A DISCOURSE OF DELIGHT IN PRAYER.

Delight thyself also in the Lord; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. —Ps. XXXVII. 4.

THIS psalm in the beginning is a heap of instructions. The great lesson intended in it is placed in verse 1: 'Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.' It is resumed, verses 7, 8, where many reasons are alleged to enforce it.

Fret not.

1. Do not envy them. Be not troubled at their prosperity.

2. Do not imitate them. Be not provoked by their glow-worm happiness to practise the same wickedness, to arrive to the same prosperity.

3. Be not sinfully impatient, and quarrel not with God, because he hath not by his providence allowed thee the same measures of prosperity in the world. Accuse him not of injustice and cruelty, because he afflicts the good, and is indulgent to the wicked. Leave him to dispense his blessings according to his own mind.

4. Condemn not the way of piety and religion wherein thou art. Think not the worse of thy profession because it is attended with affliction.

The reason of this exhortation is rendered, ver. 2, 'For they shall soon be cut down as the grass, and wither as the green herb;' amplified by a similitude or resemblance of their prosperity to grass. Their happiness has no stability; it hath, like grass, more of colour and show, than strength and substance. Grass nods this and that way with every wind. The mouth of a beast may pull it up, or the foot of a beast may tread it down. The scorching sun in summer, or the fainting sun in winter, will deface its complexion.

The psalmist then proceeds to positive duties, ver. 3.

1. Faith. Trust in the Lord. This is a grace most fit to quell such impatiencies. The stronger the faith, the weaker the passion. Impatient motions are signs of a flagging faith. Many times men are ready to cast off their help in Jehovah, and address to the god of Ekron, multitudes of friends or riches; but trust thou in the Lord, in the promises of God, in the providence of God.

2. Obedience. Do good. Trust in God's promises, and observance of his precepts, must be linked together. It is but a pretended trust in God where there is a real walking in the paths of wickedness. Let not the glister of the world render thee faint and languid in a course of piety.

3. The keeping our station. Do good. Because wicked men flourish, hide not thyself therefore in a corner, but keep thy sphere, run thy race, 'and verily thou shalt be fed,' have everything needful for thee. And now because men delight in that wherein they trust, the psalmist diverts us from all other objects of delight to God as the true object: 'Delight thyself in the Lord;' place all thy pleasure and joy in him. And because the motive expresseth the answer of prayer, the duty enjoined seems to respect the act of prayer as well as the object of prayer; prayer coming from a delight in God, and a delight in seeking him. Trust is both the spring of joy and the spring of supplication. When we trust him for sustenance and preservation,

we shall receive them; so when we delight in seeking him, we shall be answered by him.

1. The duty. In the act, 'delight;' in the object, 'the Lord.'

2. The motive: 'he shall give thee the desires of thy heart;' the most substantial desires, those desires which he approves of. The desire of thy heart as gracious, though not the desire of thy heart as carnal; the desire of thy heart as a Christian, though not the desire of thy heart as a creature. *He* shall give; God is the object of our joy, and the author of our comfort.

Doct. Delight in God, in seeking him only, procures gracious answers; or, without cheerful prayers, we cannot have gracious answers.

There are two parts: 1, cheerfulness on our parts; 2, grants on God's part.

1. Cheerfulness and delight on our parts. Joy is the tuning the soul. The command to rejoice precedes the command to pray: 1 Thes. v. 16, 17, 'Rejoice evermore, pray without ceasing.' Delight makes the melody; prayer else will be but a harsh sound. God accepts the heart only when it is a gift given, not forced. Delight is the marrow of religion.

1. Dulness is not suitable to the great things we are chiefly to beg for. Gospel discoveries are a feast, Isa. xxv. 6. Dulness becomes not such a solemnity. Manna must not be sought for with a dumpish heart. With joy we are to draw water out of the wells of salvation, Isa. xii. 3. Faith is the bucket, but joy and love are the hands that move it. They are the Hur and Aaron that hold up the hands of this Moses. God doth not value that man's service, who accounts not his service a privilege and a pleasure.

