





*I. Sturt. Sculp.*

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# SERMONS

Preach'd on

Several Occasions.

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BY

WILLIAM BATES, D.D.

*Revised Edition,*

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L O N D O N,

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REV. O. M. ...

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Sin the most formidable Evil.

SERMON I.

Genesis xxxix. 9.

*How can I do this great Wickedness,  
and sin against God?*

**T**HE Text is the Record of *Joseph's* Innocence and Victory, consecrated in Scripture for the Honour and Imitation of that excellent Saint in succeeding Ages. He had been try'd by sharp Afflictions, the conspiring Envy of his Brethren, and the cruel Effects of it, Banishment and Servitude, *and possess'd his Soul in Patience*: here he was encounter'd by a more dangerous Temptation in another  
B
kind,

kind, and preserv'd his Integrity. Adversity excites the Spirit to serious Recollection, arms it with Resolution to endure the Assaults, and stop the entrance of what is afflicting to Nature: Pleasure by gentle Insinuations relaxes the Mind to a loose Security, softens and melts the Heart, and makes it easily receptive of corrupt Impressions.

Now to represent the Grace of God, that preserved *Joseph*, in its Radiance and Efficacy, we must consider the several Circumstances that increased the Difficulty of the double Victory, over the Tempter, and himself.

I. The Tempter, *his Mistress*, who had devested the native Modesty of the blushing Sex, and by her Caresses and Blandishments sought to draw him to compliance with her Desires. Her superiour Quality might seem to make her  
Request

Request have the force of a Command over him.

2. The Sollicitation, *Lie with me.*

There are no Sins to which there is a stronger Inclination in our corrupted Nature, than to Acts of Sensuality. The Temptation was heighten'd by the lure of Profit and Advancement, that he might obtain by her Favour, and Interest in her Husband, who was an eminent Officer in the Egyptian Court: and the Denial would be extreamly provoking, both in respect it seem'd to be a Contempt injurious to her Dignity, and was a Disappointment of her ardent Expectation. Hatred and Revenge upon Refusal, are equal to the Lust of an *Imperious Whorish Woman*. We read the Effects of it, in this Chapter: for upon his rejecting her Desires, inflam'd with Rage, and to purge her self, she turn'd his Accuser, wounded his Reputation, depriv'd him of his

Regera-  
mus ipse  
crimen,  
atq; ultro  
impiam  
Venerem  
argua-  
mus: sce-  
lere ve-  
landum  
est scelus.  
Senec.  
Hippeli-  
tus.

Liberty, and expos'd his Life to extrem Peril. *Joseph* chose rather to lie in the Dust, than to rise by Sin.

3. The Opportunity was ready, and the Object present: 'tis said, *there was none of the Men of the House within.* She had the advantage of Secrecy to fasten the Temptation upon him. When a Sin may be easily committed, and easily conceal'd, the Restraints of Fear and Shame are taken off, and every Breath of a Temptation is strong enough to overthrow the carnally-minded. The purest and noblest Chastity is from a Principle of Duty within, not constrain'd by the apprehension of Discovery and Severity.

4. The Continuance of the Temptation: *She spake to him day by day.* Her Complexion was Lust and Impudence, and his repeated Denials were ineffectual to quench her incensed Desires, the black Fire that darkned her Mind: *She caught*  
him



him by the Garment, saying, Lie with me : she was ready to prostitute herself, and ravish him.

5. The Person tempted, *Joseph*, in the flower of his Age, the season of Sensuality, when innumerable, by the Force and Swinge of their vicious Appetites, are impell'd to break the holy Law of God.

6. His Repulse of the Temptation was strong and peremptory : *How can I do this great Wickedness ?* He felt no Sympathy, no sensual Tenderness, but express an Impossibility of consenting to her guilty Desire. We have in *Joseph* exemplified that Property of the Regenerate, *He that is born of God, cannot* 1 Joh. 3. 9. *sin* : by a sacred potent Instinct in his Breast, he is preserved not only from the consummate Acts, but recoils from the first Offers to it.

7. The Reasons are specified of his rejecting her polluting Motion. *Behold, my Master knows not what is with*

me in the House, and he hath committed all that he hath to my Hands: there is none greater in his House than I; neither hath he kept back any thing from me but thee, because thou art his Wife: How then can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God? 'Twas a complicated Crime of Injustice and Uncleanness; a most injurious Violation of the strongest Ties of Duty and Gratitude to his Master, and of the sacred Marriage-Covenant to her Husband, and the foulest Blot to their Persons: Therefore how can I commit a Sin so contrary to natural Conscience, and supernatural Grace, and provoke God? Thus I have briefly considered the Narrative of Joseph's Temptation; and that Divine Grace preserved him untouched from that contagious Fire, may be resembled to the miraculous preserving the three Hebrew Martyrs unsinged, in the midst of the flaming Furnace. The Patience of  
Job,

*Job*, and the Chastity of *Joseph*, are transmitted by the Secretaries of the Holy Ghost in Scripture, to be in perpetual Remembrance and Admiration.

From this singular Instance of *Joseph*, who was neither seduced by the Allurements of his Mistress, nor terrified by the Rage of her despis'd Affection, to sin against God, I shall observe two general Points.

I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring soever, or terrifying, ought to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

II. *That the Fear of God is a sure Defence and Guard against the strongest Temptation.*

I will explain and prove the first, and only speak a little of the second in a Branch of the Application.

- I. *That Temptations to Sin, how alluring soever, or terrifying, are to be rejected with Abhorrence.*

There will be convincing Proof of this, by considering two Things.

1. That Sin in its Nature, pre-scinding from the Train of woeful Effects, is the greatest Evil.
2. That, relatively to us, it is the most pernicious destructive Evil.

1. That Sin considered in it self is the greatest Evil. This will be evident by considering the general Nature of it, as directly opposite to God the supream Good. The Definition of Sin expresses its essential Evil; *'tis the Transgression of the Divine Law*, and consequently opposes the Rights of God's Throne, and obscures the Glory of his Attributes that are exercis'd in the  
Moral

Moral Government of the World. God, as Creator, *is our King, our Lawgiver and Judg.* From his Propriety in us arises his just Title to Sovereign Power over us: *Know ye* Pfal. 100. *that the Lord he is God; 'tis he that made us, not we our selves; we are his People, and the Sheep of his Pasture.* The Creatures of a lower Order are incapable of distinguishing between Moral Good and Evil, and are determin'd by the weight of Nature to what is meerly sensible, and therefore are incapable of a Law to regulate their Choice. But Man, who is endow'd with the Powers of Understanding and Election, to conceive and choose what is Good, and reject what is Evil, is govern'd by a Law, the declared Will of his Maker: accordingly a Law, the Rule of his Obedience, was written in his Heart.

Now Sin, the Transgression of this Law, contains many great Evils.

I. Sin

1. Sin is a Rebellion against the Sovereign Majesty of God, that gives the Life of Authority to the Law. Therefore Divine Precepts are enforced with the most proper and binding Motive to Obedience, *I am the Lord.* He that with purpose and pleasure commits Sin, implicitly renounces his Dependance upon God, as his Maker and Governour, over-rules the Law, and arrogates an irresponsibile Licence to do his own Will. This is exprest by those Atheistical Designers, who

Psal. 12. said, *With our Tongue we will prevail,*  
 4. *our Lips are our own: who is Lord over us?* The Language of Actions, that is more natural and convincing than of Words, declares that sinful Men despise the Commands of God, as if they were not his Creatures and Subjects. What a Dishonour, what a Displeasure is it to the God of Glory, that proud Dust should fly in his Face, and controul his Authority?

rity? He has ten thousand times ten Dan. 7.  
 thousand Angels that are high in Dig- 10.  
 nity, and excel in Strength, waiting in a Pfal. 103:  
 Posture of Reverence and Observance 20.  
 about his Throne, ready to do his Will:  
 How provoking is it for a despica-  
 ble Worm to contravene his Law,  
 and lift his Hand against him? It  
 will be no Excuse to plead the  
 Commands of Men for Sin: for  
 as much as God is more glorious  
 than Men, so much more are his  
 Commands to be respected and  
 obeyed than Mens. When there  
 is an evident Opposition between  
 the Laws of Men and of God, we  
 must disobey our Superiours, tho  
 we displease them, and obey our  
 Supream Ruler. He that does what  
 is forbidden, or neglects to do what  
 is commanded by the Divine Law,  
 to please Men, tho invested with  
 the highest Sovereignty on Earth,  
 is guilty of double Wickedness;  
 of Impiety, in deposing God; and  
 Idola-

Idolatry, in deifying Men.

It is an extream Aggravation of this Evil, in that Sin as it is a disclaiming our Homage to God, so 'tis in true account a yielding Subjection to the Devil. For Sin is in the strictest Propriety *his Werk*. The Original Rebellion in Paradise was by his Temptation, and all the actual and habitual Sins of Men since the Fall, are by his efficacious Influence.

<sup>2</sup> Cor. 4. *He darkens the Carnal Mind, and*  
<sup>4</sup> sways the polluted Will; he excites and inflames the vicious Affections,

Ephes. 2. *and imperiously rules in the Children*  
<sup>2</sup> *of Disobedience.* He is therefore stiled *the Prince and God of this World.*

And what more contumelious Indignity can there be, than the preferring to the glorious Creator of Heaven and Earth, a damned Spirit, the most cursed part of the Creation? It is most reasonable, that the Baseness of the Competitor, should be a Foil to reinforce the Lustre



Lustre of God's Authority: yet Men reject God, and comply with the Tempter. O prodigious Perverseness!

2. Sin vilifies the ruling Wisdom of God, that prescrib'd the Law to Men. Altho' the Dominion of God over us be Supreme and Absolute, yet 'tis exercis'd according to the Counsel of his Will, by the best Means, for the best Ends; he is accordingly stiled by the Apostle, *The eternal King, and only wise God.* 1 Tim. i. 'Tis the glorious Prerogative of his Sovereignty and Deity, that he can do no Wrong: for he necessarily acts according to the Excellencies of his Nature. Particularly, his Wisdom is so relucant in his Laws, that the serious Contemplation of it, will ravish the sincere Minds of Men into a Compliance with them. They are framed with exact Congruity to the Nature of God, and his Relation to us, and to the Faculties

culties of Man before he was corrupted. From hence the Divine Law being the Transcript not only of God's Will, but his Wisdom, binds the Understanding and Will, our leading Faculties, to esteem and approve, to consent and choose all his Precepts as best. Now Sin vilifies the Infinite Understanding of God with respect both to the Precepts of the Law, the Rule of our Duty, and the Sanction annex'd to confirm its Obligation. It does constructively tax the Precepts as unequal, too rigid and severe a Confinement to our Wills and Actions. Thus the impious Rebels complain, *The Ways of the Lord are not equal*, as injurious to their Liberty, and not worthy of Observance. What St. James saith, to correct the uncharitable, censorious Humour of some in his time, *He that speaks*

James 4. *Evil of his Brother, and judges his*  
 11. *Brother, speaks Evil of the Law, and*  
*judges*

*judges the Law*, as an imperfect and rash Rule, is applicable to Sinners in any other kind. As an unskilful Hand by straining too high, breaks the Strings of an Instrument, and spoils the Musick; so the Strictness and the Severity of the Precepts, breaks the harmonious Agreement between the Wills of Men and the Law, and casts an Imputation of Imprudence upon the Law-giver. This is the implicit Blasphemy in Sin.

Besides, the Law has Rewards and Punishments, to secure our Respects and Obedience to it. The wise God knows the Frame of the reasonable Creature, what are the inward Springs of our Actions; and has accordingly propounded such Motives to our Hope and Fear, the most active Passions, as may engage us to perform our Duty. He promises his *Favour that is better than Life*, to the Obedient, and threatens

*his*

*his Wrath, that is worse than Death, to the Rebellious.* Now Sin makes it evident, that these Motives are not effectual in the Minds of Men: And this reflects upon the Wisdom of the Law-giver, as if defective in not binding his Subjects firmly to their Duty; for if the Advantage or Pleasure that may be gain'd by Sin, be greater than the Reward that is promised to Obedience, and the Punishment that is threatned against the Transgression, the Law is unable to restrain from Sin, and the Ends of Government are not obtained. Thus Sinners in venturing upon forbidden things, reproach the Understanding of the Divine Law-giver.

3. Sin is a Contrariety to the unspotted Holiness of God. Of all the glorious and benign Constellations of the Divine Attributes that shine in the Law of God, his Holiness has the brightest Lustre.

God

God is holy in all his Works, but the most venerable and precious Monument of his Holiness is the Law. For the Holiness of God consists in the Correspondence of his Will and Actions with his moral Perfections, Wisdom, Goodness and Justice; and the Law is the perfect Copy of his Nature and Will. The Psalmist who had a purged Eye, saw and admir'd its Purity and Perfection. *The Commandment of the Lord is pure, inlightning the Eyes. The Word is very near, therefore thy Servant loves it.* 'Tis the perspicuous Rule of our Duty without Blemish or Imperfection: *The Commandment is holy, just and good.* It enjoins nothing but what is absolutely Good, without the least Tincture of Evil. The Sum of it is set down by the Apostle, to *live soberly*, that is, to abstain from any thing that may stain the Excellence of an understanding Creature: To *live*

C

righte-

Psal. 19.

Psal. 119.

140.

*righteously*, which respects the State and Situation wherein God has disposed Men for his Glory: It comprehends all the respective Duties to others, to whom we are united by the Bands of Nature, or of Civil Society, or of Spiritual Communion: *And to live godly*, which includes all the internal and outward Duties we owe to God, who is the Sovereign of our Spirits, whose Will must be the Rule, and his Glory the End of our Actions. In short, The Law is so form'd, that prescindg from the Authority of the Law-giver, its Holiness and Goodness lays an eternal Obligation on us to obey it. Now Sin is not only by Interpretation, a Reproach to the Wisdom and other Perfections of God, but directly and formally a Contrariety to his Infinite Sanctity and Purity; for it consists in a not doing what the Law commands, or doing what it forbids.

'Tis

'Tis therefore said, *That the Carnal* ROM. I. I.  
*Mind is Enmity against God*: An active,  
 immediate and irreconcilable Con-  
 trariety to his holy Nature and Will:  
 From hence there is a reciprocal  
 Hatred between God and Sinners:  
*God is of purer Eyes than to behold* ROM. I. I.  
*Iniquity*, without an infinite Displi-  
 cence, the Effects of which will  
 fall upon Sinners; and tho 'tis an  
 Impiety hardly conceivable, yet the  
 Scripture tells us, that *they are Ha-*  
*ters of God*. 'Tis true, God by the  
 transcendent Excellence of his Na-  
 ture is incapable of suffering any  
 Evil, and there are few in the pre-  
 sent State arrived to such Malice,  
 as to declare open Enmity and War  
 against God. In the Damned this  
 Hatred is explicit and direct, the  
 Fever is heightned to a Frenzy, the  
 blessed God is the Object of their  
 Curses and Eternal Averfation: If  
 their Rage could extend to him, and  
 their Power were equal to their  
 C 2 Desires,

Desires, they would dethrone the most High. And the Seeds of this are in the Breasts of Sinners here. As the fearful Expectation of irresistible and fiery Vengeance increases, their Aversion increases. They endeavour to raze out the Inscription of God in their Souls, and to extinguish the Thoughts and Sense of their Inspector and Judg. They wish he were not All-seeing and Almighty, but Blind and Impotent, uncapable to vindicate the Honour of his despised Deity. *The Fool hath said in his Heart, there is no God.* The Heart is the Fountain of Desires, and Actions interpret the Thoughts and Affections, from whence the Inference is direct and conclusive, that habitual Sinners, *who live without God in the World*, have secret Desires; there was no Sovereign Being, to observe and require an Account of all their Actions. The radical Cause of this Hatred  
is



is from the Opposition of the sinful polluted Wills of Men, to the Holiness of God; for that Attribute excites his Justice, and Power, and Wrath, to punish Sinners. Therefore the Apostle saith, *They are Enemies to God in their Minds through wicked Works.* The naked representing of this Impiety, that a reasonable Creature should hate the blessed Creator for his most Divine Perfections, cannot but strike with Horror. O the Sinfulness of Sin!

4. Sin is the Contempt and Abuse of his excellent Goodness. This Argument is as vast as God's innumerable Mercies, whereby he allures and obliges us to Obedience: I shall restrain my Discourse of it, to three things wherein the Divine Goodness is very conspicuous, and most ungratefully despised by Sinners.

1<sup>st</sup>. His creating Goodness. 'Tis clear, without the least shadow of

Doubt, that nothing can give the first Being to it self; for this were to be before it was, which is a direct Contradiction: and 'tis evident that God is the sole Author of our Beings. Our Parents afforded the gross matter of our compounded Nature, but the Variety and Union, the Beauty and Usefulness of the several Parts, which is so wonderful, that the Body is composed of as many Miracles as Members, was the Design of his Wisdom, and the Work of his Hands. The lively Idea and perfect Exemplar of that regular Fabrick, was modell'd in the Divine Mind. This affected the Psalmist with Admiration: *I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy Works, and that my Soul knows right-well. Thine Eyes did see my Substance, yet being imperfect, and in thy Book all my Members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none*

Psal. 139.  
14, 15,  
16.

of

of them. And Job observes, Thy <sup>Job 10:</sup>  
*Hands have made me and fashioned me* 8.  
*round about.* The Soul, or principal  
Part, is of a Celestial Original,  
inspired from *the Father of Spirits.*  
The Faculties of Understanding and  
Election, are the indelible Cha-  
racters of our Dignity above the  
Brutes, and make us capable to  
please, and glorify, and enjoy him.  
This first and fundamental Benefit,  
upon which all other Favours and  
Benefits are the Superstructure, was  
the Effect from an eternal Cause,  
his most free Decree, that ordained  
our Birth in the spaces of Time.  
The Fountain was his pure Good-  
ness; there was no Necessity deter-  
mining his Will, he did not want  
external declarative Glory, being  
infinitely happy in himself, and  
there could be no superiour Power  
to constrain him. And that which  
renders our Maker's Goodness more  
free and obliging, is the Considera-

tion he might have created Millions of Men, and left us in our native Nothing, and, as I may so speak, lost and buried in perpetual Darkness. Now, what was God's end in making us? Certainly it was becoming his Infinite Understanding, that is, to communicate of his own Divine Fulness, and to be actively glorified by intelligent Creatures. Accordingly 'tis the solemn Acknowledgment of the Representative Church. *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive Glory, and Honour, and Power: For thou hast created all Things, and for thy Pleasure they were created.* Who is so void of rational Sentiments, as not to acknowledg 'tis our indispensable Duty, *Our reasonable Service, to offer up our selves an intire living Sacrifice to his Glory?* What is more natural, according to the Laws of uncorrupt Nature, (I might say, and of corrupt Nature, for the Heathens practised it) than

Rev. 4.  
11.

than that Love should correspond with Love, as the one descends in Benefits, the other should ascend in Thankfulness. As a polish'd Looking-glass of Steel, strongly reverberates the Beams of the Sun shining upon it, without losing a spark of Light, thus the understanding Soul should reflect the Affection of Love upon our blessed Maker, in Reverence, and Praise, and Thankfulness. Now Sin breaks all those sacred Bands of Grace and Gratitude, that engage us to love and obey God. He is the just Lord of all our Faculties Intellectual and Sensitive, and the Sinner employs them as Weapons of Unrighteousness against him. He preserves us by his powerful gracious Providence, which is a renewed Creation every Moment, and the Goodness he uses to us, the Sinner abuses against him. This is the most unworthy, shameful and monstrous  
Ingrati-

Ingratitude. This makes forgetful and unthankful Men, more brutish than *the dull Ox, and the stupid Ass*, who serve those that feed them; nay, sinks them below the insensible part of the Creation, that invariably observes the Law and Order prescribed by the Creator. Astonishing Degeneracy! *Hear O Heavens, give Ear, O Earth! I have nourished and brought up Children, and they have rebelled against me*, was the Complaint of God himself. The considerate Review of this, will melt us into Tears of Confusion.

2dly. 'Twas the unvaluable Goodness of God to give his Law to Man, for his Rule, both in respect of the matter of the Law, and his end in giving it.

(1.) The matter of the Law, this, as is forecited from the Apostle, *is holy, just, and good. It contains all things that are honest, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good Report,*  
whatso-

whatsoever are vertuous and Praiseworthy. In Obedience to it, the Innocence and Perfection of the reasonable Creature consists. This I do but glance upon, having been consider'd before.

(2.) The end of giving the Law. God was pleas'd upon Man's Creation, by an illustrious Revelation to shew him his Duty, to *write his Law in his Heart*, that he might not take one step out of the Circle of its Precepts, and immediately sin and perish. His gracious Design was to keep Man in his Love; that from the Obedience of the reasonable Creature, the Divine Goodness might take its rise to reward him. This unfeigned and excellent Goodness, the Sinner outrageously despises: for what greater Contempt can be express'd against a written Law, than the tearing it in pieces, and trampling it under foot? And this constructively the Sinner does

does to the Law of God, which Contempt extends to the gracious Giver of it. *Thus the Commandment*  
 Rom. 7. 10. *that was ordain'd unto Life, by Sin was found unto Death.*

(3.) Sin is an extream vilifying of God's Goodness, in preferring Carnal Pleasures to his Favour, and Communion with him, wherein the Life, the Felicity, the Heaven of the reasonable Creature consists, God is Infinite in all possible Perfections, All-sufficient to make us compleatly and eternally happy: he disdains to have any Competitor, and requires to be supream in our Esteem and Affections: the reason of this is so evident by Divine and Natural Light, that 'tis needless to spend many words about it. 'Tis an Observation of *St. Austin* \*, *That it was a Rule amongst the Heathens, that a wise Man should worship all their Deities.* The Romans were so insatiable in Idolatry, that they sent to Foreign

\* Omnes Deos colendos esse sapienti. Cur ergo à numero cæterorum ille rejectus est? nihil restat ut dicant, hujus Dei sacra recipere noluerint, nisi quia solum se coli voluerit. *Aug. de Confess. Evang. c.*  
 17.



Foreign Countries to bring the Gods of several Nations: an unpolish'd Stone, a tame Serpent, that were reputed Deities, they received with great Solemnity and Reverence. But the true God had no Temple, no Worship in *Rome*, where there was a *Pantheon* dedicated to the Honour of all the false Gods. The Reason he gives of it is, that the true God, who alone has Divine Excellencies, and Divine Empire, will be worship'd alone, and strictly forbids the Assumption of any into his Throne. To adore any besides him is infinitely debasing, and provoking to his dread Majesty. Now Sin in its Nature is a Conversion from God to the Creature; and whatever the Temptation be, in yielding to it, there is signified, that we choose something before his Favour. Sin is founded *in bono jucundo*, something that is delectable to the Carnal Nature: 'tis the

the universal Character of Carnal Men, *They are Lovers of Pleasure more than Lovers of God.* To some, Riches are the most alluring Object. The young Man in the Gospel, when our Saviour commanded *him to give his Estate to the Poor, and he should have Treasure in Heaven, went away sorrowful,* as if he had been offer'd to his loss. To others, the Pleasures that in strict Propriety are sensual, are most charming. Love is the Weight of the Soul that turns it, not like a dead Weight of the Scales, but with Election freely to its Object: in the carnal Ballance the present Things of the World are of conspicuous Moment, and out-weigh Spiritual and Eternal Blessings. Altho the Favour of God be eminently all that can be desir'd, under the Notion of Riches, or Honour, or Pleasure, and every Atom of our Affection is due to him; yet Carnal Men think it a  
cheap

cheap Purchase to obtain the good Things of this World, by sinful means, with the loss of his Favour. This their Actions declare. Prodigious Folly! as if a few Sparks struck out of a Flint, that can neither afford Light or Warmth, were more desirable than the Sun in its Brightness. And how contumelious and provoking it is to God, he declares in the most moving Expressions: *Be astonished, O ye Heavens at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my People have committed two Evils; they have forsaken me the Fountain of living Waters, and hewed them out broken Cisterns that can hold no Water.* This immediately was charg'd upon the Jews, who set up Idols of Jealousy, and ador'd them, rather than the glorious *Jehovah*: and in proportion 'tis true of all Sinners; for every vicious Affection prefers some vain Object, before his Love,

and

and the Enjoyment of his glorious Presence, that is the Reward of Obedience.

5. The Sinner disparages the impartial Justice of God. In the Divine Law there is a Connexion between Sin and Punishment; the Evil of doing and the Evil of suffering. This is not a meer Arbitrary Constitution, but founded on the inseparable Desert of Sin, and the Rectitude of God's Nature, which unchangeably loves Holiness, and hates Sin. Altho the threatning does not lay a strict necessity upon the Lawgiver always to inflict the Punishment; yet God having declar'd his equal Laws as the Rule of our Duty, and of his Judgment, if they should be usually without Effect upon Offenders, the Bands of Government would be dissolv'd, and consequently the Honour of his Justice stain'd both with respect to his Nature and  
Office :

Office: for as an essential Attribute 'tis the Correspondence of his Will and Actions with his Moral Perfections; and as Sovereign Ruler, he is to preserve Equity and Order in his Kingdom. Now those who voluntarily break his Law, presume upon Impunity. The first rebellious Sin was committed upon this Presumption: God threatn'd, *If you eat the forbidden Fruit, you shall die: the Serpent says, Eat, and you shall not die; and assenting to the Temptation, Adam fell to Disobedience.* And ever since Men are fearless to sin upon the same Motive. God chargeth the wicked, *Thou thoughtest* Psal. 50. *that I was altogether such a one as thy self; not concern'd to punish the Violation of his sacred Laws. The Sinner commits the Divine Attributes to fight against one another, presuming that Mercy will disarm Justice, and stop its terrible Effects upon impenitent obstinate Sinners:*

From hence they become bold and harden'd in the continuance of their Sins. *There is a Root that beareth Gall and Wormwood: and when the Curse of the Law is declar'd and denounc'd against Sin, the Wicked bleisseth himself in his Heart, saying, I shall have Peace, tho I walk in the Imagination of my Heart, to add Drunkenness to Thirst. This casts such a foul Blemish upon the Justice of God, that he threatens the severest Vengeance for it. The Lord will not spare him, but the Anger of the Lord and his Jealousy shall smoke against that Man, and all the Curses written in this Book shall be upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his Name from under Heaven.*

Deut. 29. 17, 19, 20.

Pfal. 50.

Consider this ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.

6. The Sinner implicitly denies God's Omniscience. There is such a Turpitude adhering to Sin, that it cannot endure the Light of the Sun,

or the Light of Conscience, but seeks to be conceal'd under a Mask of Vertue, or a Vail of Darknes. There are very few on this side Hell, so transform'd into the likeness of the Devil, as to be impenetrable by Shame. What is said of the Adulterer and Thief, Sinners of greater Guilt, and deeper Dye, is true in proportion of every Sinner: *If a Mans sees them, they are in the* Job, *Terrors of the shadow of Death.* Now from whence is it that many, who if they were surpriz'd in the actings of their Sins by a Child or a Stranger, would blush and tremble, yet altho the holy God sees all their Sins in order to judg them, and will judg in order to punish them, are secure without any fearful or shameful Apprehensions of his Presence? Did they stedfastly believe that their foul Villanies were open to his piercing, pure and severe Eye, they must be struck with Terrors,

and cover'd with Confusion. *Will he force the Queen before my Face?* was the Speech of the King inflam'd with Wrath, and the Prologue of Death against the fallen Favourite. Would Men dare to affront God's Authority, and outrageously break his Laws before his Face, if they duly consider'd his Omnipresence and Observance of them? it were impossible. And Infidelity is the radical Cause of their Inconsideration. It was a false Imputation against Job, but justly applied to the Wicked, *Thou sayest, How does God know? can he judg through the dark Cloud? Thick Clouds are a Covering to him, that he sees not.* And such are introduced by the Psalmist declaring their inward Sentiments: *The Lord shall not see, neither shall the God of Jacob regard it.*

Lastly; The Sinner slights the Power of God. This Attribute renders God a dreadful Judg. He has



has a Right to punish, and Power to revenge every Transgression of his Law. His Judicial Power is supreme, his Executive is irresistible. He can with one Stroke dispatch the Body to the Grave, and the Soul to Hell, and make Men as miserable as they are sinful. Yet Sinners as boldly provoke him, as if there were no danger. We read of the infatuated *Syrians*, that they thought that God, the Protector of *Israel*, had only *Power on the Hills*, and not *in the Vallies*, and renewed the War to their Destruction. Thus Sinners enter into the Lists with God, and range an Army of Lusts against the Armies of Heaven, and blindly bold, run upon their own Destruction. They neither believe his All-seeing Eye, nor All-mighty Hand. They change the Glory of the living God into a dead Idol, that has Eyes and sees not, and Hands and handles not; and accordingly

his Threatnings make no Impression upon them.

Thus I have presented a true View of the Evil of Sin consider'd in it self: but as *Job* saith of God, *How little a Portion of him is known?* may be said of the Evil of Sin, *How little of it is known?* For in proportion as our Apprehensions are defective and below the Greatness of God, so are they of the Evil of Sin, that contradicts his Sovereign, Will and dishonours his excellent Perfections.

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 SERMON II.
 

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Genesis xxxix. 9.

*How can I do this great Wickedness,  
and sin against God?*

2. I shall proceed to consider the Evil of Sin relatively to us, and prove it to be most pernicious and destructive. If we compare it with Temporal Evils, it preponderates all that Men are liable to in the present World. Diseases in our Bodies, Disasters in our Estates, Disgrace in our Reputation, are in just Esteem far less Evil than the Evil of Sin: for that corrupts and destroys our more excellent and immortal Part. The *vile Body* is of no account in comparison of the *precious Soul*. Therefore the Apostle enforces his Exhortation, *Dearly*

*beloved Brethren, abstain from fleshly Lusts, that war against the Soul.* The Issue of this War is infinitely more woful, than of the most cruel against our Bodies and Goods, our Liberties and Lives: for our Estates and Freedom, if lost, may be recover'd; if the present Life be lost for the Cause of God, it shall be restor'd in greater Lustre and Perfection; but if the Soul be lost, 'tis lost for ever.

All Temporal Evils are consistent with the Love of God: *Job* on the Dunghil, roughcast with Ulcers, was most precious in God's sight; *Lazarus* in the lowest Poverty, and walled with loathsome Sores, was dear to his Affections; a Guard of Angels was sent to convoy his departing Soul to the Divine Presence. *But Sin separates between God and us,* who is the Fountain of Felicity, and the Center of Rest to the Soul.

Other Evils God, who is our wise and compassionate Father and Physician, makes use of, as Medicinal Preparations for the Cure of Sin: and certainly the Disease which would be the Death of the Soul, is worse than the Remedy, tho never so bitter and afflicting to Sense.

Sin is an Evil of that Malignity, that the least degree of it is fatal. If it be conceiv'd in the Soul, tho not actually finish'd, 'tis deadly. One Sin corrupted in an instant Angelical Excellencies, and turn'd the glorious Spirits of Heaven into Devils. 'Tis Poison so strong, that the first Taste of it shed a deadly Taint and Malignity into the Veins of all Mankind.

Sin is such an exceeding Evil, that 'tis the severest Punishment Divine Justice inflicts on Sinners on this side Hell. The giving *Men over to the Power of their Lusts*, is the most fearful Judgment, not only with respect

respect to the Cause, God's unrelenting and unquenchable Anger, and the Issue, everlasting Destruction, but in the quality of the Judgment. Nay, did Sin appear as odious in our Eyes as it does in God's, we should account it the worst part of Hell it self, the Pollutions of the Damned to be an Evil exceeding the Torments superadded to them.

Sin is pregnant with all kinds of Evils, the Seeds of it are big with Judgments. The Evils that are obvious to Sense, or that are Spiritual and Inward, Temporal and Eternal Evils, all proceed from Sin, often as the Natural Cause, and always as the Meritorious. And many times the same Punishment is produc'd by the Efficiency of Sin, as well as inflicted for its Guilt. Thus Uncleanness, without the miraculous Waters of Jealousy, rots the Body, and the Pleasure of Sin

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is revenged by a loathsome consuming Disease, the natural Consequence of it. Thus Intemperance and Luxury shorten the Lives of Men, and accelerate Damnation. Fierce Desires, and wild Rage are Fuel for the everlasting Fire in Hell. The same Evils considered Physically, are from the Efficiency of Sin; consider'd legally, are from the Guilt of Sin, and the Justice of God.

This being a Point of great Usefulness, that I may be more instructive, I will consider the Evils that are consequential to Sin, under these two Heads;

*First*, Such as proceed immediately from it by Emanation.

*Secondly*; Those Evils, and all other as the Effects of God's Justice and Sentence.

*First*,

*First*, The Evils that proceed immediately by Emanation from it: and tho some of them are not resented with feeling Apprehensions by Sinners, yet they are of a fearful Nature. Sin has deprived Man of the Purity, Nobility, and Peace of his innocent State.

1. It has stain'd and tainted him with an universal, intimate and permanent Pollution. Man in his first Creation was holy and righteous: a Beam of Beauty derived from Heaven was shed upon his Soul, in comparison of which, sensitive Beauty is but as the Clearness of Glass, to the Lustre of a Diamond. His Understanding *was Light in the Lord*, his Will and Affections were regular and pure, the Divine Image was impress'd upon all his Faculties, that attracted the Love and Complacency of God himself. Sin has blotted out all his amiable Excellencies, and super-induc'd



induc'd the most foul Deformity, the Original of which was fetch'd from Hell. Sinners are the natural Children of Satan, of a near Resemblance to him. The Scripture borrows Comparisons to represent the defiling Quality of Sin, from Pollutions that are most loathsome to our Senses: *from pestilential Ulcers, putrifying Sores, filthy Vomit, and defiling Mire.* This Pollution is universal through the whole Man, Spirit, Soul and Body. It darkens the Mind, our supream Faculty, with a Cloud of Corruption; it depraves the Will, and vitiates the Affections. 'Tis a Pollution so deep and permanent, that the Deluge that swept away a World of Sinners, did not wash away their Sins: and the Fire at the last Day, that shall devour the Dross of the visible World, and renew the Heavens and the Earth, shall not purge away the Sins of the guilty Inhabitants.

bitants. This Pollution hath so defil'd and disfigur'd Man, who was a fair and lovely Type, wherein the Skill and Perfections of the Creator was conspicuous, *that it repented God that he made Man.* As an Artificer having form'd a surprising Piece, either a Statue or Picture, wherein Art almost equall'd the Life and Lustre of Nature; if it be torn or broken, throws it from his sight with sorrow, impatient to see it so rudely defaced: Thus God is said *to hide his Face from Sinners*, to express his Displeasure, as unwilling to behold the Disparagement of his Master-piece, the excellent Product of his Wisdom and Power.

