

SERMON XXIV.

OR,

MOTIVES TO SHEW MERCY.

'Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.'—MAT. v. 7.

THE commendation of this grace of mercy you have had abundantly. Consider yet further,

That the end why God shews mercy to you more than others, it is that you might do good to others. Why would God have some poor, some rich, but that he might crown patience in one, and mercy in another? 2 Cor. i. 4, saith the apostle there, speaking of spiritual mercy, 'Who comforteth us in all our tribulations'—why? 'that we may be able to comfort them that are in any trouble, by the same comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God.' This is the end why God comforteth us in our tribulations, that we may comfort those that are in trouble with the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. This is a great argument to spiritual mercy, and so by consequent for relieving in outward afflictions. Hath God bestowed any comfort upon your souls at any time, brought you out of sore distresses, answered very distracting doubts, and delivered you from dreadful fears? Now when you see others that are under dreadful and grievous temptations, know the way that God requires is that you should be merciful to them; and he hath therefore comforted you, delivered you from your spiritual afflictions, that you might help to deliver them. And so in bodily distress. Some of you have been poor heretofore; the Lord hath helped you, and given you estates; whether you have been poor or not, God hath given you estates plentifully. Certainly it is not for yourselves only, but that you might comfort those that want comfort. It is one part of God's end in this, in making a difference between one man and another.

A second motive that I would add, it is a mighty ease to those that are in affliction to consider, Though I be in afflictions, in straits, and in the depth of poverty, yet the Lord hath taken care for me, the Lord hath given the grace of his Spirit to his saints to be merciful to those that are in affliction; and the Lord lays weight upon them, and gives great charge to them to exercise the grace of mercy. Surely the Lord hath a care of me; though I want, yet the

Lord doth therefore indue his saints with the grace of mercy, that they might help me in my misery. And, I beseech you, do not discourage the hearts of those that are in misery, that they may not make their moan to God, saying, O Lord, hast thou made such a difference between me and others, and is there no care of me at all? Hast thou given charge to none to look upon me, to pity me, to help me? When thou shalt look upon the sorrows and miseries of thy brethren, and art merciful towards them, then they will acknowledge, if they be gracious, God's goodness, that the Lord hath been pleased to take care over them, and secretly to give thee a charge and a command to pity and help them. Therefore, be merciful.

Again, Hereby thou shalt honour God exceeding much. God accounts it his honour when his servants do communicate of his goodness; so it is a special part of the honour of God to be communicative; so it is the honour of his saints. In Prov. xiv. 31, 'He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker: but he that honoureth him hath mercy on the poor.' For men to oppress the poor, they do but reproach their Maker; as if so be that God would make such distance between man and man, and have no care of those that are in misery, you reproach God; but he that honoureth him, hath mercy on the poor. This is a great way of honouring God; 1 Pet. iv. 11, 'If any man minister, let him do it out of the ability which God giveth, that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ.' It is spoken first of the work of the ministry in dispensing the word; but likewise applied in general to all ministering of the gifts and graces of God, and any good thing that God gives us, that of all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

Further, you know those scriptures that tells you that God accounts it as his own. Christ accounts it as given to him, what is given to a disciple in the name of a disciple; 'and inasmuch as you gave it to these little ones, you gave it unto me.'

We find that God stands so much upon the works of mercy, that he is willing to have his own worship to stay upon it. If the matter lies thus, that either I must for the time be without worship, or those in necessity be without relief, saith God, I will rather be without worship than they shall be without relief. That scripture in Hosea vi., quoted divers times by Christ in the Gospel, 'I will have mercy and not sacrifice,' is a text that all that are acquainted with Scripture cannot be ignorant of. God stands much upon his sacrifice, but he stands more upon mercy. Saith God, If both be laid in the balance, either a sacrifice to be offered to me, or a work of mercy unto this poor brother—if there must but one be done, let the work of mercy be done rather than sacrifice. Surely it is that that God prizes highly. The Lord is content to be without sacrifice for mercy. Be merciful therefore.