2. Dulness is not suitable to the duty. Gospel duties are to be performed with a gospel temper. God's people ought to be a willing people, Ps. cx. 3, נדבת, a people of willingness, as though in prayer no other faculty of the soul had its exercise but the will. This must breathe fully in every word, as the spirit in Ezekiel's wheels. Delight, like the angel, Judges xiii. 20, must ascend in the smoke and flame of the soul. Though there be a kind of union by contemplation, yet the real union is by affection. A man cannot be said to be a spiritual king if he doth not present his performances with a royal and prince-like spirit. It is for vigorous wrestling that Jacob is called a prince, Gen. xxxii. 28.

This temper is essential to grace. Natural men are described to be of a heavy and weary temper in the offering of sacrifices, Mal. i. 13. It was but a sickly lame lamb they brought for an offering, and yet weary of it; that which was not fit for their table they thought fit for the altar.

In the handling this doctrine I will shew,

I. What this delight is.

II. Whence it springs.

III. The reasons of the doctrine.

IV. The use.

I. What this delight is. Delight properly is an affection of the mind that springs from the possession of a good which hath been ardently desired. This is the top-stone, the highest step. Delight is but an embryo till it come to fruition, and that certain and immutable; otherwise, if there be probability or possibility of losing that which we have present possession of, the fear of it is as a drop of gall that infects the sweetness of this passion. Delight properly is a silencing of desire, and the banquet of the soul on the presence of its desired object.

But there is a delight of a lower stamp.

1. In desires. There is a delight in desire as well as in fruition, a

cheerfulness in labour as well as in attainment. The desire of Canaan made the good Israelites cheerful in the wilderness. There is an inchoate delight in motion, but a consummate delight in rest and fruition.

2. In hopes. Desired happiness affects the soul; much more expected happiness: Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.' Joy is the natural issue of a well-grounded hope. A tottering expectation will engender but a tottering delight. Such a delight will madmen have, which is rather to be pitied than desired; but if an imaginary hope can affect the heart with some real joy, much more a hope settled upon a sure bottom, and raised upon a good foundation. There may be joy in a title as well as in possession.

3. In contemplation. The consideration and serious thoughts of heaven do affect a gracious heart and fill it with pleasure, though itself be as if in a wilderness. The near approach to a desired good doth much affect the heart. Moses was surely more pleased with the sight of Canaan from mount Pisgah than with the hopes of it in the desert. A traveller's delight is more raised when he is nearest his journey's end, and a hungry stomach hath a greater joy when he sees the meat approaching which must satisfy the appetite. As the union with the object is nearer, so the delight is stronger. Now, this delight the soul hath in duty is not a delight of fruition, but of desire, hope or contemplation, *gaudium viæ*, not *patriæ*.

1. We may consider delight as active or passive.

(1.) Active, which is an act of our souls in our approaches to God, when the heart, like the sun, rouseth up itself, as a giant to run a spiritual race.

(2.) Passive. Which is God's dispensation in approaches to us, and often met with in our cheerful addresses to God: Isa. lxiv. 5, 'Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and works righteousness.' When we delightfully clasp about the throne of grace, God doth often cast his arms about our necks, especially when cheerful prayer is accompanied with a cheerful obedience. This joy is, when Christ meets us in prayer with a 'Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven,' thy request granted. The active delight is the health of the soul, the passive is the good complexion of the soul. The one is man's duty, the other God's peculiar gift; the one is the inseparable property of the new birth, the other a separable privilege. There may be a joy *in* God when there is little joy *from* God; there may be gold in the mine when no flowers on the surface.

2. We may consider delight as settled or transient, as spiritual or sensitive.

(1.) A settled delight. In strong and grown Christians, when prayer proceeds out of a thankfulness to God, a judicious knowledge and apprehension of God. The nearer to God, the more delight; as the motion of a stone is most speedy when nearest its centre.

