

Here David declareth unto us in brief by his example, That when God punisheth the Godless, he layeth his hand upon them, in such sort as that we may perceive that he showeth himself to be their Judge, to the end that we thereby should be the rather stirred up to love his Commandments, and to be ruled by them in bestowing all our desire and affection upon them. See then how the judgments and corrections which God layeth upon the ungodly ought to profit us. And this is it why Saint Paul in exhorting the faithful to walk holily, and to abstain from all pollution saith, Take heed that you be not beguiled through vain words: For, for such things the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience. (<490506> Ephesians 5:6)

Now it is true, that before God hath executed his judgments we ought already to be instructed to walk in his fear. But when God showeth us openly how he putteth to his helping hand, it is good reason that we should be so much the more attentive to his Judgments. And lo why the Prophet Isaiah saith, (<235917> Isaiah 59:17, 18) That when God executeth his Judgments, that the inhabitants of the earth might learn, that he doth it righteously. Moreover, let us consider how slack we are to come unto God, that he is fain [*willing*] to draw us perforce unto him. Ought not we even to run unto him, so often as he lifteth up his finger unto us? So often as he shall open his holy mouth to instruct, and show us the way of salvation, should we slack and defer it from day to day? But what? Mark the perverseness, and that not only of the most wicked, but even of the holiest and perfectest which are infected with this vice. See what David saith, that he had need to be pricked forward like an Ass: yea even David himself, who was the most forward [*earnest*] of all other according to the graces which he had received. If it hath so fallen out with him, by reason of

the rest of the imperfection which he had, that he was spurred, and his flesh pricked like an Ass: what shall become of us which have scarcely received one drop of the spirit of God, in respect and comparison of this holy man? And so let us consider to be the more watchful over ourselves so often as God sheweth us any token that he is Judge, and calleth the ungodly to an account: that at the least we be stirred up to run unto him for refuge, and to love his word. Now in the meantime, to conclude David addeth,

My flesh trembleth for fear of thee: and I am afraid because of thy judgments.

Here David setteth down two things which seem at the first sight not to agree together: For it may be said, that this fear whereof he speaketh can no way agree with the fear of the commandments of God: but yet there is a sweet harmony between the one and the other. And why so? For as the faithless in fearing God wax desperate, and are so thrown down, that they can never have that boldness to come near unto him: Even so on the contrary side, there is a frank and free fear in those which are governed by the spirit of God, which beareth a reverence unto his word, to make them tremble before it. For by the judgments which David here speaketh of, he meaneth not the punishments only which God executeth, but now he treateth as he doth throughout the whole Psalm, either of Statutes or else of ordinances, which are to direct our life: as also the Prophet Isaiah saith, (<236602> Isaiah 66:2) that the faithful tremble at the voice of God: that they conceive his incomprehensible majesty in his word, and thereupon are humbled: But yet they cease not for all that, to come boldly unto GOD, knowing that he will be their merciful father and desireth nothing else but to receive them. This humble fear then, may well be conjoined with the love of God, agree with faith, and with a taste which we might take in the word of God, in giving ourselves wholly thereto. But the fear, which serveth to none other end but to astonish the wicked, which only feel an hell in their consciences, and yet have no taste of the grace of God: this fear I say serveth to none other purpose, but to shut up the gate against these miserable accursed people, without all hope of salvation. Now David speaking of the fear of the word of God, leadeth us to a deeper and a more weighty consideration. For his meaning is to show unto us, how that God is our father and Savior, and that he freely draweth us unto himself, as already he hath declared.

According to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us to feel the sweetness of his word, as his servant David hath been thereon thoroughly settled: to the end we might have such a fervent affection to it, as that it might cause us to forget all the desires of this world, wherein we are too much plagued: and that we might cut off all the superfluities of our flesh: to the end we might be dedicated in all holiness unto our God, and to be confirmed more and more in his service. And that being once brought by him into the way of salvation, although we must walk in this world, because we are compassed about with so many dangers: yet that he will always stretch forth his hand unto us, to keep and hold us in his protection unto the end. That he will not only grant us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the world, etc.

THE SIXTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

AIN

- 121** I have executed judgment and justice: give me not over unto mine oppressors.
- 122** Answer for thy servant in that which is good: and let not the proud do me wrong.
- 123** Mine eyes have failed in looking for thy salvation: and for thy just promise.
- 124** Deal with thy servant according unto thy loving mercies: and teach me thy statutes.
- 125** I am thy servant, grant me therefore understanding: that I may know thy testimonies.
- 126** It is time for the Lord too lay to his hand: for they have destroyed thy law.
- 127** Therefore love I thy Commandments, above gold: yea above more fine gold.
- 128** Therefore I esteem all thy commandments most just: and all false ways I utterly abhor.

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE oftentimes admonisheth us, that if we will have God to stand with us against our enemies, we must walk perfectly and soundly: For if we will be like the wicked, rendering evil for evil, it is in vain for us to hope that God will be on our side, either yet favor us: But it is meet that he be judge on both parts, when as they incline thus to do evil. Would we have God to be our warrant and defender? Do we believe that he will have compassion on us, when we are troubled and violently oppressed? Let our consciences be pure and clean before him, because we know that he taketh upon himself this title, to be the maintainer of all those which are unjustly oppressed, and also of the miserable and afflicted. Now if we

have such wicked hearts, to enforce us to wicked dealing, how shall God put forth his hand to aid us? For then must he intermeddle himself with a naughty cause, which is an impossibility, and altogether contrary to his nature. See then wherefore it is said in this place,

I have executed judgment and justice: give me not over unto mine oppressors.

David here maketh a request unto God, that he might not be delivered into the hands of his enemies which sought to destroy him. Now for the obtaining of that which he demanded, he maketh this protestation, That he hath walked rightly before God, yea, even with them which went about to destroy him. Moreover these two words, *Righteousness and Judgment*: when they go together, import as much as to do wrong to none: but to proceed in equity, and in good faith (as we say) for to maintain every good cause, and not to suffer any wrong to be done: For it is not enough for us to abstain from hurting and grieving of our neighbor. Neither is it enough for us to go about to discharge us of our duties: But when we shall see any man unjustly trodden down, and a good cause go to wrack, we ought to oppose ourselves against every such wicked act and injury, and as it were to take part with God, who as he is the commender of all equity, so will he also have us to maintain it forasmuch as we are his children. We see then in sum, the protestation which David here maketh, that is, that he did not only abstain from hurting his neighbors, and go about to render to every man, that which was his: But over and besides all this he set himself against all violences and extortions, which were committed. He would not suffer the innocent to be oppressed to be put forth for a prey or spoil, but pained himself to do what in him lay to help them. When we may be bold to make such a protestation in truth, Let us not doubt but that God will stretch forth his hand: that if men went about to trouble us, yea and that we were as it were in great danger to fall into their hands, Let us not doubt but that God will have pity on us and aid us. For this Prayer which David here maketh was not made at adventure: but the holy Ghost put it into his mouth, to the end to teach us to walk (as he hath done) so soundly and perfectly. And hereupon, if men should lift themselves up against us, and use all the outrages and malice they can against us, Let us have recourse unto God, and be assured that he will be our defender and protector.

Now we very well see by this, that David made no mention of his merits unto God, as if he should have said, I have right well deserved, O Lord, that thou shouldest keep and defend me against the wicked, because I have done that which is lawful and right. David spake it not to any such end. But he had regard (as I have already said) to the goodness of God and to his promises which are contained in the law, and imprinted in his heart: to wit, That God will uphold all those that are unjustly trodden down, and always help those which are outraged and injured: Because that they for their part have taken great pain to be at peace with all the world: that they have not given occasion for any to grieve and torment them, and yet that the ungodly have risen up against them. See what a regard David had. Now he addeth,

Answer thou for thy servant in that which is good: and let not the proud do me wrong.

The saying that David here useth, signifieth sometimes a man to give his word, as we say in this country: that is, to become a man's surety, and his pledge, and some there are which do so expound it: but the true sense and most natural meaning of it is this, that David prayeth that he might be given to do good and to delight therein. Wherein we see this to be a work of GOD, and a grace proceeding from him, when we shall desire to be given to do good, to that we have pleasure in it, and do taste thereof. For this is very certain, that notwithstanding that men follow the very inclination of their flesh, to hate the good and love the evil: and when anything shall be told them of God, we see how it maketh them Melancholic and sorrowful. So then, it is God that must change and reform us, or else we shall never attain to this affection here spoken of, to take pleasure in well doing, and so to love it.

Now David was no hypocrite, to make a fair show, to desire a thing at the hands of God, which was in his own hand: But he knew this to be the manner of men, that it was impossible for him to come to the full perfection of that, except it were given unto him from above. See here in sum, what we have to learn and keep by this. For when he addeth that the wicked (or the proud) outrage against him, he sheweth that when we shall be so given to well doing, we must trust to the protection of God according to that which I have already said. Let us also note that David in this verse confirmeth the matter already handled. He hath heretofore very well said,

O Lord, I have done the thing that is lawful and right: and yet he ceaseth not to beseech God to grant him such courage and strength. And how is that? Forsooth [*in truth*], that he would increase it in him, and give him the grace to stand steadfastly therein unto the end. We see then that whensoever we shall be the most desirous in the world, to follow sincerity and equity: we must understand for all that, that we may yet be amended, and that we are nothing near that perfection which is requisite.

Wherefore it remaineth that we desire this performance with the graces that David hath here demanded: Thy graces O Lord, had need to increase in us, grant us therefore that we may come to the accomplishment of them. We have O Lord walked purely so far forth as thou hast given us the power: But we fly unto thy promises: to the end thou mightest make us to persevere in well doing. See, I say, how we ought to crave the thing at the hands of God which he hath already given us, and that we have received from him: that is, that it would please him to conserve and increase it, considering that we are very far from such a perfection as is most requisite: in such sort as that we never decline from well doing, which we should do if he shook his hand. See then to what end this petition tendeth which is here placed.

Now we must turn again to the matter, to wit, that David here repeateth, that they which have been thus perfect, and have loved well doing, should be under the hand and safeguard of God, never to be delivered into the power of their enemies, so that the proud shall never be able to do them that exceeding great wrong which they had pretended: Not that they shall not be assailed, neither yet that the wicked will not craftily go about to work them mischief: but yet so, as that God will be their buckler, and defend them with his mighty power. And namely he saith, *The proud*. Because that they which are our enemies, and make war against us, have such an unbridled liberty, as that they think neither God nor yet any other living creature is able to stay them, but that they will bring to pass whatsoever they have determined. Since then it is so, that we have to deal with such kind of people as are both stout and cruel, who lift themselves up against all truth, that neither the fear of GOD, nor yet natural honesty can stop them, but that they will destroy whether it be right or wrong as we say: for this cause David saith, *O Lord let not the proud do me wrong*. And so as often as we shall see this boldness in men, to lift themselves up, and to vomit out their pestilent malice against us, let us fly unto GOD, and

beseech him to hold his holy hand over us, and to repress so great and insolent arrogancy. This being done, although men for their parts make such attempts, yet shall they never bring them to pass. For God will hold them back, as it were with a sharp brake.

Now if this petition came ever in season, it cometh now at this day in very good season. For we see how many the enemies of God are which bend themselves against the Gospel: we see the malice and obstinacy throughout the whole world. And so, it is not possible but that a man which feareth God must needs be assailed and troubled on all sides. Seeing then that men are so furious to wrong us, so much the rather ought we to be careful to make this request unto God with David, yea and that with such a confidence, as that we should not doubt but that when we are under his protection, he shall be sufficient to maintain and defend us. Now it followeth:

Mine eyes have failed in looking for thy salvation: and for thy just promise.

We shall not need to stand long upon this sentence, because it hath been already handled here before. David only protesteth, that he hath looked for such help from God, as he desired. And that is to show, that he prayed not hypocritically, but faithfully. And this is a thing which we ought thoroughly to mark. For we think ourselves to have done very substantially and sufficiently, when as we have pronounced and rightly placed our words in the time of prayer: but if we shall have spoken never so loud, and with never so full and open mouth, and yet have empty or fast closed up hearts, empty I say, and void of all trust and fast closed up, it is a most manifest token that we never surely looked for any succor [*help*] at the hands of God: and therefore behold why of very right all our prayers are unprofitable and to no purpose. And so, when as we will beseech the Lord our god to take our cause into his hand to help us, let us take this with us which David here sheweth in this place by his example: to wit, let us attend and look for our salvation and deliverance from God: Yea and let us consider of that which is said, and according to the word of thy righteousness. For by this he signifieth to us, upon whom we must look and cast our eyes, when as we would thoroughly stir up ourselves unto such an hope: to wit, unto the promises which God hath given us: for if this be not in us, it can never be said to be any more hope, but a vain imagination which we have forged to ourselves: for to hope or trust in

God, is to be established in his promises. For if a man imagine a thing which seemeth good in his own sight, and after, leaneth thereto, this man trusteth not in God but in himself. So then, if we look to have any help at the hands of God, we must have a sure testimony of his will, we must be sure that he loveth us, and that when he loveth us, he will not fail us in our need. And how shall we be assured of this? It shall be by the only means of his word. Now because men are so hard to be brought to rest themselves upon God, and not to content them with his promises, David saith these promises to be just, according to the word of thy righteousness, saith he. It is not in vain that he thus entitleth the word of God. And why so? For he thinketh that if he have but his bare word, that it is enough for him. And why so? For God maketh not unto us liberal and large promises as men do, and then deceiveth us. His words are just. And as he saith (^{<191206>}Psalm 12:6) in another place, his words are like to pure silver which is tried in the fire, and hath been seven times purified in the furnace. Even so is it with all the promises of God, we ought to be very assured of them: Because he is faithful and just, and that there is nothing but righteousness and truth in all that he saith. Now David goeth further on: for he speaketh not of a simple affection: But saith, that his eyes have failed, as if he should have said, that he was hardly so resolved and not without great pain. By this he sheweth us, that his faith was so troubled, as that he knew not what would become of him, that he had great and strong conflicts, that he was in marvelous anguishes, and troubles, so that he was as a man half dead: and yet that he was armed and fenced amidst all these hard cases, with the hope and trust which he had in God. See what the words import which he useth, that his eyes failed for the health, and succor [*help*], which he looked for at the hands of God. Will we then have a right hope, and such an one as God alloweth of? Let us then not trust only when we are quiet and at rest, nor yet be thrown down by any temptations: but when as we shall be in our extreme troubles that we know not at all what shall become of us, that we shall see nothing else but death before us and round about us: here upon, I say, let us always be firm and constant, trusting that God will be our savior, since he hath so promised us. Lo how we may make this protestation as David here doeth. Now it followeth,

Deal with thy servant according to thy loving mercies: and teach me thy statutes.

Here it may very well seem that David maketh two petitions, but yet they tend both to one end. For in the first part of this verse, he sheweth, how he desireth, and trusteth to be heard: to wit, through the mere mercy of God. As if he should have said, O Lord, teach me thy statutes: and teach me them, not for that I think myself worthy of them, but because thou art pitiful and knowest my need, and hast promised also to help all those which call upon thee. Deal then, O Lord, with thy servant according to thy mercy, to the end thou mightest teach me. By this we see that, which I have already touched: to wit, that this verse containeth not two petitions, but one only. And yet notwithstanding David so setteth it forth, in declaring that when he cometh to God to pray him to teach him, that he doeth it not to the end that he presumeth of his merits, neither yet to make vaunt that he deserveth anything of him. Wherefore then? Forsooth [*in truth*] because he looketh and trusteth to the mere mercy of God. And in very deed, this is a far more precious thing than that which David here demandeth, to be taught the statutes of God, to say that it hangeth not upon our merits, neither yet of any worthiness of ours. It is a question to know the way of everlasting life, and wherein it consisteth and lieth. It is very meet then that God do it, because he is pitiful: that he use his goodness towards us, and looketh to none but unto himself, because he is good, and that it pleaseth him to put to his helping hand to those which are his. Now although he hath here spoken of an excellent thing, yet of all the petitions which we make, were they the least in the world, we always ought to lay this foundation, yea, and to stay upon it, that is, upon the mercy of God. If we should only demand but a drop of water or a morsel of bread, we must not think to obtain, by reason of our desert, as if God paid unto us our wages: but his mercy must always go before, for that is the cause why we receive so many benefits at his hand, and especially that we are taught his statutes.

Now it followeth, *I am thy servant: grant me therefore understanding: that I may know thy testimonies.*

This is a more large exposition of the verse going before: he hath said, O Lord, deal with me according to thy mercies, and now he saith, I am thy servant. And how is this? it should seem that there is some diversity betwixt these two sayings. For doth not David in calling himself the servant of God, set down before, what service he hath done him? Now let us note that for the first place that it is not said for any brag, nor that he

was so able a man to attain unto any such worthiness, neither yet that he deserved to be preferred before others: he meaneth not that this honor appertained [*pertains*] unto him of right. What then? It is as much as if he had said, O Lord, I am thine. Now, cometh it of ourselves, that we are the servants of God? have we obtained this estate, or degree as of ourselves? Alas it is very far off: for we have it of free gift. Since the time that we were the bondslaves of Satan, God hath taken us unto himself, to be of his household and of his number. In that then that we are his, it is not because we have deserved it, but because he hath called us unto him of his free mercy and goodness. And indeed, if a man who was first of a base condition, serveth a noble man, he will not say that he was worthy of the service of such a master, nor yet that he was put unto him therefore: but will thus say, sir, I confess that you have received me into your service of your mere favor and grace and have done me the honor which appertained [*pertained*] not unto me. And thus should we most wretched worms of the earth say, Lo God, who ceaseth not still to do us good: and yet we will be so arrogant, as to determine to attribute unto ourselves I know not what, as though he had herein nothing to do with us. Now I beseech you tell me whither is this to go? And that which is more, let us consider a little, what service it is that God might draw and pluck out from us, to do unto his majesty. If he shall leave us unto ourselves to be as we are, about what shall he employ us, and what service can we do him? For lo, both we and all that is within us are altogether given to wickedness. We cannot once think any good: how shall we then do any? Next of all, David meaneth not, that he being called to serve God, was able to discharge himself thereof: for he felt himself utterly unable to do it. And so as touching this place, we must not think that he meant to make any vaunt of the service which he had done to God, but it is as much as if he had said, O Lord, thou hast showed me that favor and grace to be one of thy number, and hast received me into it, through thy bounty and goodness. I beseech thee therefore to continue the same thy goodness and to heap grace upon grace in me, as in that behalf thou art wanted to do.

Let us now come unto his petition. He saith, *O grant me understanding , that I may keep thy testimonies.*

We have already said, that he handled that which he had lately spoken. For by these words he meaneth, that we should be always like beasts, until such time as God had opened unto us the spirit or understanding of

humane things. Very well, yet shall we learn them according to our natural disposition. It is very true, that it shall be according to such measure, as God shall therein give it unto us: but yet it is as it were after a natural manner. Moreover, when we shall talk of the secrets of the heavenly life, and of the wisdom which God showeth unto us in his word: there must all men confess, that all their senses fail them, and that all their reason is dead and buried. What is then to be done? Let us come to the remedy which David here giveth us: to wit, that we desire of God to have understanding, that we might become very well learned. For without that, we must continue and remain still in our beastliness. And this prayer answereth and very well agreeth with that which we have seen in the verse next before, as that matter hath been already touched. Now it followeth soon after,

It is time for the Lord to lay to his hand: for they have destroyed thy law.

Here David maketh a petition against the contemners of God, and transgressors of his law: saying, That it is time for the Lord to lay his hand, since that he seeth his law to be so destroyed, that there is no accompt [*account*] made of it. It is very true, that David greatly desired the conversion of all men, and by little and little their salvation. And it is no doubt but that he prayed to God with a good affection, that it would please him to bring to repentance all those which he see to be lead unto wickedness: but yet he was not without this zeal which we see in this place: that is, that God would execute his judgments upon the obstinate, and upon all those which were altogether stubborn. And see also how we ought to temper our affections, that when we see men go to do mischief, let us have compassion upon them: if we see them given to sin and wickedness, if we see them to be in the way of perdition, let us travail to bring them again into the right way, to procure their salvation as much as in us lieth, and we ought to desire and to pray for it, have we had any such affection? Then let us never cease to pray unto God, to stretch forth his hand upon those his enemies whom he knoweth to be altogether desperate. It is very true we must not condemn them: But we ought rather, as I have already said, to use the effect of charity towards all, and pray unto God that he would save them: but because there are a great number which are stubborn and without amendment, we ought to beseech God, to show himself a judge over those whom he knoweth to be such. And why so? Because they draw the simple and ignorant unto wickedness, and are an offense unto them, because also they make the word of God to be evil

spoken of, and are the occasion that liberty is given to all evil. When then we see the name of God to be evil spoken of, that there is no reckoning made of his word, that all doctrine is cast underfoot, we are to pray unto him to remedy it. It is time, saith he, for God to lay to his hand: for they have destroyed thy law, O Lord. He here speaketh in the third person: and after directeth himself to God. And why doth he so? Although that this order is not always to be observed, that he which prayeth unto God is to continue in one selfsame person: yet it is so, that in this place, it seemeth that David meant to speak with a greater vehemency, when he saith, O Lord, lay to thy hand. As if he should have showed, what the office of God is: for if he had simply said, It is time O Lord, that thou didst look unto the matter, because thy law is destroyed: this had not been spoken with the like vehemency, as when he said, it is time that thou O Lord, lay to thy hand: for by this saying, he declareth what the office of God is: to wit, to be judge of the world: and beseecheth him to lay forth his justice, in punishing the offenses, and horrible wickednesses committed here below: that after he had suffered them a long time, he desireth him to provide for the punishing of all those which had been so obstinate, and hard hearted against him. Now by this we are admonished, when as we see that the law of God is as it were utterly cast underfoot, his doctrine to be a reproach amongst men, and all right and equity overthrown, so that there is nothing but confusion throughout: that then we ought to pray unto God the more earnestly, to the end it might be known that he doth his office. If this ever were necessary, it is at this present most necessary. For let us consider the estate of the world I beseech you, what havoc is there made of the law of God? Are we not come to the very extremity, to contemn all doctrine of salvation?

When God at this day speaketh unto us, what ear give we unto him? and how reverently? See here, he hath bestowed upon us a singular grace at this day, when as his word hath been once again published. Let us behold our unthankfulness? Let us lay all these things together, and we shall see that the majesty of God his word is no more esteemed than the very peel of an onion, as we say. See I pray you too what a point we are grown and come: even unto such an horrible and brutish impiety as is most lamentable. Moreover, let us look into the manner of our life and the order of government: shall we find either justice, loyalty, reason, or modesty? no: but clean contrary, we shall see the whole state of our life, and order of

government, full of treason, malice, cruelty, and violence: all full of blasphemy against God: plenty of drunkenness, gluttony, and dissoluteness: store of lechery and all other villainies whatsoever: To be short, it seemeth that the whole world hath conspired to exceed even unto the highest degree of wickedness. When then we see the law of God to be thus overthrown every manner of way, ought not we to give our minds a great deal more than we do, to beseech God to take order, and to provide for the same. Now when we shall have such a zeal to pray unto God, as we see that David had, let us not doubt but that he will remedy all the confusions which we see to be at this day. And now he concludeth, and saith,

Therefore love I thy commandments: above gold yea above most fine gold.