By the work of mercy, you that are in a mean condition otherwise, may come to have as high a reward as the most eminent saints of God. In Mat. x. 41, saith Christ, 'He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.' Be merciful to those that are gracious; you may come to have as great a reward as they.

You that are poor men and poor women will say, We can do little for God; we can be employed but little in any service for God—we are weak; but here is a way how you may come to have the reward of the prophets of God, and the most eminent of the saints, by shewing works of mercy unto them.

And that these things may the rather sink into your hearts, labour to principle your hearts fully in this, That 'it is a better thing to give than to receive;' you know they are the words of Christ. It will be very hard to get this principle into the hearts of many people, that it is a more blessed thing to be merciful to others than to be rich to themselves; yet that is the wisdom of Christ. Christ saith so; and did we account of mercies to be better than our riches, this would be a mighty help to the works of mercy. There is many people think that all they bestow in works of mercy is lost. No; 'He that giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord; and he shall have it again.' It is better a great deal than anything he doth enjoy; that that is given, you should look upon as the best part of your riches. It is a speech of an ancient, 'How much more glorious is it to do good to many, than to dwell sumptuously!'

Secondly, If you would have these things take impression; labour to make the times where you yourself heretofore have had need of mercy to be as present to you. When you see an object of mercy,

think, Was I never miserable myself? was I never an object of mercy myself? did I never see need of mercy myself.

Again, It may be I am well now, and all well about me, may not I be an object of mercy ere long? What if I were now in that condition, that all comfort from all creatures left me, were taken from me, that I had before—what if it were so with me now? then I would prize mercy. Is mercy good then to you, and is it not good now? Oh make these times real to you. Men that have their health, and are in peace and prosperity, they go on in their bravery and bustling as if there should never be a change; but the very thought of thy change, and the sad condition that thou mayest be soon in, would mightily work upon your bowels to shew mercy towards others.

Lastly, Let your eye affect your heart; do not turn away your eyes from them, but look upon them; Lam. iii. 51, 'Mine eye affecteth mine heart.' It is a mighty means to affect the heart, to have the eye look upon those in misery. You that enjoy all comforts, look upon the lamentable objects that there are in the world, that there are in the city; look into the hospitals among wounded soldiers, among those that are miserably poor, and let your eye affect your heart that you may be merciful, for 'blessed are the merciful; they shall obtain mercy.'

We now pass by this point of mercifulness, and shall proceed to the sixth rule of happiness that here Christ propounds:

Ver. 8. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'

There is a good connexion of these two. Some men are willing to do good works, and to be very beneficial to others, having unclean and guilty consciences of their own, and think thereby to stop the mouths of their consciences. They are conscious to themselves of vile, base ways, and they live in some secret haunt of wickedness, and so they think that if they be merciful to others, and do some good works, that will serve turn to stop their consciences. I am persuaded that many stop their consciences with such things as those are. But, saith Christ, do not deceive yourselves in that: 'Blessed are the merciful, they shall obtain mercy;' but he adds this too, 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' There must be purity in heart as well as mercifulness. There may be many works of mercy done by such as are unclean and base-hearted; and therefore look to that, that your hearts be clean and pure.

'Blessed are the pure in heart.'

This Christ makes the rule of blessedness, in opposition to the way of the pharisees. They made blessedness to consist in outward purity, in their outward washings; but, saith Christ, never satisfy yourselves in any ceremonial holiness, but look to

your hearts. 'Blessed are the pure in heart.' We shall open this purity of heart:

First, What this purity of heart is, and then shew you what a blessed thing it is to have a pure heart.

Only premise this, that by heart we are to understand not only the will or affections, but all the faculties of the soul—the mind, conscience, and thoughts, all is to be understood by heart. Blessed are those who have purity in their minds and consciences, in their thoughts, wills, and affections.