2. Sin has degraded Man from his native State and Dignity. Man by his Extraction and Descent was *the Son of God, a little lower than the Angels*, consecrated and crowned, as a Priest for the Service and Communion

munion with his glorious Maker, and as King over the World. *But being in Honour, he understood not his Dignity, his Duty and Felicity, and became like the Beasts that perish.* By his Rebellion against his Creator, he made a Forfeiture of his Dominion, and lost the Obedience of sensible Creatures, and the Service of Insensible; which I only mention, and shall restrain my Consideration, to shew how he is become like the Beasts, as an Effect resulting from his Sin. He is de-vested of his white Robe of Innocence, and his noblest Perfections, Reason and Religion. Sense and Imagination, the leading Faculties in Brutes, are his Rulers: The rational governing Powers of Man, have lost their superior Sway, and the Carnal Passions rove without Reins to forbidden Objects. The lower Appetites are predominant, which is the most ignominious and  
cruel

cruel Servitude wherein Human Liberty can be intangled and fetter'd. His Understanding and Will, that were capable of taking a flight for the Discovery and Fruition of Celestial and Eternal Things, are debased, and limited to sensual perishing Things, and derive vilifying Qualities from them. *He is Earthly-minded*; his Aims, Contrivances, Desires are fastened to the Earth: the Divine Spark within him is cover'd under Ashes. *He is carnally minded*, always studying and making *Provisions for the Flesh*. This is a viler Debasing, than if the Counsellors of State were employed in the fordid Offices of the Kitchen or Stable. Nay, 'tis a Diminution below the Rank of Beasts, for by Nature they are incapable of directing their Eyes and Desires towards Heaven; but Man is Brutish by his voluntary Sin. To see the Head of a rapacious Wolf, or  
fierce

fierce Tyger, or lustful Horse joined to the Body of a Man, how monstrous would it appear? But 'tis more unnatural and ignominious, for Men, in whom Reason and Religion should govern, to resemble them in the Brutish Appetites of Lust and Rage; for there is a nearer Affinity between the Body of a Man and of a Beasts, that agree in the common sensible Nature, than between the Immortal Spirit of a Man, and the Beasts that perish. In short, Sin has enslaved Men to Satan an Infernal Fiend: *They are taken Captives by him at his Pleasure: And, which is the lowest Degradation, they are the Servants of Corruption.*

3. Sin has broke the sweet Peace and blessed Concord in the Soul, the Felicity of our innocent State. Peace is the Tranquillity that results from Order and Unity. In Man there was a regular Harmony of all

his Faculties; the Affections were consonant with his Will, his Will with his Understanding, and his Understanding with the Law of God. This was the inward State of his Soul in his Creation; for having a derived Being, it was natural and necessary, that he should be appointed to his End, and receive his Rule for the obtaining it, from the Understanding and Will of his Maker. Now whilst there was a Correspondence in his Faculties, and their Operations with his Rule and End, the Will of God, and the Glory of God, the Result of it, as well as the Reward of it, was Spiritual Peace with God, Internal Peace with himself, External Peace with others. Now Sin has dissolved this Unity, violated this sacred Order: And from hence,

(1.) Peace with God, that consisted in his Favour and Friendship to us, and our Filial Dependence upon

upon him, which is the Spring of full and satisfying Joy, is broke. God appears a fearful Enemy against the Sinners; the penal Effects of his Wrath, I shall speak of distinctly under the second General: And that Divine Calm in the Conscience, that Peace joyn'd with the purest Pleasure, that was the Reflex of God's Favour on the Soul, is changed into anxious Apprehensions of his just Power to punish us. Guilt generates Fear, and Fear Hatred, and both cause a woful flight from God.

(2.) Internal Peace is broke by Sin. Whilst the Passions were subordinate to the Empire of Reason, and in Accord among themselves, there was a perfect Peace; but Sin has raised an intestine War in Man's Breast. *The Law of the Members rebels against the Law of the Mind:* for there is no Man so prodigiously wicked, and spoil'd of his Primi-

Prima  
hæc est  
ultio,  
quod se  
judice ne-  
mo no-  
cens ab-  
solvit.

tive Endowments, but still there remains some Principles of Morality in the Mind, so that his Conscience discovers and condemns the Vices he allows and practises, which makes the Sinner uneasy to himself, and mixes Vinegar with his Wine. Besides, since the Passions are disbanded, into what Confusion is Man fallen? How various, how violent are they, and often repugnant to one another? How often do we change their Habits and Scenes in a day? Sometimes we are vainly merry, and then as vainly sad; sometimes desirous, and then averse; and with respect to our selves, sometimes pleased, sometimes vex'd, sometimes amiable, and sometimes odious; we are more mutable than the Planet that is the Emblem of Inconstancy. How often do Clouds of Melancholy darken the bright Serenity of the Spirit, and cast a dreadful Gloom  
over



over it? How oft do Storms of Passion disturb its Tranquillity? The Breast of Man, that was the Temple of Peace, is become a Den of Dragons; every exorbitant Affection tears and torments him. 'Tis true, this is also a penal Effect from Divine Justice: *There is no Peace saith my God to the Wickd:* With which that Saying of St. *Austin* is consonant, *Jussit Domine, & sic est, omnis inordinatus affectus est sibi pœna.*

(3.) Sin has broke our Agreement with one another. When there was a regular Consent between the superiour and lower Faculties in all Men, they were in Unity among themselves, for they were perfectly alike. But the tumultuous and tyrannical Passions have engaged them in mortal Enmity. 'Tis the account St. *James* gives, *From whence come Wars and Fightings among you? Come they not*

hence, even of your Lusts, that war in your Members? Sin kindles and blows the Fire of Discord, in Families, Cities, Kingdoms: Sin is the Fury that brings a smoking Firebrand from Hell, and sets the World into Combustion. Ambition, Avarice, the greedy Desires of Rule and Revenge, have made the World a Stage of not feigned, but the most bloody Tragedies. In this Men are not like, but worse than the Beasts: for the fiercest Beasts of *Africa* or *Hyrcania*, have a respect for their own Likeness: tho' they devour others, yet they spare those of their own kind: but Men are so degenerate as to be most cruel against their Brethren. These are some of the Evils that proceed from Sin as their natural Cause. And from hence 'tis evident, that Sin makes Men miserable, were there no Hell of Torment to receive them in the next State.

Secondly ;

*Secondly*; I will consider the Evils consequent to Sin, as the Penal Effects of the Sentence against Sin; of Divine Justice that decrees it, and Divine Power that inflicts it: and in these the Sinner is often an active Instrument of his own Misery.

1. The Fall of the Angels is the first and most terrible Punishment of Sin. *God spared not the Angels that sinned, but cast them down to Hell, reserved in Chains of Darknes to Judgment.* How are they fallen? from what height of Glory and Felicity into bottomless Perdition? How are they continually rack'd and tormented with the Remembrance of their lost Happiness? If a thousand of the prime Nobility of a Nation were executed in a day, by the Sentence of a righteous King, we should conclude their Crimes to be *atrocious*: innumerable Angels; dignified *with the Titles of*

*Dominions and Principalities*, were expell'd from Heaven, their native Seat, and the Sanctuary of Life, and are dead to all the joyful Operations of the intellectual Nature, and only alive to Everlasting Pain.

One Sin of Pride or Envy, brought this terrible Vengeance; from whence we may infer, how provoking Sin is to the holy God. We read of King *Uzziab*, that upon his *Presumption to offer Incense*, he was struck with a *Leprosy*, and the *Priests thrust him out*, and himself hastened to go out of the Temple: a Representation of the Punishment of the Angels: by *Presumption* they were struck with a *Leprosy*, and justly expelled from the *Celestial Temple*; and not being able to sustain the *Terrors of the Divine Majesty*, they fled from his Presence. 'Tis said, *God cast them down, and they left their own Habitation.*

2. Consider the Penal Effects of Sin with respect to Man. They are comprehended in the Sentence of Death, the first and second Death, threaten'd to deter *Adam* from transgressing the Law.

In the first Creation Man while innocent was immortal: for altho his Body was compounded of jarring Elements, that had a natural Tendency to Dissolution, yet the Soul was endowed with such Virtue, as to imbalm the Body alive, and to preserve it from the least degree of Putrefaction. But when Man by his voluntary Sin was separated from the *Fountain of Life*, the Soul lost its derivative Life from God, and the active Life infused by its Union into the Body. It cannot preserve the natural Life beyond its limited Term. A righteous Retaliation. Thus the Apostle tells us, *Sin came into the World, and Death by Sin.* Even Infants who  
never

never committed Sin, die, having been conceived in Sin. And Death brought in its Retinue Evils so numerous and various, that their kinds are more than words to name and distinguish them. *Man that is born of a Woman, is of few days, and full of Trouble*: at his Birth he enters into a Labyrinth of Thorns, this miserable World, and his Life is a continual turning in it: he cannot escape being sometimes prick'd and torn; and at going out of it, his Soul is rent from the Embraces of the Body. 'Tis as possible to tell the number of the Waves in a tempestuous Sea, as to recount all the tormenting Passions of the Soul, all the Diseases of the Body, which far exceed in number all the unhappy Parts wherein they are seated. What an afflicting Object would it be, to hear all the mournful Lamentations, all the piercing Complaints, all the deep Groans from the miserable

rable in this present State? What a prospect of Terror, to see Death in its various Shapes, by Famine, by Fire, by Sword, and by wasting or painful Diseases, triumphant over all Mankind? What a sight of Woe, to have all the Graves and Charnel-houses open'd, and so many loathsom Carcases, or heaps of dry naked Bones, the Trophies of Death, expos'd to view? Such are the afflicting and the destructive Effects of Sin. *For Wickedness burns as a Fire: it devours the Briars and Thorns.*

Besides other Miseries in this Life, sometimes the Terrors of an accusing Conscience seize upon Men, which of all Evils are most heavy and overwhelming. *Solomon* who understood the Frame of Humane Nature, tells us, *The Spirit of a Man can bear his Infirmity*: that is, the Mind fortified by Principles of moral Counsel and Constancy, can endure

dure the Assault of external Evils :  
*but a wounded Spirit who can bear?*  
This is most insupportable when the  
Sting and Remorse of the Mind is  
from the Sense of Guilt : for then  
God appears an Enemy righteous  
and severe ; and who can encounter  
with offended Omnipotence ? Such  
is the sharpness of his Sword, and  
the weight of his Hand, that every  
Stroke is deadly inward. Satan the  
cruel Enemy of Souls, exasperates  
the Wound. He discovers and  
charges Sin upon the Conscience,  
with all its killing Aggravations,  
and conceals the Divine Mercy, the  
only Lenitive and healing Balm to  
the wounded Spirit. - What Visions  
of Horror, what Spectacles of Fear,  
what Scenes of Sorrow are presented  
to the distracted Mind by the  
Prince of Darkness ? And which  
heightens the Misery, Man is a  
worse Enemy to himself than Sa-  
tan : he falls upon his own Sword,  
and



and destroys himself. Whatever he sees or hears, afflicts him ; whatever he thinks, torments him. The guilty Conscience *turns the Sun into Darkness, and the Moon into Blood*: the precious Promises of the Gospel, that assure Favour and Pardon to returning and relenting Sinners, are turn'd into Arguments of Despair, by reflecting upon the abuse and provocation of Mercy, and that the Advocate in God's Bosom is become the Accuser. Doleful State! beyond the Conception of all, but those who are plung'd into it. How often do they run to the Grave for Sanctuary, and seek for Death as a Deliverance?

Yet all these Anxieties and Terrors are but the beginning of Sorrows: for the full and terrible Recompences of Sin shall follow the Eternal Judgment pronounc'd against the Wicked at the last Day. 'Tis true, the Sentence of the Law  
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is past against the Sinner in this present State, and Temporal Evils are the Effects of it ; but that Sentence is revokable: at Death the Sentence is ratified by the Judg upon every impenitent Sinner; 'tis decisive of his State, and involves him under Punishment for ever: But the full Execution of Judgment shall not be till the publick general Sentence pronounc'd by the everlasting Judg, before the whole World. It exceeds the compass of created Thoughts to understand fully the direful Effects of Sin in the Eternal State: *For who knows the Power of God's Wrath?* The Scripture represents the Punishment in Expressions, that may instruct the Mind, and terrify the Imagination: that may work upon the Principles of Reason and Sense, by which Men are naturally and strongly moved.

1. Sinners shall be excluded from Communion with the blessed God

in Heaven, in whose Presence is Fullness of Joy, and at whose Right-hand are Pleasures for evermore. In the clear and transforming Vision of his Glory, and the intimate and indissolvable Union with him by Love, consists the Perfection and Satisfaction of the immortal Soul. The Felicity resulting from it, is so entire and eternal, as God is great and true, who has so often promis'd it to his Saints. Now Sin separates lost Souls for ever from the reviving Presence of God. Who can declare the Extent and Degrees of that Evil? for an Evil rises in proportion to the Good of which it deprives us: it must therefore follow, that Celestial Blessedness being transcendent, the Exclusion from it is proportionably evil: And as the Felicity of the Saints results both from the direct Possession of Heaven, and from comparison with the contrary State: so the Misery of

of the Damned arises, both from the Thoughts of lost Happiness, and from the lasting Pain that torments them.

But it may be replied, If this be the utmost Evil that is consequent to Sin, the threatenng of it is not likely to deter but few from pleasing their corrupt Appetites: for carnal Men have such gross Apprehensions, and vitiated Affections, that they are careless of Spiritual Glory and Joy. *They cannot taste and see how good the Lord is*: nay, the Divine Presence would be a Torment to them: For as Light is the most pleasant Quality in the World to the sound Eye, so 'tis very afflictng and painful to the Eye when corrupted by a Suffusion of Humours.

To this a clear Answer may be given: In the next State where the Wicked shall for ever be without those sensual Objects which here deceive

ceive and delight them, their Apprehensions will be changed; they shall understand what a Happiness the Fruition of the blessed God is, and what a Misery to be incapable of enjoying him, and expell'd from the Celestial Paradise. Our Saviour tells the Infidel Jews, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets in the Kingdom of God; and you your selves shut out.* How will they pine with Envy at the sight of that Triumphant Felicity of which they shall never be Partakers? *Depart from me,* will be as terrible a part of the Judgment, *as Eternal Fire.*

Luke 15:  
28:

2. God's Justice is not satisfied in depriving them of Heaven, but inflicts the most heavy Punishment upon Sense and Conscience in the Damned: for as the Soul and Body in their State of Union in this Life, were both guilty, the one as the

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Guide,

Guide, the other as the Instrument of Sin ; so 'tis equal, when re-united, they should feel the Penal Effects of it. The Scripture represents both to our Capacity, *by the Worm that never dies, and the Fire that shall never be quenched*: and *by the destroying of Body and Soul in Hell-Fire*. Sinners shall then be tormented, wherein they were most delighted: they shall be invested with those Objects, that will cause the most dolorous Perceptions in their sensitive Faculties. *The Lake of Fire and Brimstone, the Blackness of Darkness*, are words of a terrible Signification, and intended to awaken Sinners to fly *from the Wrath to come*. But no words can fully reveal the terrible Ingredients of their Misery: the Punishment will be in proportion to the Glory of God's Majesty that is dishonour'd and provok'd by Sin, and extent of his Power. And as the Soul was the Principal, and the  
Body

Body but an Accessary in the Works of Sin; so its capacious Faculties will be far more tormented, than the more limited Faculties of the outward Senses. The fiery Attributes of God shall be transmitted through the Glass of Conscience, and concenter'd upon damned Spirits: the Fire without them is not so tormenting as this Fire within them. How will the tormenting Passions be inflam'd? What Rancor, Reluctance and Rage against the Power above that sentenc'd them to Hell? What Impatience and Indignation against themselves for their wilful Sins, the just Cause of it? How will they curse their Creation, and wish their utter Extinction, as the final Remedy of their Misery? But all their ardent Wishes are in vain: for the Guilt of Sin will never be expiated, nor God so far reconcil'd as to annihilate them. As long as there is Justice

in Heaven, and Fire in Hell, as long as God and Eternity shall continue, they must suffer these Torments, which the Strength and Patience of an Angel cannot bear one hour. From hence we may infer, what an inconceivable Evil there is in Sin, and how hateful it is to the most High, when God *who is Love*, who is *stiled the Father of Mercies*, has prepared and does inflict such Plagues for ever for the Transgression of his holy Laws: and such is the Equity of his Judgment, that he never punishes Offenders above their Desert.

I shall now apply this Doctrine, by reflecting the Light of it upon our Minds and Hearts.

1. This discovers how perverse and depraved the Minds and Wills of Men are, *to chuse Sin rather than Affliction*, and break the Divine Law for the obtaining Temporal Things.

If



If one with an attentive Eye regards the generality of Mankind, what Dominion present and sensible Things have over them, how securely and habitually they sin in prosecution of their Carnal Aims, as if the Soul should not survive the Body, as if there were no Tribunal above to examine, no Judg to sentence and punish Sinners; if he has not Marble Bowels, it will excite his Compassion or Indignation. What Comparison is there between the good Things of this World, and of the next in Degrees or Duration? Aiery Honour, Sensual Pleasures, and Worldly Riches, are but the thin Appearances of Happiness, Shadows in Masquerade, that cannot afford solid Content to an immortal Spirit: the Blessedness of Heaven replenishes with everlasting Satisfaction. What Proportion is there between the *light and momentary Afflictions here,* and a vast Eternity

*fill'd with Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish, and desperate Sorrow?* What stupid Beast, what Monster of a Man, would prefer a superficial transient Delight, the Pleasure of a short Dream, before ever-satisfying Joys? Or to avoid a slight Evil, venture upon Destruction? Yet this is the true Case of Sinners: if they can obtain the World with the loss of Heaven, they count it a valuable Purchase; if they can compound so, as to escape Temporal Troubles, tho' involved under Guilt that brings extrem and eternal Misery, they think it a saving Bargain. Amazing Folly! Either they believe or do not, the Recompences in the future State: if they do not, how unaccountable is their Impiety? If they do, 'tis more prodigious they do not *feel the Powers of the World to come*, so as to regulate their Lives, and controul the strongest Temptations

tions to sin against God. A wicked Believer is more guilty than a wicked Infidel. How could we conceive it possible, were it not visible in their Actions, that Men who have judicative Faculties to compare and distinguish things, and accordingly be moved with Desires or Fears, should with ardent Affections pursue despicable Vanities, and neglect substantial Happiness, and be fearful of the Shadows of Dangers, and intrepid in the midst of the truest Dangers! He is a desperate Gamester that will venture a Crown at a Throw, against some petty Advantage: yet this is really done by Sinners who hazard the loss of Heaven for this World: they hang by slender Strings, a little Breath that expires every moment, over bottomless Perdition, and are insensible, without any palpitation of Heart, any sign of Fear.

How strong is the Delusion and Concupiscence of the carnally-minded? The Lusts of the Flesh bribe and corrupt their Understandings, or divert them from serious Consideration of their Ways, and the Issues of them. From hence it is they are presently entangled and vanquish'd by sensual Temptations; they are cozen'd by the Colours of Good and Evil, and Satan easily accomplishes his most pernicious and envious Design, to make Men miserable as himself. How just is the Reproach of Wisdom, *How long ye simple ones will ye love Simplicity, and Fools hate Knowledge?* The Light of Reason and Revelation shines upon them, they have not the excuse of Ignorance, but the righteous and heavy *Condemnation of those who love Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil.* 'Tis no mean degree of Guilt to extenuate Sin, and make an Apology for Sinners.

ners. The wisest of Men tells us, *Fools make a mock of Sin*: they count it a fond Niceness, a silly Preciseness to be fearful of offending God. They boast of their deceitful Arts and Insinuations, whereby they represent Sin as a light matter, to corrupt others. But 'tis infinitely better to be defective in the Subtilty of the Serpent, than in the Innocence of the Dove. A meer Natural, who is only capable of sensitive Actions, and is distinguish'd from a Brute by his shape, is not such a forlorn Sor, as the sinful Fool. What the Prophet *Jeremy* speaks of one who gets Riches unjustly, that he shall leave them, and *in the end die a Fool*, will be verified of the wilful obstinate Sinner: in the end he shall by the terrible Conviction of his own Mind, be found guilty of the most woful Folly: and how many have acknowledged in their last hours, when usually Men speak  
with

with the most feeling and least Affectation, how have they in words of the Psalmist arraigned themselves, *So foolish have we been, and like Beasts before thee?*

2. From hence we may be instructed of the wonderful Patience of God, who bears with a World of Sinners, that are obnoxious to his Justice, and under his Power every day. If we consider the number and aggravations of Mens Sins, how many have out-told the Hairs of their Heads in actual Transgressions; how mighty and manifest their Sins are, that the Deity and Providence are questioned for the suspending of Vengeance? And yet that God notwithstanding all their enormous Injuries, and violent Provocations, is patient towards Sinners, it cannot but fill us with Admiration. His Mercy, like the cheerful Light of the Sun, visits us every Morning with  
its

its benign Influences; his Justice, like Thunder, rarely strikes the Wicked. He affords not only the Supports of Life, but many Comforts and Refreshments to the unthankful and rebellious.

'Tis not from any Defect in his Power that they are not consum'd, but from the Abundance of his Mercy. He made the World without any strain of his Power, and can as easily destroy it: he has an innumerable Company of Angels attending his Commands; and every Angel is an Army in strength: one of them destroyed an hundred and fourscore and five thousand in a Night. He can use the most despicable and weakest Creatures, Frogs, and Lice, and Flies, as Instruments of Vengeance to subdue the proudest *Pharaoh*, the most obstinate Rebels. — He sees Sin where-ever it is, and hates it where-ever he sees it; yet his Patience endures  
their

their crying Sins, and his long-Suffering expects their Repentance. *The Lord is not slack, as some Men count slackness, but he is long-suffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to Repentance. He spares Sinners with such Indulgence, in order to their Salvation. 'Tis deservedly one of his Royal Titles, The God of Patience.* Our fierce Spirits are apt to take Fire and Revenge for every Injury real, or suppos'd; but the great God, who is infinitely sensible of all the Indignities offer'd to his Majesty, *defers his Anger, and loads them with his Benefits every day.* What is more astonishing than *the Riches of his Goodness,* unless it be the perverse Abuse of it by Sinners, to harden themselves in their Impieties? But altho his Clemency delays the Punishment, the Sacredness and Constancy of his Justice will not forget it: *when Patience has had its perfect work, Justice shall*

shall



shall have a solemn Triumph in the final Destruction of impenitent unreformed Sinners.

3. The Consideration of the Evil of Sin, so great in it self, and pernicious to us, heightens our Obligations to the Divine Mercy, in saving *us from our Sins*, and an everlasting Hell, the just Punishment of them. Our Loss was unvaluable, our Misery extream, and without infinite Mercy, we had been under an unremediable necessity of sinning and suffering for ever. God saw us in this wretched and desperate State, *and his Eye affected his Heart, in his Pity he redeemed and restored us.* This is the clearest Testimony of pure Goodness: for God did not want external Glory, who is infinitely happy in his own Perfections: he could, when Man revolted from his Duty, have created a new World of innocent Creatures: for infinite Power is not spent

spent nor lessened by finite Productions, but his undeserved and undesired Mercy appeared in our Salvation. The way of accomplishing it, renders Mercy more illustrious: for to glorify his Justice, and preserve the Honour of his Holiness unblemish'd, he laid upon his Son *the Iniquity of us all*. This was Love that passeth all Understanding: Our Saviour speaks of it with Admiration; *God so loved the World, and hated Sin, that he gave his only begotten Son to die for it; that whosoever believes in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.*

And how dear are our Engagements to Jesus Christ. The Judge would not release the Guilty without a Ransom, nor the Surety without Satisfaction; and the Son of God most compassionately and willingly gave his precious Blood to obtain our Deliverance. If his Perfections were not most amiable  
and

and ravishing, yet that he died for us, should infinitely endear him to us. *To those who believe, he is precious: to those who have felt their undone Condition, and that by his Merits and Mediation, are restored to the Favour of God, he is eminently precious. Who can break the Constraints of such Love? If there be a spark of Reason, or a grain of unfeigned Faith in us, We must judg, that if one die for all, then all were dead; and those that live, should live to his Glory, who died for their Salvation.*

Add to this, that in the Sufferings of Christ there is the clearest Demonstration of the Evil of Sin, and how hateful it is to God, if we consider the Dignity of his Person, the Greatness of his Sufferings, and the innocent Recoilings of his Human Nature from such fearful Sufferings. He was the Eternal Son of God, the Heir of his

his Father's Love and Glory, the Lord of Angels; he suffered in his Body the most ignominious and painful Death, being nail'd to the Cross in the sight of the World: The Sufferings of his Soul were incomparably more afflicting: For tho heavenly meek, he endured the Derision and cruel Violence of his Enemies with a silent Patience; yet in the dark Eclipse of his Father's Countenance, in the desolate state of his Soul, *the Lamb of God opened his Mouth* in that mournful Complaint, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* His innocent Nature did so recoil from those fearful Sufferings, that with repeated Ardency of Affection, he deprecated that bitter Cup; *Abba, Father, all things are possible to Thee; let this Cup pass me:* He address'd to the Divine Power and Love, the Attributes that relieve the Miserable, yet he drank off the  
Dregs

Dregs of the Cup of God's Wrath. Now we may from hence conclude, how great an Evil Sin is, that could not be expiated by a meaner Sacrifice, *than the offering up the Soul of Christ* to atone incensed Justice; and no lower a Price, than the Blood of the Son of God, the most invaluable Treasure, could ransom Men who were devoted to Destruction.

4. The Consideration of the Evil of Sin in it self and to us, should excite us with a holy Circumspection to keep our selves from being defiled with it. 'Tis our indispensable Duty, our transcendent Interest to obey the Divine Law entirely and constantly. The Tempter cannot present any Motives, that to a rectified Mind are sufficient to induce a Consent to Sin, and offend God. Let the Scales be even, and put into one all the Delights of the Senses, all the Pleasures and Honours

nours of the World, which are the Elements of Carnal Felicity, how light are they against the Enjoyment of the blessed God in Glory? Will the Gain of this perishing World, compensate the loss of the Soul and Salvation for ever? If there were any possible Comparison between empty deluding Vanities, and Celestial Happiness, the Choice would be more difficult, and the Mistake less culpable; but they vanish into nothing in the Comparison; so that to commit the least Sin that makes us liable to the forfeiture of Heaven, for *the Pleasures of Sin that are but for a season*, is Madness in that degree, that no words can express. Suppose the Tempter inspires his Rage into his Slaves, and tries to constrain us to Sin by Persecution; how unreasonable is it to be dismayed at the Threatnings of Men, *who must die*, and who can only touch

touch the Body; and to *despise the Terrors of the Lord*, who lives for ever, and can punish for ever? Methinks we should look upon the perverted raging World, as a Swarm of angry Flies, that may disquiet, but cannot hurt us. *Socrates*, when unrighteously prosecuted to Death, said of his Enemies, with a Courage becoming the Breast of a Christian, *They may kill me, but cannot hurt me.* How should these Considerations raise in us an invincible Resolution and Reluctancy against the Tempter, in all his Approaches and Addresses to us? *And that we may so resist him, as to cause his flight from us,* let us imitate the excellent Saint, whose Example is set before us.

(1.) By possessing the Soul with a lively and solemn Sense of God's Presence, who is the Inspector and Judg of all our Actions. *Joseph* repell'd the Temptation with this

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powerful Thought, *How shall I sin against God? The Fear of the Lord is clean*; 'tis a watchful Sentinel, that resists Temptations without, and suppresses Corruptions within: 'Tis like the Cherubim plac'd with a flaming Sword in Paradise, to prevent the Re-entry of *Adam* when guilty and polluted. For this end we must, by frequent and serious Considerations, represent the Divine Being and Glory in our Minds, that there may be a gracious Constitution of Soul; this will be our Preservative from Sin: for altho the habitual Thoughts of God are not always in act, yet upon a Temptation they are presently excited, and appear in the view of Conscience, and are effectual to make us reject the Tempter with Defiance and Indignation.

This holy Fear is not a meer judicial Impression, that restrains from Sin, for the dreadful Punishment that



that follows; for that servile Affection, tho it may stop a Temptation, and hinder the Eruption of a Lust into the gross Act, yet it does not renew the Nature, and make us Holy and Heavenly. There may be a respective Dislike of Sin with a direct Affection to it. Besides, a meer servile Fear is repugnant to Nature, and will be expell'd if possible. Therefore, that we *may be in the Fear of the Lord all the day long*, we must regard him in his endearing Attributes, his Love, his Goodness and Compassion, his rewarding Mercy; and this will produce a filial Fear of Reverence and Caution, lest we should offend so gracious a God. As the natural Life is preserved by grateful Food, not by Aloes and Wormwood, which are useful Medicines; so the Spiritual Life is maintained by the comfortable Apprehensions of God, as the Rewarder of our

Fidelity in all our Trials.

(2.) Strip Sin of its Disguises, wash off its flattering Colours, that you may see its native Ugliness. *Joseph's* reply to the Tempter, *How shall I do this great Wickedness?* Illusion and Concupiscence are the Inducements to Sin: When a Lust represents the Temptation as very alluring, and hinders the Reflection of the Mind, upon the intrinsic and consequential Evil of Sin, 'tis like the putting Poison into the Glass: but when it has so far corrupted the Mind, that Sin is esteemed a small Evil, Poison is thrown into the Fountain. If we consider the Majesty of the Lawgiver, there is no Law small, nor Sin small, that is the Transgression of it. Yet the most are secure in an evil course, by Conceits that their Sins are small. 'Tis true, there is a vast difference between Sins in their Nature and Circumstances: there are insensible Omissi-

Omissions and accusing Acts, but the least is damnable. Besides, the allowance and number of Sins reputed small, will involve under intolerable Guilt. What is lighter than a Grain of Sand? you may blow away a hundred with a Breath; And what is heavier than a heap of Sand condens'd together? 'Tis our Wisdom and Duty to consider the Evil of Sin in its essential Malignity, which implies no less, than that God was neither wise nor good in making his Law, and that he is not just and powerful to vindicate it: And when tempted to any pleasant Sin, to consider the due Aggravations of it, as *Joseph* did, which will controul the Efficacy of the Temptation. I shall only add, that when a Man has mortified the Lusts of the Flesh, he has overcome the main part of the infernal Army that wars against the Soul. Sensual Objects do powerfully

fully and pleasantly insinuate into carnal Men, and the Affections are very unwillingly restrain'd from them. To undertake the Cure of those, whose Disease is their Pleasure, is almost a vain Attempt: for they do not judg it an Evil to be regarded, and will not accept distasteful Remedies.

(3.) Fly all tempting occasions of Sin. *Joseph* would not be alone with his Mistress. There is no Vertue so confirmed, and in that degree of Eminence, but if one be frequently ingaged in vicious Society, 'tis in danger of being eclips'd and controul'd by the opposite Vice. If the Ermins will associate with the Swine, they must lie in the Mire: if the Sheep with Wolves, they must learn to bite and devour: if Doves with Vultures, they must learn to live on the Prey. Our surest Guard is to keep at a distance from all engaging Snares.

Snares. He that from Carelessness or Confidence ventures into Temptations, makes himself an easy Prey to the Tempter.

And let us daily pray for the Divine Assistance to keep us from the Evil of the World; without which all our Resolutions will be as ineffectual as Ropes of Sand, to bind us to our Duty.

5. The Consideration of the Evil of Sin is a powerful Motive to our solemn and speedy Repentance. The remembrance of our Original and Actual Sins, will convince us, that we are born for Repentance. There are innumerable silent Sins, that are unobserved, and do not alarm the Conscience: and altho a true Saint will neither hide any Sin, nor suffer Sin to hide it self in his Breast, yet the most holy Men in the World, have great reason with the Psalmist; to say with melting Affections; *Who can understand his*

*his Errors? O cleanse me from my secret Sins; discover them to me by the Light of the Word, and cover them in the Blood of the Redeemer. There are Sins of Infirmity and daily Incurſion, from which none can be perfectly freed in this mortal State: theſe ſhould excite our Watchfulneſs, and be lamented with true Tears. There are crying Sins of a Crimson Guilt, which are to be confeſt with heart-breaking Sorrow, confounding Shame, and implacable Antipathy againſt them, and to be forſaken for ever. Of theſe, ſome are of a deep die in their Nature, and ſome from the Circumſtances in committing them; ſome are of a heinous Nature, and more directly and expreſly renounce our Duty, and more immediately obſtruct our Communion with God: As a Mud-Wall intercepts the Light of the Sun from ſhining upon us.*

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2. Some derive a greater Guilt from the Circumstances in the commission. Such are,

(1.) Sins against Knowledge: for according to the Ingrediency of the Will in Sin, the Guilt arises. Now when Conscience interposes between the Carnal Heart and the Temptation, and represents the Evil of Sin, and deters from Compliance, and yet Men will venture to break the Divine Law, this exceedingly aggravates the Offence; for such Sins are committed with a fuller Consent, and are justly called Rebellion against the Light. And the clearer the Light is, the more it will increase the disconsolate fearful Darkness in Hell.

(2.) Sins committed against the Love as well as the Law of God, are exceedingly aggravated. To pervert the Benefits we receive from God to his Dishonour, to turn them into occasions of Sin, which were designed

designed to endear Obedience to us; to sin licentiously and securely in hopes of an easy Pardon at last, is intensive of our Guilt in a high degree. This is to poison the Antidote; and make it deadly. There is a Sacrifice to reconcile offended Justice; but if Men obstinately continue in Sin, and abuse the Grace of the Gospel, there is no Sacrifice to appease exasperated Mercy.

