

THE TENDER HEART.

SERMON I.

And as for the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, so shall ye say unto him, Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard, Because thine heart was tender, &c.—2 CHRON. XXXIV. 26.

THESE words are a part of the message which the prophetess Huldah sent to good King Josiah; for as the message was concerning him and his people, so his answer from her is exact, both for himself and them. That part which concerned his people is set down in the three foregoing verses; that which belongs unto himself is contained in the words now read unto you, 'But to the king of Judah,' &c. The preface to her message we see strengthened with authority from God, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel;' which words carry in them the greater force and power from the majesty of the author. For if words spoken from a king carry authority, how much more then the word of the Lord of hosts, the King of kings? Here is her wisdom, therefore, that she lays aside her own authority, and speaks in the name of the Lord.

We see that waters of the same colour have not the same nature and effect, for hot waters are of the same colour with plain ordinary waters, yet more effectual; so the words of a man coming from a man may seem at first to be the same with others, yet notwithstanding, the words of God coming from the Spirit of God, carry a more wonderful excellency in them even to the hearts of kings. They bind kings, though they labour to shake them off. They are arrows to pierce their hearts; if not to save them, yet to damn them. Therefore she speaks to the king, 'Thus saith the Lord God of Israel concerning the words which thou hast heard,' &c.

Here we read of Josiah, that he was a man of an upright heart, and one who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord; and answerably we find the Lord to deal with him. For he, desirous to know the issue of a fearful judgment threatened against him and his people, sendeth to Huldah, a prophetess of the Lord, to be certified therein; whereupon he receiveth a full and perfect answer of the Lord's determination, both touching himself and his people, that they being forewarned might be forearmed; and by their timely conversion to the Lord, might procure the aversion* of so

* That is, 'turning away.'—G.

heavy wrath. He in uprightness sends to inquire, and the Lord returns him a full and upright answer. Whence we may learn,

Doct. 1. That God doth graciously fit prophets for persons, and his word, to a people that are upright in their hearts. Where there is a true desire to know the will of God, there God will give men sincere prophets that shall answer them exactly; not according to their own lusts, but for their good. Josiah was an holy man, who, out of a gracious disposition, desirous to be informed from God what should become of him and his people, sends to the prophetess Huldah. It was God's mercy that he should have a Huldah, a Jeremiah, to send to; and it was God's mercy that they should deal faithfully with him. This is God's mercy to those that are true-hearted. He will give them teachers suitable to their desires; but those that are false-hearted shall have suitable teachers, who shall instruct them according to their lusts. If they be like Ahab, they shall have four hundred false prophets to teach falsehood, to please their lusts, 1 Kings xxii. 6; but if they be Davids, they shall have Nathans. If they be Josiahs, they shall have Huldahs and Jeremiahs. Indeed, Herod may have a John Baptist, Mark vi. 27; but what will he do with him in the end when he doth come to cross him in his sin? Then off goes his head.

Use. This should teach us *to labour for sincerity, to have our hearts upright towards God*; and then he will send us men of a direct and right spirit, that shall teach us according to his own heart. But if we be false-hearted, God will give us teachers that shall teach us, not according to his will, but to please our own. We shall light upon belly-gods and epicures, and shall fall into the hands of priests and Jesuits. Where such are, there are the judgments of God upon the people, because they do not desire to know the will of God in truth. We see, Ezek. xiv. 3, 4, the people desired to have a stumblingblock for their iniquity. They were naught,* and would have idols. Therefore they desired stumblingblocks. They would have false prophets, that so they might go to hell with some authority. Well, saith God, they shall have stumblingblocks: for thus saith the Lord God of Israel, 'To every man that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet to inquire; I the Lord will answer him that cometh, according to the multitude of his idols; according to his own false heart, and not according to good.' What brought the greatest judgment upon the world, next to hell itself, I mean antichrist—the terriblest judgment of all, that hath drawn so many souls to hell—but the wickedness of the place and people, and his own ambition? The sins of the people gave life to him. They could not endure the word of God or plain dealing; they thought it a simple thing. They must have more sacrifices, more ceremonies, and a more glorious government. They would not be content with Christ's government which he left them, but were weary of this. Therefore he being gone to heaven, they must have a pope to go before them and lead them to hell. Therefore let men never excuse those sins, for certainly God saw a great deal of evil in them, and therefore gave them up to the judgment of antichrist. But let us magnify God's mercies that hath not so given us up. Thus we see how graciously God deals with a true-hearted king: he sends him a true answer of his message.

Ver. 27, 'Because thine heart was tender,' &c.

Now here comes a comfortable message to good Josiah, that he should

* That is, 'naughty,' wicked.—G.

be taken away and not see the miseries that should befall his people ; the cause whereof is here set down, ' Because thy heart was tender, and thou didst humble thyself before God ;' which cause is double.

1. *Inward.* 2. *Outward.*

1. The inward is the tenderness of his heart and humbling of himself.

2. And then the outward expression of it is set down in a double act :

(1.) Rending of clothes. (2.) Weeping.

