

the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance," and at last be found among the happy number of those who have had the "loving kindness of God always before their eyes," and have not departed from the paths of His truth.

I now proceed in the second place, to offer some arguments to prove and confirm the *reality* of this truth. It is very clear and evident that no man has such a lively sense of the loving kindness of God upon his heart, as the penitent sinner on his return to God; and therefore, it must certainly be a very powerful means to engage us to a sincere and a universal obedience. There is nothing that can be supposed to work so powerfully upon the mind of an awakened and relenting sinner, as an affecting sense of the Divine goodness and benignity. He truly may be said to love much because much has been forgiven him. When Christ is about to be formed in the soul, these discoveries of the grace of God tend greatly to forward and promote it. If these children of disobedience have been enemies in their mind hitherto, they will not continue to be so any longer. If they have done iniquity, they will do so no more; they will not go on in their trespasses *after* the grace of God has been so graciously displayed in their remission and forgiveness. The time of conversion is the time of love; the time not only of God's *exercising*, but also of *manifesting* His loving kindness to the tender hearted and relenting sinner. It is indeed the power of the Holy Spirit that impresses such a sense of the love and favor of God upon the soul. He is the Only Author of it, and therefore it must quicken to obedience. But this does not, in the least, weaken the force of the present argument: for whatever may be the means or instrument of conveying this Divine principle into the soul, it will always have the same influence and effect upon the gracious feelings of a tender and devout heart. False hopes and groundless comforts, which only tend to the encouraging of sin, arise entirely from ourselves, and from the suggestions of the devil; but the consolations of God, which always produce holiness to the Lord, are from the influence of the Holy Spirit. As He works love to God in us, so He also bears witness of God's loving kindness to us. As we cannot see the sun, but by his own light, so we cannot see the face of God with joy, but by a beam from Himself. We can no more know that God is at peace with us, merely by our own understanding, than we can reconcile ourselves to Him by the power of our own will. The foolish sinner is hard to be convinced, and the convinced sinner refuses to be comforted. We are as far from applying promises, as we are from hearkening to precepts, and as we cannot be subject to the law, so we can get no relief by the Gospel. The promises which declare

and confirm the law of God to us, are special means of working holiness in our souls. As they assure our deliverance from wrath, so they promote our salvation from sin. Divine promises not only tend to beget us to a lively hope in the mercy of God through Jesus Christ; but they also help to produce and maintain the life of every good disposition. They are the spiritual food of the soul, which both nourishes our faith, and strengthens us to obedience. We do not indeed obtain any Gospel privilege by the performance of duty—but duty is effectually enforced by the enjoyment of Gospel privileges. This is plainly held forth to us as the way and method in which God first works upon us, and enables us to work in conjunction with the aid of His Holy Spirit. "Having therefore these promises," says Paul, (2 Cor. vii. 1.) "let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord." The promise of God's being a reconciled Father to us is a stronger inducement to purify ourselves, and to be followers of Him, than any threatening of His being an Avenger; and thus, the promises of Grace animate the soul to duty; and when we thus see the goodness of the Lord, it is a strong encouragement to walk in His truth. Again, a lively sense of the loving kindness of God will create in us a more perfect hatred of sin, and a fearful dread of falling into His displeasure. Nothing can more sensibly affect a grateful mind than the remission of punishment we have justly deserved. Divine reconciliation to us stirs up in us the greatest hatred against our vices. When we know that God is reconciled to us, it makes us loathe and abhor ourselves the more in remembrance of the evils we have done. If He pardons transgression, the pardoned transgressor fixes his eye upon the sin with greater indignation, and resolves to practice it no more. David's sin was ever before him, though the prophet Nathan had told him from God, that his sin was forgiven. A sin is never so odious in his own sight, as when he is persuaded of his being precious in the sight of God. How greatly does Paul aggravate the abomination of his pharisaical state, when he knew himself to be beloved of God, and established in Jesus Christ? With what humble penitence does he bewail what he once was, after he had obtained mercy and forgiveness of the Lord? We do not love the prospect of our own vileness, by having the kindness and love of God before our eyes, but we see it the better. His gracious forgiveness kindles in our breasts a burning zeal and revenge against those sins, from which we are absolved, and consequently proves a strong inducement to our obedience. But, I said likewise, that a failing sense of the love of God towards us is apt to beget in us a great fear of falling under His just displeasure.