Therefore I esteem all thy commandments most just: and all false ways I utterly abhor.

See here what a notable protestation he maketh, and such one as we ought thoroughly to mark. For when David hath said here before, that the wicked have destroyed the law: yea, and speaking of no small number of men, but as of all in general, seeing all the world to exceed and to be corrupt: he addeth for this cause, O Lord, I have loved thy commandments, above all gold, yea and above most fine gold. I have loved them in all and through all, and have utterly abhorred all false ways.

Now I have said that this is an excellent protestation, considering the circumstances. For if David had dwelt amongst the godly faithful ones, which had served God, and walked in his fear: then it might have been said, that it was an easy matter for him to have conformed himself unto them. For although we see men always inclined to evil, yet they are many times reduced and framed to goodness through good examples. But I pray you in what time was it that David lived? Forsooth [*in truth*] in such a time as that he was compassed with the despisers of God, he see nothing but following of evil throughout the world, he see as it were a mad and devilish impiety, he see everything full of all infection: to be short, there was neither justice nor equity, no fear of God, nor yet any religion. And yet notwithstanding he saith, that he loved the word of God, and his commandments, and that he made more accompt [*account*] of them, than of all the most precious things in the world. Let us then learn to love the word of God, not only when as we shall be stirred up by those which keep

us company to serve God all with one accord: but also when we shall be amongst perverse and forward people, that we be as it were in hell amidst all the devils, yet to persevere in this affection, and not to leave following of the word of God: that whatsoever offenses we shall see committed by men, that they withdraw us not from the love which we ought to bear to the word of God. See then what we must keep in mind for the understanding of this text.

And after, we are to note for the last verse, that David saying, that he loved the commandments of God, saith not that he did it by halves, as we many times do: but I, saith he, have loved thy commandments above all things. As if he should have said, I am not like unto those, O Lord, which come to serve thee by halves: but in all and through all, I love whatsoever that thou hast commanded. And after this manner it is that we must also do: for it is not in us to divide and make a partition of the word of God, neither yet can we make it. And therefore, let us be well advised to obey God, in whatsoever he shall command us, and to love his commandments from the first to the last: and not to do as a great many do, which will be contented to receive the Gospel, forsooth [*in truth*], so far forth as it will serve their turn and pleasure them. Or else, if they pass over this or that: and think themselves to give God great credit, when as they shall give him authority over them in some one point: But if soon after, they shall be anything grieved, they will never overslip that point. Nevertheless we are there admonished to the contrary, that it is not for us, as I have already said to make a partition of that which god hath conjoined: but we must yield our obedience unto him even to the full: that although whatsoever he saith or commandeth us to do, be hard and sharp to our nature, yet let us take it in good part with a gentle and mild mind: and say with David, O Lord I have loved thy commandments which thou hast given me, not in one, two, nor three points, but in all and through all. According to this holy doctrine, let us humbly prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good god, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us better to feel our miseries, to the end we might be grieved with them and to seek for remedy at his hands: That in renouncing whatsoever that is in us, and whatsoever power and strength we think ourselves to have, let us beseech him to fortify us, and so to enlighten us with his holy spirit, as that we may more and more draw near unto him: And as he hath already begun to enlighten us, that it would please him to

cause us to see his brightness better than we have done heretofore, until such time as we shall come unto his kingdom, where we shall perfectly see that which now we do but half know. And although this world be so perverse and wicked, as that we might take occasion to withdraw us from the right way: notwithstanding let us beseech him, that he will always uphold us with a mighty and strong hand, to the end we may stand steadfastly in that whereunto he hath called us, and never decline from it whatsoever came of us. That it would please, etc.

THE SEVENTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

PHE

- 129** Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.
- 130** The entrance into thy words: sheweth light, and giveth understanding unto the simple.
- 131** I opened my mouth and panted: because I loved thy commandments.
- 132** Look thou upon me and be merciful unto me: as thou use to do unto those that love thy name.
- 133** Order my steps in thy word: and let no wickedness have dominion over me.
- 134** O deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men: and I will keep thy commandments.
- 135** Shew the light of thy countenance upon thy servant: and teach me thy statutes.
- 136** Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water: because men keep not thy law.

IN VERY DEED the sentence contained in this first verse of the eight, should be a very ordinary and common thing with us. And in very deed there is no man but will confess it to be true: but yet it is so very far off, as that there is none of us all which hath the feeling thereof in himself: that is, that the law of God is a wonderful wisdom: for we do see how it is contemned and despised. It is very true that God in all the holy scripture speaketh sharply enough and also humbly: but it is for this cause that he would fit himself to our simple capacities. And because that we are blockish and earthly, it is meet that he should so plainly speak as that we might understand him. Nevertheless, in this speech, which carrieth no great glory

with it, nor yet is colored with any worldly eloquence, are certain secrets, which may very well ravish us with marvelous astonishment. And indeed, the very cause why these faithless, and contemners of God, so little esteem of the doctrine of salvation, is, for that they being brutish, never tasted of that, which it meaneth to utter. See then whereupon this pride and ungodliness ariseth which we see at this day to be in the greater part of the world, so that there are very few which bear that reverence to the word of God as they ought: for it is an old saying, no man can love a thing, before such time as he knoweth it. They then which are so blockish, as that they have neither sense nor judgment rightly to discern of the truth of God, slip it over, yea, and tread such an inestimable treasure as it is under their feet. But they which have once known, what it is that God teacheth us in the holy scripture, may very well say with David, that they are wonderful things, and so high mysteries as that we ought to wonder at them, and do deserve that every one of us should wholly apply his mind thereto. Now he saith, *That for this cause his soul did keep the testimonies of God.* This importeth a greater matter, than if he had simply said, I have kept them: for he signifieth that he hath kept them (as we say) with an hearty affection. And lo, how indeed, we ought to esteem of the doctrine of God: it is not only to have an opinion, that it is excellent, and worthy to be had in sovereign and high honor: but that we should be very earnestly touched therewith that we might have such a fear and an obedience rooted in our hearts, as that the saying of the Prophet Isaiah (<236602> Isaiah 66:2) might be fulfilled in us, that we might tremble at the voice of our God. Lo here in effect the content of the first verse, of these eight, which we are now about to handle: that is to say, that the faithful whose eyes God hath opened, might know, that the holy scripture containeth no common doctrine, but such a wise doctrine as is worthy to be revered and honored all the world over. Now when as we shall once have known that God layeth wide open his heavenly mysteries in his law, it is good reason that we for our part be touched, and moved to hearken unto our God when he speaketh unto us: yea and that in such sort, as that he handleth no small and light matters, and of no importance: but openeth unto us his mysteries, which are far beyond our reach and capacities, except that of his infinite goodness, he bare us that favor to fit himself to our understandings. Now David addeth in the second verse:

The entrance into thy words, showeth light and giveth understanding unto the most simple.

Wherein he signifieth, that if we understand not all the mysteries of God which he showeth unto us in his word, we must not straightways therefore say, that the doctrine is unprofitable unto us. Why so? Because the only favor which we shall feel therein shall profit us. It is not needful that we be great clerks nor perfect doctors to receive some benefit and edifying from the word of God: for we cannot have so small an entrance into it, but that we shall become already both wise and well advised. Lo here in sum the meaning of the second verse. And it is a place which we very well ought to observe: for like as there are a great sort of people which make no account [account] of the word of God, because they never tasted of the mysteries therein contained: even so also there are some which excuse themselves and say that the word of God is too dark and hard, insomuch that it maketh them to fly from it, and dare not come near it.

Alas will one say, I am a very ignorant soul, or, I am not so sharp witted as indeed a man would judge: or else, I am but a simple scholar, and therefore cannot conceive of so high mysteries. Lo here what excuses a number of men will make, because they would not be acquainted with the word of God. No doubt of it we shall have of those people which will use such excuses and startingholes, only because they would be ignorant, and have their eyes fast closed up, although they have the light of God to shine upon them. Again there are another sort which will keep themselves clean away from the word of God, fearing that if they should once enter into it, that it would be like unto a maze wherein they should be held fast in and so be utterly confounded. And therefore, let us for this cause thoroughly consider the saying of David: to wit, that although we attain not unto such a perfection, as that we are able to understand and know whatsoever is written in the holy scriptures, and to be so exercised therein even at the full, as that nothing hath escaped us: but let us be thoroughly acquainted with the law, and have the very true and undoubted exposition and meaning of the Prophets, yea and let us know and understand the Gospel at our fingers' ends: and yet although, I say we have not attained unto this excellency, let us not for all this cease to be enlightened. Let us then boldly approach, when as we see that God calleth and allureth us, and is ready to teach us his word: and let us know that when we shall have never so little a taste thereof, that it shall be for our salvation, so that we shall not be

altogether blind, but that we may be able to know which is the right way unto everlasting life. To be short, we shall be enlightened as David speaketh of in this place. And hereby we may see, what a great abuse at this day reigneth in this point in Popery, when as they shall put by the greater part of Christendom from the reading of the holy scripture under a color, it should thereby be utterly confounded: and again being never able once to come to have any taste thereof, that it is overhigh a thing for them to meddle with. Now, this is to make the holy Ghost a manifest liar, who hath spoken and pronounced by the mouth of David, that which we have already heard, That the first entrance into the word of God showeth light: insomuch that so soon as we shall have understood but one only sentence thereof, the same to be already even enough to lead and guide us to everlasting life. Now sithens [*since*] then we see how the devil possesseth the Papists, when as under such a cloak, they withdraw the simple people from the reading of the word of God, yea in forbidding it them with such a cruel tyranny: let us for our part, having so good and sure a ground, take great heed how we waver and how we always abide wittingly ignorant, considering that God having openly and at large manifested himself unto us, continueth still more and more our good God, and giveth us so great leisure and large a time to profit in his school. And why so? Because the place alone is clear and bright: what will it then be when as we shall enter on somewhat further: that even in the very entrance, we find salvation? in what care then I beseech you shall we be, when as we shall have once passed the midway on? And to the end that David might the better express, that the question is not here of the great learned doctors he namely saith,

That it giveth instruction to the simple and silly souls, to the end they might have light and understanding.

As if he should have said, that God hath so communicated his word unto us, and in such sort framed and wrought it for our understanding, as that there is not the most simple and ignorant which shall not find himself capable to be the scholar of God, yea so that we come unto it in all lowliness and humbleness. For David in saying that the word of God maketh the lowly to understand, right well showeth, that if we come unto it in the pride of our own minds, presuming of our own fine heads, as in this point a great number of proud and glorious men do, who will rather control God than submit themselves unto him and to his word: no doubt of

it we shall be left in the dark. For let us not be abashed although such people of whom I have already spoken, do continually remain most blockish. But we for our parts ought to know, that we must be humbled and thrown down in ourselves, to the end god might lighten us. And then let us not doubt but that we shall feel God to be ever more ready to play the part of a good schoolmaster unto us, when as we shall show ourselves to be true and dutiful scholars. Now by and by followeth, *I opened my mouth and panted*: he was scarcely able to fetch his breath. And by this is signified the fervent zeal which he had, which was to be well instructed in the law of God. Now here David showeth, how it is that we should be enlightened, that is, that after we are known to be lowly and humbled, feeling our want [*lack*] and necessity, let us sigh and groan unto the majesty of our God, in beseeching him to instruct us. For we shall not need to be greatly learned for our right and perfect walking, if we truly and earnestly desire to be his scholars, and to prefer his word before all other things. David might very well say, O Lord, I have desired to understand that which thou hast showed me by thy law, and yet contented not he himself with this only saying: But saith namely, that he opened his mouth, as a forepined [*languished, wasted away*] ghost, who was no longer able to abide it. And afterward he saith that he drew in his breath, that he was so zealous, as that it took away as it were his very speech from him. There is no doubt that David meant here the very single affection wherewith he was touched: not for any desire he had to commend himself, but to show unto us by his example what our office and duty is towards God: that is, that we should seek to profit ourselves by his word. Now then we have here to note, that even then we shall be enflamed with the word of God, when as we shall have yea even such a vehement desire, as hereof is mention made and as hath been before spoken of. That the word of God ought to be more dear and precious unto us than all the riches of the world, and more sweet than all other sweetness in the earth. When then we shall have such a desire as this, we shall find God to be always ready to accomplish that which is said in the song of the holy virgin, that he hath filled and satisfied the hungry and empty. God will satisfy and fill those that hunger after the things which concern but this present life. And do you think that when we shall be desirous of his doctrine, knowing it to be the most principal benefit that we can possibly wish, and whereunto we ought to apply our whole heart, that he will let us famish?

Do you suppose that he will not grant us so holy a desire, and such a one as he approveth above all the rest? But by the way let us consider, that we perceive not at this day, the profit and edifying which David bringeth unto us in this place: because indeed we are overcold to seek after the will of God. And to say truly, I beseech you can we find one amongst an hundred which desireth it, I say yea such a one as only hath that affection to be taught of God? We see to the contrary, that we shall not need the very least trifling toy to keep us at the gaze: because we are so full of all vanity as is lamentable: neither can the devil no sooner set anything before us which we will not run after, and take occasion to be withdrawn from all whatsoever is good and godly. Now then, when as we shall see ourselves to be thus cold, is this to come with such a fervency, as is here declared unto us by David? Alas where shall we find it? ought we not then even to be abashed, when as we shall see so few to be truly taught of God? considering that so small a number of people are touched to the quick with a true desire of his doctrine? But we ought rather to think it more strange, when as we seeing God to be so full of loving kindness, as to bear with our negligence that instead of opening our mouths, and to desire his heavenly doctrine, as David hath done, we open our mouths to crave such things as do nothing else but offend and grieve the majesty of God: for in that is our whole delight, and upon it bestow we all our power and strength. When then we shall after this sort forsake God, and seek after the transitory things of this world, yea the which cannot but hurt, and lead into everlasting destruction, are we not worthy that God should leave and forsake us as most miserable and wretched caitiffs [*despicable captives*]? And therefore this doctrine is not here set down in vain.

Let us then understand, that God meaneth here to exhort us by the example of David, that if we will be well instructed by his word, we ought with such an humility as here mention is made of, to come unto him with an earnest desire and zeal, knowing this to be such a benefit as deserveth to be preferred above all the rest, even to know the will and love of God towards us, considering that in it consisteth and resteth our whole salvation. Now it followeth in the fourth verse:

Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me: as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

Here David right well showeth, what the desires and petitions of all the Children of God ought to be, to wit that they must hang upon the mere mercies of God, and to know that all their felicity consisteth therein, and so to stay themselves upon this ground and foundation, That God looketh with his eye upon them, to guide and govern them. Now this thing is greatly to be observed, because that men commonly make themselves believe that they shall be blessed, if they may obtain that which their flesh desireth. As when the Glutton shall have wherewithal to fill his filthy paunch, so that it may stand astrout [*protruding*]: the Whoremonger to enjoy all his foul villainies and beastly lecheries: the Covetous man to be so scraping as that he careth not what he getteth nor how he cometh by his goods, to lay Land to land, and to be filled with another man's blood: Lo these are the men, as they think, which are blessed. Yea, and although they were not so given to wickedness, as openly to grieve the majesty of God: yet for all that ye shall have very few which will acknowledge themselves to be accursed, but that God hath care over them and their salvation, and that there is none other blessedness nor felicity but even this, that they are in the hand of God and under his protection. And so much the rather ought we to record and have often in mind this lesson when as David saith, *O look upon me O Lord, and be merciful unto me*. For by this he signifieth unto us, that if we will have our life to be blessed, if we will have good success in all our affairs, Lo from this fountain must we draw all our felicity: which is the providence of God, because we should in no wise doubt but that he careth for us, and bestoweth and employeth himself for our preservation. When it is thus with us, all the rest cannot but go well with us: but if this point be wanting [*lacking*], we are very miserable, although it seemeth to us to have even as much as can be wished. Now by the way let us note, that David in beseeching God to be merciful unto him, declareth, that so long as we are in this world, that we are subject to a number of calamities and afflictions. And so, we have great need of the mercy of God, or else we shall carry away all the blows (as we say) amongst so many grievous encounters, as shall be lamentable. Now this may serve us for two purposes: The one is, that we being here below upon the earth, might make our account that we cannot be here as it were in Paradise, to have such rest and quietness as we would chiefly desire, to lack nothing, and not to be subject to any grief nor displeasure: No, not so: But contrariwise, let us know that here God subjecteth us to a great number of wretchednesses and miseries, to the end we should be always

calling upon him for his mercy, and to be always running unto him for it. Lo here the first point which we are to consider of in this place, that the faithful to the outward show shall be very miserable, and in a most wretched case, so long as they shall live here below: and the meaning of God is, to hold us under this condition, to the end to awaken us, that we might have a far greater affection to call upon him, and to cleave wholly unto him.

Now if we shall have this consideration with us, we may then in the second place say with David, *Have mercy upon us O Lord*: that is to say, we may be assured in all our miseries, that God will be pitiful and merciful unto us, yea so that we desire him, as we are here taught to do by the spirit of God. Namely David addeth, *As thou usest to do unto those which love thy name*.

This is a sentence of Judgment which is here set down: But it sometimes signifieth, measure, sometimes estate, order or fashion: the sense is not dark: for it is as much as if he had said, O Lord, have mercy upon me, even as thou art wonted to have mercy upon those which call upon thy name. Now we are to gather from this saying, that David made not this petition only for himself, but hath set down unto us a general rule, which we may and ought to apply unto every child of God, to the end that everyone for his own part might be sure that God will have mercy upon him, and stretch forth his hand to aid him in his need. And why so? For the holy Ghost namely pronounceth, that it is the ordinary manner of God to be loving and pitiful to all those which love his name. What remaineth then for us to do? Forsooth [*in truth*] we must love the name of God. And here we are also to consider, what this saying meaneth, to love the name of God: For we shall have some men which will fear god, so, so, and yet be contented never to come near him, if they could otherwise choose: yea they will not stick to shut the door against him, and keep themselves as far from him as is possible.

Now David sheweth here unto us, what the true fear of God is, to wit, that we must love him of our own good will, and that with reverence, and not constrainedly to love and fear him, but that we desire to come unto him, and wholly to submit ourselves unto his Majesty. If we shall do thus: then may we truly say that we love him, and in loving him, fear him also. In very deed, these are things that may not be separated, because it is

impossible for us rightly to reverence God, and to fear him as we ought, except (as it is said in the Psalm) that we first acknowledge him to be our father, looking for all goodness and courtesy from him. This then affordeth us, in the first place, that we are assured that God loveth us, that we must take him as for our father, that we feel, that he in the loving of us, desireth nothing else but our salvation. And thus much for the first point. And after from thence also proceedeth, humility: when as we see GOD so to abase himself, as to seek for us miserable Creatures, wretched worms of the Earth, yea even very condemned and utterly lost persons, the bondslaves of Satan, That God seeketh for us even in Hell, and draweth us so lovingly unto himself. And must it not needs be that we are very stubborn, if we be not touched, and moved to come unto him, and yield ourselves unto him, and be ruled and governed by his hand and protection? Lo, say I, how we ought to love the name of God, to the end we might be glad of that felicity which David here speaketh of, that is, that God looketh to keep us through his providence. And although we are here compassed with a great number of miseries, afflicted a great number of ways, and judged to be most wretched, yet God is at hand to help our necessities. And namely it is said to love the name of God, Because we must receive a testimony from him, to comprehend his good will. We see not God in his Essence, or as he is indeed, but he manifesteth himself unto us by another means: to wit, that we might behold him in the glass of his word, where he showeth himself unto us openly enough. Now David addeth soon after,

Order my steps in thy word: and let no wickedness have dominion over me.

Here we see more clearly that, which I have already touched: to wit, what the petitions of the faithful ought to be, to the end they should not be given to vain things. For we need not to have anything to make us by and by to go astray, seeing our own nature draweth us readily enough thereto. There is no question, but that we will go more than a foot pace, when as we are bent to do mischief: yea we will trot on most swiftly and violently, even as wretched men that were bewitched. Wherefore, here is a remedy set down unto us: considering that our nature is inclined to all evil, and carrieth us thereto headlong, that we only ought to endeavor ourselves to bridle our vain and wicked affections: and besides we ought to desire God to keep us through his word, and not to suffer any iniquity to reign in us. Lo, I say, in what sort all the faithful must order themselves, fighting against all their fleshly lusts: For it is meet that we utterly renounce the

evil that is in us, if we will seek after God and come unto him. Now here are two things which David desireth, To have his footsteps ordered according to the word of God: And afterward, that no iniquity have dominion over him. Which is as much as if he had said, That God had conformed him to his word, and given him power and strength to withstand all temptations.

Now when he saith, *Order my steps according to thy word*: he meaneth, that we can do nothing at all, except God governeth us by his holy spirit. So then, it is not enough that we have the word of God preached unto us, to hear it, and to be exercised in the reading thereof: But it is God that must put to his helping hand over and besides: he it is that must make the preaching of it effectual, and pierce our ears, to the end we might understand that which is set down unto us, and open our eyes when we read, and that altogether by his holy spirit. And thus much for this. For although we have the word of God offered unto us, yet shall we profit nothing thereby until such time as God giveth us understanding to see it. And besides, it is not enough to have the knowledge of the will of God, and to understand the right way to salvation: But God also must lead us himself, and hold us by the hand even unto the end. And why so? For we will never cease drawing backward, when as God shall have faithfully instructed us, if so be he himself doth not still conduct us, and always holdeth us with a strong and mighty arm: because that our rebellious nature will never cease to withdraw us clean contrary. For Saint Paul, who had so greatly profited in the fear of God, and was so very forward [*ready*] therein as the like was not in his time, yet ceased he not still to say,

I see two laws in myself: I have a desire to serve God, but yet there is another thing also which leadeth me to the contrary, so that I do the evil which I abhor, and would not do: and if I do any good, it is not done with so cheerful an affection as I would.

(<450715>Romans 7:15-23)

See here in what sort Saint Paul complaineth himself, and in the end concludeth and saith:

Alas most wretched man that I am,
who shall deliver me out of this prison? (<450724>Romans 7:24)

If Saint Paul used this kind of speech, what shall become of us, when we shall be no whit guided by the spirit of God? I beseech you what shall the bare doctrine profit us? It is meet then, that after God shall have taught us, that he also guide us, and after, that he give us the power and strength to follow him, and to confirm, imprint and engrave his law in our hearts, as also it is sufficiently set down in the scripture touching the same.