' Because thou hast rent thy clothes, and wept before me.' After which comes the promise, ' I have also heard thee,' saith the Lord ; ' behold, I will gather thee to thy fathers, and thou shalt be put in thy grave in peace, and thine eyes shall not see all the evil which I will bring upon this place, and upon the inhabitants of the same.'

I will first remove one doubt, before I come to the tenderness of Josiah's heart.

Quest. What! may some say, Is there anything in man that can cause God to do do him good ?

Ans. No. One thing is the cause of another, but all come from the first cause. So tenderness of heart may be some cause of removal of judgment ; but God is the cause of both, for they all come from the first cause, which is God. So that these words do rather contain an order than a cause. For God hath set down this order in things, that where there is a broken heart there shall be a freedom from judgment ; not that tenderness of heart deserves anything at God's hand, as the papists gather, but because God hath decreed it so, that where tenderness of heart is, there mercy shall follow ; as here there was a tender heart in Josiah, therefore mercy did follow. God's promises are made conditionally ; not that the condition on our part deserves anything at God's hand, but when God hath given the condition, he gives the thing promised. So that this is an order which God hath set down, that where there is grace, mercy shall follow. For where God intends to do any good, he first works in them a gracious disposition : after which he looks upon his own work as upon a lovely object, and so doth give them other blessings. God crowns grace with grace.

By ' heart' is not meant the inward material and fleshy part of the body ; but that spiritual part, the soul and affections thereof. In that it is said to be ' tender' or melting, it is a borrowed and metaphorical phrase. Now in a ' tender heart' these three properties concur :

1. *It is sensible.* 2. *It is pliable.* 3. *It is yielding.*

1. First, A tender heart is always a *sensible* heart*. It hath life, and therefore sense. There is no living creature but hath life, and sense to preserve that life. So a tender heart is sensible of any grievance ; for tenderness doth presuppose life, because nothing that hath not life is tender. Some senses are not altogether necessary for the being of a living creature, as hearing and seeing ; but sensibleness is needful to the being of every living creature. It is a sign of life in a Christian when he is sensible of inconveniences. Therefore God hath planted such affections in man, as may preserve the life of man, as fear and love. Fear is that which makes a man avoid many dangers. Therefore God hath given us fear to cause us make our peace with him in time, that we may be freed from inconveniences ; yea, from that greatest of inconveniences, hell fire.

2, 3. Again, A tender heart is *pliable and yielding*. Now that is said to be yielding and pliable, which yields to the touch of anything that is put to it, and doth not stand out, as a stone that rebounds back when it is

* That is, ' sensitive.'—G.

thrown against a wall. So that is said to be tender which hath life, and sense, and is pliable, as wax is yielding and pliable to the disposition of him that works it, and is apt to receive any impression that is applied to it. In a tender heart there is no resistance, but it yields presently to every truth, and hath a pliability and a fitness to receive any impression, and to execute any performance; a fit temper indeed for a heart wrought on by the Spirit. God must first make us fit, and then use us to work. As a wheel must first be made round, and then turned round, so the heart must be first altered, and then used in a renewed way. A tender heart, so soon as the word is spoken, yields to it. It quakes at threatenings, obeys precepts, melts at promises, and the promises sweeten the heart. In all duties concerning God, and all offices of love to men, a tender heart is thus qualified. But hardness of heart is quite opposite. For, as things dead and insensible, it will not yield to the touch, but returns back whatsoever is cast upon it. Such a heart may be broken in pieces, but it will not receive any impression; as a stone may be broken, but will not be pliable, but rebound back again. A hard heart is indeed like wax to the devil, but like a stone to God or goodness. It is not yielding, but resists and repels all that is good; and therefore compared in the Scripture to the adamant stone. Sometimes it is called a frozen heart, because it is unpliant to anything. You may break it in pieces, but it is unframeable for any service, for any impression; it will not be wrought upon. But on the contrary, a melting and tender heart is sensible, yielding, and fit for any service both to God and man. Thus we see plainly what a tender heart is. The point from hence is,

Doct. 2. That it is a supernatural disposition of a true child of God to have a tender, soft, and a melting heart. I say that a disposition of a true child of God, and the frame of soul of such an one, to be tender, apprehensive, and serviceable, is a supernatural disposition; and of necessity it must be so, because naturally the heart is of another temper—a stony heart. All by nature have stony hearts in respect of spiritual goodness. There may be a tenderness in regard of natural things; but in regard of grace, the heart is stony, and beats back all that is put to it. Say what you will to a hard heart, it will never yield. A hammer will do no good to a stone. It may break it in pieces, but not draw it to any form. So to a stony heart, all the threatenings in the world will do no good. You may break it in pieces, but never work upon it. It must be the almighty power of God. There is nothing in the world so hard as the heart of man. The very creatures will yield obedience to God; as flies, and lice, to destroy Pharaoh; but Pharaoh himself was so hard-hearted, that after ten plagues he was ten times the more hardened, Exod. x. 28. Therefore, if a man have not a melting heart, he is diverted from his proper object; because God hath placed affections in us, to be raised presently upon suitable objects. When any object is offered in the word of God, if our hearts were not corrupted, we would have correspondent affections. At judgments we would tremble, at the word of threatenings quake, at promises we would with faith believe, and at mercies be comforted; at directions we would be pliable and yielding. But by nature our hearts are hard. God may threaten, and promise, and direct, and yet we insensible all the while. Well, all Josiahs, and all that are gracious, of necessity must have soft hearts. Therefore I will shew you,

1. *How a tender heart is wrought.*
2. *How it may be preserved and maintained.*

3. *How it may be discerned from the contrary.*

1. First, A tender heart is made tender *by him that made it.* For no creature in the world can soften and turn the heart, only God must alter and change it; for we are all by nature earthly, dead, and hard. Hence is it that God doth make that gracious promise, Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within their bowels; and I will take away the stony hearts out of their bodies, and give them a heart of flesh;' that is, a living, sensible heart.

