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The Opening of the Words

“I was also upright before Him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.” Psalm 18:23

This psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving, the occasion of which the title of the psalm acquaints us with, that of the Lord’s delivering the psalmist from the hands of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul. But I shall not spend time in looking back to the foregoing verses but come immediately to the text itself wherein you have these two parts or things considerable.

1. David’s solemn and serious profession of his sincerity, “I was also upright before [or with] Him.”

2. The proof and evidence of his sincerity, “and I kept myself from mine iniquity.” I wish briefly to open the words. “I was also upright before Him,” that is, sincere in the bent of my heart, approving my heart to God, setting the Lord before me, carrying myself in the habitual frame of my heart and in the general course of my conversation as being under God’s eye. This being upright is in the Scripture in several places called being perfect. Genesis 17:1, “Walk before Me and be thou perfect,” or, as it is in the margin, “upright or sincere.” So in Job 1:1, 8 and 2:3, Job is said to be a perfect and upright man; the latter word explains the former. No mere man on earth is legally perfect, with a perfection of degrees; for legal perfection is full conformity to God, a sinless perfection. But every true believer is evangelically perfect, that is, upright and sincere, perfect with a perfection of parts, as a child that has all its faculties and members is a perfect child though it has not arrived at its full growth and stature. Yea, the believer is perfect in his design

2 The Great Duty of Keeping Ourselves from Iniquity

and aim, breathing and endeavoring after perfection, and shall at last, immediately after death, be made perfect in holiness.

“And I kept myself from mine iniquity,” that is, I watched over my heart, observed myself, used all means of God’s appointing to keep myself from sin. David does not arrogate to himself or ascribe his keeping himself from his iniquity to his own strength, either of nature or of grace received; for he was very sensible and readily acknowledged that he could not keep himself but that it was God, His special grace, and the continued and renewed aids of His Spirit that could keep him from his iniquities and enable him to walk uprightly before Him; that it was God in Christ. It was Jesus he looked to as the Author and Finisher of his faith and all other graces; but he knew God works by means, and on men not as stocks or stones but they must use God’s approved means to keep them. And though they are passive in the turning act of conversion, yet God then infuses a principle of spiritual life into them and requires they should use the means, depending upon God by faith, prayer, and watchfulness to make them effectual for keeping them from their iniquities.

“From mine iniquity,” that special sin to which he found himself most prone and was most easily and frequently foiled and overcome by his constitution, condition of life, or temptation he lay more peculiarly open to; that which in his unregenerate state was his beloved sin and after his conversion might be his tyrannizing and too often his prevailing corruption. He might probably in his distressed condition, when persecuted by Saul, be tempted to impatience, unbelief, lying, making haste, using indirect means, revenge, and the like, and he endeavored to keep himself from these. The doctrine is this:

DOCTRINE. It is the duty of all who profess to be God’s people, as evidence of their sincerity, to keep themselves from their special sins, those that they