David goeth forward and saith, *Suffer not any iniquity to have dominion over me.* To what end, and purpose saith he this? For he had before desired God to order his steps, to the end he might serve him in true and faithful obedience. Forsooth [*in truth*] it is, because that when God hath bestowed his grace upon us, to be desirous to cleave unto him, yet shall we never come to the full end thereof without great afflictions, having so mighty an enemy to stand against us as we have. It is very true that we desire nothing else but to be made teachable of God, and to suffer ourselves to be governed by the great Pastor or Shepherd Jesus Christ: this is already one good step: but let us a little better consider, wherefore such grace profiteth us not. It is because the Devil cometh soon after to set it on fire, for he always findeth good store of Wood in us according as we are stored with many vices and imperfections in our nature, until such time as God shall have wholly taken us from out of this flesh. For all our lusts and affections are so many rebellions against God, as that we never cease to fight against him, that if at anytime on the one side we go about to do good, we are on the other side carried to do evil. What must we then do? We had need to have God to array us with a power and constancy, to resist all these contrarieties and wicked lusts which are in us: that we be not only teachable, and governed by him, but also that we be fenced with such armor and weapon, as are needed to fight against Satan and all his crafty sleights and strengths, to the end our enemy might have no hold of us: so that we having as Saint Paul saith, both our headpiece, and shield, might be armed and appointed at all pieces, And when as we shall be thus armed, then to see how we should wholly and fully cleave unto our God. And whatsoever the Devil shall craftily invent against us, whatsoever stops and lets [*hindrances*] are in us: yet let us not doubt but to obtain victory.

So then, it is not without cause, that David here joineth these two things together, to be guided by the majesty of GOD, and above all to be so mightily strengthened, as that no iniquity could have dominion over him

but that he was well able to overcome all the temptations wherewith Satan any way could assail him. Now if David, was fain [*obliged*] to make such a petition unto God, without hypocrisy, by this we may gather of what strength and effect our free will is, which the Papists so highly extol. When as we shall speak of the serving of God, they straightways think that it cometh of our own power and strength. Not that they do not confess, but that they had in some sort need of God his help, but yet that they will be companions and fellow workers with God, and that without they for their part did something of their own power and strength, all of it were nothing. And contrariwise, except the spirit of God leadeth and guideth us, we must needs slip, yea and utterly fall away. We speak not here of an half aid only: But it is GOD that must take the whole conduct and leading into his own charge. And again hath he taken us into his hand? Then no doubt of it, there is a second grace to be looked for: that is to say, that we be strengthened with his holy spirit, and so to be governed, as that we may have an invincible power to persevere in well doing. Howbeit there is yet one point more to be considered of in this verse: And that is, that David desireth to have all his steps ordered according to the word of God.

Now by this he sheweth that if we be governed according to our own minds and fantasies, we will be very swift to run: But yet not be to seek our salvation. And why so? because we run thwart the fields, without holding any way and path. Lo here the manner of the Papists, are they able rightly to say, that their steps are ordered by the word of God? but contrariwise, the abomination of their Antichrist withdraweth them from the right way, to make them wander and stray here and there, and in the end to cast themselves headlong into the bottom of hell: in such sort, as whatsoever they call the service of God, when as both the ends shall be brought together, we shall find to be so many blasphemies against God. And if they be asked, Now Sir, I beseech you, from whom have you your Mass, your invocation of Saints, prayer for the dead, images, your deifying of Saints, your erecting of Altars unto them, your torches, candlelights, pilgrimages, and all the rest of your beggarly trash? what answer will they make? They are never able to answer you one iota for the maintenance of this their cloutery [*rags, botched work*] out of the holy scripture. What will they then say? Forsooth [*in truth*], we follow our fathers and their traditions. Yea, but it is here namely set down, that we must be ordered by the word of God. For all our whole life is a very great

disorder: and we wander and stray like unto brute beasts, except the word of God be our only rule and plain square. Wherefore let us be well advised not to stray as these miserable accursed people, which close up their eyes in the clear daylight, yea and which whet themselves and stubbornly stand in opinion against God, when he goeth about to reform them, and to show them that they have hitherto vainly spent and lost all their time and travail. And although that they be altogether so hardened, yet let not us be so: But let us know that there is none other direction that is good, but the very same which God showeth unto us, as was said to Moyses, Lo this is the way which thou must follow. Now it followeth soon after,

O deliver me from the wrongful dealings of men: and I will keep thy commandments.

David by this manner of speaking right well declareth, that the Children of God shall always be assailed with many and sundry assaults, persecutions and griefs, so long as they live here in this world, and the meaning of God is to appoint him to be as it were a Glass for all the faithful to look in. For as we see how he hath been intreated, and do also see his condition and state, no doubt God hath set him as it were upon a scaffold, to the end we might be conformed according to his example: as he was also in very deed, a figure of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now we know that our Lord Jesus was a true patron of all the Children of god, according unto whose image we must be made like, namely in this point, to wit, in afflictions, in anguishes, and miseries, as Saint Paul thereof witnesseth to the Romans. (<450835> Romans 8:35-39) Since then it is so, let us know that so long as we are to live in this world, we shall be always afflicted and troubled by wicked and ungodly men, neither ought we to think it any strange thing, since that David hath showed us the way: and that God hath purposed to have us framed after his example, let not the afflictions and persecutions, which we must abide at this day, seem new and strange unto us.

Now hereupon it followeth, *That he will keep his commandments.* Whereby he signified, that he will not forget himself of such a benefit, when as he shall have God to be his protector, to succor [*defend*] him against the malice of men that he will keep his commandments. Let us learn then, that when God shall have maintained and defended us, that we ought to be a great deal the more ready to obey and fear him: and that this ought always to stir us up to a greater consideration: that as he daily increaseth

more and more his benefits upon us so ought our affection also to serve him, increase: and besides it must more profit and inflame itself. Now it followeth by and by after,

Show the light of thy countenance upon thy servant: and teach me thy statutes.

By this he confirmeth the matter which he before handled: and therefore we shall not need to stand much upon this verse: for he showeth that he is contented to have God to look and care for him. And to prove this to be true, you may see, that the thing which he desireth, is that which I have already touched, that is, the principal safety which the Children of God ought to have, is, to stay themselves upon this providence of God, when as they certainly know and may boldly say, that God standeth for us, and will never forget us: and although we be never so miserable creatures, yet for all that he careth for us, watcheth over us yea, and also he hath an eye unto us, neither will he suffer any hurt to come unto us, but will provide for all our needs and wants [*lack*]. And if we carry this mind with us, we have the greatest benefit that is possibly to be wished. And this is it which David speaketh of in this place, when he saith, *Show the light of thy countenance, O Lord, upon thy servant.* For he meaneth that when he shall feel the protection of God, he is then sure that God looketh unto him, and that the same is it, which shall deliver him from all cares. Now let us note that this manner of speech is drawn from a similitude, as when we think God his countenance to be darkened in the time of our trouble and adversity: and feeling no comfort whereby to glad ourselves in him, it seemeth to us by and by, that there are great and monstrous thick clouds betwixt him and us, and indifferently we imagine that God seeth us not. And therefore David so far as flesh and blood could reach unto, saith, Show the light of thy countenance, that is, make me to feel that thou hast care over me. And in the end he saith, *Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water: because men keep not thy law.*

Here he declareth that over and besides the desire which we ought to have, and wherewith we ought to be affected to cleave unto God according to his word, what a great mischief and grief it should be unto us, to see the scornors which so contemn and despise the word of God, to tread the same under foot, and besides, to see the wicked to overthrow all good order and justice. See then, that the true children of God ought not only to be

contented with their own walking aright, and to be framed according to the law of God: But they ought also by all means possible to labor to bring the whole world to that pass with them, to the end that all the creatures of God might with one accord reverence and glorify his majesty. And therefore when as they see God to be contemned, they should be grieved thereat, and not only to be sorry and vexed: but also to be as it were mortally wounded. For it is not without cause that David saith here *That rivers of water gushed out of his eyes*: He meaneth hereby, that he was so sorrowful and vexed as could not be expressed. Now if David had occasion to groan and weep after this sort, when he see God to be rejected, what shall become of this our time I pray you? to what an extremity are we come? Is not impiety or ungodliness grown at this day to a full measure? Do we not see the ungodly exceed in all abundance of wickedness? one sort is fallen out with God and the gospel: Another sort will confess with the mouth that they allow of it or desire it: and yet we see them to be an hundred thousand times worse than the papists: no doubt of it we shall find amongst us of that sort, such devils incarnate, and so villainous and detestable, as that the very air crieth out unto god for vengeance against them. When then we shall see these accursed monsters to make no account of God nor godliness, must we not needs be grieved as David was? Let us know that God will bless our crying and groaning, when we shall have this godly sorrow: as to see his law thus destroyed and overthrown, and not to be regarded with that reverence that it deserveth. And yet notwithstanding the contemners of God must one day come to an account, when as they shall be merry after another sort, and then they shall be assured to make a reckoning for the groans and lamentations of the children of God: when they do not only vex the mortal creatures of God, but even the living God himself, and his holy spirit which dwelleth in us, from whom all such sighs and groans do proceed. And so, when as we lament, to see the law of God to be so destroyed by the wicked, let us put them over to the judgment of God, before whom they shall make an account of all the groans and sighs which we shall have poured out, which they thought by their gibings [taunting, mocking] and laughings to strangle and choke. For although they tread under foot the law of God so much as in them lieth yet the sorrow and grief which we abide for it, shall ascend into the heavens to cry for vengeance of them.

According to this wholesome Doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us better to feel our miseries than we have heretofore felt them, yea to the end we may lay them open unto him, and to seek for remedy where it is to be found: that is, that after this our good God hath enlightened us in his knowledge, that it would please him more and more, to increase the brightness thereof in us, and so to confirm us, as that we never change from the right way. And although we are to withstand a great number of assaults and that the Devil never ceaseth craftily to go about infinite ways to trouble us: yet notwithstanding let us beseech him to give us an invincible power to resist them, until such time as we become fully Conquerors, and be conjoined unto himself, to live in his kingdom in everlasting joy and felicity.

THE EIGHTEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

ZADE

- 137** Righteous art thou O Lord: and true in thy judgment.
138 Thou hast commanded: justice by thy testimonies and truth especially.
139 My zeal hast even consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.
140 Thy word is proven more pure: and thy servant loveth it.
141 I am small and of no reputation: yet do I not forget thy commandments.
142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness: and thy law is the truth.
143 Trouble and heaviness have taken hold upon me: yet is my delight in thy commandments.
144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: grant me understanding and I shall live.

IT IS CERTAIN that there is no man but will easily grant, the law of God to be both good and holy, and that we ought not only to allow of it: but also to receive it with all fear and reverence. Notwithstanding, there are very few touched with this affection, to understand that there is such a perfection in the word of God, as that nothing can be found therein, but all purity and sincerity: and to be so infallible a truth, and a righteousness so certain as possible cannot be more certain and sure. But very few there are which understand this, or at the least which are very greatly touched herewith. And therefore it is not without cause, that David in this present psalm, useth such a repetition, that he so highly magnifieth the doctrine which he hath learned out of the law of God: to the end to declare unto us, that we have greatly profited, when we shall have such a favor and

judgment thoroughly imprinted in our hearts. When as, I say, this righteousness, this wisdom, and this sincerity which is contained in the word of God, shall be very well and thoroughly known unto us: then may we be able to say with David, *Righteous art thou, O Lord, and true in thy judgments.*

Now as the holy spirit of God speaking by the mouth of David, hath set down here no superfluous matter, but such as he knew to be profitable for our instruction: Let us also diligently weigh and consider all the words, which are here touched. In the first place he saith, *Righteous art thou O Lord: and true in thy Judgments.* We have already heretofore handled, that the judgments of God in this Psalm are called, the commandments of the law which he giveth unto us, to rule our lives by. Even so, when David saith, that God is righteous and true in his judgments: It is as much as if he had said, That god hath declared what his nature is in his law, that we might behold him in it, as in a glass. This then is as much as if he should have said, O Lord, we have thine Image truly and lively pictured and expressed in this doctrine which thou hast delivered unto us in thy law, there we see thee to be righteous, and also that thou hast commanded nothing therein, which tendeth not to the same end. Will we then magnify God aright? We must know him to be such a one as he showeth himself to be by his word, and not to fashion ourselves like unto a great number of scoffers, which will not stick to say that god is altogether good, wise, and righteous: but yet they will separate themselves from his word: forge themselves a God in the air, or else they would be contented that there were such a medley as that there were no more divinity known. Now see how god showeth himself, as I have said, by his word. We must then, if we intend to confess him to be righteous, good, true, and faithful, to give these commendations unto his word, wherein he hath once for all declared unto us his will. Now after David hath used this word righteous, he addeth, *Thou hast commanded justice by thy testimonies, and truth especially.* See then how David handleth it himself, showing that the law of God is wholly righteous, because saith he, that it leadeth us to righteousness and truth. Now when these two things are in it, what may we say, but that which hath already been before said? What is that? It is so far off with a great number, that when they are convinced hereof, are persuaded in good earnest to say Amen without dissembling. And to prove it to be so, how many men shall we see submit themselves in this point to the truth of

God, whereunto he desireth to lead us by his word? How many I say, shall we find, which will yield themselves teachable unto it? But contrariwise, we shall find the greatest part clean contrary. It is very true we shall be ashamed, yea even horribly afraid, to say, that there is anything in the law of God, which is not true and just: and yet for all that it may as easily be perceived, that there is no such knowledge engraven in our hearts, as to be assured thereof. To be short, this is farthest off from our minds, when we shall say thus: I speak now of those which are not yet thoroughly instructed by the spirit of God. Neither yet let us think this to be a common and ordinary thing, when as David saith, That the testimonies of God are nothing but true and righteous. For although we have learned somewhat out of them, yet is not this enough, until such time as we are conformed and framed unto them, that we fully and wholly agree with this saying and commendation which is here given to the law of God. Now because David would show with what affection he is moved, he protesteth, that he was not only grieved, when as he felt in himself any rebellion against God, but when he perceived it in others, that he conceived a wonderful sorrow and grief, yea even a marvelous torment of mind. For he saith, That his zeal had even consumed him, that he was as one dead, and so thrown down as he could not be more. Now, he namely speaketh of his enemies, and of such as had afflicted him: But he signifieth anon after, that all the mischiefs and injuries which they had done unto him, did not half so mightily grieve him, as the contempt which he knew to be in them touching the law of God. For he saith,

My zeal hath even consumed me: because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

Here then David sheweth in effect, that he was not so greatly grieved nor yet so sorrowful for all the evils and wrongs which he endured at the hands of men, as to see the word of God to be cast under feet and clearly forgotten. See here, I say, a most sure testimony that he highly preferred the word of God, before his own person: that he had not that pleasure in his life, nor in whatsoever concerned the same as he had in the reverence which all the creatures of God ought to have towards his majesty. Now if he had not had this zeal, he could never have been thus grieved and vexed, when as men made no reckoning of the word of God, and cast it behind their backs. And here we are thoroughly to consider, that David spake not in this place of a mean sorrow. For then this had been enough, to have said,

Alas my God, I have been a great deal more grieved to see the wicked contemn thy word, than when as they persecuted myself: although that I was sore troubled and grievously oppressed, yet had I greater regard to thy law, than to all whatsoever concerned mine own person. This had been enough, say I, if David had said but thus much: but he went a great deal farther, saying *The zeal of the house of God, hath even gnawn and eaten me up*. Here he saith that he was consumed and brought to nothing, so that he had no strength in himself. Now here we must note by the way, that David spake not this to brag of himself: but rather hath set forth this his example for our better instruction, to the end we might learn to have the honor of God and the reverence of his word in such recommendation, as that when we see the world to make light of it, and to forget it, we should be grieved and tormented a great deal more, than if we did abide all the griefs, extreme wrongs and injuries that were possible: yea, that all our particular benefit, or damage, and whatsoever is most dear, ought to be nothing unto us in respect of this light reckoning of the word of God. Lo here what wholesome lessons and instructions, we have to gather out of this place.

Now when he saith, that it grieved him to see the word of God clean forgotten, what then shall become of the matter, when as men shall not only forget it, but even with a most detestable fury oppose themselves wholly against it? As at this day, we shall not only say that the word of God is forgotten: but men of a set purpose run violently upon it utterly to abolish it. And to prove it to be so, I beseech you, whence cometh this cruelty and fury of the Papists: but because that they are purposed clearly to go against it? to be angry with God, not abiding to suffer themselves to be subject unto him by any manner of means? They will not say thus in plain words, but we may judge of the matter so far forth as we see it. For, how should it be possible, that they should so rage against the known and certain truth, if they were not even the very professed enemies of God? and without they went about to stand against him even to the hard hedge, as we say? I will not deny but that men many times shall forget the word of God, when as they shall be carried away with their wicked affections. As thus, when a man is greatly given to lechery, this villainous desire so blindeth him, as that he clearly forgetteth whatsoever he hath heard spoken against it never so little before: to wit, they which defile their bodies with lechery, do deface, as much as in them lieth the image of God, pollute his

temple, divide and pull in pieces the body of Jesus Christ, shut themselves quite out of the kingdom of heaven, and provoke the heavy wrath and curse of God against them. And yet an whoremaster forgetteth all these notable sayings, which are set down to keep him within his rein. The covetous man also forgetteth what equity and right is, let him be admonished thereof never so often, as to be pitiful to his neighbors, to help the poor and needy, rather than to take away another man's goods and substance, and to be so given to our own gain: to procure and profit the welfare of our neighbors, rather than to be given to seek our own private commodity. A covetous man I say, will quite forget all this. And why so? Forsooth [*in truth*], because he is blinded with this covetous desire of gain, and to heap up together the goods of this world. See then when it is, that the word of God shall be forgotten, verily even then when as men shall be drunken with their inordinate greedy passions. But they which set themselves against God, yea with a fury and frenzy utterly to abrogate his word, to turn his truth into leasings [*lies*], these men, I say, do not only forget the word of God, but remember themselves of it too much, even to set themselves purposely against it. And we need to go no further but even into the stare of Popery, to see such a villainous and detestable impiety. For we shall see these contemners of God, which are even here amongst us, yea and which come sometimes to defile the temple of God, to thrust in their swinish groins: and to scorn the doctrine which shall be read, which maketh even the very devils in hell to tremble. We shall see then here these contemners of God, which will even lift themselves up against him, and pour out their blasphemies, and is it meet that we dissemble this? No, not so, but let us rather stir up ourselves to groaning yea to cry out with a loud voice, beseeching GOD to stretch forth his mighty and strong arm, against such villains, and firebrands of hell, such upholders of Satan, which thus come to defile the sacred and holy things of God, which his majesty hath set before us for our salvation. And thus much for this point. And again let us not only be grieved and sorrowful, because there are in us rebellious affections which so hinder us, as that we cannot take any such taste as is to be wished for in the word of God: but also when as we see that men so lightly esteem and forget this word of God, that they outrage in all wickedness, it cannot be but that we must be grieved and sorrowful for the same. And yet there is a further matter to be required at our hands, which is this, that when we shall see and hear the name of God to be blasphemed, and his majesty violated, we should be tormented, and feel a greater grief

for the same, than for all the evil that might come unto ourselves: for it is very good reason that the majesty of God should be more dear unto us without all comparison, than our own persons and lives. Now since it is so, that if we ought to be sorrowful, when as we see the word of God to be forgotten by others, even to begin at the best end, if the evil be found in us (as Satan moveth us to fall unto wickedness, and we are very far off from truly serving of God, and looking to his word, with such fear and humility as indeed we ought:) since then, I say, we are so greatly to be amended, that we have so many sins fighting against the law of God: even so much the more ought we to sigh and groan: as Saint Paul right well showeth us, saying, (⁴⁵⁰⁷²⁴ Romans 7:24) Oh accursed man that I am, who shall deliver me out this mortal body. Lo here Saint Paul, in showing their condition and state to be miserable which live in this world, exhorteth them to groaning, and to a continual sorrow and care, because they are not able fully and thoroughly to yield themselves to the word of God: so that whensoever we shall do but even so much, we shall render a true proof and testimony of our faith and Christianity. Now it followeth soon after,

Thy word is proved most pure: and thy servant loveth it.

Here it verily seemeth (as we have before said) that David bringeth in a most manifest sentence, yea, known even unto the simplest: to wit, that the word of God is pure and clean, without spot and blemish. But what? let us see a little whether we put this purity in practice or not, alas, we are far from it. For even then we may say the word of God to be pure and without spot, when as without any gainsaying we only trust in him, and that we have a true certainty of our salvation, because he hath once stretched forth his hand unto us, and promised never to fail us. When then we shall have such a confidence in God that we may boldly walk through death, and the very gulf of hell: that in seeing the bottomless pits open to swallow us up, we should not doubt of our safety, since that we are in the hand of God: lo how the word of God shall be pure unto us. But now are we all in a clean contrary vein. And from whence cometh this? It is because we are full of infinite filthiness and pollutions: to be short, there is nothing but stench in us, and all our senses are defiled. Let us first begin at our eyes, and we shall have such a number of filthy troublesome and glimpsing gloatings: to wit, such a number of vanities which hinder us to know the purity that is in the word of God, as lo we have already lost one of our senses. Afterward, we are deprived of our hearing, because our ears are so

filled with such trifling yea and perverse matters, that we can give no ear unto God, or else, that which entereth in at one ear, goeth out at another, as we say. Now if this be already a great vice in us, to be so slack as to receive but one good lesson, the second is no whit less, that when we shall have gotten even a very little, it shall incontinent so melt away from us, as that we shall never think more of it. We see how jolly and frisking our feet and hands are, when as we hear any talk of ribaldry [*indecenty*] and filthiness, and altogether dull and senseless when any speech is of virtue and godliness. There is never a finger in our hands, but will be as good as a razor, to cut even to the quick, if any talk shall be had to offend the majesty of God. And in the meanwhile we shall not find one man that will once lift himself up to do any good. See how all our senses are corrupt, and how full of pollutions and filthiness. And this is it which hindereth us, that we are not able to know how the word of God is to be tried. Now it followeth,

I am small and of no reputation: yet do I not forget thy commandments.