Quest. But doth God immediately make the heart tender, and change it, without any help by means?

Sol. 1. I answer, Means do not make the heart tender, but God through the use of means softens it by his word. God's word is a hammer to break, and as fire to melt the hardened heart, Jer. xxiii. 9. And thus it works, first, when God doth shew to the heart our cursed estate, and opens to the same the true dangers of the soul, which it is in by nature and custom of sin, and sets before it the terrors of the last day and present danger of judgment. When the Spirit of God, by the word, doth convince the soul to be in a damned estate, dead, born under wrath, and an heir of damnation; that by nature God frowns, and hell is ready to swallow us up; when the soul is thus convinced, then the heart begins to be astonished, and cries out, 'Men and brethren, what shall I do?' Acts ii. 37. When the word is thus preached with particular application, it doth good. For a man may hear the word of God generally, and yet have no broken heart. But when a Peter comes and saith, 'You have crucified the Lord of life;' and when a Nathan comes to David, and saith, 'Thou art the man,' then comes the heart to be broken and confounded.

But it is not enough to have the heart broken; for a pot may be broken in pieces, and yet be good for nothing; so may a heart be, through terrors, and sense of judgment, and yet not be like wax, pliable. Therefore it must be melting;* for which cause, when God by his judgments hath cast down the heart, then comes the Spirit of God, revealing the comfort of the word; then the gracious mercy of God in Christ is manifested, that 'there is mercy with God, that he may be feared,' Ps. cxxx. 4. This being laid open to the quick, to a dejected soul, hence it comes to be melted and tender; for the apprehension of judgment is only a preparing work, which doth break the heart, and prepare it for tenderness.

Sol. 2. Again, Tenderness of heart is wrought by an apprehension of tenderness and love in Christ. A soft heart is made soft by the blood of Christ. Many say, that an adamant cannot be melted with fire, but by blood. I cannot tell whether this be true or no; but I am sure nothing will melt the hard heart of man but the blood of Christ, the passion of our blessed Saviour. When a man considers of the love that God hath shewed him in sending of his Son, and doing such great things as he hath done, in giving of Christ to satisfy his justice, in setting us free from hell, Satan and death: the consideration of this, with the persuasion that we have interest in the same, melts the heart, and makes it become tender. And this must needs be so, because that with the preaching of the gospel unto broken-hearted sinners cast down, there always goes the Spirit of God, which works an application of the gospel.

Christ is the first gift to the Church. When God hath given Christ, then comes the Spirit, and works in the heart a gracious acceptance of mercy offered. The Spirit works an assurance of the love and mercy of

* Qu. 'melted'?—ED.

God. Now love and mercy felt, work upon the tender heart a reflective love to God again. What, hath the great God of heaven and earth sent Christ into the world for me? humbled himself to the death of the cross for me? and hath he let angels alone, and left many thousands in the world, to choose me? and hath he sent his ministers to reveal unto me this assurance of the love and mercy of God? This consideration cannot but work love to God again; for love is a kind of fire which melts the heart. So that when our souls are persuaded that God loves us from everlasting, then we reflect our love to him again; and then our heart says to God, 'Speak, Lord; what wilt thou have me to do?' The soul is pliable for doing, for suffering, for anything God will have it. Then, 'Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth,' 1 Sam. iii. 9.

And when the heart is thus wrought upon, and made tender by the Spirit, then afterward in the proceeding of our lives, many things will work tenderness: as the works of God, his judgments, the word and sacraments, when they are made effectual by the Spirit of God, work tenderness. The promises of God also make the heart tender, as Rom. xii. 1, 'I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God, offer up your souls and bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.' There is no such like argument to persuade men to tenderness of heart, as to propound the love and mercy of God. And so the fear of any judgment will work tenderness. This made Josiah's heart to melt, but yet this did not work first upon him: for he having a tender heart before, and being sure of God's love, when he heard the judgment that should come upon his people, out of love to God and to his people, his heart melted, not so much for fear of judgment, but to think that God should be provoked by the sins of his people.

And thus we have seen how tenderness of heart is wrought. Now I come to shew,

2. *Second, The means how we may preserve this tenderness of heart, because it is a disposition of God's children.* How then shall we preserve ourselves in such a perpetual temper? The way to preserve a tender heart is,

1. *First, To be under the means whereby God's Spirit will work;* for it is he by his Spirit that works upon the heart, and doth preserve tenderness in us; and he will work only by his own means. All the devices in the world will not work upon the heart. Therefore let us be under the means that may preserve tenderness, and hear what God's word says of our estate by nature, of the wrath and justice of God, and of the judgment that will shortly come upon all the world. This made Paul to cry, though he knew that he was the child of God, and free from the law. 'Therefore,' saith he, 'knowing the terror of the law, we admonish you.'