(2.) A sensitive delight. As in persons troubled in mind there may be a kind of delight in prayer, because there is some sense of ease in the very venting itself; and in some, because of the novelty of a duty they were not accustomed to before. Many prayers may be put up by persons in necessity without any spiritual delight in them; as crazy persons take more physic than those that are healthful, and observe the spring and fall, yet they delight not in that physic. The pharisee could pray longer, and perhaps with some delight too, but upon a sensual ground, with a proud and vaunting kind of cheerfulness, a delight in himself, when the publican had a more spiritual delight; though a humble sorrow, in the consideration of his own vileness, yet a delight in the consideration of God's mercy. This sensitive delight may be more sensible in a young than in a grown Christian. There is a more sensible affection at the first meeting of friends, though more solid after

some converse; as there is a love which is called the love of the espousals. As it is in sorrow for sin, so in this delight; a young convert hath a greater torrent, a grown Christian a more constant stream. As at the first conversion of a sinner there is an overflowing joy among the angels, which we read not of after, though without question there is a settled joy in them at the growth of a Christian. An elder son may have a delight in his father's presence more rooted, firm, and rational, than a younger child that clings more about him with affectionate expressions. As sincerity is the soul of all graces and duties, so this delight is the lustre and embroidery of them.

Now, this delight in prayer,

1. It is an inward and hearty delight. As to the subject of it, it is seated in the heart. A man in prayer may have a cheerful countenance and a drowsy spirit. The Spirit of God dwells in the heart, and love and joy are the first-fruits of it, Gal. v. 22. Love to duty, and joy in it; joy as a grace, not as a mere comfort. As God is hearty in offering mercy, so is the soul in petitioning for it. There is a harmony between God and the heart. Where there is delight, there is great pains taken with the heart; a gracious heart strikes itself again and again, as Moses did the rock twice. Those ends which God hath in giving are a Christian's ends in asking. Now, the more of our hearts in the requests, the more of God's heart in the grants. The emphasis of mercy is God's whole heart and whole soul in it, Jer. xxii. 41. So the emphasis of duty is our whole heart and whole soul. As without God's cheerful answering a gracious soul would not relish a mercy, so without our hearty asking God doth not relish our prayer.

2. It is a delight in God, who is the object of prayer. The glory of God, communion with him, enjoyment of him, is the great end of a believer in his supplications. That delight which is in prayer is chiefly in it as a means conducing to such an end, and is but a spark of that delight which the soul hath in the object of prayer. God is the centre wherein the soul rests, and the end which the soul aims at. According to our apprehensions of God are our desires for him; when we apprehend him as the chiefest good, we shall desire him, and delight in him as the chiefest good. There must first be a delight in God before there can be a spiritual delight or a permanency in duty: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Delight is a grace; and as faith, desire, and love have God for their object, so hath this; and according to the strength of our delight in the object or end, is the strength of our delight in the means of attainment. When we delight in God as glorious, we shall delight to honour him; when we regard him as good, we shall delight to pursue and enjoy him, and delight in that which brings us to an intercourse with him. He that rejoices in God, will rejoice in every approach to him: 'The joy of the Lord is our strength,' Neh. viii. 10. The more joy in God, the more strength to come to him. The want of this is the reason of our snail-like motion to him. Men have no sweet thoughts of God, and therefore no mind to converse with him. We cannot judge our delight in prayer to be right if we have not a delight in God, for natural men may have a delight in prayer when they have corrupt and selfish ends. They may have a delight in a duty as it is a means, according to their apprehensions, to gain such an end; as Balaam and Balak offered their sacrifices cheerfully, hoping to ingratiate themselves with God, and to have liberty to curse his people.

3. A delight in the precepts and promises of God, which are the ground and rules of prayer. First, David delights in God's testimonies, and then calls upon him with his whole heart. A gracious heart must first delight in precepts and promises before it can turn them into prayers; for prayer is

nothing else but a presenting God with his own promise, desiring to work that in us and for us which he hath promised to us. None was more cheerful in prayer than David, because none was more rejoicing in the statutes of God. God's statutes were his songs, Ps. cxix. 54; and the divine word was sweeter to him than the honey, and honey-comb. If our hearts leap not at divine promises, we are like to have but drowsy souls in desiring them. If our eye be not upon the dainties God sets before us, our desires cannot be strong for him. If we have no delight in the great charters of heaven, the rich legacies of God, how can we sue for them? If we delight not in the covenant of grace, we shall not delight in prayers for grace. It was the hopes of reward made Moses so valiant in suffering; and the joy set before Christ in a promise made him so cheerful in enduring the shame, Heb. xii. 1, 2.