(3.) Sins committed against solemn Promises and Engagements to forsake them, have a deeper Die: for Perfidiousness is join'd with this Disobedience. The Divine Law strictly binds us to our Duty, antecedently to our Consent; but when we promise to obey it, we increase our Obligations, and by sinning, break double Chains. In short, any habitual allowed Sin, induces a heavy Guilt; for it argues a deeper root and foundation of Sin in the Heart, a stronger Inclination to it,  
 from



from whence the repeated Acts proceed, which are new Provocations to the pure Eyes of God. Accordingly in repenting Reflections, our Sorrow should be most afflicting, our Humiliation deeper, our Self-condemnation most severe for those Sins which have been most dishonourable to God, and defiling to us. Not that we can make any Satisfaction for our Sins, tho we should fill the Air with our Sighs, and Heaven with our Tears; but it becomes us to have our Sorrows enlarged in some proportion to our Unworthiness. And this mournful Disposition prepares us for the Grace of God. The Law does not allow Repentance, but exacts entire Obedience: 'tis the Privilege of the Gospel, that repenting Sinners are assur'd of Forgiveness: without this Qualification 'tis inconsistent with the Majesty, Purity and Justice of God, to extend pardoning Mercy to Sinners: for  
they

they will never value, nor humbly and ardently seek for Mercy, till they feel the woful Effects of Sin in their Conscience: only the stung *Israelite* would look to the brazen Serpent. And this is requisite to prevent our relapsing into Sin: for the Dominion of Sin being founded in the Love of Pleasure, the proper means to extinguish, it is by a bitter Repentance: the Heart is first broken *for* Sin, and then *from* it.

To conclude; Let us renew our Repentance every day: let not the Wounds of our Spirits puerify: let not the Sin go down upon God's Wrath: let us always renew the Application of Christ's Blood that alone can cleanse us from Sin.

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## SERMON III.

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I JOHN V. 2.

*By this we know we are the Children of  
God, if we love God, and keep his  
Commandments.*

**O**F all the Marks that are useful in the Trial of our Spiritual State in reference to Eternity, there is none affords a more clear and comfortable Assurance of God's special and saving Mercy, than Love to the Saints. This has often resolved the Doubts, and quieted the Fears of afflicted enquiring Souls, when other Graces have not been so apprehensible in their Operations. But there is no Mark which the deceitful Heart does more securely

curely rest upon, through the mistake of Natural Human Love for that which is Spiritual and Divine: It is therefore most worthy our serious Thoughts, the Deceit being so easy and infinitely dangerous, to shew what is the unfeigned genuine Love of the Brethren, to which Salvation is annex'd, to confirm the humble sincere Christian, and undeceive presuming Hypocrites.

The great Design of St. *John* in this Epistle, is to excite and enflame in Christians the Love of God, and of their Brethren, the two comprehensive Duties, and bright Sum of the Law, our principal Perfections in Heaven and Earth. These he recommends by the most affectionate and obliging, the most warming, melting Perswasives; the superlative Love of God to us, and our Communion with the Saints, in Nature and Grace.

In the former Verse the Apostle argues from the reality of the Effect, as an Evidence of the Cause. *Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, that is, the Saviour of the World, foretold by the Prophets, and expresses the Truth of that Faith in a suitable Conversation, is born of God; and every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.* Grace is not less powerful in producing tender reciprocal Affections between the Off-spring of the same Heavenly Father, than the subordinate Endearments of Nature. The Pretence is vain of Love to God, without loving his regenerate Children. And in the Text he argues from the knowledg of the Cause, to the discovering of the sincerity of the Effect: *By this we know that we love the Children of God, with a holy Affection, if we love God, and keep his Commandments.*

There is but one Difficulty to be removed, that the Force of the Apostle's reasoning may appear; 'tis this, a *Medium* to prove a thing must be a clearer Evidence than what is concluded by it: Now tho' a Demonstration from the Cause be more noble and scientific, yet that which is drawn from the Effect, is more near to Sense, and more discernable. And this is verified in the Instance before us; for the Love of God, who is absolutely spiritual in his Being and Excellencies, doth not with that sensible Fervour affect and passionately transport us, as Love to his Children, with whom we visibly converse, and who are receptive of the most sensible Testimonies of our Affection. Accordingly the Apostle argues, *He that loves not his Brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?* As the Motives to love our Brethren, from our Cojunction in Nature,

Nature, and familiar Conversation, are more capable to allure our Affections, and more sensibly strike the Heart than the invisible Deity, who is infinitely above us; by the same reason we may more easily judg of the truth of our Love to them, than of our Love to God. To this the Answer is clear; the Apostle doth not speak of the Love of God, as a still, silent, contemplative Affection, confined to the superiour Faculty of the Soul, but as a burning, shining Affection (like Fire\*) active and declarative of it self in those Effects that necessarily flow from it, that is voluntary Obedience to his Commands; and thus it becomes manifest to the renewed Conscience, and is a most convincing Proof of the Sincerity of our Love to the Saints.

\*Luminae  
qui semper  
pro-  
ditur ipsi  
suo.

The Text being cleared, affords this Doctrine.

Doct. *The Sincerity of our Love to the Children of God, is certainly discovered by our Love to God, and Obedience to his Commands.*

For the Illustration and Proof of the Point, I will briefly shew,

I. Who are described by this Title, *The Children of God.*

II. What is included in our Love to them.

III. What the Love of God is, and the Obedience that flows from it.

IV. How from Love to God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the Sincerity of our Love to his Children.

To explain the first, we must consider that this Title, *The Children*  
of



of God, is given upon several accounts.

First, By Creation the Angels are called *the Sons of God, and Men his Off-spring.*

The reason of the Title is,

1. The manner of their Production by his immediate Power. Thus he is stiled, *The Father of Spirits*, in distinction from *the Fathers of the Flesh*. For tho' the Conception and forming of the Body be the Work of his secret Providence, yet 'tis by the hand of Nature, the Parents concurring as the second Causes of it: but the Production of the Soul is to be entirely ascribed to his Power, without the Intervention of any Creature.

2. In their spiritual immortal Nature, and the intellectual Operations flowing from it, there is an Image and Resemblance of God; from whence this Title is common

to all reasonable Creatures, and peculiar to them: for tho' Matter may be ordered and fashioned by the Hand of God into a Figure of admirable Beauty, yet 'tis not capable of his Likeness and Image; so that neither the Lights of Heaven, nor the Beasts and Plants of the Earth are called his Children.

*Secondly*, By External Calling and Covenant some are denominated his Children; for by this Evangelical Constitution God is pleased to receive Believers into a filial Relation. Indeed where there is not a cordial Consent and Subjection to the Terms of the Covenant, visible Profession, and the receiving the External Seals of it, will be of no advantage; but the publick serious owning of the Gospel, entitles a Person to be of the Society of Christians; and *Filius* and *Fæderatus* are all one.

*Thirdly*,

*Thirdly*, There is Sonship that arises from supernatural Regeneration; that is the communicating a new Nature to Man, whereby there is a holy and blessed Change in the directive and commanding Faculties, the Understanding and Will, and in the Affections, and consequently in the whole Life. This is wrought by the Efficacy of the Word and Spirit, and is called by our Saviour Regeneration, because it is not our Original Carnal Birth, but a Second and Celestial. 'Tis with the new Man in Grace, as with an Infant in Nature, that has the essential Parts that compose a Man; a Soul endowed with all its Faculties, a Body with all its Organs and Parts, but not in the Vigor of mature Age. Thus renewed Holiness in a Christian, is compleat and entire in its Parts, but not in Perfection of Degrees; there is an universal Inclination to

all that is holy, just and good, and a universal Aversion from Sin, tho' the Executive Power be not equal. And regenerate Christians are truly called the Children of God; for as in Natural Generation there is communicated a Principle of Life and suitable Operations, from whence the Title and Relation of a Father arises; so in Regeneration there are derived such holy and heavenly Qualities to the Soul, as constitute a *Divine Nature* in Man, whereby he is Partaker of the *Life and Likeness* of God himself: from hence he is a Child of God, and has an Interest and Propriety in his Favour, Power and Promises, and all the Good that flows from them, and a Title to the Eternal Inheritance.

II. I will shew what is included in our Love to the Children of God.

First,

*First, The Principle of this Love is Divine. The Soul is purified through the Spirit to unfeigned Love of the Brethren.* Naturally the Judgment is corrupted, and the Will depraved, that carnal Respects either of Profit or Pleasure are the quick and sensible Incitements of Love; and till the Soul be cured of the sensual Contagion, the Inclination can never be directed, and the Desires fastned on the supernatural Image of God in his Saints. As Holiness in the Creature is a Ray derived from the infinite Beauty of God's Holiness, so the Love of Holiness is a Spark from the sacred Fire of his Love. St. John exhorts Christians, *Let us love one another, for Love is of God.* Natural Love among Men is by his general Providence, but a gracious Love to the Saints is by his special Influence. The natural Affection must be baptized with the Holy Ghost, as

1 Pet. 1.

22.

1 Joh. 4.  
7.

with

*with Fire, to refine it to a Divine Purity.*

*Secondly, The Qualifications of this Love are as follow :*

1. It is sincere and cordial ; it does not appear only in Expressions from the Tongue and Countenance, but springs from the Integrity of the Heart. 'Tis stiled *unfeigned Love of the Brethren* ; 'tis a Love not in *Word and Tongue only, but in Deed and Truth*. A counterfeit formal Affection, set off with artificial Colours, is so far from being pleasing to God, the Searcher and Judge of Hearts, that 'tis infinitely provoking to him.

2. 'Tis pure ; the attractive Cause of it is the Image of God appearing in them. Our Saviour assures us, that Love shall be gloriously rewarded, that respects a *Disciple upon that account as a Disciple, and a righteous Man as a righteous Man.*

*Man.* The holy Love commanded in the Gospel, is to Christians for their Divine Relation, as the Children of God, as the Members of Christ, and Temples of the Holy Ghost.

3. From hence it is universal, extended to all the Saints. The Church is composed of Christians that are different in their Gifts and Graces, and in their external Order; some excel in Knowledg, and Zeal, and Love, in active Graces; others in Humility, Meekness and Patience, that sustain and adorn them in Sufferings; some are in a higher Rank, others are in humble Circumstances: as in the visible World things are placed suitably to their Natures, the Stars in the Heavens, Flowers in the Earth: and our special Respects are due to those whom the Favour of God has dignified above others, and in whom the Brightness and Power of Grace shines

shines more clearly: for according as there are more Reasons that make a Person deserving Love, the degrees of Love should rise in proportion. But a dear Affection is due even to the lowest Saints; for all have Communion in the same holy Nature, and are equally instated in the same blessed Alliance.

4. It must be fervent, not only in Truth, but in a degree of Eminency. St. Peter joins the two Qualifications; *See that ye love one another with a pure Heart fervently.* Our Saviour sets before us his own Pattern, as a Pillar of Fire to direct and inflame us; *This is my Com-*  
 John 15. *mandment, that ye love one another as*  
 12. *I have loved you. As I have loved you!* Admirable Example! His Love was singular and superlative; a Love that saves and astonishes us at once; for he willingly gave his precious Life for our Ransom. This we should



should endeavour to resemble, tho our highest Expressions of Love and Compassion to the Saints, are but a weak and imperfect Imitation of his Divine Perfection.

I shall add farther; This Love includes all kinds of Love.

1. The Love of Esteem correspondent to the real Worth and special Goodness of the Saints. 'Tis one Character of a Citizen of Heaven, that *in his Eyes a vile Person* Psal. 15. *is contemned, however set off by the Glory of the World, and the Ornaments of the present State, that, as a false Mask, conceal their foul Deformity to carnal Persons; but he honours them that fear the Lord, tho disfigured by Calumnies, tho obscur'd and depress'd by Afflictions, and made like their blessed Head, in whom there was no Form nor Comeliness in the Judgment of Fools.* In our Valuation, Divine Grace should

should turn the Scales against all the natural or acquired Perfections of Body or Mind ; Beauty, Strength, Wit, Eloquence, human Wisdom ; against all the external Advantages of this Life, Nobility, Riches, Power, and whatever is admired by a carnal Eye. The Judgment and Love of God should regulate ours. A Saint is more valued by God, than the highest Princes ; nay, than the Angels themselves, considered only with respect to their spiritual Nature. He calls them *his peculiar Treasure, his Jewels, the first-Fruits of the Creatures*, sacred for his Use and Glory, in comparison of whom, the rest of the World are but Dregs, a corrupt Mass. They are stiled *his Sons* ; being Partakers of that Life of which he is the Author and Pattern : And what are all the Titles on Earth, compared with so Divine a Dignity ?

2. The

2. The Love of Desire, of their present and future Happiness. The Perfection of Love consists more in the Desire than in the Effects; and the continued fervent Prayers that the Saints present to God for one another, are the Expressions of their Love.

3. The Love of Delight, in spiritual Communion with them. All the Attractives of human Conversation, Wit, Mirth, Sweetness of Behaviour, and wise Discourse, cannot make any Society so dear and pleasant to one that is a Lover of Holiness, as the Communion of Saints. *David*, whose Breast was very sensible of the tender Affections of Love and Joy, tells us, That *the Saints in the Earth, the Excellent,* Psal. 16. *were the chief Object of his Delight.* And consequent to this, there is a cordial Sympathy with them in their Joys and Sorrows, being Members of the same Body, and having an Interest

Interest in all their Good or Evil. 'Tis observable, when the Holy Spirit describes the sweetest human Comforts that are the present Reward of the godly Man, the Enjoyment of his Estate in the dear Society of his Wife and Children, there is a Promise annex'd, that sweetens all the rest, That *he shall see the Good of Jerusalem, and Peace upon Israel.* Without this all Temporal Comforts are mix'd with bitter Displeasure to him. There is an eminent Instance of this in *Nehemiah*, whom all the Pleasures of the *Persian Court* could not satisfy, whilst *Jerusalem* was desolately miserable.

Psal. 128.

Neh. 2.

4. The Love of Service and Beneficence, that declares it self in all outward Offices and Acts for the Good of the Saints: And these are various; some are of a sublimer Nature, and concern their Souls; as spiritual Counsel and Instruction,

com-

compassionate Admonition and Consolation, the confirming them in Good, and the fortifying them against Evil, the doing whatever may preserve and advance the Life and Vigor of the inward Man; others respect their Bodies and Temporal Condition; directing them in their Affairs, protecting them from Injuries, supplying their Wants, universally assisting them for their tolerable Passage through the World. And all these Acts are to be chearfully performed; there is more Joy in conferring than receiving a Benefit, because Love is more exercised in the one than the other. In short, the highest Effect of Love that comprizes all the rest, is to die for the Brethren; and this we ought to do when the Honour of God, and Welfare of the Church require it. *Herby perceive we the Love of God, because he laid down his Life for us; and we ought to lay down*

*our Lives for the Brethren.* If Christians thus loved one another, the Church on Earth would be a lively Image of the blessed Society above.

III. The Love of God, and Obedience to his Commands, the Product of it are to be considered.

*First,* The Love of God has its Rise from the Consideration of his amiable Excellencies, that render him infinitely worthy of the highest Affection; and from the blessed Benefits of Creation, Preservation Redemption and Glorification, that we may expect from his pure Goodness and Mercy. This is the most clear and essential Character of a Child of God, and most peculiarly distinguishes him from unrenewed Men, however accomplished by Civil Vertues.

Now

Now the internal Exercise of Love to God, in the Valuation of his Favour, as that which is better than Life, in earnest Desires of Communion with him, in ravishing Joy in the Testimonies and Assurance of his Love; in mourning for what is displeasing to him, is in the secret of the Soul; but with this there is inseparably join'd a true and visible Declaration of our Love in Obedience to him: *This is the Love of God, the most real and undeceitful Expression of it, that we keep his Commandments.*

I Joh. 3.  
16.

The Obedience that springs from Love, is,

1. Uniform and universal; for the two principal and necessary Effects of Love are an ardent Desire to please God, and an equal Care not to displease him in any thing. Now the Law of God is the Signification of his Sovereign and Holy Will, and the doing of

it is very pleasing to him, both upon the account of the Subjection of the Creature to his Authority, and Conformity to his Purity: He declares that Obedience is better than the most costly Sacrifice. There is an absolute peremptory Repugnance between Love to him, and despising his Commands: And from thence it follows, that Love inclines the Soul to obey all God's Precepts, not only those of easy Observation, but the most difficult and distasteful to the Carnal Appetites; for the Authority of God runs through all, and his Holiness shines in all. Servile Fear is a partial Principle, and causes an unequal Respect to the Divine Law; it restrains from Sins of greater Guilt, from such disorderly and dissolute Actions at which Conscience takes Fire; but others are indulged: it excites to good Works of some kind, but neglects others that are equally



equally necessary. But Love regards the whole Law in all its Injunctions and Prohibitions; not merely to please our selves, that we may not feel the stings of an accusing Conscience, but to please the Lawgiver.

2. The Obedience of Love is accurate; and this is a natural Consequence of the former. The Divine Law is a Rule not only for our outward Conversation, but of our Thoughts and Affections, of all the interior workings of the Soul, that are open before God. Thus it requires Religious Service, not only in the external Performance, but those reverent holy Affections, those pure Aims, wherein the Life and Beauty, the Spirit and true Value of Divine Worship consists. Thus it commands the Duties of Equity, Charity and Sobriety, all *Civil* and *Natural Duties* for Divine Ends, to please and glorify God. It forbids

Heb. 13.  
16.

all kinds and degrees of Sin; not only gross Acts, but the inward Lustings that have a tendency to them. Now the Love of God is the Principle of spiritual Perfection. 'Tis called *the fulfilling of the Law*, not only as it is a comprehensive Grace, but in that it draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul to obey it in an exact manner. This causes a tender sense of our Failings, and a severe Circumspection over our Ways, that nothing be allowed that is displeasing to the Divine Eyes. Since the most excellent Saints are God's chiefest Favourites, Love makes the holy Soul to strive to be like him in all possible degrees of Purity. Thus St. Paul, in whom the Love of Christ was the imperial commanding Affection, declares, his zealous endeavour to be conformable to the Death of Christ, in dying to Sin, as Christ died for Sin, and that he might attain to the Resur-

1 Cor.  
10. 31.

Phil. 3.  
10, 11.

*Resurrection of the Dead, that Perfection of Holiness that is in the immortal State.*

3. The Obedience of Love is chosen and pleasant. *This is the Love of God, that we keep his Commandments, and his Commandments are not grievous.* Those that are Strangers to this Heavenly Affection, imagine that a sollicitous diligent Respect to all God's Precepts, is a melancholy Task; but it is delightful to the Saints: for Obedience is the continual exercise of Love to God, the Paradise of holy Souls. The mortification of the Carnal Appetites, and the restraint from such Objects as powerfully insinuate and engage Carnal Hearts, is with a freer Complacency to a Saint, than a sensual Fruition of them. The sharpest Sufferings for Religion are allayed, nay sweetned to a Saint from the Love of God, that is then most sincerely, strongly,

and purely acted. The Apostle more rejoiced in sharp Tribulation for Christ's sake, than in Divine Revelation.

4. The Love of God produces persevering Obedience. Servile Compliance is inconstant. A Slave hates the Duties he performs, and loves the Sins he dares not commit; therefore as soon as he is releas'd from his Chain and his Fear, his Obedience ceases: but a Son is perfectly pleas'd with his Father's Will, and the Tenor of his Life is correspondent to it. He that is press'd by Fear to serve in an Army, will desert his Colours the first Opportunity; but a Volunteer, that for the love of Valour, and of his Country, lifts himself, will continue in the Service. The Motion that is caused by outward Poises, will cease when the Weights are down; but that which proceeds from an inward Principle of Life, is continual;

nual ; and such is the Love of God planted in the Breast of a Christian.

IV. We are to prove that from the Love of God, and willing Obedience to his Commands, we may convincingly know the sincerity of our Love to his Children.

There is an inseparable Union between these two Graces, and the one arises out of the other. *Godliness* and *Brotherly Kindness* are joined by the Apostle. And it will be evident that where this Affection of Love to the Saints is sincere and gracious, there will be an entire and joyful respect to the Law of God, by considering the Reasons and Motives of it.

*First*, The Divine Command requires this Love. *These things I command you, saith our Saviour, that ye love one another.* This Precept so often repeated,

repeated, and powerfully re-inforc'd by him, made so deep an Impression on the first Christians, that *they had one Heart, and one Soul, and their Estates were common between them.*

And in the next succeeding Ages, this fraternal Love was so conspicuous in the Professors of his sacred Discipline, that their Enemies observ'd it as a rare and remarkable

*Tert. A-* thing : *See how the Christians love one*  
*pol. c. 33.* *another ! see how ready they are to die*  
*for one another !* Now the same gra-

acious Principle that inclines us to do one Command, will make us universally willing to observe all ; for sincere Obedience primarily respects the Authority of the Law-giver, which binds the whole Law upon the Conscience. And as he

*James 2.* *that breaks the Law wilfully in one Point,*  
*is guilty of all,* because the Violation of a single Precept proceeds from the same Cause that induces Men to transgress all, that is, Contempt of  
 the

the Divine Majesty; so he that sincerely obeys one Command, does with consent of Heart, and serious Endeavours obey all. And from hence 'tis clear, that without a religious and unreserved regard of the Divine Commands, 'tis impossible there should be in any Person a gracious Affection to the Saints; that is the product of Obedience to God, and consequently the observance of his Precepts, is the certain Proof of our Love to his Children.

*Secondly*, Spiritual Love to the Saints arises from the sight of the Divine Image appearing in their Conversation. Now if the Beauty of Holiness be the attractive of our Love, it will be fastned on the Law of God in the most intense degree. The most excellent Saints on Earth have some mixtures of Corruption; their Holiness is like the Morning-light,

light, that is checker'd with the Shadows and Obscurity of the Night; and 'tis our Wisdom not to love their Infirmities, but to preserve an unstained Affection to them. But the Law of God is the fairest Transcript of his Nature, wherein his glorious Holiness is most resplendent. *The Law of the*

Pfal. 19. *Lord is perfect, converting the Soul;*  
 7, 8. *the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightning the Eyes.* This ravish'd the Heart of David with an inexpressible Affection. *O how I love*

Pfal. 119. *thy Law! it is my Meditation all the day.* And he repeats the Declaration of his Love to it with new Fervor, upon this ground; *I love thy Law, because it is pure.* Now Love to the Commands of God will transcribe them in our Hearts and Lives. As affectionate Expressions to the Children of God, without the real supply of their Wants, are but the shadows of Love; so words  
 of



of Esteem and Respect to the Law of God, without unfeigned and universal Obedience, are but an empty Pretence.

*Thirdly*, The Divine Relation of the Saints to God as their Father, is the Motive of Spiritual Love to them. And this is consequent to the former; for by partaking of his Holiness, they partake of his Life and Likeness. And from hence they are the dearest Objects of his Love; his Eye and Heart is always upon them. Now if this Consideration excites Love to the Children of God, it will be as powerful to incline us to keep his Commands; for the Law of God, that is the Copy of his Sacred Will, is most near to his Nature, and he is infinitely tender of it. Our Saviour tells us, that it is easier for Heaven and Earth to pass away, than for one tittle of the Law

Luke 16.  
17.

*to fail.* If the entire World, and all the Inhabitants of it were destroyed, there would be no loss to God; but if the Law lose its Authority and Obligation, the Divine Holiness would suffer a Blemish.

The Use of the Doctrine is, to try our Love to the Children of God, to which all pretend, by this infallible Rule, our Obedience to his Commands. This is absolutely necessary, because the Deceit is so easy and so dangerous: and it will be most comfortable, if upon this Trial our Love be found to be Spiritual and Divine. The Deceit is easy, because Acts of Love may be expressed to the Saints from other Principles than the Love of God: Some for vain-Glory are bountiful; and when their Charity seems so visibly Divine, that Men admire it, there is the Worm of Vanity at the Root, that corrupts and makes  
it

it odious to God. The Pharisees are charged with this by our Saviour; their Alms were not the Effect Mat. 6. 2. of Charity, but Ostentation; and whilst they endeavoured to make their Vices vertuous, they made their Vertues vicious. There is a natural Love among Persons united by Consanguinity, that remains so entire since the Ruine of Mankind by the Fall, and is rather from the force of Nature, than the virtue of the Will, and this is in all kind Offices may be express'd to the Saints. There is a sweetness of Temper in some, that inclines them to wish well to all, and such tender Affections that are easily moved and melted at the sight of others Miseries; and such may be beneficent and compassionate to the Saints in their Afflictions: but the Spring of this Love is Good-Nature, not Divine Grace. There are Human Respects that incline others

others to Kindness to the Saints, as they are united by Interest, Fellow-Citizens and Neighbours, and as they receive Advantage by Commerce with them, or as obliged by their Benefits: But Civil Amity and Gratitude are not that holy Affection that is an Assurance of our Spiritual State. There are other Motives of Love to the Saints, that are not so low nor mercenary; in the thickest Darkness of Paganism, the Light of Reason discovered the amiable Excellence of Vertue, as becoming the Human Nature, and useful for the Tranquillity and Welfare of Mankind; and the Moral Goodness that adorns the Saints, the Innocence, Purity, Meekness, Justice, Clemency, Benignity, that are visible in their Conversations, may draw Respects from others who are Strangers to the Love of God, and careless of his Commandments.

And

And as the Mistake of this Affection is easy, so it is infinitely dangerous; for he that builds his hope of Heaven upon a *sandy Foundation*, upon false Grounds, will fall ruinously from his Hopes and Felicity at last. How fearful will be the Disappointment of one that has been a Favourer of the Saints, that has defended their Cause, protected their Persons, relieved their Necessities, and presum'd for this, that his Condition is safe as to Eternity, tho he lives in the known neglect of other Duties, and the indulgent Practice of some Sin?

But if we find that our Love to the Children of God flows from our Love to God, that sways the Soul to an entire compliance to his Commands, and makes us observant of them in the course of our Lives: What a *blessed Hope* arises from this Reflection? We

need not have the Book of the Divine Decrees opened, and the Secrets of Election unvail'd; for we  
<sup>1</sup> Joh. 3. know that we are past from Death  
<sup>14</sup> to Life, if we love the Brethren.  
This is an infallible Effect and Sign of the Spiritual Life, and the Seed and Evidence of Eternal Life.

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SER-

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*How to bear Afflictions.*

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SERMON IV.

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HEBREWS xii. 5.

*My Son despise not thou the chastening of  
the Lord, nor faint when thou art  
rebuked of him.*

**T**HE words are an excellent  
Passage from the Book of  
the *Proverbs*; wherein the Supreme  
Eternal Wisdom is represented, Prov. 3.  
12.  
giving Instruction to the Afflicted,  
how to behave themselves under  
Troubles, so as they may prove  
beneficial to them: the Counsel is,  
that they should preserve a Tempe-  
rament of Spirit, between the excess  
and defect of Patience and Courage,

neither despising the Chastening of the Lord, by a sinful neglect of them as a small unconcerning matter, nor fainting under them, as a Burden so great and oppressing, that no Deliverance was to be expected. To enforce the Exhortation, Wisdom useth the amiable and endearing Title, *My Son*, to signify that God in the quality of a Father, corrects his People; the Consideration whereof is very proper to conciliate Reverence to his Hand, and to encourage their Hopes of a blessed Issue.

The Proposition that arises from the Words is this;

*'Tis the Duty and best Wisdom of afflicted Christians, to preserve themselves from the vicious Extreams of despising the Chastenings of the Lord, or fainting under them.*

To



To illustrate this by a clear Method; I shall endeavour to shew,

I. What it is to despise the Chastenings of the Lord; and the Causes of it.

II. What fainting under his Rebukes signifies, and what makes us incident to it.

III. Prove that 'tis the Duty and best Wisdom of the Afflicted to avoid these Extreams.

IV. Apply it.

*First,* To despise the Chastenings of the Lord, imports the making no account of them, as unworthy of serious Regard; and includes Inconsiderateness of Mind, and an Insensibleness of Heart.

I. Inconsiderateness of Mind, with respect to the Author or End of Chastenings.

(i.) With respect to the Author, when the Afflicted looks only down-

wards, as if the Rod of Affliction sprang out of the Dust, and there were no superiour Cause that sent it.

Thus many apprehend the Evils that befall them, either meerly as the Productions of Natural Causes, or as casual Events, or the Effects of the Displeasure and Injustice of Men, but never look on the other side of the Vail of the second Causes, to that invisible Providence that orders all. If a Disease strikes their Bodies, they attribute it to the extremity of Heat or Cold, that distempers their Humours: if a Loss comes in their Estates, 'tis ascribed to Chance, Carelesness and Falseness of some upon whom they depended; but God is concealed from their sight by the nearness of the immediate Agent. Whereas the principal Cause of all Temporal Evils is the over-ruling Providence of God.

Amos 3.

6. *Shall there be Evil in a City, and the Lord*

*Lord hath not done it?* They come not only with his Knowledge and Will, but by his Efficiency. The Locusts that infected *Egypt* are as Exod. 10. 13, 19. real an Effect of God's Wrath, as the most miraculous Plague, altho an East Wind brought them, and a West Wind carried them away. The Arrow that was shot at a venture, and pierc'd between the Joints of *Ahab's* Armour, was directed by 1 Kings 22. 34. the Hand of God for his Destruction. *Shimei's* cursing of *David*, tho it was the overflowing of his Gall, the Effect of his Malignity, yet that holy King look'd higher, and acknowledged the Lord hath bidden 1 Sam. 16. 11. him. As the Lord is a God of Power, and can inflict what Judgments he pleaseth immediately; so he is a God of Order, and usually punisheth in this World by subordinate means. Now where-ever he strikes, tho his Hand is wrap'd up in a Cloud, yet if it be not ob-

served, especially if by habitual Incogitancy Men consider not with whom they have to do in their various Troubles, this profane neglect is no less than a despising the Chastenings of the Lord.

(2.) Inconsiderateness of the End of the Divine Discipline, is a great degree of Contempt. The Evils that God inflicts are as real a part of his Providence, as the Blessings he bestows; as in the course of Nature the Darkness of the Night is by his Order, as well as the Light of the Day: therefore they are always sent for some wise and holy Design. Sometime, tho more rarely, they are only for trial, to exercise the Faith, Humility, Patience of eminent Saints; for otherwise God would lose in a great measure the Honour and Renown, and his Favourites the Reward of those Graces, Afflictions being the Sphere of their Activity. But for the most part

part they are castigatory, to bring us to a sight and sense of our State, to render Sin more evident and odious to us. They are fitly exprest, by pouring from Vessel to Vessel, that discovers the Dregs and Sediment, and makes it offensive, that before was concealed. The least Affliction even to the Godly, is usually an Application of the Physician of Spirits for some growing Distemper: every Corrosive is for some proud Flesh that must be taken away. In short, they are deliberate Dispensations to cause Men to reflect upon their Works and Ways, and break off their Sins by sincere Obedience. Therefore we are commanded *to hear the Voice of the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* Mic. 6. 9. 'Tis a Preacher of Repentance, to lead us to the Knowledg and Consideration of our selves. The Distress of Joseph's Brethren was to revive their Memory of his Sorrows caused by

by their Cruelty. Now when Men disregard the Embassy of the Rod, are unconvinced, notwithstanding its lively Lessons; when they neither look up to him that strikes, nor within to the Cause that provokes his Displeasure; when they are careless to reform their Ways, and to comply with his holy Will, as if Afflictions were only common Accidents of this mutable State, the Effects of rash Fortune or blind Fate, without Design and Judgment, and not sent for their Amendment, this is a prodigious despising of God's Hand. For this reason the Scripture compares Men to the most inobservant Creatures, to the wild Asses Colt, the deaf Adder, to the silly Dove without Heart: and the Advantage is on the Beasts side, for their Inconsideration proceeds meerly from the Incapacity of Matter, of which they are wholly compos'd to perform reflex Acts: but Man's  
Incogi-

Job 11.

12.

Psal. 58.

Hosea 4.

7.  
11.

Incogitancy is the sole fault of his Spirit, that wilfully neglects his Duty. The Prophet charges this Guilt upon the Jews, *Lord, when thy Hand is lifted up, they will not see.* Isa. 26. 11.

2. Insensibility of Heart is an eminent degree of despising the Lord's Chastenings. A pensive feeling of Judgments is very congruous, whether we consider them *in genere Physico*, or *Morali*; either materially as afflictive to Nature, or as the signs of Divine Displeasure: for the Affections were planted in the Human Nature by the Hand of God himself, and are duly exercised in proportion to the quality of their Objects. And when Grace comes, it softens the Breast, and gives a quick and tender sense of God's Frown. An eminent Instance we have in *David*, tho of Heroical Courage; yet in his sad ascent to Mount *Olivet*, he went up weeping with his Head covered, and his

2 Sam.  
15. 30.

his Feet bare, to testify his humble and submissive sense of God's Anger against him. Now when Men are insensible of Judgments, either considered as natural or penal Evils; if when they suffer the loss of Relations or other Troubles, they presently fly to the Comforts of the Heathens, that we are all mortal, and what can't be help'd must be endured, without the Sense Humanity requires; that Calm is like that of the dead Sea, a real Curse: Or suppose natural Affection works a little, yet there is no Apprehension and Concernment for God's Displeasure, which should be infinitely more affecting than any outward Trouble, how sharp soever, no serious deep Humiliation under his Hand, no yielding up our selves to his Management; this most justly provokes him: of this Temper were those described by Jeremiah, *Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved;*



*grieved; thou hast consumed them, but they refused to receive Correction.*

Secondly, The Causes of this despising of God's Chastenings are :

I. A contracted Stupidity of Soul, proceeding from a course in Sin. There is a natural Stubbornness and Contumacy in the Heart against God, a vicious Quality derived from rebellious *Adam*; we are all hewn out of the Rock, and dig'd out of the Quarry: and this is one of the worst Effects of Sin, and a great part of its Deceitfulness, that by stealth it increaseth the natural Hardness, by degrees it creeps on like a Gangreen, and causes an Indolency.

Heb. 3.  
13.

The Practice of Sin makes the Heart like an Adamant, the hardest of Stones, that exceeds that of Rocks.