Purity, what is that? Purity consists in the immixedness of anything inferior—when a thing hath no mixture of anything inferior to itself. That we account to be pure metal which hath not anything baser than itself mixed with it. If a metal hath another metal that is more excellent than itself mixed with it, that doth not make it impure; it may be pure still. As if silver hath gold mixed with it, the silver is not made impure by the mixture of gold; but if it hath lead or tin mixed with it, it is made impure. So the soul of man. There is nothing more excellent but God himself. Now, when the soul is mixed with the divine nature, then it is made more excellent—that is the perfection of it; but if the soul of man be mixed with anything of the creature not in order to God, then it is impure—there is a mixture of something that is worse than itself; when the mind hath principles that are beneath a right rational understanding. And so when the thoughts have those things mixed that are beneath the excellency of such a faculty as thinking and meditating is; and so the will and affections, when they have anything mixed beneath the excellency of their faculty, then they come to be impure: and the more the thing is beneath the soul that they are mixed with, the more impure. As the sin of adultery and fornication, it is called by the Holy Ghost uncleanness itself, because it is one of the meanest and brutishest things for the faculty of a rational soul to mix itself with; therefore that hath the denomination of uncleanness. Thus much for what purity is in general.

But what is a pure heart?

You may take, instead of a description, these seven things to make up the purity of our hearts:

First, The heart must be cleansed from the guilt of sin through faith, made pure that way, washed with the blood of Jesus Christ; no heart is sure else: in Acts xv. 9, 'And he put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.' This scripture is ordinarily taken for the work of sanctification, that comes into the heart by faith: but if you observe the context, you shall rather find it to be that purity that comes in by faith in justification; for it is spoken of the Gentiles, that were accounted an unclean people to the Jews. But, saith the apostle here, God hath taken away their uncleanness; for he

hath purified their hearts by faith. They by faith having believed in Jesus Christ, the Lord accepts of them as of the children of Abraham. The Lord now hath taken away their uncleanness; through their believing in Jesus Christ, he hath so purified their hearts by faith, that through faith they are accounted as clean before God as any child of Abraham. They are come into the covenant with God, and so no more reckoned among the unclean ones, being purified by faith. We are all impure naturally; and though we think that by leaving some gross sins, as some men that, in the time of their youth, have lived in some gross sins, they leave them, and live better, and so think they are cleansed; yet certainly the great work of cleansing the soul is the application of the blood of Jesus Christ unto it, to wash the soul from its former uncleanness. The heart is never pure till then; all thy breaking off, and leaving thy sinful ways, and living better, will never make thy heart pure before God; it must be the washing of the blood of Jesus Christ. And so the very first moment the soul comes to believe in Jesus Christ, it is washed from the guilt of sin; for so the Scripture speaks of taking away the guilt of sin by that expression of washing with the blood of Jesus Christ, as in Rev. i. 5, 'Who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.' The soul, as soon as it believes in Jesus Christ, is washed from the guilt of sin, so as it stands as pure before the Lord as the child that is new born, and much more; for there is original corruption; but he is cleansed from the guilt of all those filthy and abominable sinful courses that he hath lived in, and that the soul is defiled withal—it stands clean before God through the blood of Christ, being washed. That must be first, or else all other purity is nothing.

Secondly, A pure heart is a heart acted by pure principles. The Scripture speaks of men of corrupt minds, 2 Tim. iii. 8; and likewise of pure minds, 2 Pet. iii. 1. There is much uncleanness in men's minds, in the upper chamber of the soul, as I may so call it; and whereas the soul did act from corrupt principles, from unworthy apprehensions of God and the things of God, from base corrupt notions that it had of things it acted; now it is cleansed, that is, those corrupt principles are done away, and it comes to have pure principles, right apprehensions of God and of the ways of God, of the covenant of grace and of the course of a Christian; and whatever might further the ways of holiness in him, the soul hath right apprehensions of them, and the soul is filled with gracious and pure principles, and acts from them. We may easily see by men's ways and courses that they are of corrupt minds, and from these their hearts are so filthy and vile.