4. A delight in prayer itself. A Christian's heart is in secret ravished into heaven. There is a delight in coming near God, and warming the soul by the fire of his love. The angels are cheerful in the act of praise; their work is their glory. A holy soul doth so delight in this duty, that if there were no command to engage him, no promise to encourage him, he would be stepping into God's courts; he thinks it not a good day that passeth without some intercourse with God. David would have taken up his lodgings in the courts of God, and regards it as the only blessedness, Ps. lxv. 4. And so great a delight he had in being in God's presence, that he envies the birds the happiness of building their nests near his tabernacle. A delight there is in the holiness of prayer; a natural man under some troubles may delight in God's comforting and easing presence, but not in his sanctifying presence; he may delight to pray to God as a storehouse to supply his wants, but not as a refiner's fire to purge away his dross. Prayer, as praise, is a melody to God in the heart, Eph. v. 19; and the soul loves to be fingering the instrument and touching the strings.

5. A delight in the things asked. This heavenly cheerfulness is most in heavenly things. What delight others have in asking worldly goods, that a gracious heart hath in begging the light of God's countenance. That soul cannot be dull in prayer that seriously considers he prays for no less than heaven and happiness, no less than the glory of the great God. A gracious man is never weary of spiritual things, as men are never weary of the sun, but though it is enjoyed every day, yet long for the rising of it again. From this delight in the matter of prayer it is that the saints have redoubled and repeated their petitions, and often double the *Amen* at the end of prayer, to manifest the great affections to those things they have asked. The soul loves to think of those things the heart is set upon, and frequent thoughts express a delight.

6. A delight in those graces and affections which are exercised in prayer. A gracious heart is most delighted with that prayer wherein grace hath been more stirring, and gracious affections have been boiling over. The soul desires not only to speak to God, but to make melody to God; the heart is the instrument, but graces are the strings, and prayer the touching them; and therefore he is more displeased with the flagging of his graces than with missing an answer. There may be a delight in gifts, in a man's own gifts, in the gifts of another, in the pomp and varnish of devotion, but a delight in exercising spiritual graces is an ingredient in this true delight. The pharisees are marked by Christ to make long prayers, vaunting in outward bravery of words, as if they were playing the courtiers with God, and complimenting him; but the publican had a short prayer, but more grace, 'Lord, be merciful to me a sinner.' There is reliance and humility. A gracious heart labours to bring flaming affections, and if he cannot bring flaming grace,

he will bring smoking grace; he desires the preparation of his heart as well as the answer of his prayer, Ps. x. 17.

II. Whence this delight springs.

1. From the Spirit of God. Not a spark of fire upon our own hearth that is able to kindle this spiritual delight. It is the Holy Ghost that breathes such an heavenly heat into our affections. The Spirit is the fire that kindles the soul, the spring that moves the watch, the wind that drives the ship. The swiftest ship with spread sails will be but sluggish in its motion unless the wind fills its sails. Without this Spirit, we are but in a weak and sickly condition, our breath but short, a heavy and troublesome asthma is upon us: Ps. cxxxviii. 3, 'When I cried unto thee, thou didst strengthen me with strength in my soul.' As prayer is the work of the Spirit in the heart, so doth delight in prayer owe itself to the same author. God will make them joyful in his house of prayer, Isa. lvi. 7.

2. From grace. The Spirit kindles, but gives us the oil of grace to make the lamp burn clear. There must not only be wind to drive, but sails to catch it. A prayer without grace is a prayer without wings. There must be grace to begin it. A dead man cannot rejoice in his land, money, or food; he cannot act, and therefore cannot be cheerful in action. Cheerfulness supposeth life; dead men cannot perform a duty (Ps. cxv. 17, 'The dead praise not the Lord'), nor dead souls a cheerful duty. There must not only be grace infused, but grace actuated. No man in a sleep or swoon can rejoice. There must not only be a living principle, but a lively operation. If the sap lurk only in the root, the branches can bring forth no fruit; our best prayers, without the sap of grace diffusing itself, will be but as withered branches. Grace actuated puts heat into performances, without which they are but benumbed and frozen.* Rusty grace, as a rusty key, will not unlock, will not enlarge the heart: there must be grace to maintain it. There is not only need of fire to kindle the lamp, but of oil to preserve the flame; natural men may have their affections kindled in a way of common working, but they will presently faint and die, as the flame of cotton will dim and vanish, if there be no oil to nourish it. There is a temporary joy in hearing the word; and if in one duty, why not in another, why not in prayer? Mat. xiii. 20. Like a fire of thorns that makes a great blaze, but a short stay.