Zech. 7.  
12.

From hence proceeds such Unteachableness of the Mind, that when God speaks and strikes, yet Sinners will not be convinc'd; that Briars  
and

and Thorns are only effectual to teach them; and such an Untractableness in the Will, that when the Sinner is stormed by Affliction, and some Light breaks into the Understanding, yet it refuseth to obey God's Call.

2. Carnal Diversions are another Cause of slighting God's Hand. The Pleasures and Cares of the World, as they render Men inapprehensive of Judgments to come, so regardless of those that are present. Some when ever they feel the Smart of a Cross, use all the Arts of Oblivion to lose the Sense of it. The Affliction instead of leading them to Repentance, leads them to vain Conversations, to Comedies and other sinful Delights, to drive away Sorrow. Others, altho they do not venture upon forbidden things to relieve their Melancholy, yet when God by sharp and sensible Admonitions calls upon them, they have present-

Luke 21.  
34.

presently recourse to Temporal Comforts, which altho lawful and innocent in themselves, yet are as unproper at that time, as the taking of a Cordial when a Vomit begins to work: for whereas Chastisements are sent to awaken and affect us, by considering our Sins in their bitter Fruits, this unseasonable Application of sensual Comforts wholly defeats God's Design. For nothing so much hinders serious Consideration as a voluptuous indulging the Senses in things pleasing; like Opiate Medicines, they stupify the Conscience, and benumn the Heart. 'Tis Solomon's Expression, *I said of Laughter, It is mad*: for as Distraction breaks the Connexion of the Thoughts, so Mirth shuffles out most serious Thoughts into disorder, and causes Men to pass over their Troubles without Reflection and Remorse.

1 Kings  
16.

And

And as the Pleasures, so the Business of the World cause a supine Security under Judgments. We have an amazing Instance of it in *Hiel* the Bethlemite, who laid the Foundation of his City in the Death of his First-born, and set up the Gates of it in his youngest Son; yet he was so intent upon his Building, that he disregarded the Divine *Nemesis*, that was apparent, fulfilling the terrible Threatning prophesied against the Builder

Joshua 6.

26. of *Jericho*.

3. An obstinate fierceness of Spirit, a Diabolical Fortitude is the Cause that sometimes Men despise afflicting Providences so far as to resist them. There is a passive Malignity in all, an Unaptness to be wrought on, and to receive Spiritual and Heavenly Impressions from God's Hand; but in some of the Sons of Perdition there is an active Malignity, whereby they furiously  
 repel

repel Judgments as if they could oppose the Almighty. Their Hearts are of an Anvil-Temper, made harder by Afflictions, and reverberate the Blow, like that Roman Emperor, who instead of humbling and reforming at God's Voice in Thunder, thundred back again. All Judgments that befall them, are as Strokes given to wild Beasts, that instead of taming them, enrage them to higher degrees of Fierceness.

The Prophet described some of this Rank of Sinners, who said *in the Pride and Stoutness of their Hearts, the Bricks are fallen down, but we will build with hewn Stones: the Sycomores are cut down, but we will change them into Cedars.* Isa. 9. 9.  
10.

And many though not Explicitly, yet virtually declare a Resolution notwithstanding the most visible Discouragements from Heaven, to proceed in their sinful courses

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with more greediness, and from a sullen secret Atheism are more strongly carried to gratify their Lusts again, when they are in Afflictions.

II. I shall proceed to consider the other Extream of fainting under God's Rebukes.

εὐλυσ.

I. The Original Word signifies the slackening and relaxing of things that were firmly join'd together. The Strength of the Body proceeds from the Union of the Parts, when they are well compacted together. By their disjointing 'tis enfeebled, and rendred unfit for Labour. In this Motion the Apostle in the 12th Verse *exhorts them to lift up the Hands that hang down, and strengthen the feeble Knees*: That is, to encourage and strengthen their Souls by a real belief of the Promises made to afflicted Christians.

2. It

2. It may respect the sinking, and falling away of the Soul like Water, being hopeless of overcoming Troubles. When Water is frozen into hard Ice, it will bear a great Burden, but when 'tis dissolved and melted, nothing is weaker. So the *Spirit of a Man* confirmed by Prov. 19: 14. religious Principles, *is able to sustain all his Infirmities.* *Si fractus illabitur orbis*, if the Weight of the heaviest Afflictions fall upon him, yet his Mind remains erect and unbroken, and bears them all with Courage and Constancy: But if through Impatience under Tribulation, and Diffidence in the Divine Promises, we shrink from our Duty, or reject *the Comforts of God as if they were small*, and not proportionable to the Evils that oppress us; this is to faint when we are rebuked by him.

The Causes of this Despondency are usually;

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(1.) Either

(1.) Either the kind of the Affliction: when there is a Singularity in the case, it increaseth the Apprehension of God's Displeasure; because it may signify an extraordinary Guilt, and singular Unworthiness in the Person that suffers; and upon that account, that Sorrow swells so high as to overwhelm him.

(2.) The number and degrees of Afflictions; when like those black Clouds which in Winter-Days join together, and quite intercept the Beams of the Sun: so many Troubles meet at once, and deprive us of all present Comfort. *Job* lost his Children by a sudden unnatural Death; and was tormented in all the Parts of his Body, and reduced from his rich Abundance to the Dunghil, and a Potsherd to scrape his Boils. Indeed his Heroical Spirit was supported under those numerous and grievous Troubles,  
but



but such a Weight were enough to sink the most.

(3.) The continuance of Afflictions. When the Clouds return after Rain, and the Life is a constant Scene of Sorrows, we are apt to be utterly dejected, and hopeless of Good. The Psalmist tells us, *All the Day long I have been plagued, and chastened every Morning*; and from thence was strongly tempted to Despair. Psal. 73.  
14.

(4.) Comparing their great Sufferings with the Prosperity of those who are extremely vicious, inclines some to Despair. For not only their present Evils are heightened, and more sensibly felt by the Comparison, but the prosperous Impiety of others tempts them to think there is no just and powerful Providence that distributes things below; and looking no higher than to Second Causes, that are obvious to Sense, they judg their State past Recovery.

III. The next thing is to prove, that 'tis the Duty and Wisdom of the Afflicted not to Despise the Chastenings of the Lord, nor to faint under them.

*First*, 'Tis their Duty carefully to avoid those Extreams, because they are very dishonourable to God:

1. The Contempt of Chastisements is high Profanation of God's Honour, who is our Father and Sovereign, and in that Quality afflicts us: 'Tis our Apostle's Argument, Heb. 12. *Furthermore, we have had Fathers of our*  
 2. *Flesh which corrected us, and we gave them Reverence; shall we not much more be subject to the Father of Spirits, and live?* 'Tis a Principle deeply planted in the Human Nature, which the most barbarous Nations have kept inviolable, to express the reallest Respect to our Parents, from whom we derive our Life, and by whose tender

tender Care we have been preserved, and educated, altho their Discipline be rigorous: but it is infinitely more just and reasonable, that we should reverently submit to the Father of Spirits, who hath the highest Right in us. As much as the immortal Spirit excels the infirm corruptible Flesh, proportionably should our Reverence to God, when he most sharply rebukes us, exceed our Respects to our Earthly Fathers when they correct us. The manner of the Apostle's Expression is very significant, *Shall we not much rather?* If there be any vital spark of Conscience remaining in our Breasts, if Reason be not wholly declined to Brutishness, we cannot do otherwise.

2. Fainting under Chastenings reflects dishonourably upon God. 'Tis true in some respect, those who are extreamly dejected, are not so guilty as the Despisers; for usually

they acknowledg the Order and Justice of his Providence. But that false Conception of the Father of Mercies, either that he willingly afflicts the Children of Men, or that he hates them because he afflicts them here, is so contrary to his holy Nature, and injurious to his Goodness, the special Character of his Nature, that 'tis an equal Provocation, with the slighting his Sovereignty.

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*How to bear Afflictions.*

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SERMON V.

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HEBREWS xii. 5.

*My Son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.*

Secondly, **I** Shall proceed to prove, 'tis the best Wisdom not to despise God's Chastenings, nor faint under them. I will not insist upon the Consideration that 'tis the Counsel of the supream Wisdom to us, nor that 'tis the avoiding the vicious Extrems, which is the chiefest Point of Moral Prudence: but it is the only way to prevent the greatest Mischiefs that will

will otherwise befall us. 'Tis said, he that is wise is profitable to himself, that is either in obtaining Good, or preventing Evils. Now it will  
 Job 22. appear how pernicious those Ex-  
 21. tremes are, by considering ;

1. The Contempt of Chastenings, deprives us of all those Benefits which were intended by them. God's End in them is to imbitter Sin to our Taste, and make us dislike that deadly Poison: for as, according to the Rules of Physick, Contraries are cured by Contraries; so Sin that prevails by Pleasure, by something delightful to the Carnal Part, is mortified by what is afflictive to Sense. Repentance is a Duty that best complies with Affliction: for when the Spirit is made sad, and brought to the Sobriety of Consideration, it will more readily reflect upon the true Causes of Troubles: When the Springs overflow, 'tis but directing the Stream  
 into

into a right Channel, the changing the Object of our Grief, viz. mourning for Sin instead of sorrowing for outward Trouble, and we are in the way to Happiness. Sensible Sorrow leads to Godly Sorrow. The natural is first, then the spiritual. Now the Despisers of God's Hand, that are unaffected with Judgments, are incapable of this Benefit. For if they do not feel the Blow, how shall they take notice of the Hand that strikes? If they are not softened with Sorrows, how shall they receive the Divine Impression? If they have no sense of his Displeasure, how shall they fear to offend him for the future? If the Medicine doth not work, how can it expel noxious Humours?

2. The neglect of Chastening doth not only render them unprofitable, but exposes to greater Evils.

(1.) It

(1.) It provokes God to withdraw his Judgments for a time. This the Sinner desired, and thinks himself happy that he is at ease: Miserable Delusion! This Respite is the Prefage of his final Ruin. 'Twas the desperate State of Judah, as God Isa. 1. 5. expresses it, *Why should ye be stricken any more? ye will revolt more and more.* The words of an anxious Father that has tried all Methods, Counsel, Kindness, Corrections to reclaim a rebellious obstinate Son; and finding no answerable Effect, gives him over to follow the pernicious swinge of his corrupt Desires. No Severity is like the suffering him in his licentious Courses. Thus when God hath used many gracious ways to reduce the Sinner, by his Word, Spirit and Judgments, but he is inflexible to the Calls of the Word, impenetrable to the Motions of the Spirit, and insensible of afflicting Providences; when after a Combate with



with the Rod, Sin comes off unwounded, and the Rod retires; this Calm is more dreadful than the fiercest Storm; nothing can be more fatal to the Sinner, for by this Divine Desertion he is given over to a reprobate Mind, and vile Affections; he goes on undisturb'd in his Sins, and every day increaseth his Enmity against God, and provokes God's Enmity against him. 'Tis not conceivable that one who is not made pliable to the Grace of God by Afflictions, should submit when he is in pleasant Circumstances, and dispos'd to enjoy sensual Satisfaction. If the Whip and Spur cannot break and tame the unruly Beast, certainly the rich Pasture will never make him manageable. So that God's ceasing to punish the Sinner at present is so far from being a Favour, that 'tis the Effect of his deepest Displeasure; for it contributes to his hardning. 'Twas  
the

the Case of *Pharaoh*, when any of the Plagues were removed: Indulgence occasioned his Induration. As Water taken from the Fire, freezes sooner and harder, than if the thinner Parts had never been evaporated by the former Heat; so when Men are taken off from the Fire of Affliction, they are more confirmed in their vicious Courses than if they had never been afflicted.

(2.) The slighting of lighter Strokes, provokes God sometimes to bring more dreadful Judgments in this Life upon Sinners. No Man can endure that his Love or Anger should be despised. *Nebuchadnezzar* commanded the Furnace to be heated seven times hotter for those who contemned his Threatnings. God tells the *Israelites*, *If ye will not be reformed by these things, but will walk contrary unto me; Then will I also walk contrary unto you, and will punish*

Levit. 26.  
23, 24.

punish

*punish you yet seven times for your Sins.*

He will change the Rods into Scorpions, and will scourge them for their continued Rebellions. 'Tis

the intent of that Expostulation,

*Shall one take up a Snare from the Earth, and have taken nothing at all?*

Amos 3.

5.

Shall God remove his Judgments

while Sinners are careless and unreformed, as if they might be final

Conquerors over them? no, he will

multiply and greaten them. It

may be at first God blasts part of

the Estate, and the Sinner is not

apprehensive of his Hand; then he

comes nearer and snatches away a

dear Relation: if still the Sinner is

unaffected, he strikes his Body with

a lingring, or acute Disease: if still

he be not concern'd for God's Dis-

pleasure, he wounds his Spirit,

makes him sick in Sense and Con-

science at the same time, fills him

with Terror by the Reflection upon

his wicked Ways, and the fore-sight

of

of that dreadful Tribunal before which he must appear; so that altho he cannot live, he dare not die; tho his Earthly Tabernacle be ready to fall upon him, he is afraid to go out and meet the supream Judg: and if this doth not work a sincere thorow Change, God casts him into Hell to the Company of the

Prov. 21.  
16. Giants, those bold Rebels that fought against God. Briefly, as under the Law, an incorrigible Son that neglected his Father's Re-  
Vid. Mr. proofs, was to die without Mercy; Mede in so an unreformed Sinner who kicks  
loc. against the Pricks, and refuses to submit to God's Corrections, shall be cut off in his Obstinacy; Justice will proceed to Excision, and Acts of Vengeance against him.

(3.) Fainting under Chastenings is pernicious to Sufferers: for it renders them utterly indisposed for the Performance of Duty, and

unca-

uncapable of receiving the Comforts proper for an afflicted State.

1<sup>st</sup>. It renders them utterly indisposed for the performance of Duty. Hope draws forth all the active Powers of the Soul; 'tis the great Motive to Diligence, and Instrument of Duty. Despair, like extremity of Cold that checks the Spring, and binds up the Earth that its Fruits cannot appear, hinders the free Exercise of Reason and Grace, and cuts the Sinews of Obedience. He that is hopeless of a good Issue out of Troubles, will neither repent, nor pray, nor reform, but indulges barren Tears instead of real Duties.

Besides, it often falls out, that the same Affliction is sent from God's Displeasure upon his People for their Sins, and is the Effect of the Rage of Men against them up-

M

on

on the account of their professing his Name. Such is the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that by the same fiery Trial he may refine his Servants from their Dross and Impurities, and render the Glory of the Gospel more *conspicuous*. The Hatred of Religion, and a blind Fury may transport Men to Acts of Cruelty against the Saints; but 'tis by the permission of the universal Sovereign, who hath the Hearts of all in his Hands, and suffers their Rage for holy Ends. The Enemy designs against their Faith, but God's Aim is to make them reform their Lives.

Now if either through strong Fears, or the stinging sense of Troubles upon the account of Religion, our Courage fails, we are presently in danger of falling away, and denying our Master. The faint-hearted Person is usually false-hearted,

hearted, and for want of Resolution, being frightened out of his Conscience and Duty, chooses Sin rather than Suffering, and thereby justly deprives himself of the Crown of Life, that is promised only to those who are faithful unto the Death. Besides, not only the loss of Heaven; but the Torments of Hell are threaten'd against those who withdraw from the Service of God to avoid Temporal Evils. *The fearful and unbelieving are in the front of those that shall have part in the Lake of Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.* Now what Folly is it when two Evils are propounded, to choose the greatest; that is, Eternal Death rather than Temporal: and of two Goods to prefer the less; a short Life with its Conveniences on Earth, before that which is eternally glorious in Heaven? By which it appears how much

Rev. 21.  
8.

it concerns us to fortify and fix our Minds by a stedfast Belief of God's supporting Presence with us in all Troubles, and of his gracious Promise, that in due time we shall reap if we faint not in well-doing.

2dly. They are incapable of the Comforts proper to an afflicted State. Those arise from the Belief, *that God loves whom he chastens*: for the least Sin is a greater Evil than the greatest Trouble; and his design is to take that away, and from the expectation of a happy Issue. Hope is the Anchor within the Vail, that in the midst of Storms and roughest Seas, preserves from Shipwreck. The Character of Christians is, that they *are rejoicing in Hope*: But when the

Rev. 3.  
Rom. 12.  
12.

Afflicted are under fearful Impressions that God is an irreconcilable

able



able Enemy, and sadly conclude their Miseries are past Redress, those Divine Comforts that are able to sweeten the most bitter Sufferings to Believers, are of no Efficacy. Their deep Sorrows are not like the Pains of a travailing Woman that end in a joyful Birth, but the killing Tortures of the Stone that are fruitless to the Patient. An obstinate Grief, and rejecting the Consolations of God, *is the beginning of Sorrows*, the first Payment of that sad Arrear of mourning that shall be exacted in another World.

The Use shall be to excite us to those Duties that are directly contrary to the Extreams forbidden, *viz.* To demean our selves under the Chastenings of the Lord with a deep Reverence and humble Fear of his Displeasure, and with

IV.

a firm Hope and Dependance upon him for a blessed Issue upon our complying with his holy Will.

1. With an humble Reverence of his Hand. This Temper is absolutely necessary and most congruous with respect to God, upon the account of his Sovereignty, Justice and Goodness declar'd in his Chastnings; and with respect to our Frailty, our Dependance upon him, our Obnoxiousness to his Law, and our Obligations to him, that he will please to afflict us for our good.

Amos 3. This is the reason of that Ex-  
 4. postulation, *Will a Lion roar in the Forest, when he hath no Prey? Shall God's Threatnings and Judgments have no Effect? Who ever hardened himself against him, and prospered? Do we provoke the Lord*

to Jealousy, the most sensible and severe Attribute when it is incens'd? Are we stronger than he? Can we encounter offended Omnipotency? Can we with an Army of Lusts oppose Myriads of mighty Angels? 'Tis not Courage, but such a prodigious degree of Folly and Fury, that one would think 'twere impossible a reasonable Creature were capable of it. Yet every Sinner unreformed by Afflictions is thus desperate: *He stretches out his Hand* Job 15. *against God, and strengthens himself* 25, 26. *against the Almighty; he runneth upon him, even on his Neck, upon the thick Bosses of his Bucklers.* Such a furious Rebel was Ahaz, who in the time of his Distress, did trespass more against the Lord: This is that King Ahaz! But God hath most solemnly declared, that he will be victorious at last over the most fierce obdurate Enemies. *As I live, saith*

*the Lord, every Knee shall bow to me. His Power is Infinite, and Anger puts an Edg upon his Power, and makes it more terrible. If our Subjection be not voluntary, it must be violent. 'Tis our Wisdom to prevent Acts of Vengeance by humble Submissions. The Duty of the Afflicted is excellently exprest by Elibu: Surely it is meet to be said to God, I have born Chastisements, I will not offend any more. That I know not, teach thou me: if I have done Iniquity, I will do so no more.*

Job 34.  
31, 32.

Add further, upon another account Reverence is due to God's Chastenings: for when Love is the Motive that incites one to give us Counsel, tho it be mixt with Reproofs, and his Prudence is not great, yet a Respect is due to the Affection. Now God who is only wise, chastises Men from a desire

to make them better and happy ; he intends primarily to refine, not to consume them by Afflictions : so that a serious regard to his Hand is the most just and necessary Duty of the Creature. Briefly, every Chastisement should leave deep and permanent Impressions upon us ; the Sense of God's Displeasure should make our Hearts mournful and mollified, broken and contrite, that his Will may be done by us on Earth as it is in Heaven.

2. Let us always preserve an humble Dependance and firm Hope on God, for a blessed Issue out of all our Troubles : The Support and Tranquillity of the Soul ariseth from hence. Christian Patience suffers all things as well as Charity, being encouraged by a continual expectation of Good from him.

Patience

Patience confirms all other Graces, and is to the whole Armour of God, what the Temper is to material Weapons, that keeps them from breaking in the Combat. Now to maintain a constant Hope in Affliction, 'tis necessary to consider the Reason of the Exhortation as 'tis admirably amplified by the Apostle.

(1.) The Relation God sustains when he afflicts Believers. He is a Judg invested with the Quality of a Father. The Covenant of Grace between God and Jesus Christ, our true *David*, contains this observable Clause, *If thy Children forsake my Law, and walk not in my Judgments; If they break my Statutes, and keep not my Commandments; then will I visit their Transgressions with a Rod, and their Iniquity with Stripes.*

Psal. 89.  
30, 31,  
32.

The

The Love that ariseth from this Relation, tho it cannot hate, yet it may be displeas'd, and chastise them for their Follies. *Moses* tells the *Israelites*, *Thou shalt consider in thy Heart, that as a Man chastens his Son,* Deut. 8:  
*so the Lord thy God chastens thee.* In Children Reason is not fully dis-  
 clouded, they are not capable to govern themselves, and are only taught with sensible Pleasure or Pain: So that a Father is oblig'd to join Correction with Instruction, to form them to Vertue. This is so far from being inconsistent with Paternal Affection, that 'tis inseparable from it. For a Parent to suffer a Child to go on pleasantly in Sin without due Punishment, is pure Cruelty disguised under the Mask of Pity: for by the neglect of Discipline he is confirm'd in his vicious Courses, and expos'd to Ruin. The Apostle therefore adds,

*Whom*

*Whom the Lord loves, he chastens :* As from the severest Wrath he sometimes forbeareth to strike, so from dearest Love he afflicts. Humble Believers through a Cloud of Tears may see the Light of God's Countenance: for having elected them by special Love to a glorious Inheritance above, he dispenseth all things here in order to the preparing them for it; and all Temporal Evils, as Means, are transform'd into the Nature of the End to which they are subservient. So that the sharpest Sufferings are really from God's Favour, since they are beneficial for our obtaining real Happiness. The Devil usually tempts Men in a Paradise of Delights, to precipitate them into Hell: God tries them in the Furnace of Afflictions, to purify and prepare them for Heaven.

(2.) 'Tis



(2.) 'Tis a strong Cordial against fainting, to consider that by virtue of the Paternal Relation he scourges every Son whom he receives: for no Troubles are more afflictive and stinging than those that are unexpected. Now when we are assured that there is no Son whom the Heavenly Father doth not chasten, we are less surprized when we meet with Crosses. Indeed there is hardly any kind of Affliction that may befall us, but we have some instance in Scripture of the Saints suffering the same. Are we poor and mean in the World? we should consider that Poverty with Holiness is a Divine Complexion: Jesus Christ the holy and beloved Son of God, had not where to lay his Head. Are we under bodily Distempers? good *Hezekiah* was struck with an uncomfortable Disease

Disease as to the Quality of it; and *Gaius* had a flourishing Soul in a languishing Body. Are our dear Relations taken away? *Aaron* and *David* lost some of their Sons by terrible Strokes. Are our Spirits wounded with the sense of God's Displeasure? *Job* and *Heman* were under strong Terrors, yet the Favourites of Heaven. Briefly, how many most dear to God were called forth to extream and bloody Trials for Defence of the Truth? How many Deaths did they endure in one Torment? How many Torments in one Death? yet they were so far from fainting, that the more their Pains were exasperated, the more their Courage and Joy was shining and conspicuous; as the Face of the Heavens is never more serene and clear, than when the sharpest North Wind blows. 'Tis the Apostle's Inference, Seeing

we are compassed with such a Cloud of Witnesses, let us run with Patience the Race that is set before us.

This is further enforc'd by the following words, *If ye be without Chastening, whereof all are partakers, then are ye Bastards, and not Sons.* If God doth not vouchsafe us the Mercy of his Rod, 'tis evident we are not part of his Fatherly Care. The Bramble is neglected, while the Vine is cut till it bleeds. 'Tis a miserable Privilege to be exempted from Divine Discipline, and by Ease and Prosperity to be corrupted and made fit for Destruction. *St. Austin* represents one expostulating with God: *O Deus, ista est Justitia tua, ut mali floreant, & boni laborent!* In Psal. 25. O God, it is righteous with Thee, that the Wicked should prosper, and the Good suffer! *Dicis Deo, ista est Justitia tua? & Deus tibi, ista est Fides tua? hæc enim tibi promisi?*

*ad hoc Christianus factus es, ut in seculo isto floureres, & in inferno postea torquereris?* God replies to him, Is this your Faith? Did I promise you Temporal Prosperity? Were you a Christian for this, that you might flourish in this World, and be miserably tormented in Hell?

Ver. 9.

The Apostle represents the special Prerogative of God *as the Father of Spirits*, and so hath a nearer Claim to us than the Fathers of our Flesh, and that he is not liable to those Imperfections that attend the Earthly Relations. *They for a few days chastened us for their own Pleasure.* Human Love is a troubled irregular Passion, mixt with Ignorance, and prone to Error in the Excess or Defect. Sometimes Parents are indulgent, and by a cruel Compassion spare their Children when they are faulty: sometimes they correct without Cause,

Cause, sometimes when the Reason is just, yet they err in the manner or measure of the Correction, so that their Children are discouraged. But in God there is a perfect Union of Wisdom and Love, of Discretion and Tenderness; his Affection is without the least Imperfection. His Will is always guided by infinite Wisdom. If his Children offend, he will chastise them with the Rod of Men, that is, moderately: for as in Scripture things are magnified by the Epithet, Divine or of God, so they are lessened by the Epithet, Human. Accordingly the Apostle declares to the *Corinthians*, that no *Temptation had befallen them, but such as is common to Man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able; but will with the Temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to*

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bear

2 Sam. 7.

14.

1 Cor.

10, 13.

*bear it.* As a prudent Physician consults the Strength of the Patient as well as the Quality of the Disease, and proportions his Medicine; so all the bitter Ingredients, their Mixture and Measure, are dispens'd by the wise Prescription of God, according to the degrees of Strength that are in his People.

The Apostle specifies the immediate End of God in his Chastenings: *But he for our Profit, that we may be partakers of his Holiness.* This is the supream Excellency of the Divine Nature, and our Conformity to it is so valuable, that it renders Afflictions not only tolerable, but so far desirable as they contribute to it. In the present State our Graces are imperfect, and our Conformity to the Divine Purity is like the Resemblance of the Sun in a watry Cloud, very  
much

much beneath the Perfection and Radiancy of that great Light. Now God is pleased to fashion us according to his Image by Afflictions. As a Statue is cut by the Artificer, to bring it into a beautiful Form.

He is pleased to bring us into divers Temptations to try our Faith, to work in us Patience, to inflame our Prayers, to mortify our Carnal Desires, to break those voluntary Bonds whereby we are fettered to the Earth, that we may live with those Affections wherewith others die. And certainly if we make a true Judgment of things, we have not the least cause to suspect the Love of God when he chastises us, to take away Sin the only abominable Object of his Hatred and deep Detestation, and to render us Partakers of the Divine Nature.

And the present peaceable Fruit of Righteousness is the Product in those who are duly exercised by their Troubles. It is an Allusion to the Reward of the Conquerors in the Olympick Games, who had a Crown of Olives, the Emblem and Shadow of Peace. But true Peace, a Divine Calm in the Conscience, shall be the Recompence of all that exercise their Graces suitable to an afflicted State. In short, the Apostle assures Believers, that they are chastened of the Lord, to prevent their Condemnation with the World. The correcting Rod delivers them from Hell. This Consideration changes Thorns into Roses, and extracts Honey out of Wormwood: if the way be stony or showery that leads to Blessedness, a Christian should willingly walk in it. To conclude; from the Consideration of what  
the

1 Cor.  
11. 32.



the Scripture declares concerning Temporal Evils, let us *lift up the Hands that hang down, and the feeble Knees*; and make *streight Paths for our Feet*, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed; *i. e.* In our Affliction, let us take Courage and Resolution from the Promises, and live in a holy Conformity to God's Will, that the weak or faint may be restored.

The first and last Lesson of Pagan Philosophy was to support Men under the Storms to which they are liable in this open State, to render the Soul *velut Pelagi rupes immota*, as a Rock unshaken by the Waves.

But all their Directions were unsuccessful, and so could not secure them from Impatience or  
Despair.

Despair. But the Gospel that assures us of the Love of God in sending Afflictions for our Spiritual and Eternal Good, is alone able to compose the Mind. And whenever we faint in Troubles, 'tis either from Infidelity or Inconsideration; 'tis impossible a Person should be a Christian, and be incapable of Comfort in the most afflicted State: for we are really so by the holy Spirit, who is the Comforter. When we speak sometimes to those we judg infirm, we speak to Infidels, who only receive Remedy from Time which they ought to receive from Faith; they they have the Name of God only in their Mouths, but the World is in their Hearts. Their Passions are strong and obstinate, not subject to sanctified Reason. The Difficulty they have of being comforted, discovers the necessity of their

their being afflicted. They need Conversion more than Consolation; others, who are sincere in Faith, yet are apt to faint under Troubles, from an Error like that of the Apostles; when their Lord came upon the Waters in a stormy tempestuous Night to their Assistance, they thought he was a Spirit. So they look on God as an Enemy, when he comes to sanctify and save them: the Sovereign Remedy of our Sorrows is to correct the Judgment of Sense by a serious Belief of God's Promise. Thus we shall reconcile the roughness of his Hand with the sweetness of his Voice: he calls to us from Heaven in the darkest Night, *'Tis I, be not afraid.* He corrects us with the Heart and Hand of a Father.

A due Consideration of these things will produce a glorified Joy  
in

in the midst of our Sufferings.

Rom. 15. *Whatsoever things were written afore-  
<sup>4</sup> time, were written for our Learning,  
that we through Patience and Com-  
fort of the Scriptures might have  
Hope.*

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SER.

## SERMON VI.

LUKE xiv. 23.

*The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.*

**O**UR Blessed Saviour in the days of his Humility, among other Instances of his admirable Condescension, was pleased in his Sermons to stoop to the Capacity of the Hearers, and instruct them in a familiar easy way. The infirm Eye of Flesh cannot behold Spiritual Things in their immediate Purity and Glory, but as shadowed under sensible Comparisons. Therefore his excellent Goodness made use of Parables, to illustrate and explain by Representations

tations and Patterns borrowed from things common and known, things of a sublimer Nature, and more distant from our Apprehensions: and by this ingaging lively manner to awaken the Spirit to consider by what is said, what is signified: and to insinuate into the Affections Divine Truths so pleasingly conveyed to us.

Now of all the Parables in the Gospel, this of the Marriage-Feast, both in respect of the Excellence of the Matter, and the manner of Expression suitable to our Capacity, deserves the serious Application of our Minds and Hearts. I will make some Observations upon it, that may be useful and introductory to the following Discourse.

Two general Parts are to be considered, in it: *viz.*

I. The

- I. The Narrative of the Preparations, and the Persons invited to the Feast.
- II. The Success of the Invitation.

In unfolding these Generals, I shall consider the Substance of the Parable, without straining it by far-fetch'd Parallels beyond the Intention of our Saviour. 'Tis a curious Folly to turn every Figure in Scripture into an Allegory. The Parable is the same in Substance with that in the 22<sup>d</sup> Chapter of *St. Matthew*, from the 2<sup>d</sup> Verse to the 15<sup>th</sup>: that indeed has more of Circumstance and Magnificence in the Relation. *The certain Man that made the Feast is there stiled a King, that is, the blessed God; and the Feast is for the Marriage of his Son: Under this Figure of a Royal Marriage is represented the Mystical*

O 2                      Marriage

Marriage between Christ and his Church, and the Type is infinitely excell'd by the Reality. If we consider the Persons join'd in this Divine Alliance, the Son of God, of the same Nature, of equal and eternal Greatness with his Father, to unite himself to sinful miserable Creatures in a Conjugal Relation, the most tender and entire, What an immense distance was to be overcome? What a seeming Disparagement, was it to him? In order to this it was necessary there should be a Conformity of Nature between us: he therefore *was made Flesh, that we might be one Spirit with him*: he assumed our Nature in a Personal Union to the Diety, that he might marry our Persons in a Spiritual Union. He was a Saviour to redeem us, that he might be a Husband to enrich us. Astonishing Love! The Lord of Glory, higher than the Heavens, stoop'd so



so low as to espouse poor Dust: he gave his Life for us, and himself to us for ever. What Honour and Happiness accrues to us by this Alliance! the Lord of Angels is our Husband. His Gifts are answerable to his Love: he is Heir of all things, and endows his Church with Heaven and Earth: the Apostle assures Believers *all things are yours, and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.* Our Communion with him is so perfect, that he discharges us of all the Evils that we cannot bear, our Sins and the Curse due to them, by taking them upon himself, and bestows upon us all the Blessings and Blessedness we are capable to enjoy, *Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification and Redemption.*

By the great Supper prepar'd, we are to understand the Manifestation of the Messiah, with all the most precious and unvaluable Benefits purchased and conferr'd by him

upon Believers; the Pardon of Sins, Adoption into God's Family, the Graces and Comforts of the Spirit, and eternal Glory, the becoming Testimonies of his Greatness and Love.

The prime Guests invited to this Feast are the Jews, the select People of God, to whom pertained the  
 Rom. 9. Adoption, and the Glory, and the Co-  
 - 4, 5. venants, and the giving of the Law, and the Service of God, and the Promises: Whose are the Fathers, and of whom concerning the Flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. When other Nations were excluded from the Alliance of God, his Presence and Worship was their Privilege, and for them this Feast was principally intended.

The Servants employed in the Invitation were, first, Moses and the Prophets, inclusively to John  
 Rom. 3, the Baptist; all to whom the Oracles  
 - 2. of God were committed, and by whom the  
 the

the eternal Counsels of his Wisdom were declar'd concerning the Messias. All their Prophecies, as so many Lines, meet in this Centre. The other Servants were the Apostles, who were commanded to preach the Gospel first at Jerusalem. The first order of Servants, and the second, both proposed the same Messias, as the Object of our Faith and Love; but the Prophets under Shadows and Figures in the Promises, the Apostles clearly in the Truth and Accomplishment. The first invited while the Preparations were making; but the Evangelical Ministers are more earnest and pressing, *Come, for all things are now ready.* And in comparing these two Periods of Time, there is the most shining and sensible Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion: for the Marks of it are clear in the Prophecies by their exact References to the Accomplish-

Deut. 18.

Psal. 2.

Isa. 40.