This saying here importeth more than at the first sight it seemeth to do: It is very true, that it should seem a far harder matter for the mighty men of this world to serve God than the meaner sort: insomuch as we will never accompt [*account*] it strange if a man of base condition hath not forgotten the word of God. But what is the cause why we so greatly prattle, jangle, and lift up ourselves so arrogantly against him, and that we submit not ourselves wholly unto him? Forsooth [*in truth*] even the very honors and delights of this world are oftentimes the chiefest causes. When a man shall be in any credit, estimation, and reputation he imagineth unto himself an idol in his own heart: and hereupon forgetteth God, and thinketh himself to be no longer under his government. When then our Lord God holdeth us in a low estate, he putteth us in mind, and forceth us by this means not to forget his commandments, and to walk in his fear with all humility. But David his meaning tendeth to another end, that is, although he was as it were contemned, yet ceased he not to love God. Now as I have said, this is not here set down without cause. It is very true, that when God liberally bestoweth upon us great store of benefits, then are we so blockish, as that we think ourselves least beholden unto him. And contrariwise, they upon whom he hath not bestowed such graces, think themselves for their parts, not so greatly bounden unto him. And in very deed, the world will always find startingholes, to keep itself out from the service and fear of God, or

else will be so lightly discharged thereof, as that it may be done without any great pain. As how I pray you? We see, that they which pretend color of ignorance, which have neither knowledge either of God or of true religion, will say, surely for my part I am but a poor simple man, and without learning, and therefore I will leave this gear [*talk*] to those that are learned. One sort will excuse themselves one way, another, another way: but yet they all tend to this end, to exempt themselves from the obedience of God, and not to be subject either to him or yet to his word. See here the common saying amongst the Papists. Ha sirra: This is the office of the priests and the cloisterers [*monks*]: our prelates have the charge over us: we are secular and laymen, we must have nothing to do with this gear [*doctrine*]. And besides, even the meanest sort of us, have also our excuses, and will say, I am a poor man, I must get my living with great pains all the day long by my handiwork, I have scarcely any leisure once to come to hear a sermon on the Sunday. See what startingholes we find out, to the end we might follow our vanities, pleasures, and idle times, or I know not what other our slothfulness, rather than we would hear the word of God and meditate thereon. So then, David contrarily showeth, that whiles he was small and of no reputation: yet that he never ceased continually to be exercised in this lesson, even to submit himself to the obedience of God. And so we see him to be given from his childhood: and that he did not only take pleasure therein, when God had advanced him to the kingdom, that he did not begin then to taste of the law of God and to apply his whole study thereto: but when he kept his father's sheep and cattle, and was brought up in the sheepcoats, before he came anything near the court: even all that while, I say, he never ceased but was wholly occupied in the holy study of the law of God. Now let us learn hereby not to exempt ourselves by our trifling excuses, as a great number of men do: but let us understand, that David here exhorteth all the faithful in general: that the contemptible, base, and simple persons, yea even as simple as young children and that have no knowledge of that which is most esteemed amongst men, that they ought not for all that to forget the word of God. And so, let also both great and small give themselves to the study thereof, that we may be all the scholars of the law, and of the Prophets, but especially of our savior Jesus Christ, seeing that God hath now bestowed a more excellent grace upon us, than ever he bestowed upon David. For over and besides the doctrine which David received from the mouth of Moyses, see how God hath laid open unto us the infinite treasure of his heavenly wisdom, insomuch as we have

the Gospel, out of which the son of God hath spoken unto us, who is master over the whole household, as it is said in the Epistle to the Hebrews. (<580306> Hebrews 3:6) Now is this the doctrine that must make heaven and earth to tremble, as it is spoken by the Prophet Haggai: (<370206> Haggai 2:6, 7) and as this place is alleged by the Apostle, to show unto us that we ought to receive the Gospel with greater reverence, than the fathers did the law and the Prophets. For God made the earth to shake when he gave the law by Moyses, which since that time hath been confirmed and ratified by the Prophets: but when as he opened his holy mouth by his son to teach us: that was to make both heaven and earth to shake, (<581225> Hebrews 12:25-27) because he hath laid open such a wonderful wisdom, as that it ought to shake and astonish us, when as God speaketh with such power and majesty unto us. See then as concerning this saying, where David saith, that he did not forget the commandments of God, although he was small and of no reputation. Now he addeth.

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness: and thy law is the truth. Yea in such sort, that when he was afflicted and grieved, that he took pleasure in saying, thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, here David repeateth a word which hath a double signification. For in the first place Righteousness, signifieth the law of God, and that because it is the rule of all goodness. And then next, he giveth it the title of righteousness, signifying thereby, that this law is so certain a rule, as that when we shall have thoroughly sounded it even to the bottom, we shall find that God hath set down therein a perfection of all equity and sincerity: as if he should have said, this is without all doubt a perfect rule of righteousness. Now he coupleth as he hath already before done, truth, with righteousness. I have already said, that these words here, are oftentimes repeated: and yet it is no superfluous kind of speech. And what is the reason? Because we might fully and wholly confess that God hath spoken most wisely, that all men's mouths might be stopped, and that we all at once might be silent and still to hear him. There is no man but will confess this at the tongue's end. But in the meantime for us to know this equity and truth, which is contained in the word of God, Alas we are too far off.

So then, let every man look well unto himself, and see whether his life be agreeable unto the word of God or no. And if it be, it is a manifest proof that the righteousness and truth thereof is deeply imprinted in his heart. Now if this be so, then no doubt of it God his word is honored as it is

worthy. Then let us render unto him effectually, the praises which are here attributed unto him, and as they do appertain [*pertain*] unto his majesty. But if we do say that the word of God is good and holy, that it is a wonderful righteousness and power that cannot fail, and yet despise it indeed, show ourselves clean contrary unto it in our life and conversation, and making a goodly show to honor it, do spit at it: What a kind of honor call ye this? Wherefore we are to consider that it is meet that this righteousness and truth of the law of God be imprinted in our hearts, that we may make such a confession thereof, as David here hath done. And see why here he addeth, *Yet is my delight in thy Commandments*, Yea when he was afflicted, and in adversity. For it is an easy matter for men to praise God whiles they are quiet and out of trouble, and have all their heart's desire. Yea we shall see the very hypocrites cry out with open mouth, O blessed be God, and our good God: Forsooth [*in truth*] when as he sendeth them even their wish, and entreateth them according to their own desires. But when God shall afflict us, so that we be grievously vexed, until we can no more: Lo here a good trial to make us feel, that we have willingly and in earnest honored him in his word. And we shall show it to be so, when as we shall not change our minds: but constantly persevere in it, and say, whither shall I now run? see how I am afflicted: well, it is my God that must restore me. It is very true that I am not without great store of sorrows and griefs which trouble me: But yet I will content myself with this, that God loveth me. It is true that as touching the world I am tormented: but I will comfort myself that my God hath called me unto him, that he sheweth unto me indeed that he will have compassion upon me, that he taketh me for one of his children, and will extend his fatherly goodness towards me. See here a very good proof and trial, that we take the word of God to be true and righteous: that is, that if we be grieved with trouble and adversity, yet that we do never forget him, nor it. But what? let us once come to the practice thereof, and then we shall see how it fareth with us. For it is a matter of nothing to lend our ears, and say, surely this is a very good sermon, and that there was nothing taught in it but very good and wholesome doctrine, and truly if we have once said but even thus much, we will by and by think, that God is greatly in our debt. A man that cometh thus even with the ears of an Ass to play the hypocrite, thinketh verily that God is bound unto him, because he hath done him thus much honor.

Now this is an overgross and impudent kind of dissembling, in this manner to think to please the majesty of God. But yet the case so standeth, as that the greater part is even so given: now what is the next way for us to be rid of all together? Forsooth [*in truth*] even this, That when we for a time shall make a show to give diligent ear unto the word of God, that all whatsoever we have heard, will incontinent melt and vanish clean away from us. And hereby we very well show, that the truth and righteousness which is in his word, is not so imprinted in us as it ought to be. Now David addeth in the end, *Yet my delight is in thy commandments*. Whereby he adviseth us, that it is not enough that we call to mind that we have understood the word of salvation, to the end to profit ourselves in the time of affliction: but it must be of this strength and power even to glad us in the midst of our sorrows. It is very true, that we shall not be senseless and without feeling. And David also hath very well experimented, how greatly affliction and anguish tormented him. He felt then both hard and bitter passions: and yet this hindered him little, to rejoice and to be glad. And although he was greatly vexed as touching the flesh, yet felt he such spiritual joy in the testimonies of God, that sorrow overcame him not. Now, if David as before we have declared, took such pleasure in the law, whereas God only showed himself to the ancient fathers, as it were in shadows I beseech you, how ought the word of God at this day to glad us? Whereas he sheweth himself so familiar a father towards us, even opening unto us the very bottom of his heart, hiding nothing from us? When then our Lord God poureth out the treasures of his infinite love and goodness upon us so abundantly: have not we a far greater occasion to rejoice, than the fathers who lived under the law? Yes verily: but our unthankfulness so hindereth us, as that in knowing, we know nothing, and in seeing, we see no whit at all. And yet is not this written without cause. Even so, when as we shall feel the griefs, anguishes, and afflictions of this world to trouble us, let us have recourse unto this word of God: for in it we shall find him to stretch forth his hand to draw us unto him, declaring that he will help the afflicted, have pity of the miserable and vexed, aid the wretched, desireth nothing else but to bring back again poor sinners which will yield themselves unto him, lay all their cares in his lap, and that he will unburden us of them all. When then we are sure, and resolute of such God his goodness towards us, by his promises, we ought to come unto him, to call upon him, and to rejoice in him: so that we may say with David, O Lord, my delight hath been in thy testimonies, that they might glad me in the midst of my

afflictions. Lo how the children of God, in all the time of their affliction may continually do, rejoice in the assurance of their salvation, yea when as they shall settle themselves upon his promises, and receive them in such sort as that they may turn to their benefit. Now for a conclusion David saith, *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting*: and afterward he maketh his prayer and saith, *grant me understanding and I shall live*. See yet again this word, righteousness which is here repeated, and that to very good purpose: For this is according to that which I have already said, that they which dare not openly rail and jangle against God to blaspheme his word, yet will they be for all that full of malice, and treason: or else they will be so nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in their vanities as that the righteousness of God shall not appear in them. So then, David yet setteth it down, to be an everlasting righteousness: signifying that we ought not to take them as puffs of wind, as a great number of men have done, to magnify God, and after in the turning of an hand to go clean backward. As at this day we shall have them which will make a show of great devotion, and say, O what an excellent sermon, O what notable doctrine was taught this day? But I beseech you what will they say the next day? Forsooth [*in truth*] they will not for all this stick to mock God, make one jest or other at his word: or else, if God send them any adversity, they will be grieved and angry with him: so that if they be put in mind of that which they before had heard, they will answer, that they have clean forgotten it. David therefore meaning to show, that we must not be so slack as at sometimes to commend the word of God, saith, that it is an everlasting righteousness. As if he should have said, it is very true that men are changeable, and this present life also is subject to very many changes, as today we shall have some grief or other, and tomorrow be well again: oftentimes many troubles shall come unto us: and we shall see them at last to have an end: and yet for all these continual changes, men must not in the meanwhile be carried away with every blast of wind, to be inconstant and unsteadfast: but whiles they are sailing through the waves of the sea, they must hold themselves firm and sure in this righteousness and sincerity which is in the word of God.

See then how we must know the everlasting stableness of the righteousness of the law. And indeed we shall have thereof a full feeling and declaration in the word of God, when as we shall receive it as we ought: but forso much as we fail herein, and that we have not as of

ourselves the spirit to comprehend this righteousness, whereof in this place mention is made, nor yet to attain thereto: yea, and if that we should attain thereto, so that there were nothing to lead us to iniquity, yet let us pray with David, that it would please God to give us understanding. Now it is most true that David had already received some portion and measure of understanding: for else he could never have said, I have been grieved and troubled, and yet my delight was in thy law. He could not possibly be carried with such an affection, but that the word of God had touched the very bottom of his heart: but when he besought God to give him understanding, he meant to have God to increase that grace which before he had received. Now if he who was so greatly advanced: yea that had received the spirit of prophecy to instruct others, which is the principal spirit to govern the people of God: If he, I say, had need to make such a prayer, what shall we do, which have scarcely any one spark of understanding in our minds? ought not we, I beseech you, to pray with a more fervent desire, to have God to grant us understanding? And a great deal the more ought we to be stirred up thereto, when as David saith, that we are not able to live, until such time as GOD hath so enlightened us: to the end we might conceive this truth and righteousness which is in his law. See here, I say, how that the life of men cannot be but accursed, until such time as they are come even unto this point. And so, let us not learn to please ourselves, as these miserable wretched worldlings do, who are even drunken in their pleasures and pastimes, and think that there is no pleasure nor felicity, without they exceed and outrage in all vanities and follies: But let us look a great deal higher, let us seek after God, and know that then our life shall be blessed when as God shall have delivered us from these vain allurements of this wicked world, to make us feel truth and righteousness which is in his word: that it may be the only end of our life, of all our counsels, and our only exercise and study: To be short, the very summary of all whatsoever we take in hand.

According to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us to feel them better than heretofore we have: that we knowing our own wretchedness and miseries, and what need we have of his assistance, might have recourse unto him, having our whole refuge to his goodness and mercy, and stay ourselves upon his promises, not doubting but that as he is true and faithful in all that he saith, so also

that he will fulfill whatsoever he hath showed unto us in his word: to wit, that he will so unite us unto himself, as that after he hath separated us from all the filthiness of this world, he will make us partakers of his righteousness, and finally of his glory. That he will not only grant us, this grace, but also all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE NINETEENTH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

COPH

- 145** I have cried out with my whole heart: hear me O Lord, and I will keep thy statutes.
- 146** Yea even upon thee have I called, help me, and I will keep thy testimonies.
- 147** Early in the morning I cried unto thee: for in thy word is my truth.
- 148** Mine eyes prevent the night watches: that I might be occupied in thy words.
- 149** Hear my voice (O Lord) according unto thy loving kindness: quicken me according too thy judgment.
- 150** They draw nigh that follow after malice: and are far from thy law.
- 151** Thou art nigh at hand, O Lord: for all thy commandments are true.
- 152** I have known long since by thy testimonies: that thou hast grounded them for ever.

FORASMUCH as the most requisite thing that we can possibly desire for our salvation, is prayer unto God, and because we are so slack and cold therein, or else that a very small matter will make us cold: we are to consider of the examples which the holy scripture setteth forth unto us of the children of God, and of the faithful indeed, how they continually were exercised in prayer. Even as in this place David his meaning is to set before our eyes, not that he meant to glorify himself of his own strength, thereby to get him estimation, but to the end that this example might direct us the right way. We see then how careful David was to call upon the name of

God, how he applied his whole affection, and continued therein, because that every of us might do the like. Now in the first place he saith,

I have cried out with my whole heart.

Whereby he signifieth unto us, that he babbled not even as the hypocrites do, or else that he cried not out upon God for a fashion or coldly, but prayed with a true and earnest zeal. Neither do we any otherwise but even profane the name of God, when as we pray unto him without attentive minds having our thoughts wandering this way and that way, and on every side. Let us then consider, what it is principally to be required in our prayers, which is, that we must not only wag the tongue, and open our mouth, with an intent to pray unto God: but we must pray sincerely and purely also unto him from the bottom of our hearts. Now in very deed we ought to bring this into a more plain order: But yet according to the manner which we have heretofore kept in handling of this Psalm, it shall suffice that we set down everything briefly in certain articles. It remaineth then for this time that everyone privately by himself doth more diligently meditate and bestow his whole study herein. Now let us see how we ought to make our prayers to God, to wit, our prayers must not proceed from the midst of our mouth, but from a godly mind, and pure truth. This word to cry out, importeth vehemency, as shall again soon after be spoken of. Now David meaneth not that he strained his throat to call and cry out, but he rather signifieth that he went not coldly unto it, as they do which pray unto God, they know not why nor wherefore, without it be for a fashion: or if they be pressed through any need, yet are they no whit at all rightly moved, because they do not assure themselves that he will hear and receive them. David then showeth that he was not so blockish, but that he had such an earnest desire as pushed him thereto as Saint Paul saith, (^{<580507>} Hebrews 5:7) that when we come to pray unto God, we ought to approach with groaning hearts, which no tongue can express, by which we are pushed forward by the spirit of god. See then the second condition which is required in our prayers, that is, that we must lift our hearts and minds up into heaven, when as we pray unto God. For we knowing what great need we have of his help, must pray that he will have compassion of our miserable estate, yea and confess that we are the children of perdition, if he stretched not forth his merciful hand unto us: and therefore that hereupon, we ought to set out and call upon him with an earnest affection. Now in the third place David telleth us that he was very diligent in praying

unto God: to wit: that he hoped even unto the last cast, as there are very many which do so, when as they see well enough that they can go no further, except God help them: and yet for all that they step back from him as much as in them lieth, and are never carried to the very point, with all their hearts to call upon God, without it be that they can neither will nor choose, and are driven even to their wits' ends, as we say. David declareth that he was not so drowsy, for he saith, that he prevented [*anticipated*] the night watches, that he occupied himself, seeing that it was the true, and only refuge of the children of God, and the very faithful, to recommend themselves into his protection. Now he lastly declareth, that he continued it, that it was no sudden motion or blast, and afterward to wax cold again, as some do: and I would it pleased God that we might not practice it so often as we have done. But there is not that he amongst us which hath not found by experience that we are by and by tired in praying to God, and that we wax very cold so soon as we have poured out one only sigh and groan. For we think it enough, if we have set down our whole sum to God in a word, and do suppose, that if we have made one only prayer, that we are discharged of all together, and that God will help us, if we think it good. Now David sheweth unto us, that he persevered in calling upon the name of God. Lo here the four points which we have to note in this place, to the end that every of us might discharge ourselves of them. For see from whence we must learn the manner to pray well: to wit, in the first place, not with having our mouth going, but we must lay open our hearts, and all our affections before the majesty of God, and pray in spiritual truth: and not only so, but we must also be inflamed with such a zeal, as that we be fully assured that he will both hear and help us. And for performance hereof, we must be touched to the quick with the knowledge of our sins: and know that our estate is most accursed, if God hath not pity on us: and also what the salvation is which he hath promised us: we must have always these things in mind, to the end we might be the more careful, watchfully to call upon him: and not to wait until God constraineth us through extreme necessities, but to be always in such a readiness, as David here speaketh of, we must day and night, and every minute be occupied to look unto God, and to call upon him: and to have this understanding with us, that whensoever any of us shall wake in the night, that it be to this end to pour out some sighs unto our good GOD for our sins and transgressions. And also when as we shall be alone by ourselves, we must do the like knowing right well that God seeth us, and

that we are always as it were in his presence. Lastly we must persevere herein, and not take up the Bucklers, and by and by lay them down again, and be soon wearied: But we must still continue in our prayers, as David here sheweth us an example. Now after he hath made these protestations, he goeth on and saith,

That after he shall be heard, and shall have obtained his requests, that he will keep the testimonies of God.

Here David sheweth that he will not be unthankful for the grace which was bestowed upon him. And this is a point which ought greatly to be considered of by us. For what is the cause that God so easily granteth unto us whatsoever we demand according to his holy will that he so lovingly entreateth us, yea that his hands are continually open unto us, to the end liberally to bestow his benefits and riches upon us? Wherefore sheweth he himself so liberal every way unto us? It is to the end that we might have wherefore to yield him our hearty thanks, and to glorify him. Let us then learn, that it is impossible for us rightly to pray unto God, except we be already prepared to acknowledge his benefits, and to have this full resolute mind that David had: to wit, to glorify God, when as he shall have heard our prayers. As also we see these two things to go together in another place, where it is said, *Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.* See then what we have to note upon this saying where David saith, *That he will keep the ordinances and testimonies of God.* But we are to consider in the second place, what the thanks are which God requireth of us, after he hath holpen [*helped*] us, and that we have felt his goodness in not rejecting our prayers. Now this is true, that it is meet that the mouth doth his office to magnify the name of God, in confessing how greatly we are beholden unto him: and yet it is not enough that our mouth hath spoken, but we must glorify him with the whole action of our life, and to show this acknowledgment, how greatly we are bounden unto him, in serving and honoring him in all and through all. David then in saying, That he would give thanks unto God because he heard him, saith not, that he would do it only with the mouth, but sheweth that he will pass farther: that is, to keep the testimonies of God, and to submit him unto his ordinances.

See how the glory of God ought to resound, not only at the tongue's end of the faithful, but also in the whole action of their hands and feet, and

whatsoever else ought to apply them to honor this good God, that we should do him homage all our life long, considering that we hold all of him: and not only for our creation, but also for our maintenance and conservation, and for that he continually sheweth himself to be our protector. For there passeth not one hour over our heads, wherein God delivereth us not from one mischief or other. We have then a large matter to thank him for, not only with the mouth and in words: but also in making protestation thereof all the days of our life. We see now the sum and effect of that which is here spoken, to wit, *I have called upon thee with my whole heart, O hear me, and I will keep thy Statutes.* And afterwards, *I have called upon thee, save me, and I will keep thy Testimonies.* And after that, *I have prevented the dawning of the day.*

I have called upon thee, yea in trusting in thy word. Now here he again repeateth the point which we have noted in the other Sermon: that is, that for our well praying unto God, we must build upon the trust of his promises. And this is the true preparation which we ought to make, even such a one as this. It is true that we had need to feel our miseries and necessities, as it hath been before declared. For we shall never pray unto God with a right affection, and from the heart without this. And besides it is very needful also that we so lay open our hearts, as that we come boldly to present them before our good God to discharge and unburden those our hearts of all their cares and sorrows. But in the meanwhile, how is it possible for us, so watchfully and carefully to pray unto GOD, and to be at full liberty to come before him, if we had not this hope that he would hear us? And how could we have any hope, if he had not given us his word which witnesseth unto us his will, and certifieth us that we shall not lose our labor in praying unto him? The first laying open then which is requisite for rightly calling upon GOD, is, that we come unto him in full assurance that he will hear us. And why so? Because he hath promised us.

They then which shall pray at all adventure, shall gain nothing, as the scripture saith: For it is done but in hypocrisy: when as we assure not ourselves that God will hear us. We must, as the Apostle saith, in drawing near unto God, know that it is GOD which calleth us unto him. And they which have not this knowledge, shall be void of their hope. And therefore every man must look into himself, to be thus resolved and say, Well, since it is God that calleth and biddeth me to come unto him, I must not stand in doubt of obtaining that which I shall ask of him, yea because I trust to his

word. When then we shall be thus fully assured, we may very well begin to pray: But if this be not in us, we may bestow great pains in praying unto God, yea from morning until evening: we may continue all the whole night in babbling, but we shall get nothing at all by it: although we had some desire and zeal, we should never know what gain we should have by our prayers, because we trust not to the promises of God nor yet stay ourselves upon them.

Let us then not doubt but that he will help us, and that we shall feel his aid in time convenient. Hereby we see, that we could never duly and truly pray unto God in all the Religion of Popery, I say according to that doctrine which they hold. And why so? Because they teach the wretched world to be always in doubt and wavering. See then that a mere and professed Papist can never be able to make one prayer to please God: and cannot choose but to provoke the wrath of God against themselves in all their Prayers. And why so? Forsomuch as they look not unto his promises, upon which we must settle ourselves, to be assured: but that which is worse, they teach that in their prayers they must always stand in doubt. So much the more then ought this doctrine rightly to be considered of us, where it is declared, that the key which openeth the gate for us to approach unto God in calling upon his name, is this, that we must have the promises contained in the holy Scripture, and to learn such an affiance out of it, as that we doubt not that God regardeth us: and that so oftentimes as we pray unto him, that our prayers enter into him, and that he will receive them, declaring that he is ready to grant unto us whatsoever we shall crave of him in his son's name according to his will.

Now in the meanwhile, because that God ordinarily heareth not us at the first chop, that is to say, sheweth not it according to the outward show, and as we would wish, here is required patience to remain constant in this assurance, and to retain and nourish it in our hearts after the example of David. For he saith not, that he prayed only unto God for a time: but sheweth that he continued therein, and that he prevented [*anticipated*] the night watches. See then what perseverance was in him as touching prayer. Now it is a sign that God showed him not to have obtained the thing that he prayed for. It falleth out then that David his patience was troubled in that he languished: and yet for all that he always trusted to the word of God. Now we for our parts are to do even the like. For although God sheweth not himself to be merciful unto us so soon as we would wish, and

to grant us our requests, yet ought we notwithstanding to build hereupon that he will be faithful, and show himself so in the end. Although he prolongeth it for a time, he doth it because he knoweth it to be very profitable for us to humble us, and to prove our patience. It followeth soon after,

Mine eyes prevent the night watches: that I might be occupied in thy word.