2. *And then, go into the house of mourning, and present before yourselves the miserable and forlorn estate of the church of God abroad.* It was this that broke Nehemiah's heart. When he heard that the Jews were in great affliction and reproach, that the wall of the city was broken down, and the gates thereof burnt with fire, he sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, fasted and prayed before the God of heaven, Neh. i. 4. This made this good man Nehemiah to mourn, so that all the princes of the court could not comfort him. This also made Moses's heart to melt, when he looked on his brethren's affliction in Egypt. So we might keep our hearts tender if we did but set before our eyes the pitiful estate of God's church abroad, and that we may come to be in such an estate ourselves ere long.

3. *And if thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, labour for a legal and evangelical faith.* We must believe that all the threatenings of God's

vengeance against the wicked shall come to pass. Faith doth make these things present before our eyes; for it is the nature of faith to set things absent as present before us. What makes the malefactor to tremble and be cast down, but when he sees that he is ready for to die, is going to the place of execution, and sees death look him in the face? So faith setting the day of judgment before our eyes, will make us to tremble. Therefore Paul doth so often adjure Timothy by the coming of the Lord Jesus to judgment, 2 Tim. iv. 1; and Enoch set the day of judgment before him, at the beginning of the world, as we may see in Jude 14. He had a faith, that set things to come as present, and made him to walk with God. So if we had an evangelical faith to believe the goodness of God, pardon from him, and everlasting life, this would preserve tenderness of heart.

4. Again, *Good company will preserve tenderness of heart, sorting ourselves with those that are tender-hearted.* For the soul will reason thus: Doth such a one make conscience of swearing, profaning the Sabbath? and doth he mourn for the miseries of the church? Then what a hard piece of dead flesh am I, that have nothing in me!

5. Again, If thou wouldst preserve tenderness of heart, by all means *take heed of the least sin against conscience*, for the least sin in this kind makes way for hardness of heart. Sins that are committed against conscience do darken the understanding, dead the affection, and take away life; so that one hath not the least strength to withstand the least temptation. And so it comes to pass by God's judgment; for when men will live in sins against conscience, he takes away his Spirit, and gives up the heart from one degree of hardness to another. For the heart at first being tender, will endure nothing, but the least sin will trouble it. As water, when it begins to freeze, will not endure anything, no not so much as the weight of a pin upon it, but after a while will bear the weight of a cart; even so at the beginning, the heart being tender, trembles at the least sin, and will not bear with any one; but when it once gives way to sins against conscience, it becomes so frozen that it can endure any sin, and so becomes more and more hard. Men are so obdurate, having once made a breach in their own hearts by sins against conscience, that they can endure to commit any sin; and therefore God gives them up from one degree of hardness to another. What will not men do whom God hath given up to hardness of heart?

6. Again, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, *take heed of spiritual drunkenness*; that is, that thou be not drunk with an immoderate use of the creatures; of setting thy love too much upon outward things. For what saith the prophet? 'Wine and women take away the heart,' Hosea iv. 11; that is, the immoderate use of any earthly thing takes away spiritual sense; for the more sensible the soul is of outward things, the less it is of spiritual. For as the outward takes away the inward heat, so the love of one thing abates the love of another. The setting of too much love upon earthly things, takes away the sense of better things, and hardens the heart. When the heart is filled with the pleasures and profits of this life, it is not sensible of any judgment that hangs over the head; as in the old world, 'they ate and drank, they married and gave in marriage, they bought and sold, while the flood came upon them and swept all away,' Mat. xxiv. 37. When a man sets his love upon the creature, the very strength of his soul is lost. Therefore in the Scripture, God joins prayer and fasting both together, Mat. xvii. 21; that when he would have our hearts raised up to heaven, we should have all use of earthly things taken away. Therefore

when we are to go about spiritual duties, we must cut ourselves short in the use of the creatures. Talk of religion to a carnal man, whose senses are lost with love of earthly things, he hath no ear for that; his sense is quite lost, he hath no relish or savour of anything that is good. Talk to a covetous man, that hath his soul set upon the things of this life, he hath no relish of anything else; his heart is already so hardened to get honour and wealth, though it be to the ruin of others, that he cares not how hard it become. Therefore we are bidden to take heed that our hearts be not overcome with drunkenness and the cares of this life, for these will make a man to be insensible of spiritual things, Luke xxi. 34.

7. Again, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, *take heed of hypocrisy*; for it causeth swelling, and pride makes the heart to contemn others that be not like unto us. They bless themselves that they live thus and thus, they think themselves better than any other; and if they hear the minister reprove them for sin, they will shift it off, and say, Oh, this belongeth not to me, but to such a carnal man, and to such a wicked person; as the Scribes and Pharisees, who were vile hypocrites, yet they were the cause of all mischief, and more hard-hearted than Pilate, an heathen man; for he would have delivered Christ, but they would not, Luke xxiii. 14, *seq.* So, take a Romish hypocrite, that can proudly compliment it at every word with enticing speech, yet you shall find him more hard hearted than Turk or Jew; for full of cruelty and blood is the 'whore of Babylon.' Therefore, if thou wilt have tenderness of heart, take heed of hypocrisy.