Luke 24.

ment in the Person of Christ ; and they are clear in the Accomplishment by the Correspondence to the Prophecies. Who can suspend Assent that our Redemption by Jesus Christ is the Work of Divine Providence, when the design of it is so exactly delineated in the Prophecy ?

Thus the unchangeable Firmness and Stability of God's Counsel is the Foundation of our Faith. The Consummation of the Marriage will be at the second coming of Christ.

II. The Success of the Invitation is related, *They all with one Consent began to make Excuse. The first said, I have bought a piece of Ground, and I must needs go to see it : Another said, I have bought five Yoke of Oxen, and go to prove them : And another said, I have married a Wife, and I cannot come. All the Carnal Affecti-*

Luke 14.

18, 19,

20.

Affections are readily and presently conspiring in the refusal. It may seem that the Allegations of a Purchase and Marriage for not coming to a Feast were very reasonable: but the Feast represents Celestial Happiness, in comparison of which all the Profits and Pleasures of this World are but Loss and Dung: 'Tis evident then, their Excuses are strong Accusations of their Folly and Ingratitude: Of Folly in preferring Shadows before substantial Felicity, Moments before Eternity: Of Ingratitude, in rejecting contumeliously the most gracious and earnest Offer of such a Happiness. This is spoken of the Jews, who lived in the time of the Son of God's Descent for the Salvation of Men: The love of the World caused them to despise his mean Appearance, and neglect the Call of humble Mercy. Upon their refusal, *the Servant came and shewed* Ver. 21.  
*his*

- his Lord these things; Then the Master of the House being Angry, said to his Servant, Go out quickly into the Streets and Lanes of the City, and bring in hither the Poor, and the Maimed, and the
- Ver. 22. *Halt, and the Blind.* And the Servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast com-
- Ver. 23. *manded, and yet there is Room.* And the Lord said unto the Servant, Go out into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that my House
- Ver. 24. *may be filled.* For I say unto you, that none of those Men that were bidden, shall taste of my Supper.

The Refusers are for ever excluded from the Joy of this Royal Feast, being as unworthy as unwilling to partake of it. This Judgment is still visible upon the Nation of the Jews, who consent to their Progenitors rejecting and condemning the Messias, and will not be convinced of the obstinate Imposture that was devised to prevent the Belief of his Resurrection. But it did

did not become the Wisdom and Goodness of God, that such costly Preparations should be lost: it was requisite that some Persons should actually come to the Feast, that is, obey the Heavenly Call, and receive the Gospel; for otherwise the Redemption the Son of God so dearly acquir'd, had been without Fruit, he had died in vain, which is directly contrary to the Promise of God to him. *I will give thee for Isa. 49, 6.*  
*a Light to the Gentiles, that thou mayst be my Salvation to the ends of the Earth.* Accordingly the Servant is ordered to bring in the Poor, the Lame, and the Blind, and to go into the High-ways and Hedges, and compel them to come in, that the House may be filled. These Expressions declare the extream Misery of the Heathens, who were at that time *without Christ, Aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, Strangers from the Covenants of Promise, having no Hope,*  
*Ephes. 2. 12.*  
*and*

*and without God in the World.*

*Compel them to come in.* The Pa-  
pists allege this Text to give co-  
lour to their Cruelty, in their vio-  
lent ways of making Profelytes to  
their Idolatry. Their convincing  
Arguments are Swords, and Racks,  
and Gibbets, and Fires. If this be  
a proper Method of converting  
Men to Religion, the greatest Ty-  
rants are the most infallible Teach-  
ers. The Vanity and Impiety of  
the Pretence will appear by consi-  
dering,

I. 'Tis ridiculousto Reason, to use  
forcible Means for such an End: for  
the Understanding is a reasonable  
Faculty, and can only be convinc'd  
by instructing Reasons. It cannot  
judg of things but as they appear,  
nor assent against its Judgment.  
Indeed Threatnings and Tortures  
may make Men Infidels, but not  
sincere Believers: it may make  
them Hypocrites and Comedians  
in



in Religion, but not unfeigned Professors. This is abundantly exemplified in *France*, where the vast number of servile Converts have been made by their Dragoons, not their Doctors.

2. This is most contrary to the Practice of our Saviour, and to the Spirit of the Gospel. The Sword that Christ useth in subduing his Enemies, and making them willing Subjects to his Scepter, goes *Rev. 19.*  
*out of his Mouth.* His Kingdom *15.*  
was introduced into the World by Preaching and Miracles, by doing Good and suffering Evil: he open'd the way for the Gospel not by killing his Enemies, but by dying himself and in his Members: The establishing and enlarging his Religion are by sutable means, the Illumination of Mens Minds, the Perswasion of their Wills, the drawing of their Affections to embrace it. Accordingly the Apostle tells

2 Cor. tells us, *The Weapons of our Warfare*  
 10. 4, 5. *are not carnal, but mighty through God*  
*to the pulling down of strong Holds;*  
*Casting down Imaginations, and every*  
*high thing that exalteth it self against*  
*the Knowledge of God, and bringing in-*  
*to Captivity every Thought to the Obe-*  
*dience of Christ. The Weapons are*  
*sutable to the Warfare, and the*  
*Warfare to the Kingdom, which is*  
*spiritual, not of this World. The*  
*using of Force to constrain Men*  
*to embrace the Christian Religion,*  
*is contrary to the Love, the Good-*  
*ness, Meekness, Clemency and Be-*  
*nignity, the blessed Temper the*  
*Gospel plants in the Breasts of*  
*Christians. How severely did our*  
*Saviour rebuke the fiery Spirit in*  
 Luke 9. *James and John? You know not what*  
 55. *manner of Spirit you are of; the Son*  
*of Man came not to destroy Mens*  
*Lives, but to save them. 'Tis con-*  
*trary to the Golden Rule given to*  
*all his Disciples, What you would*  
 have

have others do to you, do you to them.

But this must be acknowledged, that 'tis very congruous that the Papists make use of the material Sword, when *the Sword of the Spirit, the Word of God*, strikes through the Heart of Popery. The Doctrine of the Mass is a clear Contradiction to the Scripture, and a notorious derogating from the Value and Virtue of Christ's Death: they say 'tis an unbloody Sacrifice of Christ, propitiatory for the Living and the Dead: Whereas our Saviour was offered up but once, the Mass is ten thousand times in a day repeated. Christ's Sacrifice was with Blood, and an unbloody Sacrifice is not propitiatory, nor can *obtain Remission*. Where can they find in Scripture the Religious Worship of the Saints? They set up an infinite number of Intercessors, and  
rob

rob our Saviour of his Glory, as if he were defective either in his Compassionate Love to us, for whom he mediates, or in his Power with God. They prefer his Mother before him in dispensing Mercy of which Sinners have the most need: they represent him as strict and severe, but she is composed of Sweetness, he is the Judg, she the Advocate and Saviour; we will leave them to the jealous God.

I shall only observe farther, that many erring Sects preserve their Allegiance to the Divine Authority in the Scripture, for they do not assume an Infallibility to themselves, but mistake the Sense of Scripture: but the Papists by asserting that the Authority of Scripture depends upon the Testimony of their Church, that is, the Sun borrows its Beams from her Eyes, and by arrogating an Infallibility to it, do in effect renounce Homage to the Authority of

of God in his Word. And from hence it is that the Adherers to that Religion are so inconvincible: tho' Sense, Reason and Scripture discover their Doctrines to be plainly impossible. Their Doctrine of Transubstantiation involves such Contradictions as destroy the Essence and End of Miracles: Their Doctrine of the Pope's Supremacy implies there are two Monarchs of one Kingdom, two Heads of one Body, two Husbands of one Spouse. No Errors are more strong and fatal than such as are arm'd with Authority, especially if that Authority be esteem'd sacred. But to return from this Digression, tho' not impertinent.

*Compel them to come in.* The word signifies the use of all constraining Motives, and the most earnest Intreaties that are congruous to prevail upon those who are invited to a Feast. The same word is used

Mat. 14. 22. *And Jesus constrained his Disciples to get into a Ship; which certainly was not by violent driving or drawing them, but by his commanding Authority. So 'tis related of the two that were with our Saviour in the Journey to Emmaus,*  
 Luke 24. *that they constrained him to abide with*  
 29. *them: The Constraint was by earnest Intreaties, far from Force. The same word is used of Peter's compelling the Gentiles to live after the*  
 Gal. 2. *Rites of the Jews: that was by his*  
 14. *Example. Thus the Nations were compelled to receive the Gospel by the Apostles, the Ambassadors for Christ, who did ardently, in season and out of season, pray them in Christ's stead to be reconciled to God. Their Doctrine was recommended by the Holiness of their Lives, and confirmed by the Lustre of their Miracles. In short, the Expression signifies how pleasing it is to God, that those who are in-*  
vited

vited by the Offers of Grace in the Gospel, should come to Christ to obtain Life: and that the Invitation shall be effectual in the Hearts of those who belong to the Election of Grace.

The Proposition that I shall insist on is this:

*'Tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to use their best Endeavours, to instruct and perswade Men to embrace the saving Mercies of the Gospel.*

The Commission was immediately given to the Apostles, but extends to the end of the World, till the Ministration of the Gospel shall cease. I will explicate the Doctrine in this order.

1. Consider what is implied, the Aversness in Men from con-

senting to the Terms of Salvation offered in the Gospel.

II. The Means by which they are wrought on, and induced to come to the Celestial Feast.

III. Prove that 'tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to apply themselves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the saving Mercies revealed in the Gospel.

I. There is an Averseness implied in the Expression, *Compel them to come in*. This will be evident by considering, that the World, the Flesh, and Satan, are Enemies in Combination against the Souls of Men, and raise an Army of Objections against their submitting to the Terms of the Gospel.

1. The World is the general Temptation: the natural World, and the corrupt World, the Things  
and



and Men of the World hinder our coming to Christ.

1st. The natural World, comprising all the Creatures in it, was originally very good, both in respect of the Things themselves, and their designed Use: for they were beneficial to Man, in order to his serving and enjoying the blessed God. But since his Fall from the State of unstain'd Nature, they are accidentally evil to him. *The Crea-* Rom. 8.  
*tures are made subject to Vanity, not willingly: they are perverted from their innocent use, to foment and gratify Mens vicious Appetites. Therefore the Apostle declares, the whole Creation groans and travels in Pain, is in a kind of Agony ready to faint; not for the Labour, but the Indignities they suffer. The Charge that God fastens upon Idolaters, is true against Worldly Men: Ye have taken my Silver, and my Gold, and have carried into your Temples my goodly*

*pleasant things.* The Riches, the Pleasures, the Greatness and Glory of the World are the Idols of their Heads and Hearts. The Interposition of the Earth darkens their Minds, eclipses their Esteem of the Fruition of God as their only Happiness; the Love of it alienates and estranges their Affections from him, their Trust in it slackens their due Dependance upon him. From hence it is, that the World, which, made by God, was a fair and bright Theatre of his Perfections, to raise the Thoughts and Affections of Men with Delight and Wonder to the blessed Creator, as 'tis manag'd by Satan, and abus'd by the Lusts of Men, *is the Shadow of Death*: such as some Trees cast, that not only intercept the refreshing Light of the Sun, but shed a malignant contagious Influence. Strange Alteration!

The World is present and sensible; and makes an easy entrance  
into

into the Bosoms of Men. Their Souls are surpriz'd and deceived by the Suggestions of the Senses, that represent earthly things as great Realities: spiritual and future things are to them but matters of Fancy and Conceit. The present and succeeding World are like Counterballances; as the one rises, the other sinks in Mens Opinions. When the World has got Possession of them, it commands and captivates all their Powers and Faculties. All the Preaching in the World is in vain, a Throng of Business or loose Diversions causes the neglect of the great Salvation. Represent to them the attractive Mercies of God, his melting Bowels open'd in the Gospel to all repenting Sinners; they are unmoved, frozen in their Dregs: Remember them, that their Bodies are dying every day, and their Souls are already dead, and that without sincere coming to Christ they can-

not be recovered to the Life of Grace and Glory, 'tis in vain: tell them, they must shortly appear before the dread Lord of Spirits, and be accountable for all things done in this World, and the Consequence will be eternal; all is in vain: they have other Affairs, other Desires, which they regard and pursue; they are lost in the Labyrinth of the World, and have no Time nor Inclination to secure their main Interest.

'Tis further observable, from the Excuses alleged in the Parable of a Purchase, and a Marriage, and as 'tis said in *Mat. 22.* *That the Invited made light of it, one went to his Farm, and another to his Merchandise; that those Temptations of the World are most perswasive and fatal to Men, that seem to be very natural and innocent. For what Duty is more clearly natural and reasonable than to make Provision of Supplies futu-*  
ble

ble to their Condition and State, to their Charge and Families? 'Tis true, Conscience and Prudence require that Men should be diligent in their Callings, for the Support and Comfort of the present Life. *But the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness that leads to it, must be sought in the first place.* The brightest Valuations, the most inflam'd Affections, the most vigorous and constant Endeavours are due to Heaven. Now the Minds and Faculties of Men are limited, and cannot with intense and equal Ardency apply themselves to various Objects. If the World be the main Object of their Care and Counsel, the Vigor of their leading and instrumental Faculties will be less free and active for Heaven: And from hence it is, that the Affairs and Engagements of this World, tho' immediately they do not deprive Men of Heaven, yet  
medi-

mediately they are destructive to them; for they lessen their Esteem, cool their Affections, slack their Endeavours to obtain it: they oppress their Spirits, ingross their Time, that they have no leisure to *work out their own Salvation*: They make them receptive of many Temptations, which wound their Souls to Death for ever. The constant Spring of the Sins and Misery of Men is from hence, they have forgot the regular use of the Creatures, as Means and Motives of their ascending to God; they understand not the Rule of Wisdom, to make Temporal Things subordinate to Eternal; they have lost the happy Temper of not totally declining the World, nor of eager embracing it. In short, they would enjoy the World, and only use God in their Exigencies. 'Tis therefore inculcated in Scripture, *That the Friends of the World are the Enemies of*

of God, and that the Love of the World is inconsistent with the Love of the Father. 'Tis a most dangerous Sin, being so hardly discernable, and hardly cur'd; for the more appearance there is of Reason and the less of Sensuality in a Sin, the more it insinuates and prevails. We usually judg of Sins by the Foulness of the external Act, but the Guilt of it principally arises from its inward Contrariety to God. The Love of the World dethrones God in the Hearts of Men: other Sins dishonour him in breaking his Laws, this reproaches him as less worthy of our Respects. When it has free Dominion, it will as certainly, tho silently, destroy the Souls of those who are of a fair Reputation in the Eyes of Men, as the Riots of notorious Sinners will be their Ruine.

2dly. The corrupt World, those who are stiled the *Children of this World,*

*World, by their Example, and by their Opposition, are Obstacles in the way to Heaven.*

(1.) By Example: for the broad Way is beaten by the Multitude, and few strive to enter in at the strait Gate that leads to Eternal Life. Now Men easily receive the Impression of Example. Of this there is palpable Evidence; for when Sins are common, the numbers of the Guilty diminish the Sense and Shame of the Guilt. But if Conscience be sometimes unquiet, they smother the Sparks of Conviction in their Breasts, and make a resolute Reckoning they shall be in no worse condition than others. Miserable Comfort! as if one tortur'd on a Rack could receive any Mitigation of his Pains, by the sight of many others suffering the same Torture. So contagious are the Fashions and Manners of the World, that a principal end of our Saviour's Death



Death was to deliver us from this Gal. 1. present evil World: that is, not from the Place, but from the depraved State, and sinful Practices of the Men of the World. The Apostle Peter remembers Believers, *Ye know that ye* 1 Pet. 1. *are not redeemed with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, from your vain Conversation, received by Tradition from your Fathers; but with the precious Blood of Christ as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot.* So deep was the Pollution, it could only be wash'd out in that precious Fountain. The Principles and Ways of the World have a mighty Influence to blind and harden Men in Conformity to them. The Heathen Idolatries and Impurities were continued so long in the World, being commended and establish'd by publick Custom: and accordingly the Apostle tells the Ephesians, *they in time past walked according to the course of the World.*

Now

Now to apply this more closely to the present Subject: 'tis visible by the Conversation of Men in the World, that their Aims, their Appetites, their Endeavours are terminated in the World: their Souls cleave to it, the Train and Tendency of their Actions leads to it. A superficial Tincture of Religion, a Complemental Visit to God sometimes in publick Worship, contents the most; but their Thoughts, their Time and Strength are spent to obtain and enjoy the present World; for 'tis esteem'd their main Interest, and Heaven is only sought by the by, as an Accession to their Felicity. Now we usually approve and affect things according to common Opinions and Practice, tho unreasonable and exorbitant. The Psalmist speaking of the gathering uncertain Riches, observes, *this their way*  
 Psal. 49. *is their Folly, yet their Posterity approve their Sayings: they imitate the Folly*  
 of

of their Progenitors, tho fatal to them. Men are vain in their Minds, and secure in their Sins, by Conformity to the numerous Examples that encompass them. Nay, a regenerate Man by conversing with the unregenerate World, is in danger to be tainted in his Judgment, and to be irregular in his Affections to Earthly Things: he is apt to conceive so highly, and to frame such glorious and goodly Ideas of Worldly Excellencies, that his Desires are inflam'd to attain them, and proportionably he is chill'd and controul'd in the Alacrity and Vigor of his Endeavours after heavenly things. Thus as a fresh-Water River by its nearness to the Sea has a brackish Taste; so even the Citizens of Heaven are prone to be Earthly-minded, by their Society with the Children of this World. 'Tis the wise and earnest Advice of the Apostle, *Be not conformed to this*

*this World, but be ye transform'd by the renewing of your Minds, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect Will of God. The Corruption of the World has deeply seiz'd upon us since to purge it away; a Man must be melted anew and transform'd into another Creature. So difficult it is for a Carnal Man to resist the united Force and potent Sway of corrupt Nature and Custom.*

(2.) By opposing those who sincerely comply with the Heavenly Call, either by Scorn and Derision, or Violence and Persecution. Human Nature is very sensible of disparaging Reflections, and 'tis one of the spiteful Arts of Satan to make use of his Instruments to deride serious Religion out of the World. 'Tis equally profane and pernicious to turn into Raillery and wild Mirth the Impieties and Impurities of the Wicked, and the Holiness  
that

that shines in the Lives of excellent Saints: for the *making a Mock of Sin*, takes away the just Horrour and Detestation of it; and the scurrilous vilifying of Holiness, takes away the Veneration and high Respect that is due to it. Carnal Men who live in Pleasures, without restraint of their licentious Appetites, upbraided by the holy and heavenly Conservation of sincere Christians, cannot with Patience suffer others to practise what they neglect; and to countenance their own Looseness, and from Revenge, scurrilously abuse whom they will not imitate. *Pure and undefiled Religion* is the Game that winged Wits fly at. He that avoids the appearance and approach of Sin, that *strives to be holy as God is holy in all manner of Conversation*, is the Mark wherein their poison'd Arrows are fasten'd. *The just upright Man is laughed to scorn.* Job 12. 4. Nay, even  
 Q dull

dull Wretches will set up for Wits, and attempt by their insipid Jests, and thredbare Fooleries to abuse the Saints. But all the bitter Sarcasms that are darted upon Religion, are infinitely more hurtful to the Despisers than the Despised. It argues a prodigious Depravation of Mind in those who take a perverse delight in scorning Holiness, the glorious Likeness of God in Man: such in the account of Scripture are the worst Sinners, the most forlorn Wretches, whose Condition is dreadful, if not desperate.

This scornful exposing Religion to make Men asham'd of it, is most successful upon the Dispositions of young Persons, and those who are of higher Birth and Rank in the World. Youth is the blushing Age, and has a Tenderness of Face, that cannot bear the Prints of Disgrace. If one in his early Age begins to breath the Life of Holiness, if he

he abstains from fleshly Lusts that war against the Soul, he is represented as fondly nice, and ridiculously scrupulous: no less than the special Grace of of God is necessary to fortify his holy Resolutions, and make him superior to the Scorns of the Wicked.

The Honourable are fearful of Disgrace, and more tender of their Reputation, than others, being in a greater Light, and expos'd to more Eyes and Observations. If one of noble Quality renounces the Vanities and Enticements of the World, *makes the Fear of the Lord his Treasure*; if he zealously endeavours to be more distinguish'd from others by his eminent Vertues, than by the Splendor of his Condition, he is scornfully traduc'd as a melancholy Fop, as a low Spirit: as if Constancy in Devotion, and the Practice of Mortification were a descent from his Dignity, and cast a

dark sad Shade upon his Honour. Thus the vain perverted World vilifies that Holiness in Men, which the blessed Angels adore in God.

Isa. 6.

But alas, how many that had serious Inclinations to be religious, and were entred into the way of Life, have been cool'd and check'd in their first Fervors: they could not firmly sustain Reproach, and endure Conflicts with the Passion of Shame, therefore return'd to the Course of the World, and with it have perish'd to Eternity. We read of the *Israelites* after their coming out of *Egypt*, they met in the way with *Amalec*, who feared not God, and smote the feeble, and faint, and weary of them: Therefore the Lord strictly charged them to blot out the Memory of *Amalec* from under Heaven. In this Type, profane Scorners, that discourage Beginners in Religion, may see their Doom.

Deut 25.  
17, 18,  
19.



To conclude this first General, I shall observe, the Parable represents to us, that those who were first invited, *not only made light of it, but entreated spitefully the Ser-* Mat. 22. *vants, and slew them.* Their neglect of the gracious Invitation, was like the Sleep of one oppressed with the Fumes of Wine, that does not hear a Message sent to him: their cruel Rage against those who invited them, was like the awaking of a distracted Person, who hearing the Voice that calls him, and by an Error of Judgment mistaking what is said, in fury snatches his Sword, and destroys those about him. Wicked Men are of Satan's Society: *he was a Murderer from the beginning,* and hates the Word of Life. As soon as our Saviour was born, and pointed out by a new Star in Heaven, there was a design to destroy him. 'Tis true, the subtle Tempter does not at first in-

spire Men with Rage against the Gospel: but as in the Art of dying, some Colours are preparatory for others, the Cloth is first dyt in Blew before it takes a Black; so by several degrees in sinning he brings them to extream Wickedness.

Thus the Neglect of the Gospel makes way for the Contempt of those who bring it; and Contempt proceeds to Hatred, and Hatred sometimes produces mischievous and deadly Effects. Now the fear of Temporal Evils, especially if extream, to which Men are open and obnoxious for the Gospel, will hinder them from embracing it, or cause them to forsake it, if they are not supernaturally enlightned and confirm'd, by *the Spirit of Power and Love, and of a sound Mind.*

<sup>2</sup> Tim. 1.

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 SERMON VII.
 

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LUKE xiv. 23.

*The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.*

**I** Proceed to the second Hindrance of Mens rejecting the Call of the Gospel. *The Flesh*, that in the Language of the Scripture signifies the corrupt Nature, and inbred Inclinations of Men to forbidden things, obstruct their coming to Christ. The corrupt Nature is called *Flesh*, not only as that is a term of vilifying, for the Original and Resolution of Flesh is into the Dust, but partly with respect to its Propagation, and chiefly in that the usual attractive and de-

Q 4 filing

filing Objects of Mens Thoughts and Desires are carnal, and are enjoyed by the carnal Faculties. Our Minds and Affections are coloured and qualified, distinguish'd and denominated from the Objects about which they are conversant. This Corruption is spread through all the Faculties of the Soul: the Mind is carnal in its Principles and Acts, *in opposition to the Spirit of the Mind renewed by Grace*: the Will and Affections are depraved. *Whatever is born of the Flesh is Flesh.* The Apostle fully expresses this Corruption: he saith, *the natural Man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God*; that implies the stubborn Aversness in the Will and Affections from spiritual things: *for they are Foolishness to him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.* The natural Mind is indispos'd and incapable of knowing supernatural things in their

1 Cor.  
2. 14.

their Reality and Goodness, so as to ravish the Will into a Compliance, till 'tis purified and spiritualiz'd by the holy Spirit. The same Apostle tells us, that *the* Rom. 5. *Carnal Mind is Enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law, neither can be.* As the Lusts of the Flesh are opposite to the Law of God, so the Wisdom of the Flesh is to the Gospel.

This corrupt Nature makes the World such a dangerous Snare to Men: for it blinds their Minds so as not to see the Dross of Earthly Things, and the Glory of Heavenly. St. *John* expresses the tempting Objects of the World by the vicious Affections that are drawn out and fastn'd upon them. *All that is in the World is the Lust of the Flesh, the Lust of the Eyes, and the Pride of Life*; for the Lusts of Men put a Gloss upon them, and make them pernicious. The Poison is  
not

not in the Flowers but in the Spider, that turns the Extraction from them into its own Nourishment. Accordingly St. Peter speaks of the

2 Pet. 1. *Corruption in the World through Lust.*

The vain Heart is more deceitful than the vain World: for not only Reason that instructs the Wise, but Experience that instructs Fools, affords sufficient Conviction, that all things here below are *Vanity and Vexation*: there is none so low, none so exalted in the World, but finds it so. By tasting a sprig of Wormwood, the Bitterness is perceived as truly as by drinking a strong Infusion of it. The World with all its Varieties is a multiplied and perpetuated Vanity; it affords no solid Satisfaction: the setting down a thousand Cyphers makes no Sum. But the carnal Heart is so enchanted with the false Lustre and seeming Pleasures of the World, that by changing one Vanity for another,

another, it seeks and expects Satisfaction. This verifies the Observation of the wise Preacher, *The Heart of the Sons of Men is full of Evil, and Madness is in their Hearts while they live, and after that they go down to the Dead.* What a prodigy of Madness is it for Men to catch at a shadow of Happiness, to seek for that which they are uncertain to find; and if they do find, they are certain to lose; and to neglect substantial Felicity, which if they sincerely seek, they shall obtain, and if they obtain, they shall enjoy for ever!

But that it may be more evident that the *Flesh with its Affections and Lusts*, does powerfully interpose to hinder Men from embracing the Gospel, I will particularly consider its Opposition to the supernatural Doctrines revealed in the Gospel, the Objects of Faith; to the holy Precepts of it, the Rule of Obedience; to the spiritual Rewards re-  
commend-

commended to our Choice.

1. The great Mystery of Godliness, is the Incarnate Son of God, who by an ignominious and accursed Death purchased a glorious blessed Life for his People: this Doctrine is accounted Foolishness, and rejected by the proud unrenewed Mind. The Gospel is styled  
 1 Cor. 1.  
 Rom. 10.  
 8. *the Word of Faith*: 'tis conveyed to the Soul with Authority and Efficacy by Faith. As Faith in Christ was required of the Sick, and Blind, and Lame, that his healing Vertue might rest on them; so the belief of the Divinity of his Person and Doctrine, is the first vital Qualification that makes us capable of spiritual healing. Infidelity stops the Fountain of Grace.  
 Mat. 9.  
 28.

The Apostle saith, the *Word preach'd did not profit them that heard it, not being mixt with Faith*. Now altho' the Light of the Gospel be so clear and convincing that the  
 sincere



sincere considering Mind cannot suspend its Assent to it, yet the carnal Mind stain'd with Prejudices and vicious Affections, will not admit it. *An evil Heart is the principal cause of Unbelief.*

The Jews from Pride, Vain-Glory, and the Love of the World, rejected the Son of God, tho all the Characters of the Messias were conspicuous in him: he did not come with visible Glory and Observation, according to their Expectations and Desires; they *saw no Form nor Comeliness in him, and did not believe the Report concerning him*; they were scandaliz'd at his Parentage and mean Condition: he discovered their beloved Sins, and sharply reprov'd the reigning Vices among them, which made his Person and his Preaching so odious to them.

Our Saviour tells us, *that Light was come into the World; and Men love Dark-*

*Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds are evil.* The Prejudice of their Passions was so strong, that they rejected the saving Truths of the Gospel, and believed damnable Delusions.

Now the same Roots of Offence are in the Hearts of Men against the Gospel. Such a Cloud arises from the Steam of carnal Lusts darkning the Understanding, that it cannot discover Truths so high as the mysterious Doctrines of Christ. Love in the Heart is requisite as well as Light in the Mind, to know spiritual things: Obedience to the Will of God is the best Preparative to believe his Word. Our Saviour justly tax'd the Pharisees, *they did not repent, that they might believe.* Men are averse from receiving those Doctrines that condemn their Lusts; and are Infidels that they may be freely wicked, that the Shadow of Repentance may not disturb them.

'Tis

'Tis said of Atheistical Scorners, *they are willingly ignorant*: The corrupt Will rules imperiously, and turns the Thoughts from those Arguments, which if duly considered, Reason with a strong hand would constrain them to acknowledg there is a righteous God who has Authority to command, and Power to punish those who rebel against his Laws. 2 Pet. 3.  
5.

"Tis true, they pretend to offer something for a more colourable Denial of supernatural Revelation: but the perverseness of Infidelity appears through all their Pretences. Some object against the Sublimity of the Doctrines of the Gospel. It was the scornful Expression of one, *This is like the Peace of God that passes all Understanding*. As if the Reality of things depended upon the Conception and Capacity of the Human Mind, and Divine Truths were impossible because incomprehensible.

hensible. Such foolish Pride obstructs the Reception of Divine Truths; and from hence humble Christians are despised as led by a blind Belief. Others are offended at the simplicity of the revealing them. The Doctrines are so high they cannot reach unto, the manner of conveying them is so low they will not stoop to. But 'tis evident these arguings are not from the Reason but the Lusts of Men. For the rare Accord of the Matter and Manner of the Gospel-Revelation is a sensible Character of its Descent from God: The Doctrine is high and bright, of an extraordinary Revelation; the Delivery of it is easy and familiar, since 'tis for the Instruction and Salvation of Men; and accordingly the Divine Wisdom has made an exact Temperament of these things. Briefly, the corrupt Affections pervert the Will to reject the Gospel, and the  
perverted

perverted Will influences the Understanding to disapprove it. Nay, carnal Lusts force Men against their Light, (as the Jews did *Pilate* to condemn the Person of Christ) to condemn his Doctrine.

There are many in this degenerate Age, who altho they dare not publickly own the defil'd and abhorr'd Name of Infidels, yet among their Companions employ their Wit to dispute and deride the most sublime and sacred Truths out of the World. Their Faces are full of Death, the Tokens of Reprobation are visible upon them. The Issue will discover them to be the wretched Examples of that fearful Rule. Those who are destin'd to final Ruin are infatuated.

Others are Believers in Profession and their own Conceit, but Infidels in Practice. Their Faith is but a vain Opinion, a loose Assent to the Christian Doctrine, because

'tis the Religion of the Country, but with our Radication and Establishment. This is evident, considering that the Doctrines of the Gospel are not meerly intellectual, the Objects of Theory and Speculation, but moral and practical, the Objects of our choice and seeking: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ is come into the World to save Sinners.* Accordingly the unfeigned belief of them is seated not only in the Mind, but in the Heart, and is correspondent to the infallible Truth and transcendent Goodness of the thing revealed: they make such an Impression on the Soul, that the value of them is above Life, and whatever comes in Competition is with despising Disdain rejected. But when Men seldom remember and little regard eternal Things, how specious soever the Profession is, can there be a reasonable Belief of

of their Words against their Works? Therefore in the Language of the Scripture, *all that do not first seek the Kingdom of Heaven, and the Righteousness thereof*, are Unbelievers; it being morally impossible that Men should sincerely believe, and have a due Apprehension of it, but it must be the great Design of their Souls, and the main Business of their Lives to obtain it.

2. Security is the constant Effect of Infidelity, and hardens Men in their Sins, and the neglect of Salvation so dearly purchas'd, and graciously offered to them in the Gospel. Direct Infidels set *their Mouth against Heaven*, and defy the Furnace of Hell. They are blindly bold, and fearless of that Judgment that makes the Devils tremble. Others, tho not open and palpable Infidels, are in a dead Calm, not sensible of their Sins, and have slight Apprehensions of their great

Danger: Infidelity lies at the bottom of their Security. As the *Egyptians* in the thick Darkness that covered the Land, *moved not from their Places*; so many in ignorant Darkness, sit down and are at rest, careless of the Saviour that can deliver from the Wrath to come. Only those who have strong Apprehensions of Evils imminent and destructive, will fly to Christ as a Sanctuary and Shelter, and submit to his Terms of saving them.

Secondly; The Corrupt Nature will not submit to the Sanctity and Purity of the Gospel. The fore-cited Scripture tells us, the *Carnal Mind is Enmity against God*: and that Enmity is arm'd with many strong Lusts opposing his Law. The principal Cause of rejecting the Gospel

Luke 19. is common to all, *We will not have*  
<sup>14.</sup> *this Man to reign over us.* 'Tis observable,

servable,



servable, that as Holiness is that Attribute wherein God doth most excel, and Men are most defective; so the corrupt Will is most opposite to it. The Justice and Power of God in some cases Men do approve and apply themselves to: if injuriously accused or oppressed, they desire his Justice to vindicate their Innocence, and revenge their Wrongs: if in Distress and Exigencies, they pray that his powerful Providence may regard and relieve them: but they are extremely averse from his Holiness shining in his Laws, which excites his Justice and Power to punish those who rebel against it. They are ready to say to Christ, what the rebellious *Israelites* said to *Rehobam*, *Thy Father made our Yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous Service of thy Father, and his heavy Yoke which he put upon us, lighter; and we will serve thee.* They will

1 Kings  
12. 4.

measure out the scantling of their Obedience, how far he shall rule, and farther they will not yield. But our Saviour declares, *I am not*  
 Mat. 5. *come to destroy the Law, but to fulfil it.* 'Tis true, the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace, a sovereign Composition of precious Promises of recovering Grace, and pardoning Mercy; but 'tis also a Law, and enjoins Repentance towards God, and Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As without Compensation to the Justice, so without Conformity to the Holiness of God, we can never be restored to his Favour, and enjoy him as our Felicity.