This verse is not put to without cause. I have already said, that we can have no access unto God in our prayers, without we trust to his word. For it is a very hard matter for us to stay upon God, if we only consider of him according to our natural reason, whether he be near us or no, and whether he putteth forth his hand to help us. When then we shall not perceive this power and grace of God, as we would wish, it is a very hard thing for us to believe in him, and therefore we must stoutly strive in this behalf. And see why David saith, *That his eyes prevented the night watch*, to be occupied in that which might confirm him. As if he should have said, O Lord, I have believed thy word, but it was with great pain, and with many hard conflicts. For I am a weak man, and of mine own nature inclined to distrust, and besides I am assailed with a great number of temptations: But yet have I remedied all this gear [*goings on*], when as I occupied myself about this continual meditation of thy word, which I did not only bestow on the daytime, but also in part of the night. See here what we are in very deed to gather out of this place. But first we must mark the proceeding of David. For after he hath spoken of the hope wherein he was settled, to pray unto God without doubting that he would hear him, he saith,

That he carefully meditated on his word.

And why did he so? Shall that which was necessary for David to do, be superfluous for us? God forbid. For if such a Prophet as he, had need to arm himself against the temptations of his flesh, against the infirmities wherewith he might be assailed, I pray you how quickly shall he be overthrown, if we have not the same remedy which we used, and the courage also which he here exhorteth us unto?

Let us then consider, that if we will be stayed upon the promises of God, because we would call upon him in the time of need, we ought many times to meditate upon his words both day and night: and to set all our study

and affection therein. And see what the cause is why there are so few which be disposed to pray unto God. Yea, and when they are thereto enforced, they know not which way to begin, because they cannot be fully resolved, to say, It is very requisite that when I shall call upon my good God, that I be fully assured that he will not refuse to hear me. What is the cause of this uncertainty? It is because they are not well acquainted with the promises of God. For a man will think that it were even enough slightly and lightly to believe, that God will hear those that are his. And when we come to prayer with this thought, we think that if we have said, but a word or two: that it is too much. Yea and if we come to a Sermon, and hear the promises of God spoken of, we think it by and by to be an unprofitable speech, and will say, that it is more than needeth, for what is he that understandeth not that well enough? And in the meanwhile, behold a mighty great temptation, like unto a boisterous whirlwind and tempest even at hand: and then he which thought himself so able a man, is become a very Milksop: He will look whether God will have pity of him: He will possibly imagine, that he hath turned his back, yea or else he will doubt of his providence, whether he hath any care of the world or no, there are a thousand fantasies which the Devil goeth about to put in our minds. And when we are in this case, see we are so astonied [*stunned*], as that there is no coming for us to pray unto God. And what is the reason? It is because we have not been careful to meditate upon his promises.

And therefore we ought so much the more, thoroughly to consider of this lesson, when as it is said, That David his eyes prevented [*anticipated*] the night watches, to meditate upon the promises of God. Let us now compare ourselves with him. But it is so far off that any of us in particular hath this care, whereof mention is here made, as that we cannot by any means possible be trained unto it. And although God biddeth us to come unto him, yet cannot we be brought to come anything near him. See how the Bell shall ring everyday to move us to come to the Sermon: God there telleth us of his will, he declareth unto us that he is ready to receive us to his mercy, as often as we shall call upon him.

Now every of us may very well see, that we pass not of his help one minute of an hour. And yet how many are there notwithstanding which will vouchsafe [*grant*] to step one foot, to come to occupy themselves about the promises of God, that their memories might be refreshed in them to the end they might so much the better be remembered of them? Nay we

shall scarcely have a number of them come to it on the Sunday, yea, and if perchance [*by chance*] they come once, they think it to be as it were overmuch. And forsooth [*in truth*] they must not come thither neither every Sunday, because their ears will be overmuch filled with noise: and again such as do come to it, with what affection come they, think you? Verily, because that they cannot deny, but that there must be one day in the week for them to meet together: and besides, they will for once come thither: but it shall be to sleep, so that they understand and carry away as much as these pillars, or else the stools whereon they sit.

Lo here, how a great number of the people come to the Sermon. Yea and there are no small number which will come thither, even to mock God, as we see these scoffers and gibbers, who come to none other end, but to despite him, bring with them whorish and shameless faces, and such a beastly impudency as cannot be greater. All this we see. Now let us consider that it is so far off that our slothfulness should be excused, as that God cannot but justly punish us, in that we shall be deprived of the ability to call upon him in our need, and shall have our mouths also stopped. And afterward the mischief shall increase daily more and more, until such time as we are come even to the depth of the bottomless pits: that is to say, we shall be utterly excluded from the help of our good God, that he will retire himself from us, and clearly banish us his kingdom. Behold here the fruit which cometh by our negligence, when as we shall make no account of the exercising of ourselves in this study of the promises of God. Now David addeth,

Hear my voice, O Lord, according unto thy lovingkindness: quicken me according to thy judgment.

Here David declareth yet more plainly, upon what ground he laid his foundation of praying unto God: to wit, he brought no kind of presumption with him, thinking to make account of this or that, and so to be thought very worthy that God should hear him: but he preferred the goodness and faithfulness of God above all his own worthinesses. Lo here, whereunto we must look if we will have God to be merciful unto us. And when as we would profit ourselves by our prayers, we must not once talk of bringing in of anything of ours with us, nor yet allege this thing nor that, as thinking to bind God unto us for some good turn that we have done him:

but to have this principal regard with us, God is good, and faithful, and just.

See then whereon it is that we must settle our confidence, if we will be resolved that he will hear us. And this is such a doctrine, I tell you, as we ought well to hold and keep. For in very deed, under this word, Promise, this must altogether be understood. For what is it that induceth God to help us, and to say, come unto me, without he look that we would crave something at his hands? What is the cause that our God presenteth himself thus unto us? Are they our merits? have we any ways on our part deserved, that he should be so loving and kind unto us? No without all doubt. We must then needs conclude, that the promises do spring out from this fountain, even his mere mercy. And therefore it is not without cause that David, after he hath spoken of the promises of God, declareth here that he desireth not to be heard, but in this respect, *That God is good and merciful*. As if he should have said, O Lord, if any man inquire the cause why thou hast heard me, and hast pity on me, I am able to say nothing as touching mine own person, but that I justly deserve to be rejected of thee, but thou hast taken the matter and cause unto thine own goodness and righteousness. Now it followeth soon after,

They draw nigh that follow after malice: and are far from thy law.

Thou art nigh at hand, O Lord: for all thy commandments are true.

Here David complaineth unto God, and desireth him to help him against the wicked and ungodly contemners of his majesty: As if he had said unto him, O Lord, I can allege nothing at all for mine own defense, but that they which draw nigh unto me to hurt me, are so much the farther off from thy law, and I the nearer thy commandments. It is a common intendment, that they which do imagine malice, are far from God, in withdrawing themselves from his law: but when as we shall narrowly look into the matter, that is the very true and natural sense of the Prophet which I have already touched, that they which imagine malice or deceit, are far off: that is, they are retired from the law of God, to persecute those which draw nigh unto it. And see how David hath taken for his advantage, that, that the wicked are far from God, because he did very well see, that he had been overthrown through their malice, without God had holpen [*helped*] him. Which thing he sheweth by this complaint, that the wicked troubled him even to the uttermost. And so much the more ought we to consider of this,

because we being so womanish as possibly may be, do by and by think that if the wicked bear the sway, and craftily go about to devise anything against us, that all is lost, and that God hath given us over for a spoil. We can in no wise abide that God should exercise our patience nor yet humble us. Let us then thoroughly consider of the example of David. For although that God had specially chosen him out, amongst the rest, and had bestowed so many excellent graces upon him: yet for all that he was contented that the ungodly should persecute him, neither could he make them stand aloof off, for he had neither Ramparts or Bulwarks, that he was able to say, you shall not come near me. For he saith that they drew nigh him. So then, when God giveth such leave to the wicked, as to have the reins at will, so that it should seem, that they had the power even to set their feet on our throats, yea and to swallow us clean up, Let us consider, that it hath been the will of our God in all ages, to have his children subject to the malice of their enemies. Let us also have a further consideration of this which he saith, that they are far from the law of God. For this importeth, that they neither had truth nor equity in them. When then the ungodly, shall with the contempt of God, and an extreme impiety, even rush upon us to overthrow us, let us then, I say, remember the example of David and say, wherefore do the wicked thus persecute us, without any regard to him, who ought and will when it pleaseth him both with force and violence repress them? It is because they are both blind and blockish, and are without all truth and equity. But on the contrary side, let us not be afraid, because we know that God is nigh us: and let us continually call upon him, to the end he may be always nearer and nearer unto us, to put himself betwixt us, and make himself our buckler to put back the attempts, and to bear the blows wherewith the wicked shall assail us. Moreover, let us be sure and resolute, that notwithstanding that the ungodly shall thus oppress us, yet that God is not far from us, although that we cannot perceive it. For God will oftentimes be near us, when as we shall think that he is clean hidden: that is to say, he showeth not unto us his power and virtue, neither layeth he it open at the first chop. For we must also call upon him, that we might show what honor we bear him: that although he prolongeth the time, and tarrieth longer before he help us, than we would, yet must we notwithstanding tarry his good leisure. In sum we must always be resolute in this which David here speaketh of, saying, are the ungodly nigh? very well, and God is at hand. That is to say, God is not asleep in heaven, whiles these men are maliciously imagining to do us hurt,

God his arms are not across, neither are his hands closed, notwithstanding that these men seek nothing else but to devour us. God is not yet blind, whiles these ungodly awake, to destroy and confound us. See then how God, according to the necessities which he knoweth to be in us, will always be at hand, so to assist us, as that whatsoever mischief is near us, it shall never be able to overcome us, yea, invent the wicked what they can on all sides. This is it that David meaneth to signify in this place.

Now he also saith, *That the commandments of God are true.* Wherein he exhorteth us to have recourse unto the word of God, for although we are thus tormented and fast closed up in sorrow and griefs: yea and that we look this way and that way for help, and yet see not God to remedy the same: then I say, he teacheth us to have recourse unto his word. And this is a most profitable admonition. For when we seek after God, we must not have regard to our own fantasies, nor to any worldly manner, as we are accustomed, nor to look that he submit himself unto our will, to show himself unto us after a visible sort, to have him come down from heaven in his majesty, to consume with fire and brimstone all our enemies, to set us aloft, and to bear us such favor, as that we might have all things at our own desire: Lo I beseech you how we desire to have GOD to show himself, for like as we are fleshly, so also would we have him to show himself unto us in a visible manner. All this while, his word is of no great authority with us: for if he show us not why and wherefore, we are not contented with that which he hath spoken, but we would forsooth [*in truth*] see his hand altogether open. Wherefore, this admonition which David here giveth us, is very necessary: to wit, that the commandments of God are true. As if he should have said, O Lord, I have already said, that thou art near unto us, forasmuch as thou seest us to be persecuted and troubled by the wicked, and how they come upon us to destroy us, and that thou art right before them and against them to beat them back, and to bear their blows. All this do I confess, O Lord, But yet I see not this after a visible and worldly manner. How then? It is because thy commandments are true. David then knew that God was near unto him, because he settled himself upon the law, and the promises which were given him. And even so must we do, although it seem very hard, as we have already touched. It followeth,

I have known long since by thy testimonies: that thou hast grounded them forever.

In this latter verse, for a conclusion, David saith, that he was not like a novice, to be now to learn to know what the commandments of God were, but he was resolute that God was near him, because he had his word, from which he could not start. He sheweth then, that the faithful ought not to be as it were in their ABC but must be long time exercised: as David protesteth of himself, I have known them, saith he, long since.

Now here he setteth down a word which signifieth continuance: *From the beginning have I known* saith he, *long since thy commandments which thou hast grounded forever.*

So then, let us learn that if we will boldly strive against all the assaults, wherewith we may be assailed, we must continue in this knowledge of the word of God, and we shall always find him ready to be nearhand us: so that we may be sure of his protection, not for a day only but all the days of our life. And so let us thoroughly record this lesson, to the end we may say with David, that we have the testimonies of GOD so deeply imprinted in our hearts, as that we have long time since known what is already in them, to wit, that God hath established them: That is to say, that although we shall see a great number of changes in this world, that all things are changed and turned, yet that God is no changeling, that he never altereth his mind, that his word is, as it was from the beginning, and as it shall continue forever: that it shall never be subject to all the turns and changes of this world, but shall ever abide in his full strength and virtue, because that God hath established it forever. And this is even so, as that we ought to be prepared to call upon God, to wit, when as we shall be settled upon the true confidence of his promises: that we shall have known the everlasting power and strength which he hath given to his word: that is, that he will remain always like unto himself. When, I say, we shall have known this, we may boldly come and present ourselves before him, being assured that he will make us feel by proof, that which he promiseth us, so oftentimes as we shall have recourse unto him, trusting herein that he hath rendered unto us a testimony of the love which he beareth us.

Now let us prostrate ourselves before the Majesty of our good God, and father, in acknowledging our innumerable offenses, which we daily commit against him: Beseeching him that he will so touch us, as that instead that we have been overmuch given to our fleshly affections, and vanities of this world, that now we seek none other way but wholly to order ourselves

according to his good will, being assured that although we be feeble and weak, yea and utterly void of all strength, so that we cannot step one foot forward without stumbling, or else in going backward we be far from him, yet let us not doubt but that he will be near at hand to help us: And also that when he hath made us to feel his help, that he will give us that grace that we may be so thankful unto him, as he deserveth, desiring nothing else but to glorify him all the days of our life, for so many his benefits as he daily giveth us, and liberally bestoweth upon us.

That he will not only grant unto us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE TWENTIETH SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

RESH

- 153** Behold mine affliction, and deliver me: for I have not forgotten thy law.
- 154** Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according unto thy word.
- 155** Salvation is far from the ungodly: because they seek not thy statutes.
- 156** Great are thy tender mercies O Lord: quicken me according to thy judgments.
- 157** Many there are, that trouble me, and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from thy testimonies.
- 158** It grieved me when I saw the transgressors: because they kept not thy law.
- 159** Consider, O Lord, how I love thy Commandments: quicken me according unto thy loving kindness.
- 160** Thy word is true from everlasting: and all the judgments of thy righteousness endure for evermore.

IF WE MIGHT have whatsoever we would desire and wish, in very deed we should be the better at ease, and without any grief. And this is it that man naturally desireth. But in the meanwhile we are to consider, that God will exercise us with diverse afflictions, so long as we are in this world.

Wherefore such is the condition and state of Christians, so long as they shall live here upon the earth: That is, they must strive, and be exercised with diverse sorts of griefs, sometimes of the body, and otherwhiles of the soul. And therefore for this cause must we arm ourselves to the end we be not overcome in the midst of our conflicts. Now the principal piece of our armor is, to pray unto God and to call upon him to help us. And to bring

this about, we are thoroughly to consider how all the faithful which lived long before our time, proceeded herein, to the end we might order ourselves after their example, as in this text here, we see how David was even extremely afflicted. Again, we see also how he behaved himself in all his afflictions, which although they were very vehement, yet did they not hinder him to have recourse unto God, and of him he was rescued and saved. See then what we have to meditate upon, to the end that we might do the like.

Behold mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

When as he desireth God to look unto his afflictions, it is even the same which we have already said: to wit, That although God loved him, yet would he not but that he should be subject, to a great number of miseries, torments and griefs. Let us not think then to be privileged, so long as we are to walk here below on the earth, but that God will exercise us and assay and prove our patience, as he hath proved David's, whom he so greatly loved, as the scripture witnesseth of him.

Now here we are to note two things, The one is, that when David desired God to look upon his afflictions, and to deliver him out of them: he confesseth that he was astonished [*stunned*], as if God had turned his back upon him. It is very true, that David considered not of all that was to be considered, neither did he conclude, that God would cast off his children in such sort: But yet so far forth as natural reason could reach, see how he might judge of his estate.

And at that point also are all the Children of God. For on the one side, when as they shall look upon their own state and condition, they cannot choose but that they must be forced to say, what a thing is this. Surely, if God hath any compassion upon us, and that he seeth us, is it possible that ever we should be thus cruelly handled, will not he take some better order for this: See then, that we cannot choose, but to conceive these and such like imaginations in our hearts, when as we are grieved and persecuted, and look into our own present estate: yea, even as I have already said, we cannot choose even to feel ourselves as it were to be forsaken of GOD. And yet for all this, we must be fully persuaded and resolved, that GOD beholdeth us: and although it seemeth, that he hath turned his back upon us, yet that he ceaseth not to help us, and is careful for our salvation, yea and though we see nothing, yet let us hold this for a certain and an

undoubted truth, in our hearts. And therefore so often as we shall be thus troubled to think that God hath no longer care over us, but that he hath clearly forsaken us, yet let not this hinder us from praying, after the example of David: neither let us be slack, but even say, O Lord, behold me. In the second place we have to note, the reason which David here setteth down. For I do not forget thy law. If then we will have God to hear us, we must have his law as it were fully settled in our hearts. And how is that? Forsooth [*in truth*], we must think and study upon his promises, we must know him to be loving and merciful, to help all those that are his, and to aid them in all their necessities, and besides, this must be our sure foundation that his promises are infallible, and that he will not suffer his children to go empty away, when as they shall tend themselves thereto.

See then how we must meditate upon the law of God that is to say, upon his word. For under this word, the law, there is no doubt, but that David comprehended the sum of all the doctrine which God gave unto his church. Every of us then must be exercised in this study, and we having the law thus imprinted in our hearts, may be certain and sure that God beholdeth us, and will help us in all our afflictions: yea although it seemeth, and we may judge according to our carnal senses, that he hath turned his back upon us, or that he hath closed up his eyes, and sleepeth, and as a man would say, never thinketh more of us. Now it followeth in the second verse, *Plead my cause and deliver me: quicken me according unto thy word.*

Here David expresseth what this his affection is, whereof he hath spoken: to wit, how that the wicked unjustly persecuted him, as again hereafter shall more at large be declared. Now we know, that the griefs which the children of God do suffer in this world, are diverse and sundry: For sometimes God will lay his heavy hand upon them, without any man his touching: sometimes also men shall persecute them with unjust actions, so that the wicked shall torment and grieve them. David then sheweth that the affliction which he endured, was of this second kind, to wit: that he had enemies which did unjustly trouble him. And see wherefore he desireth God, to plead his cause, and restore him. By this we are admonished, according to that which I have already said, that when we have lived in a good conscience, and have traveled even to do good unto every man, so that no man hath any cause justly to complain of us, yet although we are persecuted and troubled we must not for all that be overmuch abashed:

because as great matters as all these were laid upon David. For this is most sure, that he walked so marvelous soundly as that every man had occasion to love him. And yet notwithstanding he was not without troubles amongst men. And why so? Because of their unthankfulness. Let us then understand that this vice began not first in these days, (I mean the unthankfulness and iniquity of men:) But long time ago, and therefore as much as in us lieth, let us seek after peace: but if so be we shall procure to do any wrong, the world will never give overhating of us, and procuring of our hurt, yea, and go about even to destroy us. But as I have already said, let not that seem strange unto us, seeing it came so to pass in David. And thus much for this. Now in the second place, we are to beseech God to avenge our cause, to comfort us, when we see ourselves to be wrongfully dealt withal, when as we are oppressed with false and slanderous reports, that we are evil spoken of without just desert: we must then desire God to be our warrant and deliverer: and let us not doubt but that he will take our cause into his own hand, and show himself to be more than a protector and lawyer. For he saith that he is the adverse party for the maintenance and defense of the causes and quarrels of all his, when as they shall have walked sincerely before himself and before men. Lo here a notable, and very profitable admonition: That is, we must cast all our care upon God, when as we are wrongfully accused, injuriously dealt withal, troubled, and oppressed: and beseech God to take the cause into his own hand, and to avenge it himself. Now this may serve to make us patient: for what is the cause that men so trouble and torment themselves, wax so fierce, and cruel, use revenge, or else, grow to be very cowards when any wrong is done them, but because that they have not recourse unto God, put not themselves under his protections, and pray him not, to hold his holy hand over them, and to defend their cause? Now if we know this, it is most certain, that our hearts shall incontinent be a great deal more quiet, and let us not have such boiling affections as we have, to be avenged of them which trouble us, but let us follow the doctrine which is here set down unto us: to wit, that when we are unjustly entreated, let us pray unto God that he will avenge our cause. And besides also, let us learn to stay ourselves of the promise, which is made unto us thereof: for like as a David maketh here such a request, so also we are to consider, that he made it not of his own head, nor at adventure, but he knew it to be the office of God: That is, *That he will avenge all outrages*, as it is said in the song of Moyses,

That if men oppress any unjustly, our Lord saith, that it is he which avengeth the cause of the innocent, and of him that is troubled without a cause. (Exodus 15)

David then knowing, that God having taken this title unto himself, and declared that he will not suffer the throats of the righteous to be thus cut, to be tormented, and trodden underfoot, but that he will stretch forth his hand to help them: he having known this calleth upon God with a sure constancy, that will receive him. Wherefore it is meet that we look unto this promise when as we pray, to the end we pray not doubtfully but in full assurance, that God will be incontinent ready to help our necessities. And this is it why David by and by after saith, Quicken me according unto thy word. It is not without cause that this saying was added. For as I have already said, when as we will beseech the Lord our God to take upon him our quarrel, and to assist us in our afflictions: and then we in the meantime shall stand in doubt of his so doing, we shall profit ourselves little in so praying. But we must be fully assured that he will deliver us. And whensoever it shall come to pass, that we shall be destitute of all men's aid, yea that it shall seem that all the whole world had conspired our destruction and decay, then should we chiefliest assure ourselves, that God will avenge our cause: and not only serve us instead of a proctor, but will be altogether also our judge, and adverse party against our enemies, and against all those which have unjustly afflicted us. For he it is that must take in hand all just causes. We had need then to assure ourselves of this. But from whence shall we learn this? even out of the word of God, because he hath left unto us a testimony thereof in it: as we see that David speaketh not here at a wild adventure, but hath already grounded himself upon a good foundation, whereon he hath settled himself. Now it followeth,

Salvation is far from the ungodly: because they seek not thy statutes. And afterward he saith, *Great are thy tender mercies, O Lord: quicken me, according to thy judgments.*

Now here are two things to be considered of. The one is, that David telleth the reason why all the contemners of God, and all that rebel against his majesty run headlong into destruction, and that he forsaketh them: that they feel no taste nor ease in their afflictions, but that God clearly forsaketh them. David setteth down here the cause of all this: it is, saith

he, because they have not sought after thy laws, and therefore are far from thy salvation. Now he clean contrary, protesteth of himself, that he followed the law of God, and kept it in his heart. So then we must needs conclude, that he could not be estranged from it. In very deed, this sentence at the first sight is somewhat dark, but I will make it plain in three words, and then by little and little show what doctrine we are to gather out of this. When any telleth us of our salvation, we must in the first place know, whence it proceedeth: to wit, from God, and that there is no salvation but in him: insomuch that so long as God is good and gracious unto us, it must needs be that all must go very well on our side, and be assured that our life is blessed, and that we shall want [*lack*] nothing that is meet for our welfare and felicity. So then, our salvation, and all fullness and perfection of benefits consist in this one only point, that God loveth us and receiveth us unto himself. And since it is so, let us now consider, what he is whom God will forsake. Once, we are his creatures, and even as he hath created and fashioned us, so also will he continue his goodness towards us. Now, seeing that his mercy extendeth even to brute beasts, even to the most vile and abject things, yea even which we condemn, and disdain once to look on, seeing the mercy of God extendeth so far, as the holy Scripture teacheth us, how can it be that he will forsake us, yea unto whom he hath granted so great dignity and excellency? For we have a thing excelling all other his creatures, which is this, that God hath imprinted his own similitude and likeness in us: Now when as he hath exalted us unto so high a degree of honor, will he, think you, now forsake us? He will not without all doubt. What is the cause then that we see so many caitiffs [*despicable captives*], and miserable wretches which are even given over, so that God sendeth them not so much as the least aid and comfort, that it seemeth, that he hath set them as it were upon a stage, to be a shame and rebuke to the whole world? Whence cometh this? Forsooth [*in truth*], because they withdraw themselves from God: for when as they withdrew not themselves from him: it is most sure that then he showed himself unto them, such a one as indeed he is of his own nature, that is, loving, kind, pitiful, gentle, and merciful. To be short, so long as we will be ordered by him as his children, it is most sure, that he will play the part of a father towards us: so long as we will yield our obedience unto him, he will entreat us gently. But when we are so perverse as that we will not submit ourselves neither, unto himself, nor yet unto his word, but condemn his love and grace offered unto us: is it reason that God should put forth his

hand to help us? is it meet he should entreat us as his children, and accompt [*account*] us in the number of those which wholly dedicate themselves unto his majesty? No not so. But we rather are worthy to be set far from him, and to have nothing at all to do with him. Lo here the meaning of David in this place, when he saith, *O Lord, health is far from the ungodly because they regard not thy statutes*: As if he should have said, we ought not to be abashed, O Lord, although thou givest us over, and that we feel no succor [*help*] of thy goodness, but that we languish in all misery and calamity. And why so? Because we have forsaken and refused thy grace: and therefore of very right we ought to be confounded and come to naught. Now I pray you tell us, what meaneth it that God will not be nigh us, but by means of his word? we must needs feel his goodness by the effect, yea forsooth [*in truth*], and yet God cometh nigh unto us by his word: for that is a preparative by which he fashioneth our hearts, to the end he might show himself to be a merciful father unto us. And so he maketh an entrance into our hearts for his mercy, that we might be capable to enjoy his benefits. Seeing then it is so, that God by his word, showeth himself and also cometh nigh unto us, we must not be abashed, although they which refuse his word, yea, which so villainously and contemptuously reject it, as we see: we must not, I say, think it strange, although that they feel no help at the hand of God in their afflictions, and that his merciful goodness stretcheth not itself unto them. Now David returneth to this sentence which we have seen, and desireth to be quickened according unto the word of God. It is very true he useth the word, *Judgment*, but all cometh to one, as we have already heretofore declared. *Quicken me then according to thy judgments*, saith he, *yea which I have loved*. But yet notwithstanding, he showeth us how it is that God hath promised to quicken us, and why he attributeth it unto his only mercy.