3. From a good conscience. A good heart is a continual feast, Prov. xv. 15. He that hath a good conscience must needs be cheerful in his religious and civil duties. Guilt will come trembling, and with a sad countenance, into the presence of God's majesty. A guilty child cannot with cheerfulness come into a displeased father's presence. A soul smoked with hell cannot with delight approach to heaven. Guilty souls, in regard of the injury they have done to God, will be afraid to come; and in regard of the foot of sin wherewith they are defiled, and the blackness they have contracted, they will be ashamed to come; they know that by their sins they should provoke his anger, not allure his love. A soul under conscience of sin cannot look up to God, Ps. xl. 12; nor will God with favour look down upon it, Ps. lix. 2. It must be a pure heart that must see him with pleasure, Mat. v. 8; and pure hands must be lifted up to him, 1 Tim. ii. 8. Jonah was asleep after his sin, and was outstripped in quickness to pray, even by idolaters. The mariners jog him, but could not get him, that we read of, to call upon that God whom he had offended, Jonah. i. Where there is corruption, the sparks of sin will kindle that tinder, and weaken a

* Reynolds.

spiritual delight. A perfect heart and a willing mind are put together, 1 Chron. xxix. 2. There cannot be willingness without sincerity, nor sincerity without willingness.

4. From a holy and frequent familiarity with God. Where there is a great familiarity, there is a great delight; delight in one another's company, and delight in one another's converse: strangeness contracts, and familiarity dilates the soul. There is more alacrity in going to a God with whom we are acquainted than to a God to whom we are strangers. This doth encourage the soul to go to God. I go to a God whose face I have seen, whose goodness I have tasted, with whom I have often met in prayer. Frequent familiarity makes us more apprehensive of the excellency of another; an excellency apprehended will be beloved, and being beloved, will be delighted in.

5. From hopes of speeding. There is an expectative delight which ariseth from hopes of enjoying: Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope.' There cannot be a pleasant motion where there is a palsy of doubts. How full of delight must that soul be that can plead a promise, and carry God's hand and seal to heaven, and shew him his own bond, when it can be pleaded, not only as a favour to engage his mercy, but in some sense to engage his truth and righteousness! Christ in his prayer, which was his swan-like song, John xvii., pleads the terms of the covenant between his Father and himself: 'I have glorified thee on earth, glorify me with that glory I had with thee before the world was.' This is the case of a delighful approach, when we carry a covenant of grace with us for ourselves, and a promise of security and perpetuity for the church. Upon this account we have more cause of a pleasant motion to God than ancient believers had. Fear acted them under the law, love us under the gospel. He cannot but delight in prayer that hath arguments of God's own framing to plead with God, who cannot deny his own arguments and reasonings. Little comfort can be sucked from a *perhaps;* but when we come to seek covenant mercies, God's faithfulness to his covenant puts the mercy past a *perhaps*. We come to a God sitting upon a throne of grace, upon mount Sion, not on mount Sinai; to a God that desires our presence, more than we desire his assistance.

6. From a sense of former mercies and acceptation. If manna be rained down, it doth not only take off our thoughts from Egyptian garlic, but quickens our desires for a second shower. A sense of God's majesty will make us lose our garishness, and a sense of God's love will make us lose our dumpishness. We may as well come again with a merry heart, when God accepts our prayers, as go away and eat our bread with joy when God accepts our works, Eccles. ix. 7. The doves will readily fly to the windows where they have formerly found shelter, and the beggar to the door where he hath often received an alms: 'Because he hath inclined his ear to hear me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live,' Ps. cxvi. 2. I have found refuge with God before; I have found my wants supplied, my soul raised, my temptations checked, my doubts answered, and my prayers accepted, therefore I will repeat my addresses with cheerfulness.