Our Saviour prescribes this indispensable Rule to his Disciples, *If any Man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his Cross and follow me.* This is a comprehensive Fundamental Duty, and the natural Man has a strong Reluctancy to every part of it,

1. Self-dependance upon our own Vertues and Duties for the obtaining the Favour of God, and the Eternal Reward, is very natural to Men: it was the Condition of the first Covenant, to which they cleave. Men of a fair Conversation, and unblemish'd in the Eyes of the World, have some Sparks of the Pharisee in them, *who justified himself, that he was no Extortioner, nor Unjust, nor an Adulterer, nor as the profane Publican; and that he fasted and paid Tithes.* Upon such Reasons many presume of the Goodness and Safety of their Spiritual State: they take Pride and Content in themselves, in their Moral Goodness, and do not feel the want of a Saviour, nor apply themselves with humble mournful Affections to him for Reconciliation to God. Others think by the Worthiness of their Works to compensate for the Unworthiness of their Sins, to com-

mute one Duty for another, and ballance their Accounts with Heaven, not considering that if their Works were perfectly good, they are but the Performance of their Duty, if they had never sinn'd. It was one great Obstruction that hinder'd the Jews from receiving

Rom. 10. *They being ignorant of*  
 3. *God's Righteousness, and going about to establish their own Righteousness, did not submit themselves to the Righteousness of God.* One of a high Spirit will rather wear a mean Garment of his own, than a rich Livery, the Mark of Servile Dependance. Pride resists Grace, and Grace resists Pride. The Law of Faith requires us to renounce not only our Unrighteousness, but our Righteousness, even the most excellent Graces and the Fruits of them, in comparison of Christ, and as a Foundation of obtaining the Pardon of Sin, and Salvation for ever. Our

Righte-

Righteousness is defective and defiled, and cannot endure the trial of God's inlightning Tribunal. All our Doings and Sufferings cannot expiate the least Sin; we must only rely upon the Lord our Righteousness, to reconcile us to God, and that we may stand in Judgment. *He was made Sin* 2 Cor. 5. 21. *for us, who knew no Sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him, not in our selves.*

How hard it is to awaken Men out of the Pharisaical Dream of their own Righteousness, is evident both in Luke 16. the Doctrine and Practice of those of the Roman Communion. They assert the formal Cause of our Justification in the sight of God is our inherent Holiness: they blaspheme the imputed Righteousness of Christ as a fantastick Apprehension: they declare that good Works have the merit of *Congruity* and *Condignity* to eternal

nal Life: and that by Penance, Satisfaction is paid to God for their Sins, as if there were a Proportion between the one and the other. They succeed the Pharisees in their proud and stubborn Resistance of the Gospel. And among other carnal Motives that fasten Men in that corrupt Religion, these have a special force, as quieting Conscience, and gratifying their Lusts, that they can make Compensation for their Offences against God, and that the Absolution of a Priest seals their Pardon: thus being clear, they may begin a new Score, and return to their old Lusts with new Affections.

2. As Self implies the Flesh with its Affections and Lusts, so Self-denial and Sin-denial are of the same extent. The whole Body of Corruption with all the parts of it, even the dearest, the most tender and most cherish'd by carnal Men, must

must be mortified. Severe Re-  
 straints are laid upon the desiring  
 and the angry Appetites, the Springs  
 of all the Sins and Miseries in the  
 World. We are strictly com-  
 manded to pluck out *the right Eye*, Mat. 5.  
*and to cut off the right Hand*, upon  
 the most fearful Penalties, the Mark 9.  
 suffering Torments insupportable  
 and everlasting. The Gospel has  
 the Perfections of a Rule, 'tis clear  
 and compleat in the Direction of  
 our Duty. *It teaches us to deny all* Tit. 2.  
*Ungodliness, and Worldly Lusts, and to*  
*live soberly, righteously and godly in*  
*this World.* Now carnal Men are  
 apt to say with the *Capernaïtes*,  
*This is an hard saying.* Every one John 6.  
 has a peculiar Favourite Lust, the 64.  
 Sin of his Complexion, or of the  
 Country wherein he lives, which if  
 you pluck out of their Bosoms,  
 they will fly in your Face. Men  
 willingly enough hear Reproofs a-  
 gainst Sins to which they are dis-  
 inclin'd;

inclin'd; but if directed against their own Sins, whether of Pleasure or Profit, they will scorn the Reproof, and storm at the Reprøver. They will perform some Duties that are consistent with their Carnal Ease and Interest, but obstinately stick at others. *Herod* is a notorious Instance of this: 'tis related *he heard John Baptist gladly, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things: but his incestuous Affection made him prefer a filthy Harlot before the pure Law of God.*

Mark 6.  
20.

One indulged Lust captivates the Soul, and keeps it under the Power of Satan. If one Leg of a Bird be catch'd in the Net, 'tis as surely held as if its whole Body were entangled. One Lust separates from Christ, and is a Bar against our entrance into Heaven, for Christ is the only way to it. The Word of God is *sharper than a two-edg'd*



edg'd Sword; but carnal Men will interpose their Souls between their tender Lusts and the Word, and receive its deadly Strokes to spare them. The Lord Christ tells the Jews, *Ye will not come to me that ye* John 5. *may have Life*: They would readily embrace a Saviour that would allow the Pleasures of Sin, and free them from the Punishment; but their Wills were so strongly engaged, they would suffer no Divorce from their beloved Lusts: they chose Hell with Sin, rather than Heaven with Holiness.

3. The denial of Self includes all that in the order of Nature belongs to us: Life, and all the Supports, the Comforts, the Ornaments and Endearments of it; the sweetest Relations, Father and Mother, Brother and Sister, Wife and Children, the richest Possessions, Houses and Land, must be always parted with, in the Preparations of our Heart,

Heart, and Resolutions of our Wills, and actually, rather than desert our Duty. Such a Supremacy of Affection is required by our Saviour, that suspends the Operation of our Love upon all inferior things, when they are in Competition with his Interest and Glory. This Command binds all without exemption: therefore he directs his Followers to be arm'd with Expectation of hard Entertainment in the World. Now this Precept seems so severe to carnal Men, that no Motives can reconcile their Affections to it. If they are spoiled of the Advantages, and deprived of the Pleasures of this World, they are ready to complain as *Micah* to them who robb'd him of his Image and *Teraphim*, *You take away my Gods*. As if the Son of God were such a poor or illiberal Rewarder, either defective in Power or Love, that they should be Losers for his sake.

*Thirdly;*

*Thirdly*; The promised Rewards of the Gospel have no affective Force upon the Carnal Mind, and Affections. 'Tis true, the Gospel has open'd Heaven, and *brought Life and Immortality to light*; a State of entire endless Joy in the Presence of God. Is it possible that Men should be indifferent and careless of their final Happiness? 'Tis almost equally difficult to induce Men to believe and chuse the Favour and Fruition of God as their only Felicity, as to convince them they do not believe and choose it. But their Actions declare their Choice, and their Choice declares their Esteem: for if his Favour were esteem'd an unvaluable Treasure, it would be the chief Object of their Desires; they would not forfeit it for all the World: 'tis therefore evident that the chusing the Pleasures of Sin, and the Profits of the World, is the direct despising the Favour of God. And the

account

account of it is clear: for tho' Heaven be a State of eternal and inexpressible Blessedness, yet 'tis future and spiritual: it makes but a weak Impression upon their Minds, and is unsutable to their Affections. Can carnal Men have but an imaginary Representation of the World to come, and their Assent to it is overshadowed and eclips'd by the present World with its Advantages and Pleasures; they cannot relish a Happiness purely spiritual. 'Tis not the Goodness of the Object, but the Inclination of the Heart that makes it desirable. The wise Philosopher observes, "That such  
" as the radicated Disposition and  
" Habit of a Man is, such will the  
" End appear to him. Therefore a supernatural spiritual Good cannot appear to a sensual Man so attractive, as to be chosen as his Felicity. Only *the pure in Heart can see God*, and love him, and enjoy him

him in his amiable Excellencies : the Unrenewed have no certain nor satisfying Notions of the Happiness that his Presence diffuses among the Blessed above. This will be discoursed of more particularly under another Head.

*Fourthly*; Satan has a great Agency in Mens Opposition to the Gospel, and their neglect of Salvation. His Title, the Tempter, implies his constant Practice. 'Tis true, he cannot hurt us against our Wills; the Enemy without could not surprize us, if the Traitor within, the corrupt Nature, did not give him Admittance; he cannot immediately work upon the Will, nor discern the Mind: without our Consent he cannot obtain a Conquest over us; therefore his prevailing Temptations do not disculpate Sinners that yield to them: he rules only in the Children of

Disobedience, they are his voluntary Slaves; but he has a strange Power in the Minds and Hearts of Men by his managing tempting Objects. The World makes an Impression upon our lower Faculties, and he improves the Impression, and excites corrupt Desires. As the Operations of the holy Spirit in Believers are secret but stronger than the Influence of the Stars: so the Workings of Satan are in the Wicked secret but powerful. I will first consider the Motives that urge him to be so active and ardent in hindering the Success of the Gospel for the Salvation of our Souls. 2. His Methods and Wiles for that end. The Motives are,

1. His eternal Enmity to God: for being under a Doom never to be revert, his Malice is always raging and working to dishonour and displease the Righteous Judg.

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He *sm'd* from the beginning, 'tis his unwearied and uninterrupted Work: Men in complying with his Temptations, are sway'd and carried by the Biass of their Lusts; some are brib'd by Profit, others allured by Pleasure: but his great End is, that the Law of God may be violated, his Majesty despised, and his Glory obscur'd. As in a rebellious Insurrection, the Multitude are engaged, some for Spoil, others for private Respects, but the Design of the Leader is to dethrone the King, and usurp his Scepter. Satan's Opposition against God is more fierce and stedfast than of the most resolved Rebels that trample upon the Divine Law every day: they do more accomplish his Will than their own, which will be the occasion and matter of his insulting Scorn, and furious upbraiding them hereafter. Briefly, he loves Sin for Sin's sake, as 'tis an Affront

and Provocation of the Divine Majesty, and is more pleased in the Sins of Men than in their everlasting Damnation, because the holy and righteous Lawgiver is dishonoured by their Sins, and glorified in their Punishment.

2. His old Enmity and Hatred against the Souls of Men. 'Tis another Hell to him, to see them restor'd to the Favour of God, and his glorious Image re-ingraven on them. He is a jealous Jailor, and if possible will not lose any of his Captives. Being condemn'd to everlasting Burnings, he will make them feel his Fire.

The Scripture represents him as a strong and subtile Adversary: *a roaring Lion that goes about seeking whom he may devour, and the old Serpent.* His Enmity is universal, his Diligence is equal to his Malice, and his Malice whets his Invention to lay such Trains as may be destructive



structive to them. His Strength does chiefly lie in his Subtilty. If Men could see him in his Native Shape of Darkness, an infernal Fiend, the most cursed Creature, or what he is relatively to them, *a Liar and a Murderer from the beginning*, how would they flee with Horror from his Temptations? But he does not awake Sinners, and then wound them; he is not seen till felt, nor discover'd till he has fasten'd his Stings in their Souls. He spreads his Snares in the Dark; and when their Spiritual Senses are lock'd in a Midnight Sleep, he destroys them.

*Secondly*; His Methods and Wiles for this end are various.

1. He blinds the Minds of Men, and hardens them in Unbelief. This was his first and successful Temptation, and is the Pattern that he still follows. He told the Woman

*she should not die*; and the Restraint of Fear being taken away, the Pleasure of Taste and Curiosity soon prevail'd with her to eat the forbidden Fruit. The Apostle gives this account of Mens rejecting the Truths of the Gospel: *If our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the God of this World hath blinded the Minds of them who believe not, lest the Light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the Image of God, should shine unto them.* His principal Design is to encrease the natural Infidelity in the Minds of Men, who are so govern'd by Sense, that in Matters of Faith they require the Evidence of Sense: for he knows the powerful Efficacy of the Divine Doctrine where 'tis believed. Faith enters into the Conscience, opens the Heart, commands and captivates the Will and Affections, and brings the most stubborn Sinners from the Kingdom of Satan into

into the Kingdom of Christ. *He is in them*, possesses all their Faculties, and by that advantage works effectually. He has the Monarchy of their Minds, and diverts their Thoughts from pondering the Arguments that would turn their Judgments, and induce the Belief of the Gospel: he excites those carnal Affections that blind the Mind: he enchants Men with enticing sensual Objects, that they neither can nor will believe what is contrary to their Lusts. Reason, Conscience, Faith, whereby Men are primarily and chiefly distinguish'd from the Brutes, are sacrificed to the Prince of Darkness. Then they are securely his own: for the most precious Promises have no attractive Influence upon those in whom there is reigning Infidelity: the sharpest Threatnings cannot pierce through the Armour of Obstinacy.

2. The most that refuse the Offer of Grace in the Gospel, are not absolute Infidels; therefore the Tempter tries other ways to ruine them. He observes the Dispositions and Circumstances of Men, and presents such Temptations whereby they are most likely to be taken and held in his Snares. Altho Human Nature be wholly depraved, yet all Men are not cast into the same Mould: they are distinguish'd by their various Aspects, Constitutions, Desires, and Conditions of Life, and are not wrought on by the same Motives. The Tempter by his natural Sagacity and Experience (he is stiled the *old Serpent*) has exact Knowledg in the Art of discerning Men. Sometimes sudden Passions are painted in the Countenance, and he takes particular Advantage to strike in with them. But his universal Method is

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is to present the fittest Baits to the natural Inclinations, and habitual Dispositions of Men: he knows the Faction within will readily open to his Call. The Sanguine are soft and dissolute, and are easily drawn to exorbitant Pleasures: The Melancholy are inclin'd to Discontent, Sorrow, Impatience, Despair: Those who have active restless Spirits, are taken with the Advantages of the World. The muddy Mind is easily stirr'd by the Offer of Gain: the voluptuous Mind is strongly allur'd by sensual Delights: the aspiring Mind is incens'd by the prospect of Honour. Now tho the Tempter be a Spirit, and not capable of those Sins which are acted by the sensible Faculties, yet not only spiritual Sins, Pride, Envy, Malignity, and the like, but Fleshly Lusts, even the foulest Actions are from his Incitations. He was not only a  
proud

proud Spirit, but an unclean Spirit  
 2 Chron. in *David*. He was a covetous Spirit in *Judas*: an hypocritical Spirit in *Ananias*: Satan put it into his Heart to detain part of the Price, and lie to the Holy Ghost. He presents the Temptation, and suggests Motives to embrace it. He brings the Fewel, enticing Objects, and inspires the Flame, ardent Desires to them. If burning Lusts begin to cool, and raging Corruptions are controul'd by the threatening of the Word, and the Terrors of Conscience, he will blow them up again. Now any reigning Lust is a Viceroy of Satan's, and keeps Possession for him, and consequently excludes the Son of God from Admission into the Heart.

3. He perswades Men that Religion in its Power and Strictness is not necessary: the abstaining from enormous Crimes, and the performance of some outward Service will

will be available for Salvation. Hell is the Portion of the Devil and his Children, and none are of his Race but incarnate Devils, unclean Spirits in brutish Bodies. He makes use of carnal Men, under the pretence of Friendship to persuade those who make a Shew of Conscience, to be less tender and vigilant, by telling them, this Strictness is superfluous, 'twill spoil you, make you unsociable and odious: the Wise and Learned that think to go to Heaven with the first, take a greater liberty: they will say Moderation is a Vertue, and by the pretence of Temper cherish the loathsome Distemper of Lukewarmness, that is as fatal as a deadly Coldness. The Tempter will permit Men to make use of Religion as a Medicine, a little in fainting Fits, to relieve and recover them, but not as our daily Food: not to be their diligent and constant

stant Practice. The crafty Serpent will abuse the Words of the holy Spirit, *Be not righteous overmuch.* As Judas said of the precious Ointment poured upon our Saviour, *Why was this waste?* so carnal Men are apt to say, Why these severe Restraints from satisfying the natural Appetites? Why such Circumspection in our walking? Why keep the Lord's-day so religiously? Is it not enough to hear the Sermons? May we not afterwards unbend, and enjoy free Society, and recreate our selves with carnal Contentments? They do not believe that God is so strict in his Commands, nor will be so exact in requiring an account for them: fond Creatures to entertain such carnal Conceits of God, to think him like themselves. They are apt to say, the Ministers will fetter them all by imaginative Rules of Holiness unprescribed in the Scriptures.



tures. For Men would fain have the Light, and the Law that regulates them, to be futable to their Appetites and Actions. But are we not commanded to imitate and honour our Pattern, *to be holy as our Heavenly Father is holy, in all manner of Conversation?* Are we not enjoined to *work out our own Salvation with Fear and Trembling; to cleanse our selves from all Pollutions of Flesh and Spirit, and to perfect Holiness in the Fear of God: to follow Holiness with the most zealous and unsatisfied Desires,* that, if it were possible, we might anticipate Heaven on Earth? Can there be any Excuse for neglecting these holy Duties?

There are none more dangerously deceived than those that think they are holy enough, and make no question of the Favour of God and their final Happiness. They condemn profane outrageous Sinners; those who visibly come short of them,

them, they think will fall short of Salvation; but to excel them, they think is a needless Preciseness, a Pride of Singularity, a Mask of Hypocrisy. 'Tis one of Satan's Arts to conceal the Good that is in the Saints, that they may condemn themselves, and to conceal the Evil that is in the Unregenerate, that they may flatter themselves. How many fall as deep as Hell from such high Hopes? for he that does not seriously desire and endeavour to be renewed into the unspotted Image of God, was never truly renewed.

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 SERMON VIII.
 

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LUKE xiv. 23.

*The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.*

3dly. **I**F Conscience be not seared and senseless, but awakens Sinners to reflect upon their Condition, and to seek for the pardoning Mercy of God, he deceives them with false Notions of Faith and Repentance, and hinders their entire Compliance with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Gospel. Final Unbelief and Impenitence utterly exclude Men from Salvation: for the Death of Christ was not appointed to be a Sacrifice for those Sins. There is no Salvation to be obtain'd without

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out the Remission of Sin, no Remission without the Blood of Christ, no Application of that precious Blood without Faith. This is the vital Qualification required in all justified Persons: for it has a peculiar Efficiency in receiving Christ and Pardon, and ascribes the Glory of it intirely to the Mercy of God and Merits of Christ. 'Tis said,

John 1. *To as many as received him, he gave*  
 12. *Power to become the Sons of God, to those who believed on his Name.* Receiving is relative to God's Offer of Christ to the Condemned and Miserable, and implies the taking him in all the Essentials of his Office; as a Prophet, to instruct us in our Duty and Happiness by his Word and Spirit; as a Priest, to atone the Divine Displeasure by his Propitiation and Intercession; as a King, to govern us by his Law, and to bestow spiritual and eternal Blessings on us. Faith receives whole

whole Christ as a Kingly Priest, and a saving Prince; he is stiled a Priest upon a Throne, a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance and Remission of Sins. He purchas'd the Forgiveness of Sins as a Priest by his Sufferings on the Cross, and pardons as a King upon the Throne: from hence it necessarily follows, that Faith receives Pardon from him in that Relation wherein he procur'd it, and confers it. The Apostle declares, *He died for our Sins, and rose again for our Justification,* and thereby redeem'd us, and acquir'd a Dominion over us: then 'tis clear and consequent, that saving Faith receives him for all those Uses for which God did appoint him; and accordingly *purifies the Heart, overcomes the World, works by Love:* and Love is the Spring and Substance of every Duty, the *fulfilling of the Law.* Now Carnal Men are deceived in this Imagination, that

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the single Act of resting upon Christ is sufficient to entitle them to the Promise of Salvation to all that believe in him: they desire an Interest in Christ, to quiet their Consciences; and the World, to satisfy their Affections. They will rest on him as a Redeemer, but reject him as a Lord: they would enjoy his Salvation, but will not endure his Dominion: they will come to partake of the Festival-Entertainment, the Pardon of their Sins, but not for the Honour of the Bridegroom. As if the Gospel were a free Charter to Sin, and gave an impure Indulgence to the vicious Affections; which is as inconsistent with it, as the Darkness of the Night with Noon-day in the same Hemisphere: for then it would foil it self, and frustrate its own End. Our Saviour first redeems from Sin, *from the*  
 1 Pet. 1.  
 18. *vain Conversation*, then from Hell.  
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There can be no regular saving Trust on his Death, without an unfeigned Resolution to live within the Compass of his Laws. *He is the Author of Eternal Salvation to all that obey him.* 'Tis a blasphemous Conceit, that he will save Men with their Sins. If they will die in such a pleasing Dream, who can prevent it?

2. Men are miserably deceived about Repentance. This is indispensably required not only by the Command, but as a Disposition that qualifies the Sinner for pardoning Mercy. For altho the Majesty and Supremacy of God be illustriously visible in pardoning Sinners, and 'tis most evident that his Authority is above the Rigor of the Law, and his Mercy is infinitely free; yet they are always exercis'd correspondently to his essential and unchangeable Perfections, his ruling Wisdom, his

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unspotted Holiness, and governing Justice: From hence it follows that a Sinner remaining in the Love, and under the Power of his Sins, is not a capable Object of pardoning Mercy. Who can conceive that a wise Prince should send forth a Proclamation of Pardon to Rebels, without their Consent to return to their Allegiance? *John* the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Rising Sun of Righteousness, the Morning-Star of the Gospel, preach'd the *Baptism of Repentance for the Remission of Sins*. Even our Saviour begins his preaching the Gospel with this, *Repent ye, and believe the Gospel*. *St. Peter* directed those who were anxious and inquiring about their Salvation, *Repent, and be baptized in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for the Remission of Sins*. He repeats this Doctrine in *Acts 3. 19*. *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your Sins may be blotted out, when the Times of refreshing*  
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ing shall come from the Presence of the Lord. And he gives Testimony of the Resurrection of Christ, *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give Repentance to Israel, and Forgiveness of Sins.* According to this unalterable Tenor of the Gospel, Repentance is the Condition that qualifies the Subject, without which no Man is pardoned. Some are strangely scrupulous of using this word *Condition*, tho' tis authorized by the full Current of the Reformed Divines, and I know none more convenient to express the necessity of it in a pardon'd Person. Our Saviour tells his Disciples, *Ye are my Friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you:* Are not those words a Conditional Assertion, upon what Terms they possess that inestimable Privilege of being his Friends? Thus when God invites Men to come out from the Pollutions of the World, and to

*touch no unclean thing, and I will receive you, and I will be your Father, and you shall be my Sons and Daughters, saith the Lord Almighty:* Are not these Conditional Promises? And upon the Performance of the Terms, the Blessing will be bestowed, and not otherwise.

'Tis objected, that the asserting Repentance to be the Condition of Pardon, lessens the Grace of the Gospel: but this is a great Mistake, for Repentance is an Evangelical Duty and Grace. The Law requires Innocence and perfect Obedience, or condemns without Mercy: the Gospel commands and accepts Repentance. This Grace was purchas'd by our Saviour, and is wrought in us by the holy Spirit; and join'd with Faith, are the first Fruits of the returning Sinner to God. When 'tis exercis'd in the most eminent degrees, it has not the least Merit nor Causality in the obtaining Pardon. If a repenting  
Sinner

Sinner could fill the Air with his Sighs, and Heaven with his Tears; if all his vital Springs were open'd, and Streams of Blood flow'd out, they cannot be satisfactory to God's injured Justice. The unreconcilable Hatred of Sin, the ardent Love of Holiness, and stedfast Resolution to follow it, which are Ingredients in sincere Repentance, tho' they are pleasing to God, yet are the Duty of the reasonable Creature before the commission of Sin, and therefore can deserve nothing of God. But the ordaining an inseparable Connexion between Repentance and Pardon, is honourable to God, and very beneficial to Men: for there is no State of Misery more miserable than for the Sinner to be hardned in his Sins. But to return from this Digression.

The Scripture describes Repentance by a sincere Change and Re-

novation of the Mind, the leading Faculty; by the entire turning of the Heart from the love of Sin to the love of Holiness; by the active lively Passions, Sorrow, Fear, Shame, Indignation, Zeal, that are principal Ingredients in it; and by the Fruits *worthy of Repentance, and Works meet for Repentance.* 'Tis called *Repentance from dead Works, and Repentance unto Life.* Now Men are willingly deceived with an insincere and ineffective Repentance: either with a meer mental Change, or with broken Resolutions instead of the intire Heart; or with the leaving some Sins, and retaining others that are suitable to their Humours and Lusts. They confess their Sins, and condemn themselves for them: sometimes they have flashing Thoughts, melting Affections, good Purposes to forsake Sin, this they think to be sincere Repentance: but when a Temptation appears,

appears, they are easily overcome, and live in the habitual Practice of their provoking Sins. This Conceit of their being true Penitents, is as unreasonable, as if one that has a returning Ague, should think himself freed from his Disease in the intervals of his Fits. Now to quiet Conscience, they readily apply to themselves the words of the Apostle, *What I do, I allow not.* And since the best Saints, while they are in sympathy with frail Flesh cannot be perfect, but many Sins they unwarily and unwillingly commit, which are Infirmities lamented by them, and graciously forgiven by their Heavenly Father; therefore indulgent Sinners take shelter under this Pretence, that their Relapses are meer unavoidable Infirmities. But what Weakness can be pretended for wilful habitual Sins? Such Excuses do not cover the Guilt, but discover

discover their strong Affections to their Lusts: They have not the Excuse of Ignorance: to pretend the Flesh and the World are omnipotent Enemies that cannot be resisted, is to blaspheme the Grace of the holy Spirit. In short, a new Life is inseparable from Repentance in its Reality. Sad and serious Thoughts, Sighs and Tears, the sorrowful Confession of Sins, and good Purposes against them, are the Blossoms of Repentance, ineffective without the substantial Fruits of it in a reformed Conversation. 'Tis one of the Arts of Satan to join things together that are inconsistent: In Paradise he assured the Woman that she might take of the forbidden Tree, and of the Tree of Life: and he now deceives many with the hope that their indulged repeated Sins are consistent with Repentance. But if Men do not forsake the foul  
Sins

Sins they lament, their Sorrow will go with them to Hell, and settle in the Worm that shall never die.

*Fifthly*; The Tempter hinders Men from Compliance with the present Invitations of Grace, by suggesting there will be time enough for accepting them hereafter, and a future Repentance will be sufficient to redress all their Mis-carriages. By this Deceit he trains them on to Ruin. By this he eludes the Force of present Con-victions: that without Repentance they must perish for ever, and puts Men out of the Compass of Con-version. 'Tis clear by its own Light, and needs no other Proof, that pre-sent Obedience is due to the Com-mands of God; *To day if you will bear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*: Yet against all the Evidence of the Word without, and of Conscience within

within, Satan so strongly deceives Men, that they rebelliously neglect their Duty, till their Time and Life are expiring. But how unbecoming, how difficult, how hazardous is a late Repentance? How unbecoming is it to put off God till hereafter? Such is his glorious Majesty, we should with the most reverent Respect, and humble Thankfulness obey his first Call. If a Prince should invite a Subject to come to him for some great Favour, would he so break all the Rules of *Decorum*, as to delay his coming, by saying, Hereafter will be time enough? And what is the greatest Majesty on Earth to the God of Glory? no more than a Mote to the Sun: and proportionably the Indignity arises to neglect the Offers of his Grace.

Besides, how incongruous is it to give the Flower of our Time and Strength to our Lusts, and to reserve the



the Bran for God? To spend the Age of our vital and vigorous Actions in the Vanities and Business of the World, and to allow only our languishing Age for the obtaining of Heaven? That Men should content themselves with dead Affections in his Service who is their Life, that were so lively in the Service of Sin that is their Death?

How difficult is a late Repentance? Can you repent and believe at your pleasure? Men think that in their Age, after the ebbing and retirement of the carnal Affections, they shall more easily forsake their Sins: but 'tis a pernicious Deceit. The native Corruption of Mens Hearts, alienates them from a dutiful return to God; and contracted Corruption by habitual Practice, fastens them in Sin as their Centre. In Youth, when the Blood and Spirits are high and fierce, the Body has a corrupting Influence upon the  
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Mind; but by Custom in Sin, the Mind is so depraved, that it heats the frozen Blood and corrupts the Body. Suppose the exciting Grace of the Spirit be not totally withdrawn, which has often been ineffectual; Can it be expected that after Men have been hardened in the commission and continuance of Sin, they should be more receptive of Heavenly Impressions? A Disease neglected at first, that stealingly slips into the Habit of the Body, and gradually weakens Nature, becomes at last uncontrollable and incurable.

How hazardous is it to neglect present Obedience to the Call of Divine Mercy? Our Days, in the Language of the Psalmist, *are but as an hand-breadth*; and can Men extend their Lives beyond their Span? A vast Eternity follows without Dimensions, an undivided Duration. It is no more in their Power to continue Time to come, than to  
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recal Time past. How many are surpriz'd by hasty Death in their Security, and die in their unrepented Sins, and perish for ever? The wise Man alarms the Sluggard with approaching Poverty, and his Expressions are very applicable to the Delayers of Repentance: Death comes like a Traveller, gradually by silent Steps; and as an armed Man, will irresistably arrest them: and Damnation follows, which they can neither repel nor discover till they are seiz'd by it. O that deluded Sinners would consider, that nothing so ripens them for Death, and accelerates Judgment, as the Pre-sumption that the Season of Grace will continue notwithstanding their lavish and careless wasting it!

But suppose that Life be extended to the utmost Date, can you expect that the holy Spirit should visit you that have been so long putrifying in the Grave, and breath

a new Life into you? 'Tis the most severe threatning, *My Spirit shall not always strive with Man*; and then their Case is desperate. There is a fearful Example recorded in Scripture; the old World was first drowned in Sensuality, and resisted the holy Spirit till he was withdrawn; and then the Deluge wash'd away those Swine in their Mire. Can you expect that at last when the World and your Sins leave you, God will accept and receive you? You are commanded to seek him in your early Spring, in the first Dawnings of his Light and Favour, and is a poor Remnant of your Life sufficient for obtaining his Mercy? The Harlots respected not the dead, but contended for the living Child: Satan and the World strive to have the prime and best part of your Lives, and will God be contented with the dying Remains? Or, do you expect an easy Composition  
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for all the Abuse of his Benefits, because of his Patience? Do you presume because he forbears so long, he will readily forgive at last? The Servant not call'd to an account till he was run into an irrecoverable Arrearage of ten thousand Talents, was delivered to the Tormentors till he should pay all his Debt. How are Men degenerated, and fallen lower than the Brute Creatures? *The Stork in the Heaven knows her appointed times; and the Turtle, and the Crane, and the Swallow observe the time of their coming; but Men know not the Judgment of the Lord.* This Consideration made our compassionate Saviour dip his Words in Tears. *He beheld the City, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things that belong to thy Peace! but now they are hid from thine Eyes.*

O wretched deceived Souls! how long will you neglect a Saviour  
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and Salvation? How long shall he wait to be gracious, and expect your lingering Repentance in vain? Remember the time of Grace is limited: if you refuse Obedience to the present Call, do you know he will renew the Offers of his Grace? *Now is the accepted Time, now is the Day of Salvation*: Will this *Now* last for ever? There is no *Now* of Favour and Hope in Hell. 'Tis true, God is merciful; and 'tis one of his Royal Titles, *The God of Patience*: though Threatnings are denounced against Sinners, and Judgments are ready to seize upon them, he repents and stops his Wrath: but there is no State more fearful in this World, than when Men by neglecting Repentance, make God weary of repenting. *When Patience has had its perfect Work* towards the Unrelenting and Unreformed, Justice succeeds: before God cuts off a Sinner, he cuts off  
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all his Excuses. Read with Fear the first of the *Proverbs*, *Because I have called, and you refused; I will laugh at your Calamity, and mock when your Fear cometh.* God's Frown, much more his Scorn, is infinitely terrible and insupportable. Those who delay Repentance till the Body is diseased all over, and Death is printed in the Countenance, and the languishing Lights are almost quench'd, and the vital Frame is near a Dissolution, yet presume a few Sighs will transport their Souls to Heaven, How just and dreadful will their Disappointment be? However they are deceived, God is not mocked; as a Man sows, he shall reap.

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## SERMON IX.

LUKE xiv. 23.

*The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.*

II. **I** Am now to consider the Means by which Men are wrought on to accept of the Invitations of Grace in the Gospel. The Sum of what has been discoursed of sinful and miserable Man is this, The Understanding, the directing Faculty, is in ignorant Darkness, and a dead Slumber, not apprehensive of his Misery. A dead Eye does not see its want of Sight, nor a dead Heart feel its want of Life. If the Head be obstructed with clammy Humours, the



the whole Body is without Sense: for the Nerves have their Root in the Brain, and are the Channels to convey powerful Spirits, to give Sense, and Vigor, and Motion to all the Parts. The Will is a fierce and free Faculty, commanding and active, perverted and stubborn against the holy Law of God. The Affections are exceedingly disordered, and strongly inclin'd to sensual Things that flatter them with Satisfaction, and very tumultuous and fiery against whatever shall cross their natural Inclinations. Now how can one so stupid and refractory, be made soft and flexible to the Call of Mercy? As the *Epicurean* in *Tully* objects against the making of the World, *quæ machinæ qui vectes*, What Engines, what Leavers were used in raising this vast Fabrick? What he spoke in Derision, may be said with Wonder; What Engines, what Instruments

are used in craning up a Soul sunk below the Center, to the highest Heaven! What in making the new Creation, that is more glorious and lasting than the first! 'Tis a Work respectively impossible, not absolutely, it can only be effected by the Power of God.

There is no Principle of Recovery left in fallen Man. The Conversion of him from Sin to Holiness, and from the Creature to God, is a Miracle of Grace: if he converted himself, it were supermiraculous. God can by his commanding Power bring Light out of Darkness; but 'tis plainly impossible that Darkness should produce Light.