Thirdly, A pure heart is such a one as hath cast out the love of every known sin, and mingles not with

it though never so small. Such a heart as hath renounced every known way of evil, though there is remaining some impurity in it, yet it can appeal to God that there is no known way of sin but it hates and abominates it; this is called purity of heart in all gospel language. If God should reward men according to the law, it would not be accounted purity; but in the gospel language, where a heart is sincere in the renouncing of known sin, and can appeal to God, Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest that though I have many evils in my heart, yet they are such things that are loathsome to me, that I abominate and renounce; and there is nothing disagreeable to thy will, but Lord thou that knowest all things knowest my heart is against; this is a pure heart in the gospel language, that hath cast out the love of every sin—let conscience speak whether it be so or no, for the blessedness is annexed to this; and certainly the contrary is that which makes the soul to be an object of God's curse.

Fourthly, A pure heart is a heart that hath a gracious frame, suitable to God's holiness. Where there is a suitableness and agreeableness in the heart of a man or woman unto the holiness of God, to the holy nature of God, and unto the holiness of God's law, this is purity.

Fifthly, Purity of heart is where there are right ends and aims; or thus, where the heart is consecrated, devoted, given up to God's service, making him the highest end of all things, and accordingly hath right ends and aims for God in all it doth. This is purity. What is the nature of God's holiness? God is a holy God. What is that? You know holiness it is the consecration of a thing, setting it apart for such an end; God's holiness it is a kind of consecration of himself, as it were, to himself as the last end. Himself is the last end, and the excellency of his nature whereby he works to himself as the last end, and wills all things in order to it, suitable to his own infinite excellency; this is God's purity. But if you will take his purity thus: that perfection of his will whereby he wills himself, and all things suitable to his own infinite excellency; that is God's purity. Now a pure heart is one that is thus consecrated to God as the last end of all, and so works as God works, and in all things hath right ends and right aims at God. This purity of heart is in opposition to falseness of heart; and so I find some divines carry this purity of heart for uprightness. When men's hearts are not double, they have not by-ends and squint-eyed aims in what they do, but their hearts are clean in this, that they are open for God, consecrated to God; their ends are for God, as for instance in the very work of mercy. But a man may be impure in the works of mercy if he hath base ends, to serve himself and cover his sin—his heart is very unclean.

A man may do many good things, and yet be very impure in the doing of things that are materially good; but now when a man doth not only do things that are right, but his ends are right, and he aims at God's glory, he is able to appeal to God, Lord, thou that searchest and triest the secrets of all hearts, try this heart of mine; I am willing my heart should lie open to all the world in such and such things; this is a pure heart.

Sixthly, A pure heart is a heart working to good ends with plainness and simplicity; for it is not enough for a man to have good ends, to say, Well, I aim at God's ends, but I will have such fetches about and such mixing of human and cunning devices. Many a man blesses himself that he hath general aims at God, but he hath a company of fetches and devices that are the stirrings of his own corruption, and so he spoils all; so that this purity is that which in other scriptures is called the simplicity of the gospel. When a man walks according to the simplicity of the gospel in all candour and ingenuity, in all plainness of spirit, this is purity; when having his ends to be good, and then in the attainment to those ends there is nothing but plainness and the simplicity of the gospel. As for policies and devices, they may besem men in the matters of the world, yet when he comes to the matters of Christ he carries all on in the plainness and simplicity of the gospel.

Seventhly, A pure heart is a heart suitable to all professions and duties that a man doth. When a man makes profession of God, and of the ways of God, and then hath a heart that doth come up to his profession, and when a man doth much service for God, and his heart comes up to his service, here is purity and agreement between the profession and services that a man makes or performs, and the disposition of his heart. The impurity and uncleanness that is in the hearts of hypocrites consists in this: their profession is great and glorious, but their hearts are not suitable. So, then, take all these together, and you see what a pure heart is—a heart washed in the blood of Christ from the guilt of sin; a heart acting by pure principles; a heart casting out the love of every known sin; a heart that hath a suitableness to the holiness of God and of his law; a heart consecrated, devoted to God, that hath right ends for God in all it doth; a heart working towards those good ends in the plainness and simplicity of the gospel; a heart that hath an agreeableness to whatsoever profession is made or services that are done—this is a pure heart. Now blessed is the pure in heart.