I might add, also, other causes: as a love to God, a heavenliness of spirit, a consideration of Christ's intercession, a deep humiliation. The more unpleasant sin is to our relish, the more delightful will God be, and the more cheerful our souls in addresses to him. The more unpleasant sin is to us, the more spiritual our souls are; and the more spiritual our souls, the more spiritual our affections: the more stony, the more lumpish and unapt for motion; the more contrite, the more agile. From a spiritual taste; report of a thing may contribute some pleasure, but a taste greater.

III. Reasons. Without cheerful seeking, we cannot have a gracious answer.

1. God will not give an answer to those prayers that dishonour him. A flat and dumpish temper is not for his honour. The heathens themselves thought their gods should not be put off with a sacrifice dragged to the altar. We read of no lead, that lumpish, earthly metal, employed about the tabernacle or temple, but the purest and most glistering sorts of metals. God will have the most excellent service, because he is the most excellent being; he will have the most delighful service, because he bestows the most delightful and excellent gifts. All sacrifices were to be offered up with fire, which is the quickest and most active element. It is a dishonour to so great, so glorious a majesty, to put him off with such low and dead-hearted services. Those petitions cannot expect an answer which are offered in a manner injurious to the person we address to. It is not for the credit of our great Master, to have his servants dejected in his work; as though his service were an uncomfortable thing; as though God were a wilderness, and the world a paradise.

2. Dull and lumpish prayer doth not reach him, and therefore cannot expect an answer. Such desires are as arrows that sink down at our feet. There is no force to carry them to heaven. The heart is an unbent bow that hath no strength. When God will hear, he makes first a prepared heart, Ps. x. 17. He first strings the instrument, and then receives the sound. An enlarged heart only runs, Ps. cxix. 32; a contracted heart moves slowly, and often faints in the journey.

3. Lumpishness speaks an unwillingness that God should hear us. It speaks a kind of fear that God should grant our petitions. He that puts up a petition to a prince coldly and dully, gives him good reason to think that he doth not care for an answer. The husbandman hath no great mind to a harvest, that is lazy in tilling his ground and sowing his seed. How can we think God should delight to read over our petitions, when we take so little delight in presenting them? God gives not mercy to the unwilling person. The first thing God doth is to make his people willing. Dull spirits seek God as if they did not care for finding him: such tempers either account not God real, or their petitions unnecessary.

4. Without delight we are not fit to receive a mercy. Delight in a mercy wanted makes room for desire, and large desires make room for mercy. If no delight in begging, there will be no delight in enjoying; if there be no cheerfulness to quicken our prayers when we need a blessing, there will be little joy to quicken our praise when we receive a blessing. A weak, sickly stomach is not fit to be seated at a plentiful table. Where there is a dull asking supply, there is none, or a very dull sense of wants. Now, God will not send his mercies but to a soul that will welcome them. The deeper the sense of our wants, the higher the estimation of our supplies. A cheerful soul is fit to receive the least, and fit to receive the greatest mercy. He will more prize a little mercy than a dull petitioner shall prize a greater, because he hath a sense of his wants. Had not Zaccheus had a great joy at the news of Christ's coming by his door, he had not so readily entertained and welcomed him.

IV. *Use.* 1. Of information.

1. There is a great pleasure in the ways of God, if rightly understood. Prayer, which is a duty wherein we express our wants, is delightful. There is more sweetness in a Christian's asking, than in a wicked man's enjoying, blessings.

2. What delight will there be in heaven! If there be such sweetness in desire, what will there be in full fruition! There is joy in seeking; what is there then in finding! Duty hath its sweets, its thousands, but glory its

ten thousands. If the pleasure of the seed-time be so great, what will the pleasure of the harvest be.

3. The miserable condition of those that can delight in anything but prayer. It is an aggravation of our enmity to God, when we can sin cheerfully and pray dully, when duty is more loathsome than iniquity.