The external Ministration of the Gospel, without the concomitant Ministry of the Spirit, is ineffectivè. The Divineſt Preacher cannot soften *the Iron Sinew*, nor melt the *Heart of Stone*, nor make the Rock to tremble.

ble. The Prophet *Isaiab*, whose sublime Eloquence overcomes all the admired Orators of the World, yet complains, *Who has believed our* Isa. 53. *Report? to whom is the Arm of the Lord reveal'd?* The Angels of Light, if they were sent from Heaven, and were in this sense *ministring Spirits*, they could not by their Seraphick Zeal, and most excellent Eloquence change and reform Sinners. One evil Angel seduced and corrupted the best Man, *Adam*, in the State of Innocence and Happiness: but a Council of good Angels cannot restore one Man, tho the least tainted, to Holiness and Felicity. No Creature can be a Creator; the Sanctification of a Sinner is a new Creation. 'Tis only *the Word of Life* spoken by *the Lord of Life*, that can raise dead Bodies and dead Souls. Suppose the Word of God be assisted by his Rod, yet that will be ineffectual to cleanse and change

their Hearts without Divine Grace. 'Tis according to the wise Order of God, whom the Word does not convert, the Rod is made use of to cure; and whom the Rod does not cure, the Sword cuts off.

Prosperity furnishes the Carnal Appetites with delightful Objects, and Men are easily induced to neglect their Duty: like Children that forget their Lesson when they are at play. Sense that reigns in Beasts, and should serve in Men, is then predominant. But Affliction imbitters the carnal Sweets, and is a proper Means to fix the Thoughts, and restore the Mind to its Right and Jurisdiction: as Blows and hard Usage bind up the ranging Fancy in distracted Persons; tames and tires them, and thereby reduces them to Sobriety.

Thus God is often pleased, by  
 Job 36. Afflictions, to shew Men their Transgressions, to open their Ears to Discipline,

pline, and effectually command them to return from their Iniquities. But without the Instruction of his Spirit joins with the Voice of the Rod, the utmost Effect of even sharp and long Afflictions is a forc'd and fading Repentance. Constrained Devotion is like Fire struck out of a Flint, hardly got, and soon gone. Thus 'tis said of the *Israelites* in the Wilderness, *When he slew them, they sought him, they return'd and sought early after God; but their Heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his Covenant.* How many open Rebels have been awaken'd by the fear of Death? and when they have tasted and seen the Terrors of the Lord, what Addresses, what Submissions, what Promises have they made to God? but after their Reprieve, how soon have they forgot the past Terrors, and broke all the Bars of Reason, and of their Resolutions, and been as  
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unreform'd as ever. The wise Man tells us, *Bray a Fool in a Mortar, pound him in pieces, his Folly will remain in him.*

Nay, Miracles without the Application of them by Grace to the Spirits of Men, are ineffectual to work Faith and Repentance. The End of them is by the Evidence of Sense to excite the Mind, to consider the Power that works them. But they may astonish the Sense, and the Mind not be convinc'd; or if convinc'd, yet they leave no permanent Operation upon the Hearts of the Spectators. *Moses* charges the *Israelites* that notwithstanding they had seen all the miraculous Strokes of God's Power upon *Pharaoh* and his Servants, yet

Deut. 29.  
4. *the Lord hath not given you an Heart to perceive, and Eyes to see, and Ears to hear to this day.* When the Son of God appear'd in his own Likeness, and did such numerous and conspicuous

cuous Miracles that compell'd the most stubborn Devils to acknowledg his Deity, yet the *Pharisees* remained obstinate and unconvincible. The Souldiers who saw him rising in Power and Glory, and were almost frighten'd to Death at the sight, yet continued obdurate in their Infidelity.

Our Saviour assures us, *No Man* <sup>John 6.</sup> *can come to him, except the Father which* <sup>47.</sup> *hath sent me, draw him.* The Words are full of Emphasis, *No Man*: the Negation is universal; not only the Act is denied, *No Man comes*, but the Power, *can come*; no less than Omnipotent Grace draws him. A carnal Man will *not come to Christ for Life*; and he cannot will to come: for his Mind is so fore-laid with Prejudice, and his Will is so depraved and intangled with the love of Sin, that he cannot sincerely \* desire to be set free. Every de- \* *Nec te*  
lightful Sin is like a charm'd Circle *posse ca-*  
*rere ve-*  
out *lim.*

out of which the Sinner cannot move.

We are not to conceive of this Disability, as if Sinners had not deliberative and elective Faculties to consider and choose what is best: such a Disability would be an Argument for their Innocence and Justification: Neither as if Men had a Will to forsake Sin, and wanted Power; like a miserable Slave that sighs after Liberty, but is fasten'd by heavy Fetters: but the perverse Will keeps them in Bondage: *They serve divers Lusts and Pleasures, and delight in their Fetters.* 'Tis a voluntary culpable Impotence join'd with a strong Reluctancy to Grace: 'tis the *impudent imperious Weakness of the Whorish Woman* charged upon the *Israelites*, and admits of no Apology and Defence: Nay, it aggravates the Sin and Sentence of such depraved Creatures. As there is in Vertue and Holiness a Divine Degree



gree of Perfection, that makes Persons not capable of departing from their Duty : so there is a Diabolical Degree in Sin, when the Soul is so depraved, that it cannot abstain from doing Evil. And as consummate Vertue is most worthy of Esteem and Praise ; so when a vicious Habit contracted by long Custom in Sin, absolutely possesses the Soul, 'tis most worthy of Abhorrence.

Now only Divine Grace *compels Sinners to come to Christ*, and to partake of saving Mercies : that is, changes the Bias of the Will, and makes it obedient to the Heavenly Call. God is the supream Mover, and turns all Occurrences in the World to his Purpose and Praise : and the Hearts of Men are not exempt from his Dominion, but he *turns them as the Rivers of Waters*. The effectual Operation of Grace does not violate the native Freedom of the Will,

Will, but is congruous to it. God's drawing is by teaching: Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father, comes to me. When the Author of the Gospel is the Teacher of it, the most stupid and obstinate Sinners shall be convinc'd and obedient. To make this more clear, I will briefly consider the Intellectual Frame of Man, and the natural Subordination of the Faculties in their various Operations. As the Spring in a Watch, so the Understanding is the first Mover in the reasonable Creature: the Understanding has a double Faculty; the Apprehensive, to discover the Good and Evil in Objects presented to it; and the Judicative, to compare and ponder the Good and Evil discern'd in things; and accordingly to esteem or disvalue, to approve or dislike. The Will chooses what the Understanding commends, and rejects what the Judgment condemns. The  
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Affections of Desire and Delight are from the Choice of the Will, the Affections of Aversion and Flight are from the Rejection of the Will. The Pursuit or Neglect of Things, the Application or Opposition we make in our Actions and Practice to them, is from the Delight or Distaste of Things in our Affections. But when Lust enter'd into the Soul, it perverted this Order. As the strong Tide of the Sea pouring into Rivers, turns them back to their Springs, in a Course contrary to their natural Motion: thus the Heart overflowing with a strong Tide of Corruption, empties it self into the Head the Spring of Actions: the unholy Affections work upon the Will to reject the Offers of Grace in the Gospel; and the corrupt Will works upon the Mind to vilify them. 'Tis to be observ'd, that the Tempter works upon Mens Minds in the unnatural way;

way; he makes use of the disorder'd Affections to pervert the Will, and of the perverted Will to divert the Understanding from due Consideration of Objects, and to corrupt its Judgment. But God works by the Understanding on the Will and Affections, according to the regular Dependance of those Faculties.

The first Beam of saving Grace shines into the Mind with so strong a Light, discovering Spiritual and Eternal Things in their Reality and Glory, that the Will and Affections are drawn to choose, and embrace, and to follow them with Zeal and Constancy. In this blessed Work, we are to consider the Revelation of the Object, and the Irradiation of the Mind. As in the discerning of Corporal things, there must be Light in the Eye, or there can be no Seeing, and Light in the Air, or there can be no Sight: So the great Mysteries of Godliness, which

which are of impossible discovery without Revelation; are made known in the Gospel; and the Understanding is illuminated to see them in their Reality and transcendent Goodness, as the Apostle expresses, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ is come into the World to save Sinners.* He prays for the Ephesians, *That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,* Ephes. i. *the Father of Glory, may give them the Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation, in the Knowledge of him; that the Eyes of their Understanding being enlightened, they may know what is the Hope of his Calling; and what the Riches of the Glory of his Inheritance in the Saints.* Altho the Evidence of Faith be not so clear as that of Sense, yet 'tis so sure, that the Adherence of Faith is more firm to its Objects, tho future, than of Sense to things present. With the Irradiation of the Mind there is such a determining

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fluence on the Will and the Affections, that Christ and Heaven are joyfully chosen before all things. In converting Sinners there is not a bare proposal of the Objects of Faith, with the Motives to believe and accept them, and Men are left to their own Discretion and Choice: The Holy Ghost who certainly knows the manner and efficacy of his own Operations, expresses converting Grace by the

Ephes. 1. *exceeding Greatness of his Power toward them that believe, according to the working of his mighty Power, which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the Dead, and set him at his own Right-hand in Heaven.* 'Tis true, the Principle of Resistance in corrupt Nature is not quite extinguish'd; but actual Resistance is overcome by the holy Spirit, who works to will and to do of his good Pleasure.

In the Human Will we are to consider the Faculty of choosing and refusing, which includes in it Freedom and Liberty, without which it ceases to be a Will.

2. The Depravation of it: and this consists in a necessity of choosing the Evil of Sin, represented as pleasing to the Carnal Affections, and rejecting the Law of God, which is holy and good. The sinning Will contracted this necessity. Now Grace does not destroy the Nature of the Will, but changes its Quality: of Carnal and Earthly makes it Holy and Heavenly: this is exprest by a new Heart, and a new Spirit. And when the Spirit of the Mind is renewed by illuminating Grace, and the Will and Affections of the Heart are renewed by purifying Grace, the Will does as freely and necessarily choose spiritual and Eternal Things, as in the State of Nature it chose Things pleasing to

the corrupt Appetites. God draws Sinners to himself with *the Cords of a Man*, in a rational way, without Violence to their Faculties, and fastens them *by Bands of Love*. He instructs the Soul, and infuses such a Principle and Disposition as is suitable to the Doctrine. When the Will is directed and drawn, by the illuminating Guidance of the Mind, to choose and embrace the most excellent Good, and the other Faculties to obey, this is Man's true Liberty. In Heaven the unvariable fixing the Will upon God our Supream Good, is its Perfection and Felicity.

The outward Means of inducing Men to comply with God's Call, is the preaching of the Word. If it were the Will of God, he can immediately create Men as *Adam*, in compleat Stature, and with the Perfection of Reason; but he makes use of Second Causes, forms them  
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in the Womb, brings them into the World by the ordinary way of the Earth, and raises them from Infancy to a mature State, according to the Rules of Nature. Thus God could by one Act sanctify Sinners in Perfection; but he is pleased by the preaching of the Word to convert Sinners, and gradually perfect the Saints: The Gospel is the Ministry of Reconciliation, and of Regeneration. And this is very congruous to the Human Nature: for the Sinner is not converted, as a Stone ascends by a forc'd and blind Motion, but is instructed and affected by proposing Objects to his Mind and Will, and acts according to the Impression he received from them. Now the Natural Man being a *Servant to Corruption*, the external propounding of the most powerful Objects and Motives cannot change him: the converting Efficacy of the Word

<sup>2</sup> Cor. 5.

James 1.

is from Jesus Christ. To make this more evident, let us consider, In every Action where an Instrument is us'd, the Action is properly ascrib'd to the Agent. God is a pure Spirit, without any Composition of bodily Organs of Speech; yet when he form'd a Voice in the Air for the proclaiming the Law,

Exod. 20. 1. *He spake*; and whether by any created Voice, or by the Voice of

Deut. 5. 4. Men appointed for preaching the Gospel, he speaks. In human speaking, the Voice is from the Tongue, but the Sense and Meaning is from the Mind that directs it. From hence it is that the Gospel preached is of admirable Efficacy, and works above the Power of any Creature. *The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged Sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of Soul and Spirit, and of the Joints and Marrow; and is a Discerner of the Thoughts and Intentions*

Heb. 4. 12. *of*

*of the Heart.* It subdues open Rebels, and makes their Pride and Confidence fall as low as Hell; it mollifies the most obdurate, and makes them compliant to the Invitations of Grace. And altho the Minister be never so mean in his Person and Appearance, yet a weak Instrument in an Almighty Hand does Wonders.

Our blessed Saviour in his Person was the first Preacher of the Gospel; and in his Sermons we are directed how to work upon the Reason, and the Affections of Sinners, by which alone they are capable to be moved. The Substance of his several Sermons was, *Repent ye, and believe the* Mark 1. *Gospel.*

1. The Order and Progress of converting Grace is by the Conviction of the Mind, to turn the Will and Affections. Sin prevails in Men by the *love of Pleasure*; and

till there be a mixture of what is more bitter than Sin is sweet, they will not forsake it. *The World corrupted by Lust*, is an imaginary Paradise, wherein there is nothing but *forbidden Fruit*; and the Fruit is so pleasant to the Eyes and Taste, that only flaming Terrors will expel them out of it. No Man will cut off his Right-hand till an incurable Gangreen has seiz'd on it. The light neglected Notions of Heaven are ineffective to reform Sinners; till the Terrors of the Lord are set in array against them, they are fasten'd in their Sins. Of this there is visible and frequent Experience: how many that have lived in a careless Contempt of God till their last Sickness, and when they feel themselves sinking to the Grave and Hell, and Conscience is an exact Remembrancer and terrible Accuser of all their inward Wickedness and notorious Sins, then

then what furious Reflections do they make upon themselves? and what Promises do they make if they might be spar'd? 'Tis therefore the first Duty of Ministers, by clearing Light and convincing Strength to work on Conscience, and by the Mediation of it to apply Guilt and Wrath to the Sinner, that he may be restless in his Sins.

*The Wrath of God is revealed from* Rom. 1.

*Heaven against all Ungodliness, and Unrighteousness of Men: 'tis decreed before the World was, 'tis denounc'd in the Word, and shall be fully executed in the Day of Wrath, and the Revelation of the righteous Judgment of God: nothing is more certain than that Day, and nothing so heavy as that Wrath. 'Tis a Burden so insupportable, that the Son of God was ready to sink under its Weight: he meekly and silently endur'd all the cruel Rage of his Enemies, but mournfully broke forth, My God,*

*God, my God, Why hast thou forsaken me!* Who can understand the Consequence of that Complaint? Who can support himself under the Apprehension of an absent and angry God? When the convinced Person ponders his Sins, what Indignities he has offered to the glorious God his Maker and Preserver, his Lawgiver and Judg; that he has abus'd his Mercies, perverted his Benefits, and employ'd them in the Service of Satan; that he has despis'd his Justice, and ventur'd upon his inflam'd Anger for transient Pleasure and trifling Profits; when these killing Aggravations are duly consider'd and laid close to the Heart, how are all the sorrowful Affections moved? serious Grief that springs from the Depth of the Soul, confounding Shame, anxious inquiring Fear, to stop the Execution of the fatal Sentence past against him? Thus 'tis related of those

those Converts at the first Sermon of St. Peter, that being convinc'd of their Crimson Guilt in their crucifying of the Lord Jesus, *they were pricked in their Heart; and said to the Apostles, Men and Brethren, what shall we do?* Then Sinners will humbly sue for Peace by the blessed Peacemaker Jesus Christ: then Salvation will be so much the sweeter, by how much the Danger was more threatning. The Recovery from Death to Life is a double Life.

2. The Lord Jesus must be propos'd as an all-sufficient and compassionate Saviour, *who invites the weary and heavy-laden to come to him for Rest.* This is the order of the Spirit's Operations, *first to convince of Sin, then of Righteousness.* 'Tis true, there are diversities of Workings; the Spirit instructs and terrifies Sinners by his Office of Bondage, but not always in the same manner and degrees: but the Soul is so humbled  
by

by the sight of Sin, and impending Wrath, as it sees and feels the necessity of a Saviour, and is willing to comply with the Terms of Mercy offered in the Gospel. *The whole need not a Physician, but those who are sick.* A condemned Man values a Sheet of Paper wherein his Pardon is written and sealed, more than the Conveyance of a rich Estate. One near drowning values a Cord thrown out for his Rescue, more than a Crown. Thus when the Guilty are deeply sensible they have lost the Favour of God, and cannot fly from his Power, and there is but a step between them and Eternal Death, then a Saviour will be infinitely precious, and they will entirely close with him. Now the Gospel represents the Son of God incarnate.

1<sup>st</sup>. An all-sufficient Saviour by his Propitiation, and Intercession. The Excellency of his Obedience,  
and



and the Excellency of his Person were influential to obtain the Pardon of Sin. His Propriety in the Sacrifice, and the Value of it, was requisite to atone the just Displeasure of God for our Offences. 'Tis said, he offered his own Body on the Tree: his peculiar Right in it was requisite to make it a proper and acceptable Sacrifice. 'Tis true, the Father and holy Spirit had the same Right in the Human Nature of Christ as the Son had, with respect to the making it: but the Son by assuming it into a Personal Union with himself, has a peculiar Right in it, and offer'd his own in a strict sense. And in Consequence to this, his Sacrifice was of infinite Value: He did not compound with God, but paid a Ransom equivalent to what was due for Sinners. He bled a Fountain from his wounded Side, *that cleanses from all Sin.* 1 Joh. 2.

2dly. By his Intercession. *He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by him, for he ever lives to make Intercession for them.* God pardons Sin as a Sovereign upon the Throne: his Authority is preserved entire without any Condescension of his Person; therefore the Blood of Christ shed on the Cross, is pleaded in Heaven to reconcile God to us: he satisfied Justice, and sollicites Mercy: *his Blood speaks still, and its Voice is as powerful as ever.* The Prevalency of his Intercession depends upon the Dignity of his Sacrifice; the Dearness of his Person to the Father, does also assure us of his favourable Audience. He declar'd on Earth, *I know thou always hearest me.*

3dly. The Gospel sets forth his Willingness to save us. Faith has an Aspect upon Christ as able and willing to save: for Power without a Will to save is unprofitable, and

and the Will without Power is fruitless and ineffectual. For the begetting of Faith we are to consider the Proposal and Offer of Grace in the Gospel, and the Promise of it.

I. In the Gospel there is a Proposal of Grace to all: the Invitation is universal; *Whoever will, let him come to the Waters of Life freely.* Our Saviour gave this Command to the Apostles, *Preach the Gospel to every Creature.* Neither the number nor quality of Mens Sins are a Bar against their coming to Christ for Life. None are excluded but those who exclude themselves. In the Parable those were earnestly invited by the Command of the Master of the Feast, who refused to come. This Offer of Grace and Life to all that will humbly receive it, is the first Foundation of Faith, and induces our Acceptance of it: for without this, the self-

self-condemned Sinner sinks into Misery bottomless and helpless. The most miserable Despair is drawn from Impossibility. If Men think 'tis impossible to obtain what they desire, they will not endeavour to obtain. 'Tis easily clear'd by the Scriptures, if Men will believe the Scriptures when they are clear, that as the Brazen Serpent, the Sign of Salvation, was lifted up on high, and made obvious to every Eye, to convey healing Virtue to those who were stung by the fiery Serpents; so our crucified Saviour is lifted up in the Gospel for every Soul-wounded Sinner to regard. The belief of inviting Mercy opens the Springs of Godly Sorrow: a Natural Sorrow arises from the sense of oppressing Evils, and is terminated upon our selves: a Spiritual Sorrow proceeds from the sense of our Unworthiness, and the  
Divine

Divine Goodness, that is so ready and desirous to save us.

2. There is a Promise of Grace to all that repent and believe. Our Saviour encourages us, *Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you Rest.* Those who feel Sin as an intolerable Burden, and their fainting Souls are without Support, let them devolve their Burden upon him, and trust entirely in him, they shall obtain blessed Rest. The timorous Sinners that tremble under the Weight of their Guilt, are encouraged; for in this condition Christ invites them to come to him, and promises Rest. Let them aggravate their Sins to the highest, yet St. Paul challenges the Precedence as the chief of Sinners, and obtained Mercy. When the Heart is broken for Sin, and from it, not to believe the Promise of Mercy, is dishonourable to our Saviour's Love, and the Value of

his Blood, as if not sufficient to save poor Souls that would fain live in him. We have the strongest Testimony of his Love, in dying for us when we were Enemies. Christ came with this Intention to save Sinners; and when they come to him, will he reject them? He cannot deny himself, he's Truth, and he has most expressly declar'd, *Whoever comes to me, I will in no wise cast out*: and this Promise is confirm'd by the *Will of his Father that sent him*. Christ invites thirsty Souls to partake of the Waters of Life; and when he has inspir'd them with ardent Desires, and they come, will he send them away empty? 'Tis absolutely impossible for him who is incarnate Love and Mercy, to despise and reject the Soul that looks to him, that longs and languishes after him, and will be ever unsatisfied without him.

In short, the precious Promises in the Gospel, of the Pardon of Sin, and eternal Salvation, are so proposed to us, that the Hope of returning Sinners may be cherish'd and confirm'd, and the Presumption of secure Sinners may be dash'd and controul'd. While we are in this middle State, the fear of Caution, join'd with the lively hope of Mercy, is the most congruous Temper, and becoming the Breast of a Christian. The Presumer is like a Ship without Ballast, floating so lightly in his own Folly, that every Gust of Temptation oversets him. The fearful Spirit is like a Ship over-laden; and if not lightned, will certainly sink and perish. Fearless Security exposes to all the Temptations that gratify the Carnal Appetites: desponding Fear causes a neglect of the Remedy. If there be no fear of Pu-

nishment, or no hope of Pardon, the Consequences are equally fatal.

3. 'Tis necessary in order to the bringing Men to Christ, to remove their carnal Prejudices. The first and most fear'd Difficulties are, That serious Religion will be a damp to all their Joys, a harsh and unreasonable Restraint of their Liberties, a Bar against all the Advantages of the World : the sickly Fancy is frighten'd at the thoughts of this. If the Way to Heaven were short and fair, Men would like it ; but 'tis long and deep, and they are discouraged, as the *Israelites* with the tedious and troublesome Wilderness, before their arrival at the Land of Promise. Accordingly Carnal Men cast a slanderous Shade upon Religion, as a melancholy, severe and joyless Discipline. Now we may rectify these Mistakes  
by



by the Light of Scripture, of Reason, and of Experience.

(1.) The Scripture declares *that the Ways of Wisdom are Ways of Pleasantsness, and all her Paths are Peace.* Prov. 3. 17.

The Entrance, the Progress, and Continuance in these Ways, is joyful to the renewed Soul. Let us take a right View of the Divine Commands, the Sum of them is this, That Men would be happy here, and for ever. We are commanded *to know God and Jesus Christ, this is our Life:* John 17. 3. to trust in him, this is our Strength: to love Isa. 30. 15. him and delight in him: And are not Love and Joy the most pleasant Affections? and is not God the most amiable and pleasing Object? Psal. 37. We are commanded to fear him: and is it not most reasonable to fear the loss of his Favour, which is Heaven, and the incurring his Wrath, that is the deepest Hell?

We are commanded to obey his Laws; and our Saviour assures us, *his Yoke is easy, and his Burden is light*: 'tis an easy and easing Yoke, that frees us from the most cruel Bondage of Sin and Satan. And will not Men believe the Testimony of Eternal Truth, rather than their fond Fancies and corrupt Appetites? We are commanded to hear his Word; and is it not a Happiness to be directed in the way to everlasting Life? We are commanded *to pray continually*; Is it not a blessed Privilege that poor Dust may address their Requests to the *Lord Almighty, the Possessor of Heaven and Earth*, with an Assurance, that those Petitions are most pleasing to him, that are for his most excellent Blessings?

Besides this, nothing is forbid but sinful Pleasures that will end in eternal Torments: sinful Pro-  
fits

fits, the gaining of the World, with the loss of the Soul: the Gain is nothing, and the Loss is infinite. Now where are the Chains and Fetters that are so hard and heavy as Carnal Men complain of? All his Commands are Precepts of Happiness.

(2.) This Testimony of Scripture, Carnal Men esteem a notorious Paradox: they can taste no Pleasures but what are steep'd in Sense. Take away the Enticings and Blandishments of the Carnal Appetites, they understand no other Pleasure: which is such a Deceit, as if a sick Person who feels no Pleasure but in the soft and easy Intermissions of his Disease, should conclude if he were entirely freed from it, he should be deprived of all Pleasure. Whereas the Pleasure of Health is far more desirable and constant. The Angels are ab-

solutely exempt from the Desires of our carnal Faculties, and without carnal Fruitions, but are ever blessed and joyful in the direct Possession of what is good, not in the relief from Evils either natural or accidental, as Hunger and Thirst, or Sickness and Pain.

Pleasure results from the suitability between the perceptive Faculties and the Objects that affect them: if there be no harmonious Proportion, there will be no Musick, no Delight. Now 'tis true, while Flesh is the prevailing Ingredient in a Man, he only relishes the Satisfactions of the Senses: he cannot enjoy God, he cannot delight in doing his Will, no more than a Swine can in clean Pasture, whose natural Property strongly inclines it to wallow in the Mire. But when the Soul is clarified and purged by the great Refiner,

Refiner, how sublime and satisfying a Pleasure does it feel in the Love of God, and in his Service! As in natural feeding, when the Palat is in its due Temper, the Taste commends our proper Food to the Appetite, and the Appetite to the Stomach; but a foul Stomach disaffects the Appetite, vitiates the Pallate, and the most savoury and wholsom Meat is loathsom when the Disease is the Taster: Thus if the Soul be in its due Temper, the doing the Will of God would be *our Meat and Drink*, mixt with a sweeter Pleasure than those natural Operations are: but the Soul is so corrupt and carnaliz'd, that it has no Taste of the pure Delights of blessed Spirits in Communion with God: like the *Israelites* who despis'd the Bread of Angels, and impatiently longed for the Onions and Garlick and Flesh-pots of *Egypt*. Till  
Men

Men die to Sin, the Supper of the Lamb will be insipid and nauseous.

The Carnal Mind as grossly mistakes about Liberty. 'Tis horrible Folly to think true Freedom consists in doing whatever the vicious Affections require, in conversing with such Persons as foment and gratify them. Is that Person free that is fetter'd with as many Chains of Hell, as he has predominant Lusts? Was the poorest Person free who lived among the Tombs, among contagious Carcases? Then a Sinner, that without the fear of Hell obeys his depraved Appetites, and associates with those who are corrupt, and Corrupters by their wicked Example, is free. But 'tis evident that the Mind, the superiour leading Faculty, is in Bondage while the Passions reign, and the sensual Worldly Wretch with his

his imaginary Liberty, is the most accursed Slave. Till the Son makes us free from the tyrannous Power of Sin, we are not free indeed. Till Reason enlighten'd by the Word, resumes its Right and Jurisdiction, and leads the Will to choose what is best for a spiritual immortal Creature, and the other Faculties to obey, we are the Slaves of Satan. When we are made free from Sin, and Rom. 6. become the Servants of Righteousness, and yield an ingenuous delightful Subjection to God's Laws, we enjoy a State of Liberty. Nay, the Service of God is our Glory. He that loved us, and wash'd us from our Sins in his Blood, has made us Kings and Priests to God. The most eminent Acts of Royal Authority are to govern the Subjects by equal Laws, and to subdue the Enemies of the Peace and Prosperity of the Kingdom: and when Divine Grace reigns

reigns in the Heart, it regulates all the Thoughts and Affections, the inward and outward Faculties, according to the holy, just and good Law of God, and subdues these rebellious Lusts that disturb the Order and Tranquillity of the Soul.

(3.) Experience proves that a State of Religion is most delightful. Whenever the captive Soul is rescued from the Bondage of his Lusts, and prefer'd to the Service of God, how sweet is the Change? and how bitterly will he complain, *other Lords have had Dominion over me, but thy Service is the truest Freedom? Did ever any of the Saints complain that God is an austere Master, that his Service is a melancholy joyless Condition? No, in their Esteem and Affections, his Law is the most pure, precious, sweet and profitable Good.*

*Psal. 119. His Commands are not grievous: they obey*



obey them from Choice and Complacence. They love the Lawgiver, and like the Laws. Communion with God in his holy Ordinances, is a Heaven upon Earth to them. *One day in thy Courts is* Psal. 84. *better than a thousand in the Vanities and Business of the World. In the Presence of God is Fulness of Joy; and the more we are admitted into his Presence here, the more we are admitted into his Joy: all the blessed Means of our drawing near to God, and his drawing near to us, are the Gate of Heaven, and Entrance into Glory. David, who was so acquainted with God, declares, There be many that say, Who will shew us any Good? Lord, lift thou up the Light of thy Countenance upon me. Thou hast put more Joy into my Heart, than when their Corn and Wine increased. A Joy more solid and satisfying, than carnal Men receive in the Spring-tide of their Fruitions. As one*  
Spark

Spark of God's Wrath firing the Conscience, is more terrible than the most fearful Evils in the World: so one Beam of his Favour enlightning the Soul, is more sweet and ravishing, than all the most valued and desir'd things in the World.

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SER.

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## SERMON X.

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LUKE xiv. 23.

*The Lord said to the Servant, Compel them to come in, that my House may be full.*

III. **I** Shall now prove 'tis the great Duty of the Ministers of Christ to apply themselves with a holy Zeal to bring Men to partake of the saving Mercies of the Gospel.

This will appear by considering,

1. The Command of God, from whom they are sent, lays the highest Obligation upon them to perform their Duty. The manner and degrees of Obedience, are measured by the greatness of the Authority that enjoins it. To Sovereign Authority,

thority, immediate, absolute, and supream Obedience is due. The Authority of God is more binding than the highest in Princes, or the dearest in Parents: What are all Kings of the Earth to him? less than nothing. Temporal Greatness consists only in Comparison. In the Scale of Magistracy, the Superiors to some are subordinate to others: But the Majesty of God is absolutely and truly Infinite. And as the immediate Servants of the King are under special Obligations to obey his Commands, besides the common Duty of his other Subjects; so the Ministers of the Gospel by their Consecration and immediate Relation to God, are bound with all zealous Diligence to do his Will.

2. 'Tis the principal End of their Commission. God designs in the Contrivance and Revelation  
of

of the Gospel, to glorify his Mercy, and his Son in our Salvation.

*First*; Love is the clearest and most adequate Notion of the Deity; *God is Love*. Now Mercy is medicinal, healing, and recovering Love. The Object of it is the Miserable and Unworthy. In God's Moral Government, Mercy and Justice are the leading Attributes, and Mercy in its Exercise has the Supremacy: *Mercy rejoices against Judgment*. When our first Parents were cited to Judgment for their rebellious Sin, Mercy promis'd a Saviour before the Sentence was pronounc'd. God is stiled the *Father of Mercies*; 'tis his natural Off-spring, the freest and most delightful Emanation from him. Judgment is his *strange Work*, that by Constraint he executes. *He does not afflict willingly the Children of Men*: God is more pleas'd to see the Fruits of his Mercy in his Creatures

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restor'd to Happiness, than the Effects of his Justice in the Guilty and Miserable. To be inclin'd to do Evil and Hurt, is an Imperfection infinitely distant and opposite to the Divine Nature. *The Lord God is a Sun*: and as 'tis proper to it to enlighten, revive and refresh the World by its Operations and Influences; 'tis accidental to consume and destroy, and proceeds from the Imperfection of Things upon whom his Beams fall. Thus 'tis according to the Nature of God to dispense the liberal Effusions of his Goodness to the Creatures; if they feel the Effects of his Justice, 'tis for Sin that deserves it, and draws it forth into Exercise. Mercy is God's Glory: by Glory we understand the Lustre that results from the Perfection of Things, and is attractive and worthy of Admiration. There is Light in one Beam of the Sun; but Glory results

sults from the Union of all its Beams in their full Strength. Accordingly a double Glory belongs to God.

*1<sup>stly</sup>.* His Essential Glory, that results from his transcendent Excellencies; the supream Beauty and Brightness of that *unapproachable Light* wherein he is said to dwell; every Attribute being truly infinite, is most glorious.

*2<sup>dly</sup>.* Declarative Glory, that consists in the Operation and Influence of God's Perfections, and in the humble and thankful Adoration of them by intelligent Creatures. Some Divine Attributes are more eminently the Glory of God: as they are more declarative of his Perfections, and more sensibly and powerfully affect the Minds and Hearts of Men. In this respect Mercy, as 'tis the most benign and comfortable, so 'tis the brightest Light in all the Constellation of

the Divine Attributes; 'tis our Happiness we are under its Aspects and Influences. The other essential Excellencies of God are regarded as the Qualities of our Sovereign infinitely above us, with most humble Fear and respectful Admiration: But his Mercy represents him as our Father and Friend, and engages our Affections entirely to him. When *Moses* desir'd to see *God's Glory*, he told him, *his Goodness should pass before him*. Now Mercy is the most excellent Degree of Goodness. 'Tis Goodness primarily excited and active from it self, and takes occasion from the Misery of the Creature to be beneficent. 'Tis observable, when he was proclaimed in his glorious Titles, *The Lord, the Lord God, Merciful and Gracious*; next to the Deity, Mercy is plac'd as his dearest Attribute: and of the thirteen Titles of Honour attributed to him, nine belong to Mercy, to signify



signify the advantage it has above Justice. Mercy is his peculiar Treasure: 'tis said *he is rich in Mercy*, not in Possessions, *tho the Earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof*: his Riches are not without himself, but in his own Perfections. Now 'tis the great Design of God to glorify this Attribute in the Salvation of the Lost and Miserable. Adam had sufficient Grace to stand, but was free to fall, and by the Fraud of Satan join'd with his own Folly, was seduc'd from his Duty, and involv'd himself and all his Progeny in utter Ruin. It was very becoming God that his Enemy should not obtain his End, that Mankind should not be the eternal Trophy of the Tempter, and so noble a part of the Creation be as it were abolish'd for ever. From hence the Mercy of God took its Rise, and most apparently and eminently declar'd it self, in sending his Son the

Heir of his Love and Glory, to be the Redeemer and Ransom of the Lost and Miserable.

The Gospel is made up of Arguments and Endearments, of Commands and compassionate Calls, of encouraging Invitations, and the most constraining Motives, that sinful Men would apply themselves to our blessed Saviour, and not perish for ever in their Sins. And God has appointed an Order of Men consecrated to this Service. This is most excellently express'd by the Apostle; *Now we are Embassadors for Christ, as tho' God did beseech you by us, we pray you in Christ's stead, be reconciled to God.* From hence the Duty of Evangelical Ministers is clear and consequent, that with zealous Affections and persevering Diligence they should endeavour to bring Souls to partake of the Grace of the Gospel. An Objection may be raised.