8. Again, Above all things, *take heed of great sins*, which will harden the heart; for little sins do many times not dead the heart, but stir up the conscience; but great sins do stund* and dull a man; as a prick of a pin will make a man to start, but a heavy blow maketh a man for to be dead for the present. Therefore take heed of great sins. Thus it was with David. He sinned in numbering of the people, and for this his heart smote him; but when he came to the great and devouring sin of Uriah and Bathsheba, this was a great blow that struck him and laid him for dead, till Nathan came and revived him, 2 Sam. xii. 1. For when men fall into great sins, their hearts are so hardened, that they go on from sin to sin. Let us therefore be watchful over our own hearts, to preserve tenderness. The eye being a tender part, and soonest hurt, how watchful is man by nature over that, that it take no hurt. So the heart, being a tender thing, let us preserve it by all watchfulness to keep blows from off it. It is a terrible thing to keep a wound of some great sin upon the conscience, for it makes a way for a new breach; because when the conscience once begins to be hardened with some great sin, then there is no stop, but we run on to commit sin with all greediness.

9. Lastly, If thou wilt preserve tenderness of heart, *consider the miserable estate of hardness of heart*. Such an one that hath an hard heart is next to hell itself, to the estate of a damned spirit, a most terrible estate. A hard heart is neither melted with promises nor broken with threatenings. He hath no bowels of pity to men or love to God. He forgets all judgment for things past, and looks for none to come. When the soul is in this case, it is fit for nothing but for sin and the devil, whereas a tender-hearted man is fit for all good. Let God threaten: he trembles and quakes; let God promise: his heart melts and rejoiceth, and makes him even to break forth into thanksgiving; let God command: he will perform all; he is fit for any good thing to God and man. But when a man's heart is hardened

* That is, 'stun,' = harden.—G.

by hypocrisy, covetousness, or custom in sin, he hath no pity, no compassion: let God command, threaten, or promise, yet the heart is never a whit moved. This is a terrible estate of soul.

Now, to speak a little to young men that are like to this holy man Josiah. Surely his tenderness had some advantage from his years. Let those that are young by all means labour to keep tenderness of heart; for if young persons be good, there is a sweet communion between God and them, before the heart be pestered with the cares of the world. God delights much in the prayers of young men, because they come not from so polluted a soul, hardened with the practices of this world. Let such, therefore, as are young, take advantage of it, to repent in time of their sins, and let them not put it off unto their old days. While we are young, let us not neglect natural tenderness; although we cannot bring ourselves under the compass of God's kingdom by it, yet shall we get our hearts the sooner to be tender. In our youth, therefore, let us not neglect this good opportunity, as good Josiah did not when he was but young. Therefore let us repent of every sin betimes, and acquaint ourselves with those that are good; as it is said, Heb. iii. 13, 'Let us provoke one another daily, while it is called to-day, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.' Let us use all means to keep our hearts tender. Oh, it is a blessed estate! We are fit to live when our hearts are tender; fit to die, fit to receive anything from God, fit for duties of honesty to men, for any service to God. But when we have lost sense and feeling, it must be the almighty power of God that must recover us again, and not one amongst an hundred comes to good. Therefore labour to preserve a tender, soft, and melting heart.

Now, ere I proceed, give me leave to answer some cases of conscience, as,

Quest. 1. First, Whether the children of God may be subject to this hardness of heart, opposed to this tenderness?

Quest. 2. Secondly, Whether a Christian may be more sensible of outward things than of spiritual, as the love of God, or his own sin, and the like?

Sol. 1. To the first I answer, *that the child of God may be hard-hearted.* He may have some degrees of hardness of heart in him. For a Christian is a compounded creature; he hath not only body and soul, but flesh and spirit. He is but in part renewed; and therefore, having in him both flesh and spirit, he is subject to hardness of heart; and it is clear that it may be so. Examples shew that God's children are not always alike sensible of the wrath of God and of his mercy. They do not yield so to his commands as they should. But what is the reason that God doth suffer his children to fall into this hardness of heart? There is something in us that makes him give us up unto it, for we are no longer soft than he works upon us.

Quest. But what doth move him to leave us in this disposition?

Sol. I answer, he doth it for correction of former negligences, for sins of omission; especially when they neglect some means of grace whereby their hearts might be kept tender: it is for want of stirring up of God's grace in them; for want of an high esteem of grace bestowed upon them; want of care of their company, for not associating themselves with such as are tender-hearted; and from hence it comes that God suffers his children to fall into hardness of heart.

Quest. But now, from hence ariseth another question: How may a man know his heart from the heart of a reprobate, seeing that God's children may have hardness of heart?