If this be pure, where will you find this purity of heart in any? Prov. xx. 9, 'Who can say he hath cleansed his heart?'

To that it is answered that Christ speaks here in

a gospel way. That may be accepted for purity of heart that yet hath much uncleanness remaining in it; but though there be, yet together with these dispositions there is added,

First, That there be pains taken to find out what corruption is remaining in thy heart. Lord, I believe I have corruption; oh that I could find it out! When the heart of a man or woman is willing to search to find out all the corruptions, yea, the secret wanderings and turnings of my heart, the Lord knows that if he would speak from heaven and ask me what I would have, he knows that this would be one petition, that I might know my own heart.

Secondly, There is an unfeigned mourning for all the remainders of that impurity. The heart, when it hath found out any corruption, it mourns over it; it accounts it to be the evil, the distemper of the heart. And that is observable, that the more peace there is in the heart through the assurance that it is cleansed in the blood of Christ, the more doth it mourn and lament for any uncleanness that ever hath been, or is in it; that Scripture is very observable, in Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' And so he goes on; and then, 'I will also save you from all your uncleanness; and I will call for the corn,' &c. And then in ver. 31, 'Then shall ye remember your own evil ways, and your doings that were not good, and shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for your iniquities and for your abominations.' And God accounts them to be cleansed that do loathe themselves for their iniquities and abominations. And no men and women do more loathe themselves for their iniquities and abominations, than those that are most cleansed from their iniquities and abominations. It is a notable scripture for it, and speaks of the times of the gospel, that shews the evil of those vain and wanton spirits among us, that in magnifying of free grace grow foolish and wanton, and, never sensible of the remaining evils that are in their hearts, they think they are cleansed by the blood of Christ, and by the Spirit of Christ; but the text promises that when the Lord shall cleanse his people, that then they shall loathe themselves for all their abominations, and for all their evils.

Though there be evil remaining, yet still one that hath true purity doth watch over himself, to prevent the occasions of evil as much as may be.

And fourthly, Such a one loves the strictest rule. I find much impurity in my heart, but God knows the strictest rule I aim at; and those that grow up most in godliness my heart is most with them.

Fifthly and lastly, My soul longs for perfection. I hope there is a time coming when all my defilement

shall be done away. For the present my soul is washed, perfected in respect of its justification; and I look for a time that it shall be perfect in respect of sanctification. Oh that that time were come! Certainly here is a pure heart; and therefore do not say, Where is the pure heart? and who can make his heart pure? and are there any that are pure?

The next thing is to set out unto you the excellency that there is in a clean heart.

First, A pure heart. That shews the excellency of it, that it is the fruit of the blood of Christ and the work of the Holy Ghost. Those two scriptures you had, Rev. i. and Ezek. xxxvi. clear this: It is washed with the blood of Christ, and by the Holy Ghost it is cleansed. Surely that that is the fruit of the blood of Christ, that is purity. When the blood of Christ and the Holy Ghost as water comes to be poured out upon the soul, surely these must work most glorious cleanness and purity.

Secondly, This purity of heart is the cause of soundness of spirit. It is that will help against distempers. So that, though there be outward occasions to distemper the heart, yet, where the heart is clean within, it will not be distempered as others are. As it is with the body: the body of a man that is foul, let such a one take but a little cold, presently there will grow sickness. If there be any external thing that puts him out of any orderly course, then he will see the foulness of his body, and he saith, It was the cold I took at such a time. The cold thou tookest, it was the foulness of thy body, and this cold thou hast is but that hath occasioned the stirring of the humours of thy body some way or other. A foul body is very subject to diseases upon any occasion; but one that hath a clean body, that is cleansed from such humours that are in others, let such a one endure cold or heat, whatsoever outward thing befalls him, yet his body is kept whole and sound. Why, it is from the cleanness that is in the body; so it is in the heart. The hearts of men that are impure, when any temptation comes to evil, it doth mightily distemper them: what a deal of filth appears in their hearts upon the occasion of any temptation, and they lay it upon the temptation. Though they had tempted thee never so much, yet if there had not been much foulness in thy heart, the temptation would never have prevailed. Saith Christ, 'The devil comes, and he finds nothing in me.' In that one thing of passion and anger, many of you seem to live very fair and plausibly in your course: let some come and anger you, that you are put into a passion, what a deal of filthiness and baseness will appear in you. You will say, It was such a one that angered me, and he provoked me, and why did he do thus and thus against me? So you are ready to lay all upon the temptation, when the truth is, it was from the filthiness of your cor-