Use 2. Of examination. We pray, but how are our hearts? If it be for what concerns our momentary being, is not our running like the running of Ahimaaz? But when for spiritual things, do not our hearts sink within us, like Nabal's? Let us therefore follow our hearts close, suffer them not to give us the slip in our examination of them, resolve not to take the first answer, but search to the bottom.

1. Whether we delight at all in prayer.

1. How do we prize the opportunities of duty? There is an opportunity of an earthly, and an opportunity of an heavenly, gain. Consider which our hearts more readily close with. Can we with much pleasure follow a vain world, and heartlessly welcome an opportunity of duty, delight more with Judas in bags, than in Christ's company? This is sad. But are praying opportunities our festival times? Do we go to the house of God with the voice of joy and praise?

2 Whether we study excuses to waive a present duty, when conscience and opportunity urge and invite us to it. Are our souls more skilful in delays than in performances? Are there no excuses when sin calls us, and studied put-offs when God invites us, like the sluggard, folding our arms yet a little while longer? or do our hearts rise and beat quick against frivolous excuses that step in to hinder us from prayer?

3. How are our hearts affected in prayer? Are we more ready to pray ourselves asleep than into a vigorous frame? Do we enter into it with some life, and find our hearts quickly tire and jade us? Are we more awake when we are up than we were all the time upon our knees? Are our hearts in prayer like withered, sapless things, and very quick afterwards if any worldly business invite us? Are we like logs and blocks in prayer, and like a roe upon the mountains in earthly concerns? Surely what our pulse beats quickest to, is the object most delighted in.

4. What time is it we choose for prayer? Is it not our drowsiest, laziest time, when our nods are as many or more than our petitions, as though the dullest time and the deadest frame were most suitable to a living God? Do we come with our hearts full of the world to pray for heaven? or do we pick out the most lively seasons? Luther chose those hours for prayer and meditation wherein he found himself most lively for study.

5. Do we not often wish a duty over, as those in the prophet that were glad when the Sabbath was over, that they might run to their buying and selling? or are we of Peter's temper, and express Peter's language, 'It is good to be here' with Christ on the mount?

6. Do we prepare ourselves by delightful and enlivening considerations? Do we think of the precept of God, which should spur us, and of the promise of God, which should allure us? Do we rub our souls to heat them? Do we blow them, to kindle them into a flame? Do we send up ejaculations for a quickening spirit? If thoughts of God be a burden, requests to him will not be a pleasure. If we have a coldness in our thoughts of God and duty, we can have no warmth in our desire, no delight in our petitions.

7. Do we content ourselves with dull motions, or do we give check to them? Can we, though our hearts be never so lazy, stroke ourselves at the end, and call ourselves good and faithful servants? Do we take our souls to task afterwards, and examine why they are so lazy, why so heavy? Do

we inquire into the causes of our deadness? A gracious soul is more troubled at its dulness in prayer than a natural conscience is at the omission of prayer. He will complain of his sluggishness, and mend his pace.

2. If we find we have a delight, let us examine whether it be a delight of the right kind.

1. Do we delight in it because of the gifts we have ourselves, or the gifts of others we join with? A man may rejoice in hearing the word, not because of the holiness and spirituality of the matter, but because of the goodness of the dress, and the elegancy of the expression, Ezek. xxxiii. 32. The prophet was unto them as a lovely song, as one that had a pleasant voice. He may upon the same ground delight in prayer. But this is a temper not kindled by the true fire of the sanctuary. Or do we delight in it, not when our tongues are most quick, but our hearts most warm; not because we have the best words, but the most spiritualized affections? We may have angels' gifts in prayer, without an angel's spirit.

2. Is there a delight in all parts of a duty, not only in asking temporal blessings, or some spiritual, as pardoning mercy, but in begging for refining grace? Are we earnest only when we have bosom quarrels and conscience convulsions, but flag when we come to pray for sanctifying mercy? The rise of this is a displacency with the trouble and danger, not with the sin and cause.