Ans. I answer, that the heart of a man that is a very reprobate is totally, wholly, and finally hardened, and it is joined with security and insensibleness; it is joined with obstinacy, and with contempt of the means. But the child of God hath not total and final hardness of heart, but hath a sensibleness of it, he feelth and seeth it. Total hardness doth feel nothing, but a Christian that hath hardness of heart, doth feel that he hath it; as a man that hath the stone in his bladder, feels and knows that he hath a stone. A hard-hearted man feels nothing, but he that hath but only hardness of heart doth feel: for there is difference between hardness of heart and a hard heart; for the child of God may have hardness of heart, but not a hard heart. Now, I say a child of God that hath hardness of heart is sensible of his hardness, and performs the actions of a sensible soul: he useth some good means for the softening of it, for the sense thereof is grievous to him above all other crosses; and whiles he is under it, he thinks that all is not with him as it should be: therefore he complains of it above all other afflictions, which makes him cry to God, as we may see, Isa. lxiii. 17, 'Why hast thou hardened our hearts from thy fear?'

Obj. But some may demand how God doth harden.

Sol. I answer, the cause is first from our own selves; but he hardens four ways:

First, *Privatively*, by withholding and withdrawing his melting and softening power. For as the sun causeth darkness by withdrawing his light and warming power, so God withdrawing that melting power whereby we should be softened, it cannot be but that we must needs be hardened.

2. Secondly, *Negatively*, by denying of grace; by taking away from us his graces, which are not natural in us. Thus God doth to those whom he doth absolutely harden; he takes away that which they have, and so they become worse than they of themselves were by nature. When men walk unworthy of the gospel, God takes away very rational life from them, and gives them up to hardness of heart, that they run on in such courses, as that they are their own enemies, and bring upon themselves ruin.

3. Thirdly, And as God hardens by privation and negation, so, in the third place, he hardens *by tradition*:* by giving us up to the devil, to be vexed by his troubles, to harden us. It is a fearful judgment. When we take a course to grieve the Spirit of God, the Spirit will take a course to grieve us: he will give us up to Satan, to blind and to harden us. So that though God doth not work, as the author, effectually in this hardening, yet as a just judge he doth, by giving us up to Satan and the natural lusts of our own hearts, which are worse than all the devils in hell.

4. Fourthly and lastly, He doth harden *objectively*, by propounding good objects, which, meeting with a wicked heart, make it more hard, as, Isa. vi. 10, it is said, 'Harden these people's hearts.' How? By preaching of the word. A good object, if it lights upon a bad soul, hardens the heart; for they that are not bettered by religion, under the means, are so much the worse by their use. So we see God cannot be impeached with the hardening of our hearts, because all the cause is from ourselves; for whether he hardens by privation, negation, tradition, or by propounding good objects, it is all from ourselves; and likewise we have seen that God's children may have hardness of heart in some measure, but yet it differs from a reprobate, because they see and feel it, grieve for it, and complain of it to God.

Quest. The second question is, *But whether may a child of God be more*

* That is, 'giving up.' Cf. 1 Tim. i. 20 for the word.—G.

sensible of outward joys or crosses, than of spiritual things? for this makes many think they have not tender hearts, because they are more sensible of outward things than of spiritual.

Ans. I answer, *It is not always alike with them*; for God's children are still complaining of something: of their carelessness in good duties, of their want of strength against corruption. They go mourning when they have made God to bring them down upon their knees for their hardness of heart; but there is an intercourse, in the children of God, between the flesh and the spirit. They are partly flesh and partly spirit. Therefore many times, for a while, when the flesh prevails, there may be a sudden joy and a sudden sorrow, which may be greater than spiritual joy or spiritual sorrow; but yet it is not continual. But spiritual sorrow, grief for sin, though it be not so vehement as, for the sudden, outward sorrow is, yet it is more constant. Grief for sin is continual; whereas outward sorrow is but upon a sudden, though it seem to be more violent.

2. And again, *in regard of their valuing and prizing of earthly things*, there may be a sudden sorrow: for a child of God may, upon a sudden, over-prize outward things, and esteem them at too high a rate; but yet after that, valuing things by good advice, they prize spiritual things far beyond outward; and therefore their sorrow and joy is more for spiritual things, because it is constant. This I speak, not to cherish any neglect in any Christian, but for comfort to such as are troubled for it; therefore let such know, that God will not 'break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax.' If they have but a desire, and by conscionable* use of means, do shew their desire to be true, they shall have it at last, for Christ doth continue to make intercession for us; and if there were no weakness in us, what need Christ continue to make peace for us? for peace is made for those that fall out. Therefore, if there were no falling out between God and us, what need Christ to continue to make intercession for us? For these reasons, we see a child of God, for the present, may be more sensible of outward things than of spiritual.

Quest. But here another question may be asked, How shall we know that we have sensibleness and pliability, or not?

Ans. I answer, Easily, by applying of the soul unto objects, as 1, to God; 2, to his word; 3, to his works; 4, to man.

We may try our tenderness and pliability of heart these four ways:

1. *To God.* As it is tender from God, so it is tender for God; for the three persons of the Trinity. He that hath a tender heart cannot endure to dishonour God himself, or to hear others dishonour him, either by his own sins or by others.' He cannot endure to hear God's name blasphemed. So that they have a tender heart who when they see Christ in his religion to be wronged, cannot choose but be affected with it. So again, a man hath a tender heart when he yields to the motions of the Holy Ghost. When the Spirit moves, and he yields, this shews there is a tender heart. But a hard heart beats back all, and as a stone to the hammer, will not yield to any motion of God's Spirit.