ruptions. For all the filthy stuff that appears in a passion, it was there before, only there was an occasion to stir it; but there it lay before, and this temptation doth but now make appear what was before in the heart. But now one that is pure in heart, one that hath those corruptions mortified, that is cleansed from pride and self-love and the like, though such a one be wronged, yet he can keep himself in a meek and quiet temper; he can commit his cause to God, and go and make his moan to God. 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' they are of sound and hale spirits, and are not easily distempered as other men are, and hence follows they have sound hearts, (2 Tim. vii. 1.)

Thirdly, 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' for they have much peace of conscience; they are able to look upon the face of God with peace and joy. When God appears in his great works abroad in the world, their consciences speak peace unto them, and they rejoice that they have to deal with such a holy God as the Lord is; and all this comes from the cleanness that there is in their hearts: in Job xi. 14, 15, 'If iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles.' What then? 'For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot, yea, thou shalt be steadfast and shall not fear.' Mark, here it is spoken concerning the having of clean hands, and putting iniquity far from us; surely, when we have not only put iniquity from our hands, but from our hearts, when wickedness is not only far from our tabernacles, but far from our hearts, then shall we be able to lift up our faces without spot, to be steadfast, and not to fear whatsoever evil tidings comes; we shall be able to look upon the face of God, to lift up our countenances and not to fear. When a man hath guiltiness in his heart, and he hath an impure conscience, such a man, though he can lift up his face when he is among his impure company, yet when God comes to call him before himself, and hath to deal with him, so that he shall see plainly it is the just, right, and holy God that now I have to deal withal, that I stand before—an impure conscience, an impure heart will then cause terror to be in men, and be ready to overwhelm thee with horror; the presence of God it is very dreadful to an impure heart. 'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God,' the presence of God shall be joyful unto them, not to others. In Ps. li. 7, 8, David there having defiled his heart, began to look upon the presence of God as terrible to him; and therefore he cries out in ver. 2. 'Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and cleanse me from my sin;' and then in ver. 6, 'Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part thou shalt make me to know wisdom, purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean, wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow;' then what follows in ver. 8, 'Make me to hear joy and gladness: that the bones

which thou hast broken may rejoice.' Make me to hear joy and gladness, as if he should say, I have defiled my soul with this sin of mine, and the voice of joy and gladness is gone from my heart, and my very bones are broken with the burden that is upon me for my sin; but, Lord, purge me and cleanse me, and then the voice of joy and gladness will be in my soul again. Can any of you, whose consciences are impure, and that tell you of base uncleanness that are in your hearts and ways—can you rejoice? have you gladness in your countenances, in your ways? Certainly you know not God, you know him not; for did you know what a God it is you have to deal withal, till the Lord had purged you, you could never have joy in your hearts. It is a sign that the grace of God is in the heart of a man or woman, when, as they have defiled themselves with any sin, there is nothing in all the world that can give joy and gladness to their hearts, till the Lord hath purged them and cleansed them: 'Blessed, therefore, are the pure in heart.' There are very many excellencies in this purity of heart.