3. Doth our delight in prayer and spiritual things outdo our delight in outward things? The psalmist's joy in God was more than his delight in the harvest or vintage, Ps. vii. 4. Are we like ravens, that delight to hover in the air sometimes, but our greatest delight is to feed upon carrion? Though we have, and may have, a sensible delight in worldly things, yet is it as solid and rational as that we have in duty?

4. Is our delight in prayer an humble delight? Is it a rejoicing with humbling? Ps. ii. 11, 'Serve the Lord with gladness, and rejoice before him with trembling.' If our service be right, it will be cheerful, and if truly cheerful, it will be humble.

5. Is our delight in prayer accompanied with a delight in waiting? Do we, like merchants, not only delight in the first launching of a ship, or the setting it out of the haven with a full freight, but also in expectations of a rich return of spiritual mercies? Do we delight to pray, though God for the present doth not delight to give, and wait like David with an owning God's wisdom in delaying? Ps. cxxx. 6; or do we shoot them only as arrows at random, and never look after them where they light, or where to find them?

6. Is our delight in praising God, when mercy comes, answerable to the delight in praying, when a wanted mercy was begged? The ten lepers desired mercy with an equal cheerfulness, in hopes of having their leprosy cured, but his delight that returned only was genuine. As he prayed with a loud voice, so he praised with a loud voice, Luke xvii. 13, 15; and Christ tells him his faith had made him whole. As he had an answer in a way of grace, so he had before a gracious delight in his asking. The others had a natural delight, and so a return in a way of common providence.

Use 3, of exhortation. Let us delight in prayer. God loves a cheerful giver in alms, and a cheerful petitioner in prayer. God would have his children free with him. He takes special notice of a spiritual frame: Jer. xxx. 21, 'Who hath engaged his heart?' The more delight we have in God, the more delight he will have in us. He takes no pleasure in a lumpish service. It is an uncomely sight to see a joyful sinner and a dumpish petitioner. Why should we not exercise as much joy in holy duties as formerly we did in sinful practices? How delightfully will men sit at their games,

and spend their days in gluttony and luxury! And shall not a Christian find much more delight in applying himself to God? We should delight that we can, and have hearts to ask, such gifts, that thousands in the world never dream of begging. To be dull is a discontentedness with our own petitions. Delight in prayer is the way to gain assurance. To seek God, and treat him as our chiefest good, endears the soul to him. Delighting in accesses to him will inflame our love; and there is no greater sign of an interest in him than a prevalent estimation of him. God casts off none that affectionately clasp about his throne.

To this purpose,

1. Pray for quickening grace. How often do we find David upon his knees for it! God only gives this grace, and God only stirs this grace.

2. Meditate on the promises you intend to plead. Unbelief is the great root of all dumpishness. It was by the belief of the word we had life at first, and by an exercise of that belief we gain liveliness. What maintains our love will maintain our delight; the amiableness of God and the excellency of the promises are the incentives and fuel both of the one and of the other. Think that they are eternal things you are to pray for, and that you have as much invitation to beg them, and as good promise to attain them, as David, Paul, or any other ever had. How would this awaken our drowsy souls, and elevate our heavy hearts, and open the lazy eyelids to look up! And whatever meditation we find begin to kindle our souls, let us follow it on, that the spark may not go out.

3. Choose the time when your hearts are most revived. Observe when God sends an invitation, and hoist up the sails when the wind begins to blow. There is no Christian but hath one time or another a greater activeness of spirit. Choose none of those seasons which may quench the heat and dull the sprightliness of your affections. Resolve beforehand this, to delight yourselves in the Lord, and thereby you shall gain the desire of your hearts.

A DISCOURSE OF MOURNING FOR OTHER MEN'S SINS.

And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.—EZEKIEL IX. 4.

WHEN God in the former chapter had charged the Jews with their idolatry, and the multiplicity of abominations committed in his temple; and, ver. 18, had passed a resolve that he would not spare them, but deal in fury with them, though they should solicit him with the strongest and most importunate supplications; in this chapter he calls and commissions the executioners of his just decree: ver. 1, 'He cried also in mine ears with a loud voice, saying, Cause them that have charge over the city to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand;' and declares whom, and in what manner, he would punish, and whom he would pardon. The execu-