2. Now, in the second place, to come downward, a tender heart is sensible in regard of the word of God; as, first, at the threatenings a true tender heart will tremble, as Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look, even to him that is of a contrite and broken spirit, and trembleth at my words.' A man that hath a tender heart will tremble at the signs of the anger of God: 'Shall the lion roar, and the beasts of the forest not be afraid?'

* That is, 'conscientious.'—G.

Amos iii. 4. Yes, they will stand still and tremble at the roaring of the lion; but much more will a tender heart tremble when God roars, and threatens vengeance. A tender heart will tremble when it hears of the terrors of the Lord at the day of judgment, as Paul did: 'Now knowing the terrors of the Lord, we persuade men,' 2 Cor. v. 11. It forced him to be faithful in his office. This use the apostle Peter would have us make of it: 2 Pet. iii. 11, 'That seeing all these things must be dissolved, what manner of persons ought we to be in holy conversation and godliness?' And so for the promises in the word. The heart is tender when the word of God doth rejoice a man above all things. How can the heart but melt at God's promises, for they are the sweetest things that can be. Therefore when a tender heart hears God's promises, it makes him to melt and be sensible of them. Again, a tender heart will be pliable to any direction in the word. To God's call it will answer, 'Here I am;' Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? As Isaiah, when he had once a tender heart, then 'Send me, Lord,' Isa. vi. 8. So David to God's command, 'Seek ye my face,' answers, 'Thy face, Lord, will I seek,' Ps. xxvii. 8. There is a gracious echo of the soul to God in whatsoever he saith in his word. And thus a true, tender heart doth yield to the word of God, and is fit to run on any errand.

3. Thirdly, By applying it to the works of God; for a tender heart quakes when it doth see the judgment of God abroad upon others. It hastens to make his peace with God, and to meet him by repentance. So again, a tender heart rejoiceth at the mercy of God, for it doth see something in it better than the thing itself; and that is the love of God, from which it doth proceed.

4. Fourthly, A man may know his heart to be tender and sensible, in regard of the estate of others, whether they be good or bad. If they be wicked, he hath a tender heart for them; as David, Ps. cxix. 136, 'Mine eyes gush out with rivers of water, because men keep not thy law.' So Paul saith, 'There are many that walk inordinately, of whom I have told you before, and now tell you weeping,' &c., Phil. iii. 18. So Christ was sensible of the misery of Jerusalem, wept for it, and a little while after, shed his own blood for it, Mat. xxiii. 37. Thus had he a tender heart. But when Christ looked to God's decree, he saith, 'Father, I thank thee, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and noble, and hast revealed them unto babes,' Mat. xi. 25. And so likewise for those that are good, in giving and forgiving; in giving, they give not only the thing, but they give their hearts and affections with it; and so in forgiving, they apprehend Christ's love in forgiving them; therefore they forgive others. So for works, will God have a tender heart to do anything, it will do it. If he will have it mourn, it will mourn; if to rejoice, it will rejoice; it is fit for every good work. By these marks we may know whether we have tender hearts or no.

But to apply this; how is this affection of Josiah in the hearts of men in these days? How many have melting hearts when they hear God blasphemed, and the religion of Christ wronged? How few are there that yield to the motions of the Spirit! We may take up a wonderful complaint of the hardness of men's hearts in these days, who never tremble at the word of God. Neither his promises, nor threatenings, nor commands will melt their hearts; but this is certain, that they which are not better under religion, by the means of grace, are much the worse. And how sensible are we of the church's miseries? For a tender heart is

sensible of the miseries of the church, as being members of the same body, whereof Christ is the head. But men now-a-days are so far from melting hearts, that they want natural affection, as Paul foretells of such in the latter times, 1 Tim. iv. 1. They have less bowels of pity in them, when they hear how it goes with the church abroad, than very pagans and heathens. This shews they have no tender hearts, that they are not knit to Christ by faith, who is the head; nor to the church, the body, in love. How is thy heart affected to men when they commit any sin against God, as idolaters, swearers, drunkards, liars, and the like? Is it mercy to let these go on in their sins towards hell? No, this is cruelty; but mercy is to be shewed unto them, in restraining men from their wicked courses. Therefore do not think thou shewest mercy unto them by letting them alone in sin, but exhort and instruct them. Coldness and deadness is a spiritual disease in these days. But surely they that have the Spirit of God warming their hearts, are sensible of their own good and ill, and of the good and ill of the time. Well, if you will know you have a tender heart, look to God, look to his word, to his works, to yourselves, and others; and so you shall know whether you have tender hearts or not.

Quest. But here may be another question asked, How shall men recover themselves, when they are subject to this hardness, deadness, and insensibleness? If after examination a man find himself to be thus, how shall he recover himself out of this estate. I answer,

Ans. 1. First, As when things are cold we bring them to the fire to heat and melt, so *bring we our cold hearts to the fire of the love of Christ*; consider we of our sins against Christ, and of Christ's love towards us; dwell upon this meditation. Think what great love Christ hath shewed unto us, and how little we have deserved, and this will make our hearts to melt, and be as pliable as wax before the sun.