Fourthly, 'Blessed are the pure in heart,' further, for these are the men that are fit to serve God's designs in the ways of the gospel. There be no men fit for the designs and ways of God in the gospel, but your clean-hearted men; God takes no delight to make use of your cunning crafty men—that are crafty in a sinful way. It is true the Lord requires us, when we live among wicked men, to be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. But I speak of cunning and craftiness when they have to deal with God; God takes no delight to make use of these, but your plain, upright, and sincere hearts are fit to serve the designs of God in the ways of the gospel. As in Ps. xxiv. 3, 4, 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? and who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; who hath not lift up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.' Who is the man that shall ascend to the hill of God, that God will receive into his church, that is fit to be made an instrument of the honour of God in his church? 'He that hath clean hands and a pure heart; that hath not lift up his soul unto vanity.' That is a special uncleanness in men's hearts, when they lift up their souls to vanity—that is, they will mix their own by-ends with any services that they are employed in; but such a one as lifts not up his soul to vanity, and looks at God with a single eye, this is the man that shall ascend up into God's holy hill, this is the generation of them that seek the Lord. The blessing of God shall be upon such as these are.

Fifthly, And then another should have been this, they are under many gracious and blessed promises: Blessed are the pure in heart, for they are under many blessed

promises. In Ps. xviii. 26, 'With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure'; and so in Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart;' as if he should say, Let the world go which way it will, yet truly God is good to Israel, even to such as these are. A clean heart is worth a world, therefore go on you whose hearts the Lord hath begun to cleanse, and labour to get them clean more and more, and keep them clean. You that are holy be holy still; account it your riches, account it more than all the world that you have a clean heart. There is such a man it may be hath a greater estate, and is more brave in the world; but the more men and women have to do with the vanity of the world, the more their hearts are defiled. The Lord hath cut me short of those things, but blessed be his name, my heart in some measure is clean more than others. There are they that have greater parts than I, but many times there are very foul hearts that are joined with excellent parts. But though I cannot do what they can, yet my conscience testifies this to me, my heart is clean. Whenever I go to prayer, I can go into the presence of God with a clean heart. This should comfort thee against the want of any comforts whatsoever; this will keep thee from the defilements of the times wherein thou livest. In Ps. cxix. 1,

'Blessed are the undefiled in the way: they walk in the law of the Lord.' It is a blessed thing to be undefiled in our way, that is, when we live in the world and can keep ourselves cleansed from the pollutions of the world, unspotted in the world, can have our hearts clean. There be very few of us hath done so; but when we look back to the times wherein we lived before, the times wherein there were so great temptations to that that was evil, where is the man or woman but doth see cause to lament the defilements of their consciences and of their hearts by the pollutions of the times wherein they lived? We have sullied ourselves by superstitious vanities heretofore, and not only in our actions have been defiled, but in our very consciences, and just it were with the Lord that we should never come to see the good land that he is bringing his people unto, because we have so sullied ourselves by the superstitious vanities of the times wherein we lived. How happy is the man or woman that lived in former times wherein there were so many pollutions, that yet kept themselves undefiled in their way! I lost more, it may be, than others did, yet I kept my heart and conscience clean, and this is that that is the comfort of my soul. Blessed are such; the blessing of God is upon them, and shall certainly be upon them in a glorious manner.

SERMON XXV.

OR,

WHEREIN A PURE HEART IS BLESSED.

'Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.'—MAT. v. 8.

WE entered upon this sixth rule of blessedness the last day, and shall now proceed.

'Blessed are the pure in heart.' That spiritual cleanness of the soul of a man or woman is a very blessed thing. It is blessed,

First, If we consider the excellency of a man's soul. The more excellent a thing is, the more good there is in the keeping of it clean and pure from defilements; as now, if you have a piece of coarse cloth, you do not so much care to keep that clean as you do to keep fine lawn and cambric; it is worse for that to have a stain in it than for a piece of sackcloth to have a stain in it. Why the excellency of a man's soul is such as it is beyond all creatures that ever God made, ex-

cept the angels, all the works of nature, and therefore the cleanness of a man's soul, to be kept from stains and from filth, must needs be an excellent thing.

Secondly, and besides, in the second place, By the cleanness of a man's heart, a man comes to savour the word of God, to relish spiritual and heavenly truths. They are blessed that have clean hearts, for such, when they hear the word of God that is pure, when they hear the holy truths of God, oh how do their hearts relish them, and savour them, being clean! As the stomach when it is clean, it relishes and savours wholesome food; whereas, on the other side, when men have defiled their hearts, then