Now this is a saying which importeth a very good and excellent lesson: for they which confess, that they cannot be saved but by the grace of God, yet notwithstanding howsoever it is, they cease not to overthrow the grace of God, in extolling their merits, or else in making themselves believe that God hath promised them to be so kind unto them, because they have deserved it. It is requisite then that we know with David, what it is that hath moved and stirred up God to promise to quicken us: to wit, to maintain us. For this word to Quicken, importeth all whatsoever

concerneth our estate and salvation. It is because he is good, and never sought the cause otherwise but in his goodness. When then we are enforced to confess that it is God which maintaineth us, we must also forthwith confess that God hath done it for his promise's sake, and for that he hath revealed it as a testimony in his word. Moreover, see wherein a great number of people are too grossly deceived: that is, that God promiseth to maintain and conserve us, accordingly as we are worthy thereof, or accordingly as every man shall deserve. And hereupon, as I have already said, we darken the grace of God, and fain [*rather*] through arrogance, I know not what presumption, that it seemeth, that we ourselves are the cause why God favoreth us, and that the same cometh at the least, partly of ourselves. And therefore we ought so much the more thoroughly to consider of that which David speaketh of in this place. *Thy mercies, O Lord, are great, O quicken me according to thy testimonies.*

He saith not only, O Lord, I am conserved by thee, because thou hast promised: but meaning to declare that it cometh altogether freely, he sheweth that God was not moved to make any such promise, nor yet was induced by any occasion that he found in us, or that he took it on our behalf. No, no: but because his mercies are great. So then, by this saying David teacheth us, that the promises of God are altogether free, that they hang not of our worthiness, nor yet because God found something in us, why to love and succor [*help*] us so: but because he is good, and pitieth our miseries.

Lo what made him to offer himself so liberal to us, and consequently to perform his promise. We must learn then to glorify ourselves in the mere grace of God, and not to attribute anything whatsoever, either to our own persons, or yet to our merits, for there is nothing at all in us. Now it followeth,

Many there are that trouble and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from thy testimonies.

Here David maketh a protestation and complaint, to the end God might the rather incline himself to hear, and help him. And that is, according to that which he hath already said. For if we will have God to help us, it is good reason that we should patiently attend his leisure. And in very deed he that shall presume to advance himself, or thinketh that God will have mercy upon him, and then letteth [*allow*] himself to be overcome with

temptation, and becometh altogether desperate: he by this means suffereth not God to exercise his goodness as he hath promised: but in thus doing, shutteth the gate against God as it were. Wherefore if we be moved to be revenged of our enemies, to be our own carvers, as we say, in revenge and not tarry until God doth his office, do we think that he ought to help us? He that will do justice with his own hand, and of his own private authority, will he come to crave aid of the Magistrate, after that he hath killed his enemy? If so be then there be any man which thinketh to be saved of himself, and yet saith unto God, Save me, O Lord, this a very mockery. And therefore for this cause David saith in this place, *Many there are, O Lord, which trouble and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from thy statutes.* David speaketh not here to boast himself, but it is to declare that he waited for the help of God: and putting himself under his protection, trusted to obtain his request, because he might boldly crave it of him. So then what a full boldness we may conceive to have in calling upon God, and not to doubt but that we shall obtain whatsoever we pray for unto him according to his will: that is, he hath pity of us: so that, I say, we must always stay ourselves upon his promises, as we see David here hath done. So then, let us here consider in the first place, that so often as we come unto God, we must come unto him attending his good leisure, and not to be shaken with whatsoever temptations shall come unto us, but we must always seek after God, meditate continually upon his promises, and have them always in mind: we must, I say, have all this, if we will have God to help and defend us. Now, as I have already said, David bragged not here of his virtues, but meaneth only that he was not carried away with the iniquity of men, to be even with them, or to cry quittance, as we say, that he was not in haste to have that which was promised him, but held himself continually quiet and still, attending patiently to have God to accomplish that which he had promised, touching the revenge of his enemies: even so, when as any shall grieve and trouble us, yet must we not leave to follow our vocation, and to persevere in the fear of God. For the greater part of us will always be full of malice and unthankfulness, until such time as God hath reformed us. So then, when as we shall not have hurt any man, if they rise up against us in arms, let us not be astonied [*surprised, dismayed*] thereat. And thus much for this. Now the other is, that when our enemies shall be infinite in number, we must not be troubled for all this: but let us know what the power of God is, and glorify him as he ought to be glorified. And this is a very necessary point for us to learn: For we must

not be afraid of our own shadows as we say. And therefore, if there be two or three men which are in credit and authority, that shall make war against us, we are so faithhearted before the blow come, as that it seemeth unto us that we are utterly undone: even as though God were not strong enough to help us. See how we through fond ignorance glory in the power of men, and utterly overthrow the power and might of God. And therefore we ought a great deal the better to consider of this place, where it is said, *Many there are, O Lord, which trouble and persecute me: yet do I not swerve from thy law, neither yet have I forgotten it:* That is to say, that although we see an infinite number of people to rise up against us, that we see a general conspiracy of the whole world, and of all the creatures therein, yet let us not be too much afraid, knowing that the power of our God shall be sufficient enough to save and defend us. See what we have to note out of this place, where it is said, *It grieved me when I saw the transgressors: because they kept not thy law.*

Here David showeth that, which we have already seen before: to wit, that it grieved him more, to see the offenses which were committed against God, than all the outrages which he bare in his own person. And this is also it, which we ought to have in great recommendation. For if we be so fine and as it were womanish, that we can abide nothing, and yet in the meanwhile have no care how God is dishonored, his justice violated, and his commandments broken: I beseech you do we not right well show, that we are so given to please ourselves, as that we even condemn his sacred majesty. If a man, meaning to defend his honor even with tooth and nail, as we say, and maketh no accompt [*account*] to see the glory of God trodden under feet: if he be so gallant and haughty, as to be revenged for every injury, and can abide to hear the holy name of God to be evil spoken of, his law to be cast under foot, doth he not right well show himself to be a very sensual and fleshly man? Yes surely, he is no better than a brute beast. And therefore for this cause let us learn, after the example of David to be chiefly grieved and vexed, when as we shall see the commandments of God to be broken. It is the common and ordinary fashion amongst us, to be extremely vexed when as any injury is done unto us, as if the honor or credit of any of us be touched, we are by and by in a great heat, and desire nothing else but to follow the matter hotly. And why so? because we have no regard but to our own person. If one man shall rob another, his choler or anger will not be appeased: he looketh to his purse, his meadows, his

possessions, and to his houses, even as he shall be hindered either in this thing or in that. Now, a man that can well rule his affections shall never have so great regard to his honor, nor to his goods as he shall have when as he shall see the righteousness of God to be violated. What? (shall he say, even groaning in himself) ought men in this sort to pervert the righteousness of God? shall men break and corrupt all order and equity? Lo, say I, what it is that ought to touch us, and to make us very angry: that is, when we see offenses committed against God, and not that which toucheth our own persons. But what shall we speak of this: for very few there are which have any care hereof. And yet for all that it is not in vain that David hath set down unto us this example: but to show how the children of God ought to moderate their passions: that is, they should always begin at this end, to be grieved and sorrowful to see the transgressors, which break, contemn, and tread under foot the word of God, and this should be their chief grief and sorrow which should crucify them, and not to have such regard to their own persons as they have, but to let God always to be preferred before themselves, and to let him to have the most sovereign degree, as he is most worthy. Now if it grieveth us to see the transgressors, which tear in pieces, and break all justice and policy, it is certain, that we should also be grieved at the evil which we know to be in ourselves. For every man is to judge of himself without exception. As for those which will say, Oh see, I am not grieved as touching mine own person: and in very deed, I care not so much for myself, as I am grieved to see men thus horribly to offend the majesty of God, and yet they themselves will take leave to commit as great or else greater villainies and wickedness, than the rest: and yet when they have thus said, they will cover their own vices, and flatter themselves when they have offended his majesty, whereas they should lay them wide open: now indeed these men show themselves to be right hypocrites. And why so I beseech you? because they are not grieved at the transgressors, when as they see the glory of God impaired, his service not observed and his righteousness contemned: But rather persecute the persons, and hate not the vices which are nourished, and purposely maintained in them. For what show soever they make of condemning the evil, yet it may be easily seen that they are no whit touched therewith. And by this they right well show, that they know not what it is to be grieved as they ought. Now this is not to do as we ought: For whatsoever show we shall make of the great zeal we have to the honor and glory of God, we shall very well see, that there is nothing

but hypocrisy and dissimulation in us, if we look indifferently into the matter. Lo here what we have to note out of this place. Now David saith in the end.

Consider, O Lord, how I love thy commandments: quicken me according unto thy loving kindness.

Here David doth nothing else but setteth down more manifestly that which was spoken of heretofore, Consider O Lord, I love thy commandments, he speaketh not only of that which is said unto us, that we must love our neighbor, live chastely, honor our father and mother, do wrong to none: but under these words, he comprehendeth all the doctrine, wherewith God meaneth to govern his people, and church, as we have already handled. Now in this doctrine, are contained the promises, which witness unto us his goodness: yea and they have the chiefest place, because that God showing himself unto us to be our father, will not give us over for anything: forsomuch as we be assured of our eternal salvation, and that in this world he hath care over us, and our life is as it were committed unto him, so that herein lieth the whole substance, that after he hath pardoned us of our sins, he alloweth us for righteousness, and will also govern us with his holy spirit. See then what it is, that is contained in the testimonies of God. And so David in sum, protesteth in this verse, that he always walked in this love of God which he found in his promises. This is it which he protesteth, and thereupon saith, *Quicken me according unto thy mercy.*

If David then loved the commandment of God and his testimonies, wherefore desireth he not to be quickened according to his merits? And if it be so that he hath deserved, why hath he recourse to the mercy of God? Now he very well showeth, that he meant not to boast of his virtues neither yet of any such, I know not what perfection, to have fulfilled the law of God, but he had a special regard, as I have already said, to the content of God his promises. He allegeth not here that he had deserved to be holpen [*helped*]: but he desired to be defended according to the mercy of God. In this point he setteth before us his example, to the end we might follow him, as this is also the meaning of the holy Ghost, when as he spake by the mouth of David. Now he goeth on for a conclusion and saith,

Thy word is true from everlasting: and all the judgments of thy righteousness endure for evermore.

That is to say, thy just judgments are everlasting: or else, thy judgments are always righteous. Here David, in sum, meaneth to signify, that he so stayed himself upon the word of God, as that he had set his heart upon it, yielded himself wholly unto it, and bestowed all his thoughts and wits on it. And why did he so? saith he, *The beginning of it is true, and the righteousness thereof endureth for evermore.* As if he should have thus said, Thou, O Lord, art true in thy word, and shalt always be found so, and afterward. It is nothing but righteous, it is true from the beginning and thy righteousness shall endure unto the end, and without end. See how the two borders or limits of the word of God are laid out. When as we shall seek for this word, we must make a distinction and difference, between truth, and righteousness, with this resolution, see how God showeth himself true and righteous. And the farther we go on the better shall we find his word to be such: so that after we have thoroughly unripped and examined it, we shall not have one syllable, where righteousness, and truth, will not show themselves. Even so may we always attribute this title to the word of God, as David here showeth us. In sum, when as we would have a perfect assurance, to be confirmed, and strengthened in all temptations, so that the devil shall never be able to take fast hold upon us: let us have this regard, to stay ourselves chiefly upon the word of God, and therewith to arm us, attributing thereto these true titles which are here set down, that there is nothing in it but all truth and righteousness. And therefore this ought greatly to content us, to assure ourselves of God, not doubting but that he will grant us the grace, that when he hath once brought us into the way of salvation, that he will continually conduct and govern us, and hold us with a mighty strong arm, until such time as he hath brought us to that end whereunto he hath called us.

According to this holy doctrine, let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good God, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us better to feel our miseries than we have heretofore felt them, to the end we may lay ourselves open unto him. And that we may in the meanwhile attain to that remedy, as to crave pardon of him for them: not doubting but that he will grant us pardon for them according to our desire, through the death and passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, albeit we are miserable sinners: And also that he will through his holy spirit so purge us from our sins, as that we desire nothing else but to be confirmed unto his righteousness, to come unto him, and to advance

us thereunto daily more and more, until such time as he hath coupled us unto that holiness of life, whereunto he continually exhorteth us. That he will not only grant unto us this grace, but also unto all people and nations of the earth, etc.

THE TWENTY-FIRST SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

SCHYN

- 161** Princes have persecuted me without cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.
- 162** I am as glad of thy word: as one that findeth great spoils.
- 163** I hate falsehood and abhor it: but thy law do I love.
- 164** Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgments.
- 165** They that love thy law, shall have great prosperity: and they shall have no hurt.
- 166** Lord I have trusted in thy saving health: and have done thy commandments.
- 167** My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and I love them exceedingly.
- 168** I have kept thy commandementes and testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

WHEN AS MEN SHALL TROUBLE US, and do us many injuries, or else any way grieve and vex us, yet are there two things to lead us to walk wickedly without the fear of God. The one is, that it will seem that God hath not compassion of us, to help us. The other, that we will be more afraid of men than indeed we ought: For we imagine that all is in their hand, and that they may do all things at their own pleasure and as themselves list [*desire*], do God what he can to the contrary. Lo here, I say what it is that he hindereth us from persevering in the fear of God: That is, That when men trouble us with injuries, violences, and extortions, we are straightways discouraged. And so we are here thoroughly to consider of this place where David saith that he stood in awe of the word of God, although princes persecuted him without a cause: and indeed, we ought even then most

specially to weigh it, when as we see the mightiness of men to astonish us, and our enemies to be in great credit and authority, yea that it seem we are even as sheep in the jaws of wolves, that we have no means to resist their violence, but that they may do whatsoever seemeth good unto them, insomuch that no man dareth once to open his mouth against them. When as, I say, our enemies shall have all this, and be thus highly lifted up over us, that we know not what shall become of us: then it is a hard matter for us to conceive, what the help which God hath promised us is worth, so that we are overtaken with this fear, to say, O, see we are utterly undone, all our cause is clean cast to the ground. And yet in the meanwhile we never once think, that they are but Gnats, or else when we shall esteem most of them, that they are but Frogs leaping and skipping up and down here below. Neither yet have they so mighty thighs and legs as that they are able to jostle against God: but that whensoever he shall stretch forth his hand, it shall throw down even into the depth, whatsoever men shall of purpose with all their complices, craftily or wickedly devise, and whatsoever power they shall be anyway able to make. See then what we have here especially to note: that is, that whensoever we shall fall into the hands of our enemies, and that it shall seem they might at their pleasure bring to pass whatsoever they listed [*desired*], so that there remained no way to withstand them: yet let us look unto this infinite power of God, and not to doubt, but that when it shall please him to deliver us, that the Devil nor yet all his rabble of maintainers shall be able to do anything against us. And although all the creatures in the world lifted themselves up against us, yet are they not able to do us any hurt so long as God is on our side. And thus we must I say, receive the grace of God, which he hath promised us, to the end we might not doubt, that all the world can do us any harm, when as he shall have taken us into his protection. And see also I pray you whither it is that the Scripture leadeth us, *Although*, saith David,

an hundred thousand men did set themselves against me,
yet will not I be afraid. (<190306> Psalm 3:6)

And why so? *Because the Lord is with me.* And again,

If I should walk in the shadow of death, so long as I shall look unto God, and see his Sheepcrook before me, I will not be afraid, but be assured that I shall live. (<192304> Psalm 23:4)

Saint Paul also comprehendeth all this, speaking not only of this present life, but of the health of our souls likewise, when as he saith,

If God be on our side, who shall be against us.

(<450831>Romans 8:31)

I cannot deny, but that we shall have a great number of enemies, and Satan will labor by all means possible to hurt us: we shall have great store of his supporters to go about to cast us down headlong into the bottomless pit: and yet all they shall do nothing, when as we shall be in the safekeeping of our God. Now this is the sum, which we are to gather hereby, in the first place of this text. But yet we must go on a great deal farther. For David doth not only show unto us, that we ought highly to esteem of this mighty power, and great goodness of God, wherewith he hath promised to help us in our need: but also adviseth and exhorteth us not to turn aside from his obedience, for any hurt that men can do unto us. Now it is very true, that the one hangeth upon the other. For how can it be that we should have hearts to serve GOD, when as we see the whole world to be against us, and we always in danger to be hurt: That is to say, Let us put our trust in God, although the alarm and assaults be given us on every side: For otherwise it shall be impossible for us to stand stoutly to it, without we be thoroughly persuaded, that God is sufficient to defend us: yea when as we see all the men in the world, to set themselves against us: but that we trusting in his power, cease not to follow that which he hath commanded us: notwithstanding all the lets [*hindrances*] that men can possibly lay before us. Moreover, we must give our minds to this word of God, as here it is said, *I stand in awe of thy word*, For David meaneth not that he would have God to show himself in a visible manner, that he might come unto him to do him homage: but he is contented that God hath showed unto him his will and pleasure, and holdeth himself well pleased therewith. And even so must we also do. For there are a great many of people, which will brag that they fear God, and profess it with open mouth. And yet notwithstanding, see how God calleth us unto him by his word, and we for all that are no whit moved therewith: yea we scarcely vouchsafe [*allow*] once to open our mouths to declare that we are contented to obey him. Where then is that fear whereof we so brag, since the word, wherein the majesty of God appeareth, is so contemned of us? See then wherefore we ought a great deal the more to consider of this manner of speaking which David here useth, that he standeth in awe of the word of God, and that he

desired none other visible presence: but it sufficed him that God had only spoken, and he made good account thereof. Now, if we do not thus, we shall ever be letted [*prevented*] from following that which God hath commanded us, neither shall we ever have the hearts, to discharge ourselves perfectly of our duties. Contrariwise, they that shall be resolved as David was, only to give their minds to the word of God, shall overcome all lets [*hindrances*] and stops: Moreover after they have walked aright, do they see that men murmur against them for it, that it seemeth that they for their well doing shall be recompensed with evil, and that this thing and that is mischievously wrought against them? that they must needs languish in long attending without sparing, yea that they have kindled the fury of men against them, without any occasion given by them? do they see, I say, all this? And if they do thus, it is very well: for then stand they in awe of the word of God, knowing that they shall not be without the help of God, as also our savior Christ exhorteth us.

Fear not saith he **them which may kill the body: but I will show yet whom you ought to fear**, to wit: **fear him who hath both soul and body in his subjection.** (<401028>Matthew 10:28)

When as then you shall look unto your God, then shall you not need to fear whatsoever men go about to cause you to turn aside, and to withdraw you from the right way. And thus we see in sum, that it is our infirmity, or rather our infidelity which hindereth us, when as men threaten us, when as we see the wicked practices which are imagined against us, and that we are troubled and tormented without cause. For if we still looked unto God, this should never be able to withdraw us, but that we should always remain constant to do that which he commandeth us. And by this also we may see, how all to the contrary reigneth at this day in the world, and that there is very little fear of the word of God. For so that we can hold the favor of men, in doing our duty any way: well, this goeth for payment: But if there bloweth an ill wind, and that we perceive any evil practice, or that we be threatened, and that the ungodly bear the sway: we are incontinent [*out of control*], astonied [*stunned*], yea and that in such a fear, as that we are not able once to stir a finger. And that which is more, to gratify the wicked whom we see to be in authority, we will make no bones at it, as we say, to offend the majesty of God. And from whence cometh this? but that we look not unto his word, as here it is set down? We are then even convinced of infidelity when as we assure not ourselves of the

help of our God, to do that which he hath ordained, and that which is our duty to do: that we have not this invincible power to resist the assaults of men. And why so? Because it is most certain that we have not earnestly stood in awe of the word of God, which ought to be as an assured fortress, and not to make any account of whatsoever that Satan can anyway craftily invent against us.

Now after that David hath thus spoken, he goeth on and saith,

I am as glad of thy word, as one that findeth great spoils.