2. Secondly, If thou wilt have this tender and melting heart, then *use the means*; be always under the sunshine of the gospel. Be under God's sunshine, that he may melt thy heart; be constant in good means; and help one another. 'We must provoke one another daily, lest any be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin,' Heb. iii. 13. Physicians love not to give physic to themselves. So a man is not always fit to help himself when he is not right; but good company is fit to do it. 'Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked with us?' said the two disciples, holding communion each with other at Emmaus, Luke xxiv. 32. For then Christ comes and makes a third, joins with them, and so makes their hearts burn within them. So Christ saith, 'Where two or three are met together in his name, he is in the midst of them,' Mat. xviii. 20. Now they were under the promise, therefore he affords his presence. Where two hold communion together, there Christ will make a third. Therefore let us use the help of others, seeing David could not recover himself, being a prophet, but he must have a Nathan to help him, 2 Sam. xii. 7. Therefore if we would recover ourselves from hard and insensible hearts, let us use the help of another.

3. Thirdly, *We must with boldness and reverence challenge the covenant of grace*; for this is the covenant that God hath made with us, to give us tender hearts, hearts of flesh, as Ezek. xi. 19, 'I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within their bowels; I will take away the stony hearts out of their bodies, and I will give them a heart of flesh. Now seeing this is a covenant God hath made, to give us fleshly hearts and to take away our stony, let us challenge him with his promise, and go to him by prayer. Entreat him to give thee a fleshly heart; go to him, wait his time, for that

is the best time. Therefore wait though he do not hear at first. These are the means to bring tenderness of heart.

Now, that ye may be stirred up to this duty, namely, to get a soft and tender heart, mark here,

1. First, *What an excellent thing a tender heart is.* God hath promised to dwell in such an heart, and is it an excellent thing to have God dwell in our hearts, as he hath promised, Isa. lvii. 15, 'For thus saith he that is high and excellent, he that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is the Holy One : I will dwell in the high and holy place, and with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to give life to them that are of a contrite heart?' So Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look, even to him that is poor and contrite in spirit, and doth tremble at my words.' Now God having promised to dwell where there is a soft heart, and no hardness, no rocks to keep him out ; can God come into a heart without a blessing ? Can he be separated from goodness, which is goodness itself ? When the heart therefore is pliable and thus tender, there is an immediate communion between the soul and God ; and can that heart be miserable that hath communion with God ? Surely no.

2. Secondly, Consider *that this doth fit a man for the end for which he was created.* A man is never fit for that end for which he was made, but when he hath a tender heart ; and what are we redeemed for, but that we should serve God ? And who is fit to be put in the service of God but he that hath begged a tender heart of God ?

3. Thirdly, To stir you up to labour for this, consider *that a tender heart is fit for any blessedness.* It is capable of any beatitude. What makes a man blessed in anything but a tender heart ? This will make a man to hear the word, to read, to shew mercies to others. 'Blessed are the poor in spirit,' saith Christ, 'for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' A tender heart is blessed, because that only heareth God's word, and doth it ; and it is always a merciful heart, and therefore blessed.

4. Again, Consider *the wretched estate of a heart contrary, that is not tender, and will not yield.* Oh what a wonderful hardness would the heart of man grow to, if we do not follow it with means to soften it ! What a fearful thing was it to see what strange things fell out at Christ's death, what darkness there was, what thunders and lightnings. The veil of the Temple rent, the sun was turned into darkness, the graves opened, and the dead did rise, yet notwithstanding none of these would make the hypocritical Pharisees to tremble, but they mocked at it, although it made a very heathen man confess it the work of God, Mat. xxvii. 45-54. For a ceremonial hypocrite is more hard than a Turk, Jew, or Pagan. All the judgments of God upon Pharaoh were not so great as hardness of heart. The papists, after they have been at their superstitious devotion, are fittest for powder-plots and treasons, because their hearts are so much more hardened. What fearful things may a man come to, if he give way to hardness of heart ! He may come to an estate like the devil, yea, worse than Judas, for he had some sensibleness of his sin ; he confessed he had sinned in betraying the innocent blood. But many of these hypocrites have no sensibleness at all, which is a fearful thing. Eli's children hearkened not to the voice of their father, because that the Lord had a purpose to destroy them, 1 Sam. ii. 25. So it is in this case a shrewd sign that God will destroy those that are so insensible that nothing will work upon them. But these hypocrites shall be sensible one day, when they shall wish they were as insensible as in their lifetime they were. But it will be an unfruitful repentance to repent

in hell ; for there a man shall get no benefit by his repentance, seeing there they cannot shake off the execution of God's judgment, as they shake off the threatenings of his judgments here. Well, to this fearful end, before it be long, must every one that hath a hard heart come, unless they repent. Therefore let every one be persuaded to labour for a tender, pliable, yielding, and sensible heart here, else we shall have it hereafter against our wills, when it will do us no good ; for then hypocrites shall be sensible against their wills, though they would not be sensible in this life.

And thus I have done with the first inward cause in Josiah that moved God so to respect him, namely, tenderness of heart.