That is to say, he gladdened more in the promises of God, than in all the riches in the world, as we have seen in the ninth part beginning with the letter TETH, which hath been in that place song, That he esteemed more of the word of God, than of all the gold and Silver in the world. And here he saith, that he rejoiceth to hear God speak, more than if he had found all the goods in the world, that all the riches in the world were nothing to him in respect of it. It seemeth greatly at the first sight that here is some contrariety, as to stand in fear and awe of the word of God, and also to rejoice in it. For joy and fear are mere contraries. But we have already declared what it is that David meaneth by this fear: not that he was abashed to serve God, nor yet that he doubted of his salvation: But it was to bridle him and to hold him in obedience and also to declare, that God gave him such a constancy against all the men in the world, as that when he seeth all the creatures of God to lift themselves up against him, yet that he ceased not to go on to do that which God had committed unto him, and that which he saw was his duty to do. To be short, let us then hold this for a resolute point, that David had not such a fear as made him fierce and cruel, nor yet which made him to fly from the presence of God: but he so revered that, which God spake, as that he stood boldly at defiance with all men, declaring that he made no reckoning of their fury, poison, nor yet of all their deadly enmities. David, I say, cared for none of all this, And why so? Because he so revered and honored God, as that he fully reposed himself upon his word.

Now, when as we have such a fear, it is nothing contrary to the joy which David here speaketh of: But it is rather an excellent accord, or sweet harmony, for it is impossible for us rightly to give ourselves unto God, and to obey him in such sort as we ought without we love him, and that his word be pleasant and sweet unto us. And see wherefore David doth not

only say, that the word of God was more dear unto him, than either gold or silver: but he saith, that it was sweeter unto him than honey. He setteth down there two things which ought to be coupled together: to wit, that the word of God ought to be more dear and sweet unto us, than all other things, and that we ought to take all our delight and pleasure therein, desiring nothing else, but to order and hold ourselves to it: knowing that whatsoever God hath, is to this end, to communicate the same unto us, that we might taste of his bounty and love.

Now we see that David did not without cause join this joy: which he conceived of the word of God, with fear: signifying that he stood not in awe of God perforce, and with a slavish fear, as we say: but he did it in acknowledging him to be his God and Savior, and settling himself wholly upon his promises. And thus much for this second verse. Now he addeth soon after:

I hate falsehood and abhor it: but thy law do I love.

This verse is not here added but to good purpose: For David sheweth that we can never be glad (as he hath declared how he hath been) neither yet stand in awe of the word of God, without we detest falsehood. Now, we of our own nature are so nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in vanity, as that it is lamentable. The law of God then shall never come so fully home unto us, as that we may justly say, that we earnestly hear it, and receive it from the heart, until such time as we have strived against our fleshly affections, that is to say, against all whatsoever is in our nature, because it is all but vanity. In sum, David, after he had spoken of this joy, which he had conceived of the promises of God, wherein he declareth unto us his goodness: after he had spoken of the fear which we owe him, to become subject unto him, and after that he had given him the authority which he deserved above all other men and creatures: for a conclusion he addeth, the means how to attain to all this: to wit, that we must eschew falsehood, and not only eschew, and hate it, but also detest it: yea, signifying that we must greatly abhor it, so that we overcome all our wicked desires and tame them, and all other our lusts which carry us away to wickedness, and withdraw us from the obedience of God. So then, we see now, that natural men can never be disposed to serve God, until such time as they have striven against the vanity of their own nature, and that not only once, or twice, but also to continue it all the days of their life. For

what are the lusts which are in us, and which do wickedly lead us from the right way? In very deed, the more part are so prevented [*gone ahead*] with them, as that they feel them not: or else think, that it is nothing so marvelous thick darkness remaineth in them. As for those which have a desire with all their heart to forsake them, yet shall we find them also to be overmuch nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in them. Moreover, if all the men in the world were examined, and an inquisition made, I confess that we shall find the most wicked sometimes to be remorse and stung, and to be inwardly pricked and constrained mauger [*despite*] their hearts to have loathing to do evil. They have an eye unto it by fits: and yet they cease not to follow the evil with a continual course, although between whiles they have a loathing of it. And we must not greatly marvel at this: For carnal men which are not governed by the spirit of God, are carried away with their wicked affections, as with a fury, so that their whole reason is altogether brutish. And even they shall very well have an hatred of their evil, but yet not to fly from it, as that we shall not be able to say, that they have such a fear of God as is to be required, to forsake themselves, and wholly to submit themselves unto his will.

See here what we have to consider out of this place. But in the meanwhile one thing is to be observed, that David maketh a comparison between the law of God, and all whatsoever that men can imagine on their own head, with all their reasons and desires: as if he should have said, That there is but only rule that is good, and worthy to be beloved, to wit, the law of God. When then our life shall be conformable to the word of God, all shall go well: But we shall not withdraw ourselves never so little from it: as that we shall not by and by roil overthrow all the fields. And why so? For all our truth and sincerity is enclosed within this rule which God hath set down unto us. We ought then to bear this honor unto the word of God, to hear it as it is laid out unto us, and to follow it in all simplicity: or else so soon as we shall decline from it never so little, see, we are quite out of the way of salvation, so that we cannot choose but to be confounded, until such time as we are entered again into the way, which God hath showed us. Now he addeth:

Seven times a day do I praise thee: because of thy righteous judgments.

Here we may take this word *Judgment*, for the manner which God holdeth in governing the world, and the punishments which he layeth upon the

ungodly: as also for the grace which he causeth them to feel which call upon him, and which walk sincerely before him. For the holy Scripture oftentimes when it speaketh of the Judgments of God, meaneth all this. But because that in this Psalm, the Judgments, are for the most part taken for the statutes, and ordinances that are contained in the law of God: I gladly mean to handle it at this present thus: that is, That David praised GOD, because he had given unto his people law which was both just and full of equity, and that therein he had whereof to be glad, and to praise and magnify him.

Lo here a place well worthy the noting. For by these words David doth us to wit, that we cannot praise GOD, so long as we are not instructed in his word, our mouth shall be closed up, and our heart looked fast up, so that a man shall not pull from us one good word, which may turn to the praise of God.

And to prove this to be so, we see that the unfaithful shall not only be dumb to praise God: But they will also fall out with him, that whatsoever shall come from their mouths, shall be to blaspheme God, and to murmur against his divine majesty. As for the ignorant, they shall be so blockish as that they shall have no desire to praise God: and if they do praise him, it shall be but for fashion's sake, because it is but a mocking of God and his word. How then may we praise God in good earnest and without hypocrisy? Forsooth [*in truth*], even when as we shall be instructed in his ordinances, when as we shall have known what care he hath of our salvation how he governeth his Church, how he embaceth [*lowers, humbles*] himself, to apply himself unto our gross capacities, and to make himself to be familiarly acquainted with us. When then we shall see God to have such a care over us to instruct us, that he hath so rightly ruled our life, that he so purveyeth [*provide*] for all our necessities as that we want [*lack*] nothing: ought not we to give our minds unto him, yea even to be inflamed wholly to magnify his holy name, and to be ravished with that desire which David here speaketh of.

Let us now see what we have to gather in sum out of this place: and thereby we may see how slenderly we have at this day profited in the School of God. For, whence cometh this circumspection? Where is that zeal of ours in praising of God, which David saith, that he had? Seeing that scarcely one word can be pulled from us, when any speech shall be of

praising God, yea, were it not for fashion's sake and countenance only. This is far from continuing in it, and far from extending our whole study thereto, as to make it the most principal thing that ought to be in our whole life. Now we are hereby convinced of our slender studying and meditating in the word of God because we are so cold and negligent in praising of him, and without having a greater care in acknowledging his benefits bestowed upon us. And that which is more, Let us thoroughly consider that David saith not only, that he was stirred up to prayer unto God for once, and so continued it for certain days, but he saith *daily*, and after, *seven times*: that is, that he continued in it all his life long. For this word *Seven*, is taken in the holy Scripture for a marvelous perseverance, when as men continue it, and are not drawn away for any cause whatsoever, but do always hold themselves thereto. And this is the meaning of the Scripture, for this number of Seven. Now David protesting that he daily praised God seven times, meaneth that he exercised himself therein, from the morning unto the evening. And after that, he exhorteth all other men to have the like desire and zeal to praise God. So then, let us compare ourselves with David, and we shall find, that we have learned very little out of the word of God, considering that we are so slothful in praising of him. And yet for all that we are greatly to give him, yea infinite thanks, when as we shall have known his grace and goodness towards us, in that he is so careful to govern and order our life, and to show us the way of salvation. The Papists have applied this saying to their set hours: and have laid hold only on the first part of the verse, saying, That they praise God seven times a day, when as they sing their Matins, Primes, their third hour, sixth hour, at midnight, their evensong and Compline. See here how God shall be well praised seven times a day as they think. Yea, yea, good enough, As though God would call back that, which he hath pronounced by his prophet Isaiah, (²³²⁹¹³ Isaiah 29:13)

This people, saith he, honor me with their lips,
but their hearts are very far from me.

He goeth on farther and saith, that he will show them that he cannot abide such mockeries, and to be so dallied withal. See here how God threateneth the Jews with an horrible vengeance, because they only praised him with the mouth. Now, we know, what their set hours which their Monks, Friars, and Priests do sing, or rather which they bleat and howl out in their Churches, are that they are without either understanding, devotion, and

any good desire whatsoever. And they think it not enough that they show themselves indeed openly to mock God: but their devilish doctrine also importeth the same, that they cannot but merit, having this final meaning to praise God. So that when a Chanon hath put on his Graymisse, and Surplice, and going out of his Chamber with this final intent: and yet anon after thinketh of his Gossip, his cheer, and his pastime: yea that he play the Hypocrite there, yet forsooth [*in truth*] he must need merit. It is very true, that they will confess, that there is venial sin intermeddled amongst: but yet that the same cannot hinder them from meriting, when as they had this final intent to praise God: yea and so also, as that when they come home again unto their house, they think themselves to have discharged their duty. To be short, so that at the beginning and the end, they had some motion to devotion, it is enough. And is not this wholly to mock God, and to dally with him, more than a man would dandle a young Child. But see how this miserable cursed people have perverted all the holy Scripture, in mingling it with so shameful things that even the very Heathen, when as they shall have gotten the understanding of the least spark of truth, will be ashamed to see such service in the Papacy to be called godly service. When it is all after this manner, I pray you what praising of GOD shall there remain? Let us then understand, that these people are very far from David: and that if we would take example by them, they right well show, that they know not what it is to praise God, but rather profane his holy name, when as they will thrust in such abominations amongst, as we daily see them to commit against his word. Now David addeth soon after:

They which love thy law, shall have great prosperity, and they shall have no hurt.

Here David being led by the spirit of God, as a true Prophet, contenteth not himself with speaking of the benefits which he had received, But instructeth others of that, which they have to do. Although in truth, all the protestations which we have seen here, are full of doctrine. And that it is so, we see that David might very well have praised God in his heart, without declaring what he had done: But it was needful that he might be set as a Glass before our eyes, to the end we might be led to follow him. But yet in this verse, he more expressly setteth forth the office and duty of a prophet, when as he saith, They which love thy law, shall have great prosperity, and they shall have no hurt.

Now by this he sheweth unto us that we are even in good earnest accursed, when as we give ourselves up unto our own fleshly liking, because we would be esteemed amongst men, and take pleasure in our pastimes and delights. And why so? Because we shall be always tormented with unquietness and grief, so that we shall never be at peace and rest. And although we verily think ourselves to be assured of victory all the days of our life, yet shall we reel this way and that, and willingly hurt ourselves, so that it should seem we had a will to break both our arms and legs, and in the end, neck and all. And the reason is, for that we follow not the way which God hath set before us. Let us then consider, what the meaning of David is, to wit, that we must not make reckoning of any assurance here in this world, except we love the word of God: yea and that so to, as that we desire nothing else, but to be wholly ordered by it, to submit and hold ourselves thereto, without being withdrawn by the enticements of Satan, and with all the temptations of our corrupt flesh and nature shall lay before our eyes. In very deed it may very well seem at the first sight, that experience teacheth us the contrary of that which David speaketh. For who are most grieved, vexed, and troubled? Forsooth [*in truth*] even the children of God, who have all the shame and offenses done unto them? Even the selfsame men. For it is said, That our savior Christ is as it were a badge and mark of all these contrarieties, we must then have all the ungodly to be our enemies. In sum, all they which intend to serve God, cannot escape from shame and slanderous reports, from being despised, troubled, and outraged, and to endure great numbers of injuries and violences: Lo how the Children of God are entreated and handled in this present life. And so by this reason, it seemeth that David promiseth us here, that which we have not. But we are here to consider, that David promiseth us not such a rest, as shall be as it were an earthly Paradise. He speaketh of this true prosperity, which the Children of God have, when they are contented to serve him: that in all their griefs: yea in all their anguishes and troubles, they run only unto him, and lay all their cares upon him, not doubting but that he will help them: and afterward, hereupon not to fear, whatsoever that mortal men can imagine or devise against them.

When as then we shall have such a peace as this, although our estate and condition be in the view of men the most miserable in the whole world, yet ought we to be thoroughly contented, knowing that God will raise us up,

and make us to triumph over all our enemies, although we thought we should fall even to be crushed and utterly beaten to powder, yet will God be ready to uphold us, and make us to be blessed. As it is said Psalm 91, That God will not suffer his faithful to tumble over and over, neither yet so to fall as that they shall not be able to relieve themselves again: but will rather send his Angels to lift them up into the Air. In very deed, yet shall it not be so, as that we shall not sometimes hurt ourselves: howbeit the assaults shall not be such as to frush [*dash, crush*] us deadly: however it be we shall in the end feel in what sort God shall have assisted us by his Angels. This is the means and the manner to feel by effect, that which David speaketh of.

Now in truth, the wicked shall never be able to take any such hold: because they are not worthy of it. For by reason they know not what God, nor his word is, without it be to hate him, and to anger him: it is meet that they prove by experiment the contrary of that which is here spoken of by David: to wit, because they love not the law of God, it is good reason that they should be inwardly troubled, and grievously tormented without end. Now it followeth,

Lord I have trusted in thy saving health: and have done thy commandments.

Here David more lively expresseth and declareth that which I have already touched: to wit, that our affection in serving of God, proceedeth of the trust which we have in him, in believing his promises. If then we conceive not that God is our savior, and so by that means trust that he will help us, it is impossible that we should be inflamed to serve him. It is true, we may very well have some feeling of the duty which we owe unto him, and be somewhat touched therewith, although indeed few there are which think thereof: but admit it be so, yet will no man for all that freely and of his own accord, say, O come, Let us serve, yea let us serve our God, even until such time as we are fully assured of the good which he meaneth, and is ready to procure us, and of the true and full hope of our salvation, thoroughly imprinted in our hearts. And so let us rightly consider, that they which remember no more of that which is preached unto them but this, to say, Lo this is it which GOD commandeth us: we must either do this or that: Truly this is no point of true Christianity. And why so?

Because the principalest point of Christianity, is to know that goodness of God, and the mercy which he useth towards us.

Lo, this is I say, the true knowledge which we must learn in the School of our Lord Jesus Christ, and hold us to that which he hath declared unto us. And besides, we are also to consider of that which he commandeth us: but his promises must be preferred, and have the chiefeest place. And by this also we are showed, that in the popish religion, the principal doctrine of Christianity is put out and made nothing: Because that when the Papists creak and chatter their prayers, making as though they presented their supplications unto God, they say, that they must never assure themselves of that which they pray for. And the cause is, for that they look not unto the free promises of God. And how so? Behold an hypocrite shall step up and preach nothing else but that which every man is bound to do. He will preach unto you of Chastity, he will make you another Sermon of Alms, one of this matter, another of that: and yet for all this, we know not what it is to believe in God. Then do we a great deal less know what it is to call upon him in full assurance, to say, God is our father, he alloweth us for his children, because he hath us as he would wish, and that our sins are forgiven us through the grace of our lord Jesus Christ. There is no whit of this in popery: and therefore it is impossible that there should be one word of good and sound doctrine in it, and profitable unto salvation. Let us then well consider of this saying of David, O Lord, I have trusted in thy saving health, and have done thy Commandments. Now in the end he saith:

My soul hath kept thy testimonies: and I love them exceedingly.

I have kept thy commandments and testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

After that David hath sufficiently protested, that he loveth the word of God, that it was so sweet and pleasant unto him, as that all his study and delight consisted therein: he concludeth and saith, That his soul had kept it, as if he should have said, O Lord, in that I was given to serve thee, it was not with my hands and feet only, but because I loved thy word, yea and that with all my soul, and I take my whole delight therein. For when the Hebrews mean to show a pure and sound liking, they say, My soul hath done this, or that, that is as much to say, as I have done it with all mine heart. Lo then an hearty service which David here expresseth: and this is yet a point which ought thoroughly to be considered of: For we see

how men are given to play the hypocrites: even to set a very fair outward show of the matter, and by that means think themselves to be discharged before God.

Now we must begin farther off, as David here sheweth us, that is, we must keep the word of God in our hearts. Wherein he confirmeth the matter, which we have already heretofore handled: to wit, that the question is not, to have GOD simply to teach us, whereby we might know what he requireth at our hands, and what our duty is towards him: but he buildeth upon his promises. Howbeit David having said, that his soul kept the commandments of God, because he loved them, by this which he addeth soon after he joineth the promises with the commandments, saying *For all my ways are before thine eyes*, It is true, that he sheweth by these words, that except he had been sure that god protected him, it had not been possible for him to have had that true liking to have served his majesty. And hereupon hangeth the second point, that God held him always in his presence, because he should not have leave to do evil: as if he should have said, O Lord, because I know that no man is able to hide himself from thee, Lo why I give myself wholly to fear and serve thee. And to say the truth, what is the cause that the ungodly take such liberty, to commit and devise such villainous and grievous Acts, as that they themselves are ashamed of, yea that it maketh the very hairs of their head to stand upright: What is the cause of this? The reason is, for that they know not that God seeth them, for if they were sure of that, they would be somewhat moved with the fear of his majesty. So then, in that the faithless war thus against God, and take liberty to do wickedly: it is, because they think that God seeth them not, according to that saying in the Scripture, *The wicked man hath said, God seeth not, he knoweth nothing of that which is done here on the earth*. I mean not that the wicked do thus openly speak: yet for all that they think no less: as by experience we see, for they think that God marketh not all their iniquities, neither yet that it is needful for them once to make any account of their sins. Howbeit David saith clean contrary, That because he knew that all his ways were before God, therefore he kept his commandments. See also why the scripture, in speaking of the holy fathers which lived sincerely, saith, That they walked before God: to wit, they had this consideration, that they knew that God did see them: and therefore they walked, as if they had been in his presence. And this importeth, that they took not such liberty as they themselves thought

good, but that they wholly ordered themselves according to the will of God, as he had declared it by his word. See then David his meaning. And even so must we also do, if we will have our life and conversation to be well ordered: to wit, to know that God seeth us, and therefore that we cannot fly from his hand, but must submit ourselves unto it, albeit we will not do it freely and of our own accord. And so let us willingly be contented to be ruled by him, being certified of his love and goodness toward us, to the end we might in truth make this protestation which David here maketh.

According to this holy doctrine, let us humbly prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good god, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him that it would please him to make us to feel the power of his word, in such sort, as his holy Prophet here showeth us, and so to feel it, as that we may wholly submit ourselves unto it: Knowing that when it shall come in question for us to remit ourselves, and cleave unto him as he requireth, that we must forsake the whole world, and all our carnal affections which any way hinder us from coming unto him: to the end we may so climb up unto his majesty, as that not fearing the world nor all his assaults, we may put our whole confidence in his merciful goodness, and boldly present us before his face: to the end he may receive us, so that we might always be governed through his holy spirit, until such time as he hath brought us unto that perfection, whereunto he calleth and biddeth us. That he will not only grant unto us this grace, but also etc.

THE TWENTY-SECOND SERMON

OF THE

HUNDREDTH AND NINETEENTH PSALM

THAV

- 169** Let my complaint come before thee, O Lord: and give me understanding according to thy word.
- 170** Let my supplication come before thee: and deliver me according unto thy word.
- 171** My lips shall speak of thy praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes.
- 172** My tongue shall treat of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteous.
- 173** Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy commandments.
- 174** I have longed for thy saving health, O Lord: and in thy law is my delight.
- 175** Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee: and thy judgments shall help me.
- 176** I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: seek thy servant for I do not forget thy commandments.

THESE EIGHT LAST VERSES, which are the knitting up of the whole Psalm, do show unto us that, which we oftentimes have before seen: to wit, that David his chiefest desire was this, to be duly and truly instructed in the word of God, and therein to be confirmed: for he took such pleasure in it, as that all the rest was little, or nothing worth unto him in respect of the same. Now it is very true, that he hath already sufficiently spoken of this matter: and yet that which he presently addeth is not superfluous, especially if we consider in what sort our carnal desires rule us. For that is it which letteth [*allows*] us that we cannot only have that fervency which David had, to seek thoroughly to profit in the school of God: but we scarcely have so much as any small desire. And therefore as I have already

said, we are too much nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in our earthly affections. Wherefore this is a lesson which ought many times to put us in mind: that if we will pray unto God according unto his will, we must not come unto him with a desire of our own, to say whatsoever cometh in our brain, yea and to leave out the most principal part: but we must begin with this saying: to wit, that it would please God so to instruct us, as that our life may be squared according to his law, and we to cleave so unto it, as not to come with a double and twofold heart. Although we are to strive against the world, and our own nature, yet must we remain constant in this: chiefly to love the word of God. And therefore for this cause David here saith,

Let my Complaint come before thee, O Lord: and give me understanding according unto thy word.

When he speaketh of his complaint which he maketh unto the Lord, he sheweth that he made no cold prayer unto God, as we many times, and as it were daily do, but with great vehemency. I cannot deny but that an hypocrite may very well make complaint with a loud noise, and thrust out his weasaunt [*gullet*]. But David having here consideration of God, meaneth not to make an outward show before men. Wherefore, That he cried out aloud, importeth as much as an earnest testimony wherewith he was pricked forward. Now by this we see, that he chiefly desired that which he craveth: to wit, to have God to instruct him, and to give him understanding. And in desiring this gift of God, he confesseth that he was of himself a very wretched blind soul: that he never understood anything, yea although he had the law in his hands, which he might read, wherein was contained a true perfection of all wisdom, yet that he still continued even like a poor miserable blind wretch, except God enlightened him. So then, let us understand that this is an especial gift which God bestoweth upon us, when he openeth our eyes, to make us understand that which is showed in his word, whether we read it, or that it be preached unto us. Yea, and let us not here make any exception, thinking ourselves to be more sharp witted, or abler than David was: but let us rather know, that if he needed to beseech God to give him understanding, that we for our parts have as great need. So then, it cannot be chosen but that when God hath delivered unto us his word, and declared his will therein contained: and for performance hereof enlighteneth our hearts by his holy spirit: for other ways we shall have our ears beaten in vain: and then the doctrine which we

have heard will do us no good. Now that which followeth, *According unto thy word*, may two ways be set forth, According unto thy word: that is to say, that thou wilt make me wise. And after what manner? That I be altogether ruled by thee, and do that which thou commandest. This is a very true saying, for by this we are admonished to hear God speak, and we again must suffer him to have dominion over us: and not to be overtaken, with this foolish arrogancy, and say, I have knowledge enough, I need not so much teaching. Wherefore, when as God shall have spoken the word, let us pass it simply and without gainsaying.

This sentence then which I have spoken, is very true: but yet it agreeth not with the meaning of David, nor yet with the plainness of the text. For he craveth here two things, the one in the first verse, the other in the second. He saith in the first verse, Let my complaint come before thee, that I might be instructed according unto thy word. And afterward he addeth,

Let my supplication come before thee: and deliver me according unto thy word.

It is very true that he useth two sentences: but yet they are not without a marvelous grace in one selfsame signification: and by this repetition we may the better perceive that David meant not, but to have God to grant either of both his requests, according to the promises which he had made him. See then, what the natural sense is of the first verse, O Lord, give me understanding as thou hast promised. And this is according unto the rule which we have heretofore touched, that we ought not to crave of God anything whatsoever, without it be that which he hath promised, yea so that we be assured of his will. It is very true, that God dealeth very familiarly with us, when as he calleth us, to come unto him, as the father calleth his children, suffereth us to pour abroad all our affections unto him, and to unburden them as it were in his lap, as the scripture maketh mention: and yet he meaneth notwithstanding that we should hold this modesty, not to crave of him anything whatsoever that seemeth good in our own eyes: but to discern of that which best liketh him. And how shall we know that? Forsooth [*in truth*] by his promises. Wherefore we must be well assured of our prayers: and not to crave of God at a wild adventure, this thing, or that: but we must beseech him, and be certain and sure that he will hear us. And how may this be done, seeing that no man hath been of his counsel, to say that we have any such certainty, except he himself

had told us, that it is his pleasure to grant us? So then, it is requisite that all our prayers be conformable unto the promises of God, that we gather together, I say, out of the holy scripture, all whatsoever he hath promised us, to the end we may that way have an entrance to make our supplications, and prayers unto him. Now it remaineth for us to know, whether David had the promise alone made unto him by God, or else, whether it be common unto us all. No doubt of it God spake not to David as to a private man: but to declare in general that he would not miss to instruct all those which come unto him in humility, and to ask nothing, but according unto his word. Since then it is so, that God hath spoken to us in general, declaring that he is ready to play the part of a schoolmaster, if we will become as his scholars: we may then say with David, O Lord, give me understanding according to thy promise. Now we are here briefly to mark two notes. The first is, that we are advertised to acknowledge our ignorance and rudeness. For if we crave of God to be made wise, and then we think to become wise through our own industry and power, this is a mere mockery. We must then acknowledge ourselves to be unprovided both of wit and reason, if we will make this request in truth: to wit, to have God to give us understanding. And thus much for the first point. For the rest, we ought to know, that God desireth but to receive us with this condition: to wit, even when we shall be humbled and cast down. For otherwise we will never abide to be instructed, whatsoever holy scripture we have, because that in it he saith, that it is his office to teach the humble and meek, that it is as it were his very proper nature to open the eyes of the blind, and to instruct those which are altogether ignorant, to gather together the strayed sheep, and to bring them to the haven of salvation, when as they are in the way of perdition. Since then it is so, that God taketh all this upon himself, let not us doubt but that he will hear all our requests. But what? We see how cold we are. For we are so hindered with the things of this world as that we leave out the principal. Now after that David had declared what he chiefly desired, he goeth on and saith,

My lips shall speak of thy praise: when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

Here he prosecuteth that which he began withal at the first: that is, to show that he would not be unthankful, but that he would acknowledge the benefits of God. It is very true that when we come unto God, it is not anything needful for us to make great outward shows, as though he knew them not perfectly enough as of himself: but thus he meaneth, that when

we pray, he would have us to say, that we will never hereafter be unthankful unto him: and this needed not neither but to the end, the better to stir us up to do our duties. And this also maketh us to pray with a bolder courage, to feel the fruit which shall come unto us, when as we shall have obtained that which we have craved and desired. David then, in saying here, My lips, O Lord, shall speak of thy praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes: he meaneth that he shall be disposed to praise God with open mouth. Now why speaketh David after this manner? In thus doing he taketh upon him, and stirreth up himself to such an acknowledgment, as he protesteth to make: and it is, as if he had said: Go to now, when as God shall have showed me this favor to instruct me, what is then my duty to do? Forsooth [*in truth*], I must even then praise him, for that I ought to be thereto the more stirred up, and to be greatlier occasioned therein. And since I desire God to teach me, what fruit shall I reap thereby, when as he shall have called me unto the way of salvation? I shall then have wherefore to sing praises unto his holy name, knowing the grace which he hath bestowed on me. See then how that in this protestation David speaketh not to bind God, through any recompense or service: but only stirreth himself up, and pricketh himself forward as it were with a spur, to the end he might be the better disposed, to receive the benefit which God had promised him: and that he might know, that this benefit ought not to be an occasion to make him unthankful unto him from whom he received it. Howbeit we are here briefly to consider of two points. The one is, that as God hath liberally bestowed upon us his graces, so much the more ought we to be ready to praise, and magnify him forever. (<19B601> Psalm 116) For surely this is all the recompense that we are any way able to yield him, if so be, it may be called recompense: howbeit he accepteth it thankfully under this title, as the scripture thereof maketh mention. Since then it is so, if we will not that the benefit which God hath bestowed upon us, turn itself into condemnation by reason of our unthankfulness, let us be well advised to discharge ourselves towards him: and so, when as he shall have laid open his goodness upon us, let us not be forgetful of it, neither yet let our mouths be closed up, but even to acknowledge the same unto him.

And thus much as touching the first point. The second is, That he which shall be well and duly instructed in the word of God, let him show it, yea in glorifying his name all the days of his life. They then which are so cold

in praising of God, do right well show, that they never felt what the power of the word is. And why so? Because it is impossible for us to have any taste of the word of God, to receive thereby any instruction, but that we must needs be moved and ravished therewith to sing praises unto his glorious name. Whatsoever he be then that shall show himself negligent herein, sufficiently enough declareth that he knoweth not what the word of God is, albeit he protest himself to be a Christian. Let us now come to those, which are not only dumb themselves: but that, which is also worse, which would shut up the mouths of others, to the end it might not be lawful for them to praise God. And yet forsooth [*in truth*] these men are so shameless, as that they would notwithstanding be taken for good Christians: but by these means they declare themselves to be the deadly enemies of God, yea worse than the very devils. And why so? Forsooth [*in truth*] they think it not enough that they have nothing profited in the school of God, neither yet are they contented to show the way, to do well, unto others: but they would have all the world to be like unto themselves, that there should never mention be made of praising God, and yet in the meanwhile, as I have already said, this word Christian shall stand them in never a penny. Now without all doubt, God disalloweth of all those, which will not give themselves to sing praises unto his majesty, and that will not stir up their neighbors to do the like, that they might show themselves to have studied his word. But let us be well assured, that it is not enough, to open our mouth and to sing praises unto him with the tongue: but it must also come from a well affected heart. For David telleth us nowhere, that he will solemnize the praises of God: but in addressing himself unto God, he protesteth before him, that he will sing praises unto him. And in speaking this, he right well knoweth that his heart must needs be disposed thereto. Wherefore, when as we would magnify the name of God as appertaineth [*pertains*], let us not deliver it out with the mouth only: but our heart also must be set thereto, and that it agree therewith to make a sweet harmony. If this be so, all our life by little and little shall be answerable thereto, that it shall be no untruth which we have pronounced with our mouth. Now he addeth a sentence which is very short: to wit,

My tongue shall treat of thy word: and why? because all thy commandments saith he, are righteous.

In this verse he sheweth that after he hath been well instructed, that he himself will also travel to bring others by little and little, to the like knowledge.

Lo here his full pretense. But yet the better to express his affection that he hath to draw on his brethren and neighbors, to the knowledge of God and of his truth, he useth this word, to Sing, not contenting himself to speak after a plain manner: but expressing, that he will sing aloud and clear: that he will make his word to resound, that it might be heard, yea that it should be a thing as notoriously known, as the very common songs. Now since it is so, that David speaketh after this sort, let us now see what our duty is. For as I have already said heretofore, he bragged not of his own power: but the holy Ghost hath set him before us instead of a glass, to the end it might serve us for our better instruction. Now when as we shall have known the truth of our good God, what is there then for us to do? Forsooth [*in truth*], we must not hold fast this treasure as it were locked up in a chest, but communicate his graces unto others: yea and do the best we can, to draw on the miserable ignorant people, to the service of God: and to carry about with us the doctrine, to publish it to all men, when as it is committed unto us as a treasure, and to bestow the gift which we have received, upon our neighbors, according to that measure of faith, which God hath given us. Howbeit this order is far off from us: For if there be but three words of the word of God spoken, we will soon be weary of it, nay, we shall not hear it spoken of at this day. It is so far off, that it is talked of, both at the table, in the way, and everywhere, as that we can hardly abide, that even for fashion's sake, the preaching of it be kept: and although it be here lawful to speak in the pulpit one hour in the name of God, yet shall you have a great number of dogs which will not stick even to girn [*snarl, complain*] at it, as if God were too much privileged. It is very far off to have every man to apply himself to sing the commandments of God, and his whole word, and for us to have our ears beaten with it. Now whence cometh this unthankfulness? verily because we never tasted of that which David here addeth, *All thy statutes* saith he, *are righteous*. If we did thoroughly know, what equity and pureness there is in the statutes of God, without doubt we should be more earnest, to learn, hold, and show them, unto others, than heretofore we have been. So then, all they which make no accompt [*account*] to instruct their neighbors, and do not esteem of the knowledge and faith which they have received: do hereby show, that they will not

render the righteousness to God as to him appertaineth [*pertains*], accordingly as it is contained in his word, and as he himself sheweth it therein. Now David by and by addeth,

Let thine hand help me: for I have chosen thy commandments.

He yet returneth to that which before he had said of deliverance. For after he had required to be taught of god, he said, O deliver me: yea he right well knew that if he had not him for his protector, that he should always remain as it were in death. Now he addeth, *Let thine hand help me*. And why so?

For I have chosen, saith he, *thy commandments*.

When he desireth God to help him with his hand, he confesseth his want [*lack*], and that he was as a man which needed help, even as though he had never had more need: and that it was not in him, to deliver himself, neither could he find it in any of his creatures. And therefore except God had stretched forth his hand, see how David had been utterly cast away. Now, this confession here is very profitable for us. For which of us is he, that can be without afflictions? and that is able to say, I have all things that are necessary? It is most true, that we are more careful for that which concerneth our bodies, and this present life, than for that which is required for the salvation of our souls. If we stand in need of meat and drink, if we be sick, if we be in danger of any plague or war, that stirreth us, and toucheth us to the quick: but when we are pressed with any evil, we abuse ourselves, and lift ourselves up in such a fond presumption, as that we think we have some power to do this, and that we then make ourselves believe, that we are very well able to defend ourselves, although not wholly, yet at the least partly. And therefore we ought so much the rather rightly to mark, the sayings of the scripture where it is said unto us, that it is the hand of GOD that must help us, to the end that every man may learn to know his need, and that we had all need to be defended by this heavenly power: so that we are all cast down into the bottomless depth, without it pleaseth GOD to stretch forth his hand to help our necessities. And thus much for this. Now when David setteth down the reason, that he had chosen the commandments of God, he did it not to extoll any dignity or worthiness of his own. Wherefore then? Forsooth [*in truth*], even to show that he waited for his aid and help, from the hand of God. And therefore they which persuade themselves at adventure that God heareth their prayers, and yet have this foolish hope with them, to find help at the

hands of his creatures: refuse the hand of God as much as in them lieth: and so by that means shall never find him to be favorable unto them. And for this cause David saith, *I have chosen the commandments of God*, that is to say, that all his whole liking was in them. And this saying importeth a very great matter, and much greater than at the first sight it seemeth. Why doth David rather set down this word Election, or choice, than any other? I have chosen thy commandments. It is because we are always carried with perverse affections, and because we cannot make choice, neither can we hold us to that which is best. Every man will gladliest desire that thing which is meetest for his own ease, and quietness: to be short, every man desireth to be happy. We are nothing indifferent herein: for the very wicked in the world, and the most vile persons, will say, I would have that which were good and meet for me: howbeit we cannot choose: but even the very worst. We shall very well have a natural desire, which shall carry us as it were to one selfsame end: but we cannot keep the way. Every man goeth out of it. One man will choose this thing, another that and in this choice we are all confounded. One will choose, goods, lands, and possessions: another, great trade of merchandise: another to come unto dignity and into credit: some one man will be given to lechery, and be wholly carried that way: another will yield himself, to some other filthiness, as to drunkenness, intemperancy, and wantonness.

See then, how we all make choice of that which is naught, And for this cause David saith, that he chose the commandments of God: to wit, that although he was a mortal man, subject to a great number of wicked affections, yet that he never trusted his own flesh, neither yet obeyed his lusts, to choose nothing but vanity, and that which might withdraw him from the right way, and lead him to destruction: but that he made a good wise choice: to wit, that he held himself to the commandments of God. So then, let us learn to make a good choice: when as God shall present unto us his word, when as he shall offer himself so liberally on his part, as to look for nothing at our hands but that we should come to seek him, and that he presenteth himself before us: let not us be deceived nor carried away by the deceits of Satan, through the corruptions which he layeth wide open before our eyes: let us not be so foolish as to stay ourselves upon matters of nothing, and to leave that which ought to be the most principal, and wherein lieth all our felicity and salvation. It followeth,

I have longed for thy saving health, O Lord, and in thy law is my delight.

This sentence comprehendeth all whatsoever we have already touched, and is the only confirmation thereof. For he saith, that he hath longed for the saving health of God. And how is that? For it seemeth that every man might say as much: and so, that David had no more than the very faithless. For if we shall ask a desperate man, yea even a very half devil, and say, wouldest not thou have God to be thy savior? he will make answer and say, yes forsooth [*in truth*]. Lo what answer we shall find in the mouths both of great and small, of good and bad.

Now David his meaning is, to make a great protestation, and such a one as a very few can make in truth. For we suppose him to be all our Saviors: and yet we seek our saving health at a wild adventure, and every man will have regard to his own considerations and providence. When there shall arise any question of our maintenance here in this present life, do we believe that God must keep and preserve us, and that it is he indeed which maintaineth us herein? whence cometh it that we have so mighty evil consciences: whence cometh all deceits, frauds, excess, cruelties, injuries, violences, and all such like? What is the cause that maketh us to live with such evil consciences? but because we do not believe, that God will give us our daily bread? We desire God to feed us, and yet we will have the devil to do it: insomuch that there are very few which at this day think, that that which they have, cometh from God. So then, it is very far off from the thought of our hearts, to say, O Lord, I have desired thy saving health. For instead of attending upon God, to have him to guide, defend, and help us at all times whensoever that we have need: instead of this I say, what do we? Every man as I have said, seeketh for his saving health at a wild adventure. We should rather seek for it in hell, than to have our eyes lifted up into heaven to call upon God, and to seek for our saving health both of body and soul in him. So then, there are very few which are able to say as it is here set down, O Lord, I have longed for thy saving health: if they will not lie. As we see the impudency of hypocrites which will make mighty great brags enough: but yet for all that, it is no small matter, as I have already said, to trust altogether in God, and to say, that it belongeth to him to guide us, that we run to him, and have there our refuge both for soul and body. Now then he addeth, *In thy law is my delight*: To signify, how we ought to demean ourselves, not to hope for salvation, nor yet to wish for it otherwise than from God alone: to wit, when as we have taken delight in his law.

It is meet then that we tame and bridle our affections, that we sever them from all other our desires, and say, that in looking upon his word and in cleaving thereto, we take there our repast, and in it do truly joy.

For whensoever we shall be brought unto this point, it will stand us in nothing to seek our saving health in God. And why so? because we see none other thing in all the holy Scripture, but so many promises where God so gently biddeth us, and where he declareth unto us that he is most ready to receive us, that he looketh for none other thing at our hands but that we should seek him, and that he thrusteth himself forward, and presenteth himself even before us. The Scripture, I say, is full of this doctrine, to show unto us that God is ready prepared to help us when as we shall take pleasure in his law. We may very well then long after the saving health of God when as we shall in truth have sought him. But what? we see very few whose hearts are so confirmed, as to say that they will hold the right way, whatsoever cometh of it. And therefore see here consequently why God disappointeth us, and helpeth us not, as we gladly desire to be holpen [*helped*]. Now he addeth,

Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee: and let thy judgments help me.

He always pursueth his purpose, but here he coupleth together two things which before he severed. When he saith, let my soul live: that is always, as he hath said, that he seeketh his saving health of God, and longeth after it. He saith not, I will that my soul live: but hath recourse unto God, knowing right well that he is the keeper of his life: and therefore putteth it into his hands, and leaveth the keeping thereof unto him, as appertaining [*pertaining*] only unto him, and after he saith that he will give him thanks, for that his life shall be prolonged.

Now here we see to what end the faithful ought to desire to live in his world: to wit, that they might praise GOD: as it hath been also spoken in the other places. And chiefly without going far, in the song of Ezechias. For there, as in ^{<19B301>}Psalm 113 and as it were in the song of Jonas, it is showed, that if we must live, we must not live, for to live (as we say) and to have none other regard: neither yet, to say, I will only live to eat and drink and to dwell here in this present world. But we must go yet farther: to wit, we must live, to the end to praise God: so that if this be wanting [*lacking*] in us, Let us wish to be a hundred feet under the ground, that we may be nevermore spoken of. Lo, I say, how our life shall be blessed, and

agreeable unto the will of God: to wit, when as we bend ourselves to none other end, but to praise and magnify his holy and blessed name.

Now in the meanwhile David addeth, *O let thy judgments help me.* This is it which he had in effect before spoken of the saving health of God. For he setteth the Judgments of God against all the helps which men and the faithless are any way able to invent for the seeking of God. For they suppose that they shall be very well holpen [*helped*] elsewhere, when as they shall have their pretty shifts to think that the creatures shall be sufficient enough to help them. When then these worldlings think to bring it so about, to be defended without the aid of God, they must needs be deceived in forgetting the judgments of God: to wit, his providence, whereby he useth to rule the world: as we must be fully assured that he holdeth the ungodly in a bridle, when as they skirmish, and forcibly set themselves to hurt the good and innocent: and that it is to repress the malice of all those which torment his, because he hath taken them into his hand and protection. See then, how the faithful ought to put themselves to the Judgments of God, to wit, to this providence, by which all is disposed and governed. It is very true that God may very well arm all his creatures to defend and maintain us: but yet must we not cease for all that to feel his hand, and to behold it by faith when as it shall help us. We must not cease to see this providence which is hidden from the faithless, because their spirits are wreathed up in horrible darkness.

To be short, let not us cease to attribute all the help which we shall feel from the hand of God, unto his judgments, although he hath inferior means to help us. Now in the end David concludeth,

I have gone astray like a Sheep that is lost: seek thy servant for I do not forget thy Commandments.

Here we might think it very strange why David saith, that he hath strayed like a lost sheep, seeing that he addeth, That he hath not forgotten the Commandments of God, and that we have already seen by so many goodly protestations, that it was his whole delight to serve God: yea and that it was to him more dear than Gold and Silver. And how is it then that he now compareth himself unto a lost sheep. For to make plain this hard point, it is commonly said, that David confesseth himself to be a strayed sheep, yea notwithstanding the great desire that he had to please GOD, to govern his whole life aright, and yet that he ceased not to err. This saying is very

well verified in himself. For although that this appertaineth [*pertains*] not unto the whole life of David: yet he had a terrible fall, and was like a poor lost beast in the sin which he committed with Bethsabe, Urias's wife: For it seemeth that he had then forsaken God, and that he was as it were a lost man. He might then very well say, that he had highly and mightily erred like a lost sheep. But this might be taken more properly. That David respected not the time wherein God had called him, and set him in a good way: but rather respected his own natural estate and condition, and saith, O Lord, what am I of myself, without thou guidest me? Alas what had become of me? In what case had I been? Where should I have first begun? David then might very well make here protestation of such his condition as is common with us. For this is a general thing amongst us all, that we all go astray like wild and forlorn beasts, until such time as GOD repaireth and amendeth us. For in what case shall GOD find us, when as he chooseth us unto himself? do not we swerve from the way of salvation? We are not only in the mountains and deserts: but also drowned over head and ears even to the bottomless depths.

So then, David and we with him may very well say, that we are lost sheep, until such time as God showeth himself to be our Shepherd, and giveth us the grace to follow him. And yet there is another reason which made David to call himself a lost sheep: and this is the very true meaning and the most natural: to wit, because he was deadly pursued of his enemies, and was so hardly and grievously persecuted by them, as that he was like unto a poor chased sheep. Who seeing the Wolf to pursue him flieth from him into the Mountains, thinking there to hide himself. Lo here a poor sheep which shall escape the throat of the Wolf: he is so heartily afraid, that if he find a well, he will sooner leap into it, than to go on any farther: for he knoweth not what to do, nor what shall become of him: being thus mortally pursued. And therefore David saying, that he erred like a lost sheep referred it not unto his sins, to say, O Lord, I have offended, I have strayed from the way of salvation: but he saith, O Lord, I know not what shall become of me. Here then we now see what the natural meaning of this text is, whereupon we must chiefly stay ourselves. Although the doctrine which I have already touched be very good and profitable, yet must we have respect unto the meaning of David. I have then erred saith he, like a lost sheep. Now he saith,

O seek thy Servant, for I do not forget thy commandments.

When as we shall join these two things together, That David forgot not the Commandments of God, and that he hath erred: we shall find, how greatly he was given to the serving of God, that he desired it from the bottom of his heart: and yet was he not without extreme affliction: yea he was so void of help, as that it seemeth he could not choose but despair of his saving health. When then we see such an example, have not we very good occasion to take courage, although God suffereth us many times to be even extremely persecuted? For if this came to pass in David who was so excellent a man, as we have spoken of: Let not us think to be greatlier privileged than he. But let us chiefly consider to be patient in our afflictions, seeing that GOD thereby meaneth to make proof of our faith and patience, and will cause it all to turn unto our salvation. And this is it which David concludeth withal, O Lord, seek thy servant: signifying, that he stayeth himself chiefly upon the protection and safeguard of God. And see how we must order ourselves in this behalf: For if we can stay ourselves upon him, when as we shall be persecuted, and beseech him to seek us, we must not doubt but that he will make us to feel his help, yea, and that we shall obtain our salvation when as we shall there seek it.

According unto this holy Doctrine let us prostrate ourselves before the majesty of our good GOD, in acknowledging our offenses, beseeching him, that it would please him to make us feel them better than heretofore we have done. And in the meanwhile that it would also please him to help all our miseries, and to give us this sovereign remedy, to wit, to be purged of all our wicked affections, that the law might reign wholly in us, have full possession both of our thoughts and desires, and of all whatsoever else there is in us: and we to be so governed by it, as that forsaking all the things of this world, and of this present life, we crave and desire none other thing but to cleave unto our good GOD, and to be wholly conformable unto his holy will. And although we are now nuzzled [*groveled, brought to the ground*] in a great many of vices and imperfections, and subject to a great number of calamities: yet for all that, let us know that we are very happy so long as we shall be under his protection and safeguard, looking always for the salvation which he hath promised us, until such time as he hath granted us a full enjoying thereof, to behold him face to face in his heavenly kingdom, which now we see here below as it were in a dusky Glass. That he will not only, etc.

FINIS