If

If God be pleased with the Salvation of sinful Men, why are not all saved? for nothing is the Object of his Will, but is within the compass of his Power.

The Objection is specious, and may surprize at first, but duly considered, may receive a sufficient Answer.

I. 'Tis a leading Rule, that when Doctrines are clearly revealed in the Scripture, we must yield our Assent, tho' we cannot resolve all the Difficulties that are raised against them. 'Tis unreasonable to deny what is evident, because we cannot unfold what is obscure. There is no Doctrine more frequently and emphatically asserted in the Divine Writings, than that the Repentance of a Sinner, and his acceptance of Pardon and Life is very pleasing to God. He assures us in the most sacred and solemn manner of this: *As I live, saith the* Ezek. 33.

Lord, I have no pleasure in the Death of the Wicked, but that the Wicked turn from his way, and live : He is willing they should be saved, and they are wilful to be damned. With what tender and melting Compassions does he argue with them, *Why will ye die, O House of Israel?* as if they were upon the brink of Hell, and ready to drop into irrecoverable Misery.

2. We must distinguish between his directing Will, and his approving Will : whatever God decrees to effect, shall be infallibly accomplish'd ; but many things that he approves, are left undone. His Commands are his Will, the Rule of our Duty, but not of his Purpose what he will do. The Scripture mentions *the Word of God's Power,* and *the Word of his Holiness.* The Word of his Power effects all things according to his Will : but the Word of his Holiness,

his

his Laws declar'd to regulate our Lives, are often oppos'd, and without Efficacy.

3. The Wisdom of God directs all the Operations of his Attributes; that orders the Dispensations of Mercy, and the Inflictions of Justice. When the Apostle had considered the astonishing Oeconomy of Providence with respect to the Jews and Gentiles, he breaks forth, *O the Depth of the Riches both of the Wisdom and Knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his Judgments, and his Ways past finding out!* That so great a part of the World live in Darkness, and die in Darkness, and go to their Fathers where they shall never see Light, and the Day-spring from on high visits other Nations, is according to the Counsel of his Will.

ROM. II.  
33.

4. God does afford assisting Grace to Sinners, which if they improved, he would not desert them. *The Gospel is the Ministration of the Spirit,*

*Spirit*, to illuminate, excite and persuade Sinners not to forsake their own Mercy. *He strives with them*, he woos and waits to be gracious, till by their obstinate Resistance they quench his holy Motions. 'Tis true, he dispenses Grace in different degrees, for he is the Master of his own Favours: but the effectual converting Grace is not bestowed upon all, yet there is common Grace, that has a tendency to Conversion, which if humbly and thankfully improved, such is the most free and excellent Goodness of God, Men would receive further Supplies. But they are careless and opposite to his gracious Operations, therefore the Spirit is most righteously withdrawn from them. He that in Luxury has wasted his Estate, 'tis just he dies in Poverty. Besides this, 'tis very considerable, that Men shall be condemned at the last Day not for mere  
mere

mere Impotence; but obstinate Opposition: they loved *Darkness rather* John 3.  
*than Light, because their Deeds are* 19.  
*evil: not for the want of that*  
*Grace they did not receive, but for*  
*the neglect to improve that Grace*  
*they had received, and rejecting*  
*what was offered. The slothful Ser-*  
*vant was condemn'd for hiding his single* Mat. 25.  
*Talent in a Napkin, not because he had*  
*not five Talents.*

Secondly, 'Tis the great Design of God to glorify his Son: When he brought his First-begotten into the World, the Command was, *Let all the Angels of God worship him.* God Heb. 1.  
*has given him a Name above every Name,*  
*that at the Name of [Jesus] every Knee*  
*should bow, of things in Heaven, and*  
*Earth, and under the Earth; and every*  
*Tongue should confess that Jesus Christ*  
*is Lord, to the Glory of God the Fa-*  
*ther. Those who cross his Su-*  
*preme Wisdom and Sovereign Will,*  
*shall by a constrain'd Submission*  
 acknow-

acknowledg the high Dignity of his Son.

The great Command of the  
 1 Joh. 3. Gospel is; that Men should believe on  
 23. the Name of his Son Jesus Christ : Him  
 Acts 5. bath God exalted to be a Prince and a  
 31. Saviour, for to give Repentance and  
 Remission of Sins. The Death of  
 Christ may be considered as an Act  
 of Obedience to God, and of Love  
 to Men. His Intention was to  
 glorify God, by bringing lost Souls to  
 him. Now 'tis promised as a Re-  
 ward of his Sufferings, he shall see  
 of the Travail of his Soul, and be satis-  
 fied. He is infinitely pleased with  
 the Salvation of Souls, as the Fruit  
 of all his Anguish and bloody  
 Agony. The Election of a num-  
 ber of the lost World, that shall  
 believe in him, and be adopted  
 and saved by him, has a special  
 respect to his Honour, that his  
 Death might not be in vain : that  
 the Son of God may be magnified  
 in



in his unspeakable Love to them, and their sincere Obedience to him: his relative Glory, as Head of the Body, will shine in them for ever.

'Tis also observable, the Decree of Election is of infallible Accomplishment, both as to the Conversion and Perseverance of the Elect, not only because the Divine Will is unchangeable and insuperable with respect to the Events determined by it, but with a peculiar regard to the Glory of Christ. No Principle of Opposition in the corrupt Heart of Man can frustrate the Operation of God's Spirit, either in the powerful entrance, or sure continuance of his Grace. Our Saviour tells us, *All that the Father gives me, shall come to me.* And, speaking of his Sheep, he saith, *My Father which gave them me, is greater than all: and none is able to pull them out of my Father's Hand.* The Purpose  
of

John 6.

37.

John 10.

29.

of God, and Purchase of Christ secure their Salvation: for these our Saviour intercedes, *Holy Father, keep* John 17. *through thine own Name, those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are.* His Mediation is never interrupted: when Christ's Prayer and God's Power are ineffectual, then may they fall away totally and for ever, whom God keeps, and Christ commends to his keeping. From hence it appears, that the Ministers of the Gospel are indispensably obliged zealously to endeavour the Salvation of Souls, which the Father has design'd for the Honour of his Mercy, and which the Son of God esteems his dearest Glory.

### The APPLICATION.

I. From hence there is just cause to admire the glorious Grace of God in converting Sinners, and making

making them willing to comply with the Terms of the Gospel. Indeed 'tis strange to Amazement, that Men involv'd under the Guilt of Sins so numerous and so heinous, and liable every hour to the Sentence of the Law, so sure and severe, Eternal Death for their Sins, should neglect a Pardon so dearly purchas'd, and so graciously offer'd, and not with the deepest Humility, with ravishing Joy, and the highest Thankfulness receive it. Is there no Spirit, no Understanding left in them? Nay, is sensible Nature and its inviolable Inclinations so extinguish'd, that they are Enemies to themselves? But if we consider the Depravation of Mankind so inveterate and invincible, we shall turn the Current of our Wonder another way, that the obstinate Perverseness of any is subdued, and that with consenting Wills they receive Christ as their Prince and Saviour.

Saviour. Election is the Fountain of distinguishing Grace : *Many are called, but few are chosen.* Conversion, Adoption, Justification, Sanctification, Glorification, are all the Fruits of electing Mercy. By the most gracious and free Act of his own Will, he chose some out of the corrupt Generality, (and they are but a little diminutive Flock) to make them Vessels of Honour, that his Goodness might be the more admirable. Those who are made a *willing People*, were by the natural and contracted Hardness of their Hearts, as averse and repugnant to the Heavenly Call as others; if after a thousand Repulses, the Spirit had been withdrawn, they had died in their Sins : but as 'tis said of *Lot's* miraculous Rescue from the Flames of Sodom, *While he lingered, the Angels laid hold upon his Hand, the Lord being merciful to him, and brought him forth, and set him without*

*without the City*; so the free and omnipotent Grace over-rul'd their reluctant Hearts, and strongly and sweetly inclin'd them to God their supream and satisfying Good, and to come to Christ as the only means to restore them to the Favour and Enjoyment of God. The natural Man is no more able to believe with a saving Faith in Christ, than to obey the whole Law: 'tis *the Gift of God*. He provides the Means of Salvation, and applies them; he by victorious Grace *leads Captivity captive*, and bestows that most precious Gift upon his People. How many that enjoy'd the same Gospel, and did not reject so many Invitations, nor so often grieve and vex the holy Spirit, nor so long abuse the Patience of God, were justly left in their Sins? this will set a Lustre upon special and saving Mercy. O, what a conspicuous Discovery, what a lively and thank-

ful Sense will there be of this Grace in the next World! Our Saviour tells the unbelieving Jews, *There shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth,* Luke 13. *when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac,* 28. *and Jacob, in the Kingdom of God, and you your selves turn'd out.* The Comparison of the opposite States will then be more joyful and transporting to the Saints, and more manifest and tormenting to the Reprobates. They shall feel a burning Thirst after the Happiness they have lost, and be tortur'd between Desire and Despair for ever.

2. Let those who make light of the Invitations of Grace, consider what will be the Issue of their Obstinacy. Within a little while Conscience will awaken the Remembrance of their careless Contempt of the Divine Mercy, and that will awaken Despair. To instruct such Persons, and make them afraid, that they may fly to the Sanctuary  
from

from the Destroyer, let them consider,

(1.) This will render them inexcusable. Their Obduration and final Ruin will be of themselves. God is pleased to appeal to the Human Understanding, *What could I do more for my Vineyard, that I have not done?* His Works and his Words are declaratory of his Will, how pleasing the Repentance and Life of Sinners is to him. He has prepar'd a Saviour and Salvation, and offers them to lost Souls. In the Year of Jubilee, Liberty was proclaim'd for all the *Israelites* who had been Servants; but if any one would not leave his Master, his Ear was bored, and he was a Servant for ever. Thus the *acceptable Year of the Lord* is proclaim'd in the Gospel, a happy Freedom to Sinners by Jesus Christ: but those who are in love with their reigning Lusts, refuse this Freedom, and are con-

demn'd to the worst Bondage for ever. God by his Authority commands them to *repent and believe the Gospel*: He invites them by the most gracious Promises to accept and receive them: he expresses the most tender Compassions towards perishing Sinners; *Why will ye die?* He reproaches their unaccountable Folly, *How long ye simple ones will ye love Simplicity?* He urges them by terrible Threatnings, not to neglect his offer'd Grace. But they are deaf to his loudest Calls: if a Lust whispers from their Earthly Affections, they are presently moved. No Mercy will soften them, no Reproofs will reform them; the richest Means of Grace are lost, and they prodigally perish. Now how justly do they fall under the condemning Sentence of the Law, who slight the Mercy of the Gospel? *God takes no Pleasure in the Death of a Sinner, but they take Pleasure in their*  
Sins:



*Sins: they die in their Sins, because they will die: they are deprived of Life, because they will not come to Christ that they may have Life. At the Day of Judgment lost Sinners will intirely clear God, and deeply charge themselves with their deserved Ruin.*

(2.) Such are irrecoverable. The Gospel is the only Dispensation of Grace; if Men obstinately reject it, their Condition is as desperate as if they were bound in Chains of Darkness to the Judgment of the great Day. Mercy alone can heal us; and if that be wounded, our Sickness is incurable. *He that believeth not the Son, shall not see Life; but the Wrath of God abides on him.* His Doom is sealed and irreversibile. God now speaks in a still Voice, but hereafter he will speak in a Whirlwind to the Despisers of his Grace. 'Tis true, we cannot say a Soul is quite lost while there is

John 3.  
36.

a delay of Judgment: but the Scripture declares, that Sinners by their stubborn Refusals of Mercy, make God inexorable to their Prayers: There is a day of Grace, and the Lapse of it is fatal to the Neglecters. Of this there have been very fearful Examples: how many Despisers of the Grace of the Redeemer in the course of their Lives, yet in the Agony of their last Departure, when their Sins with a ghastly Aspect appear, and with frightful Horror they look into the bottomless Pit, Conscience anticipates the Divine Judgment. Let the most compassionate Ministers offer them the Cordials of the Gospel, and tell them they despair too soon: the self-condemning Conscience replies, they repent too late. O that Men were early wise to secure their eternal Interest!

(3.) The neglect of Salvation, will aggravate Sin and the Judgment

ment of Men. *This is the Condemnation, that Light is come into the World, and Men love Darknes rather than Light.* The higher the Disobedience, the lower the Damnation will be of Sinners. The Heathens in their Race of ignorant Rebellion are not so guilty, nor liable to so heavy a Sentence as those who disobey the Gospel. The *Israelites* had so abus'd the Mercies of God to his Dishonour, there were no such Rebels on Earth; the Prophet was fain to descend to Hell for a Comparison to equal their Wickedness: *Hear the Word of the Lord, ye Rulers of Sodom; Give Ear unto the Law of our God, ye People of Gomorrah.* But those who turn the Grace of God into an occasion of their sinful Security, are not to be parallell'd in Hell. The Devils rebel against the Creator, against his Authority and Laws, but Men rebel against their Sovereign and Saviour, and 'tis

John 3. 19.  
Isa. 1. 10.

admirable Grace. The Son of God interpos'd as Mediator to make God reconcilable to the World :

Heb. 2. *But he did not assume the Nature of Angels, he took no hold of them, nor can they take hold of him.* The Golden Scepter was never extended to them : Justice was strict and severe ; for the first Sin they were presently expell'd from the Habitation of Glory, and their Doom is irrevocable. But Men are within the Reserves of Mercy ; God spares them in order to Pardon, and renews his compassionate Calls to them to forsake their Sins, and live : by his Word and wonderful Patience he invites them to Repentance, and by Repentance to his Favour, and to Happiness. Now what a violent Provocation is the Contempt of such Mercy ? The Furnace of Hell is heated seven times more for the Despisers of the Gospel. How will the remembrance of their  
Folly

Folly rack their torn Minds? The fiercest Furies cannot so torment them as their self-condemning Consciences.

3. Let the Ministers of the Gospel be excited to discharge their Commission with Fidelity. I shall set down some Directions and Motives in order to it. The general Direction is this, *Salus Populi suprema Lex esto*: The Salvation of Souls is the End of Preaching, and must regulate it. The Qualifications of a Minister to make him successful are,

*First*, Excellent Knowledg. An ignorant Minister is a plain Solæcism, as to say a blind Eye, not capable to perform the Act proper to it. The Office and Authority without Abilities to exercise it, is in vain. The Apostle declares the Perfection of the Scripture, that 'tis profitable for *Doctrine*, for *Reproof*, <sup>2 Tim. 3.</sup> for *Correction*, for *Instruction in Righteousness*;

teousness; that the Man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good Works. He is to instruct the Ignorant, to remember the Careless, to refute the Erronious, to resolve the Doubting, and comfort the Afflicted. Not only Fidelity, Mat. 24. but Wisdom is requisite in the Servant 45. whom his Lord made Ruler over his House, to give them Meat in due season. There must be substantial Learning to convince Gainsayers, and spiritual Skill to understand the Arts of the Tempter, who will sail with every Wind, and make use of the various Dispositions of Men to do them Mischief. He feeds the blazing Presumption of indulgent Sinners: He speaks Peace to them when God is their Enemy: if there be sometimes a sad Countenance, the shadow of Repentance, it is sufficient. But he perplexes tender and fearful Spirits, by suggesting they do not mourn enough, to damp their  
their

their Endeavours, and make them heartless in God's Service. Now 'tis a principal Duty of an Evangelical Minister to unmask the Malice of Satan, and defeat his Design: to preach the Word in that distinct manner, that secure Sinners may be afraid of Vengeance, and that the Penitent may apply the Divine Mercy. *He that wins Souls is wise.* The Terrors of the Lord must be set in array against the rebellious obstinate Transgressors; but the indulgent Love of our Heavenly Father, the tender Compassions of our sensible Head and Saviour, and the Consolations of the holy Comforter, are the Portion of relenting and returning Sinners.

Prov. 11.  
30.

An understanding Minister instructs his People in their Duty and Happiness: he will not offer them *Stone for Bread*; intricate controversial Matters that astonish and cannot

cannot edify, but plain Evangelical Truths, the proper Food for the Soul.

The Manner and Language in Preaching must be answerable to the Majesty of Divine Truths. There is nothing more odious than a sacred Subject triflingly handled. The Affectation of Wit and flanting Eloquence frustrates the End of Preaching, that is, to convince Sinners of their Guilt and Misery, and by the Conviction of Conscience to make them fly to the Sanctuary, our blessed Saviour, for Protection: partly because those things that flatter the Fancy, are not proper to affect the Conscience: light trimmings of Language, gaudy Expressions, glittering Points of Wit please the Imagination; but Conscience is excited and inflam'd by representing eternal Things with powerful Plainness, and in a solemn manner: and partly because  
the



the Human Spirit being limited, while one Faculty is attentive, another suspends its Activity and Operations; so that the Exercise of the Fancy hinders the Mind from serious reflecting on Divine Truths, and applying them to the Soul. Vain Ornaments in a Sermon are like a painted Complexion; the more 'tis advanc'd to the Eye, the more 'tis abas'd to the Judgment.

The Discourse of a Preacher should directly go to the Heart: it should be so fram'd as to prove and illustrate the Subject, and work on the Understanding and Affections. We have the Pattern of this in Scripture, where the Love and Mercy of God to his Children, and his Justice and Power against his Enemies, are represented in the most pathetic manner. I will produce an Instance of both:

*Can a Woman forget her sucking Child,* Isa. 49.  
that 15.

that she should not have Compassion on the Son of her Womb? yea, they may forget, yet I will not forget thee. What can be more supporting and comforting? The other Instance is as terrible. God is angry with the Wicked every day. If he turn not, he will whet his Sword; he hath bent his Bow and made it ready. He hath also prepared the Instruments of Death. This Description of God's righteous Displeasure is more powerful to shoot through the Conscience of hardened Sinners, than the bare threatnings that Justice will surely punish them.

Secondly, A Minister should be zealous and diligent in the discharge of his Office. St. Paul adjures Timothy in the most solemn and fearful manner, I charge thee before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the Quick and the Dead at his appearing, and his Kingdom: Preach the Word, be instant in season, and out of season; reprove,

Pfal. 7.  
11, 12,  
13.

2 Tim.  
4. 1, 2.

*reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine.* Did the Apostle stir up the Fire in so vigilant a Minister, how much more needful is it to blow up the Embers in our drowsy Spirits? Certainly if Conscience be not fear'd and dead, so sharp a Charge will rouse it to the performance of our Duty.

Zeal for the Glory of our Saviour, if it inflames our Hearts, will fire our Lips, and animate our Sermons. Let Knowledg be the Breath to blow the sacred Fire, and the most burning Zeal is not excessive. But our Affections at the highest are very defective: How many preach the Word so coldly, as if they had no desire to save Souls from eternal Death?

How many Ministers lie down in their Laziness, and wretchedly neglect their Duty, to better themselves and benefit others in preach-  
ing

ing the Gospel? Idleness enervates and unstrings the Bent of the Spirit: the Mind is benumm'd by a useless and ignoble Dulness.

Some who are deputed Shepherds, may think it a Disparagement to their Greatness, to be frequent in so mean a Work as Preaching: whereas the Son of God was a Preacher of the Gospel. Others make a Gain of the Flock, but put off the Instructing and Care of it to others. They will serve Christ by Proxy, who died for us in his own Person. How can they commit to others the Charge immediately entrusted to themselves? What Exemption can they plead, what Account can they give to the great Shepherd?

*Thirdly,* Let Ministers, that they may be successful, adorn the holy, and without Holiness dangerous Office of the Evangelical Ministry, by a suitable Conversation.

Innocence

Innocence, and Abstinence from foul Sins, is not sufficient to recommend them; but *the Power of Godliness, and the Beauty of Holiness* must shine in their Lives. They can never effectually teach others what they do not practise themselves: if any Sin reigns in them, their Prayers cannot ascend with Acceptance to God, and descend with a Blessing on the People. Let a Minister preach Divine Doctrine, yet if his Conversation be Earthly and Sensual, he is more likely to harden Sinners than to convert them. How unbecoming and disgraceful are unholy Ministers to their Profession? What a Scandal do they give to the Profane, and occasion to blaspheme their high and holy Calling? Let such prepare themselves for *many Stripes*: they cannot escape a double Damnation, for the Neglect of their own Souls and the Souls of others committed to

them: Though a Heavenly Light shines in their Sermons, if in their Practice they are dark Clouds, the Blackness of Darknes is reserved for them for ever.

Fourthly; Union among Ministers is a happy Advantage to recommend their Doctrine to the People. Division and Jealousy will lessen the Authority and Efficacy of their Preaching. If one Dog opens, the Deer is not alarm'd, but the full Cry rouses him. When Ministers with one Consent declare the Wrath of God from Heaven against Sin, the Profane and Secure are afraid: and the awful Fear of Justice makes them seek for Mercy. 'Tis true, there cannot be expected an entire Conformity in Opinions among the wisest and best Men: therefore in Doctrines not so clear, nor of that moment as the great Truths, a mutual Forbearance is our Duty. *But to com*

Contro-

Controversies about clear and necessary Truths, and obscure them by Opposition, is a great hindrance to the Success of the Gospel. Some worthy Men earnestly deny the Gospel to be a Law: Will they reform the Scripture? Is not the Gospel called the Law of *Faith*, the *Law of Liberty*, the *Law of the Spirit of Life*? 'Tis true, the Gospel is a Covenant of Grace, but it has all the Essentials of a Law: 'tis the revealed Will of the Sovereign Law-giver, commanding Sinners to repent and believe, upon no less Reward and Penalty, than Eternal Life to penitent Believers, and Eternal Death to those who disobey the Gospel. Now the Command and Sanction are the proper Characters of a Law. If we duly consider it, the Sovereignty of God is such, that whatever Covenant he offers to the reasonable Creature, has the Force and Obligation of a

held

B b 2 Law.

Law. I instance in this one Point, that of late has occasion'd an unhappy Difference. O the blessed State above, where Ignorance and Strife are abolish'd for ever!

*Fifthly*, Frequent and earnest Prayer to God is a powerful Means to render our Ministry successful. Paul plants, and Apollos waters, but God gives the Increase. Let a Minister be compleatly furnish'd with Learning, Judgment, Eloquence, yet all his Labour will be fruitless without Divine Grace. A Key that is exactly fit to all the Wards of a Lock, cannot open it without a Hand to turn it. Let the most proper and powerful Motives to work upon the reasonable Nature be represented, yet they cannot open the Heart, unless they are manag'd by the holy Spirit.

'Tis very observable, that in the Narrative of the Miracles by the Prophets, some Circumstances are related,



related, that declare they were done by the Divine Power. Sometime the Command of God was before the Performance: thus in all the astonishing Works done by *Moses*, the Command of God was the beginning. *Take thy Rod, stretch out thy Hand,* and others Orders that demonstrate the miraculous Actions not to proceed from an inherent Virtue in his Person, but from a superiour and borrowed Power. Sometimes Prayer was address'd to God before the Miracles were done: Thus *Joshua* first *speaks to the Lord,* before he *commands the Sun to stand still upon Gibeon, and the Moon in the Valley of Ajalon.* Thus *Elias* and *Elisha* revived the Dead by Prayer to the Lord of Life. This was declaratory, that the Prophets were but Instruments, and that God was the absolute Author of them. Accordingly in the Conversion of Souls, which is a Work as miraculous as any of those

Exod. 7.  
16, 19.  
& 8. 5.  
& 16. 9.

Josh. 10.  
12.

1 Kings  
17. 20,  
21.  
2 Kings  
4. 33, 34.

those illustrious Miracles, there must be the Divine Appointment of the Means, and ardent Prayer to God for his Blessing. 'Tis the great Encouragement of Ministers in their Service, that whatsoever is God's Ordinance shall effect that for which it is ordain'd: the Rod of *Moses* was powerful to subdue *Egypt*, to drown *Pharaoh* and his Host in the Red Sea. Three hundred Souldiers with *Gideon*, only arm'd with Lamps and Pitchers, destroyed the numberless Army of the *Midianites*. Astonishing Victory! *And the Gospel is the Power of God to Salvation.* But Prayer is requisite to obtain the holy Spirit, by whose Influence the Word is effectual to recover lost Souls to Heaven. And 'tis evident, that numerous and entire Conversions of Sinners have been by the Ministry of holy Men, who made it their great and earnest Request that they might be successful in bring-

bringing Souls to Christ. Cold Formalities are unacceptable to God, and without Efficacy; but Prayer actuated with Life and holy Heat of Affection, ascends to Heaven and prevails. And what is more worthy of our constant and most ardent Desires, than the Salvation of precious and immortal Souls?

II. To excite Ministers to a faithful Discharge of their Duty, let them consider,

I. The Example of our blessed Saviour. It was one principal Part of his Office to preach the Gospel: this he undertook in wonderful Mercy, and perform'd with amazing Diligence. He rises before Day, and retires himself into a solitary Place to pray, that he may lose no time in Preaching. He preach'd on the Mountain, in the Desert, in the Ship, in the Synagogues, in the High-way, in the

*House* : no Place, no Persons, no  
 Time was unseasonable. It was  
 Mark 8. 35. *his Meat and Drink to do the Will of*  
 Mat. 5. 1. *his Father.* Thus constant and de-  
 Mark 6. 36. lighted was the Son of God (who  
 Mat. 13. 36. laid aside his Majesty and Glory,  
 Luke 10. 39. that he might instruct the People  
 John 4. 34. without terrifying them) in his  
 blessed Work. How does his Ex-  
 ample reprove and upbraid our  
 Negligence? How should it in-  
 flame us to imitate and honour  
 him?

2. His Love to us should make  
 us ardent and active to save Souls,  
 as a Testimony of our Love to  
 him. Thus he speaks to *Peter*,  
*Lovest thou me? Feed my Lambs.*  
 'Tis his Delight and Glory to be  
 the Saviour of Sinners. How  
 dearly has he bought our Love?  
 How willingly did he redeem us  
 when we were Enemies? His Love  
 condescended to our low State, to  
 become a Servant, that he might  
 exalt

exalt us to his State; to be the Sons of God. How does he out-love us? We do not love his Glory as he loved our Meanness, not him the blessed God, as he did us-cursed Creatures. O the Miracle of his ardent Love to us! O the Strangeness of our cold Affection to him!

Love cannot be idle, but will add Fire and Vigor, and cause unfainting Perseverance in our Lord's Service. Love and Duty will overcome all Difficulties. If we consider by how many Titles he deserves our Service, and feel the dear Obligations he has laid upon us, we shall compel *them to come in*, that our glorious King's *House may be full*.

I shall only add, that to save Souls, the Work is glorious, and the Reward is more glorious. In the Assembly of immortal Spirits above, all united in Perfection and Felicity,  
*Those*

*Those who turn many to Righteousness, shall shine with a brighter Glory, like the Stars for ever and ever. Who would be so unhappy as to prefer sluggish Ease before a brighter Crown in Heaven?*

Lastly; I will finish this Discourse with an earnest Perswasive, that Men would comply with the Invitations of the Divine Mercy. Who can without some sparks of Pity and Indignation seriously observe that Men are slight and foolish in things of eternal Interest, beyond all the degrees of Folly in the Concerns of this World? Who would that is in danger to lose his Life or Estate, and has but one day to secure them, waste it in frivolous Matters, when the Opportunity is so short, and the Omission is irreparable? Yet altho the present Life be certainly short, and uncertainly continued, and Eternity depends upon our present

present securing the Favour of God, and our Title in his Kingdom, Men employ their Time to *gain the World*, and neglect their Salvation, in comparison whereof all the Affairs of Time are a busy Folly, and vain Impertinence. Stupendous Security! Now to persuade Men to come to Christ for Life, let them consider,

1. 'Tis God's Call, to which present Obedience is due. Carnal Sense is apt to object, Is it not a Man I see and hear? 'Tis true, but the Message is the King's, not the Embassador's that brings it. A spiritual Eye looks beyond the Object of Carnal Sight, and sees Christ in the Minister by the Light of Faith. Were this believed, how would it fasten our Minds and Senses in the most serious Attention to the preaching of the Gospel!

2. Make judicious Comparisons between this World and the next.

As

As in the Light of the Sun there is an Influence that cherishes the vital Heat, and a Power that extinguishes the Kitchin Fire; so the Light of God's Word has a double Efficacy, it kindles Heavenly, and quenches Earthly Affections. Indeed there wants neither Glory nor Joy, nothing of compleat Happiness in the World to come, to raise our Affections and fasten them upon it: and in this World all is Vanity and Vexation to alienate our Affections from it. What infinite Distance and Disproportion is there between the Objects of our Choice? Who would think it possible, but that 'tis visible every day, that they who have Mortal Souls should be careless of Eternal Things, and spend all their Pains and Passions about Things that expire with the Flux of Time? That they should neglect solid Happiness, and pursue shining Bubbles?

But



But the present World fascinates their Understandings, inspires their Fancy with Dreams of Happiness here: Sensuality charms them into Stupidity: they are unwilling to be disenchantèd; they enjoy their Error, and are entertain'd with pleasant Delusions, till awaken'd by eternal Flames.

Let the enlighten'd Mind consider and judg, the Soul is of a Divine Original, a Spiritual Substance of an everlasting Duration, and can never be happy but in the Enjoyment of those Objects that are Divine and Spiritual, commensurate to its Capacity and Duration. Let a Man possess the World with all its Advantages and Delights, the starv'd Soul would suffer infinite Want, and can only be satisfied with the Fulness of God.

Under what Notion soever Happiness is conceived, 'tis only to be found

found in God. What can enrich a Spirit but Spiritual Treasures? Holiness is the richest Jewel in the Celestial Crown. What can dignify and ennoble a Spirit, but an Alliance to God as a Father, and the Likeness of him in his Divine Excellencies? What can satisfy an Immortal Spirit, and replenish it with Joy, but vital Union with God, and the immediate Influence of Almighty and Eternal Goodness? Carnal Men when they obtain their immediate End, Riches, Honours and Pleasures, they fail in their main End, true Happiness: they seem wise for the present, and are Fools for ever.

The Scripture tells us, *the Less is blessed of the Greater*. How can the present World that is so inferiour to Man in the Nobility of his Nature, afford Perfection and Satisfaction to him? How unsutable,  
how

how insufficient is it to fill the largest and strongest Desires of the Soul?

The World may cloy, but cannot satisfy us; but the Favour of God, the more 'tis enjoyed, the more 'tis desir'd, and delighted in. Carnal Joy seems, but is not: Fear and Stings of Remorse may be disguised and gloss'd over with a chearful Countenance and Carriage, but are not extinguish'd. Spiritual Joy seems not, but is: the Apostle tells us, *As sorrowful, but always rejoicing*: there may be a Winter in the Face, and a flourishing Spring in the Heart. There is a secret Sweetness in the Practice of Religion, that the Unrenewed are Strangers to: they cannot see a Taste.

Carnal Joy cannot repel its Contrary; it cannot endure the Assaults of the flight and transient Evils, to which we are expos'd here. Sick-  
ness,

1 Cor. 6.

10.

ness, Disappointments, Apprehensions of Evils that hover over us; may imbitter the most pleasant Condition. A wounded Spirit, like an ulcerous Palat that is fretted and pain'd with the sweetest things, turns all the Pleasures of the World into Vexation. Fear struck *Belshazzar* at his Feast into a trembling. But Peace with God, and the Joy that flows from it, the World can neither give nor take away: 'tis as unable to destroy it as to produce it.

Rom. 5. *Believers rejoice in Tribulations.*

2, 3. All Carnal Joys are of short

1 Joh. 2. Continuance. *The World passes a-*

17. *way, and the Lusts thereof. Life is*

dying, and the Comforts of it. *All*

*Flesh is Grass, and the Glory as the*

*Flower of the Grass; that by Heat*

*or Cold, by a Blast or a Worm*

*is soon destroyed. All the Objects*

*of the sensual Passions are very fa-*

*ding. The finest Stamp of Beauty*

in

in the Countenance, how easily is it defac'd by Sickneſs or Sorrow, by many Accidents or Age? Riches take the Wings of the Morning, and flee away from the Poſſeſſors: Honour is caſual and uncertain: the Scepter of *David*, ſo great a King, the Royal Branch of his Family, degenerated into a poor Carpenter.

The greateſt in the World, and the moſt proud of their Greatneſs, the Luxurious Voluptuaries, ſhall their Pomp and Delights continue with them in the Grave? Can they reign and revel when their Bodies are in the Duſt, and their Souls in Hell? Where is their admir'd Happineſs? Is it not all dead with them? nothing will then remain but the tormenting Remembrance of their Folly. *But the Word of the Lord endures for ever*: 'Tis an immortal Seed, and makes the Ground 'tis planted in, to live for ever. We

1 Pet. 1.

25.

are assur'd, *he that does the Will of God, abides for ever.* The Blessedness of Heaven is everlasting, as God the Object of it, and the Soul that enjoys it. There is nothing defective in the State above, where Happiness is surrounded with Eternity. This is worthy of our most aspiring Ambition, of all our Hopes and Desires. Now is it possible that the present World, as empty as the Froth of the Sea, as vanishing as a Puff of Air, should be chosen before Celestial Happiness? It is by the most, so prodigiously are Carnal Men sway'd by Sense, that like Brute Beasts they are violently drawn by present Things, and little moved by Things spiritual and future. The Devil brings ready Money in his Hands, and tempts them with *this present World*: The Son of God offers in his Word Eternal Happiness, which is despised in the Comparison. If one should choose

choose a small Sum at present before the sure Reversion of an Estate that would enrich him all his Life, would he not be despised by all for want of Understanding? Yet Men allow that Folly in their own Practice, that they would condemn in others. But such is the Mercy of God, that to perswade and prevail with us, he uses all the Arguments that can work upon the Minds of Men. Hope and Fear are the strongest Springs to move us; he therefore sets before us Heaven and Hell, to attract our Hope, and excite our Fear. He makes use of Hell to kindle our Zeal in seeking the Kingdom of Heaven. The most violent Passions are over-ruled by Fear. Now in the threatning of Hell all the Motives of Fear are united. Little Evils are despised, not feared: great Evils that may be easily avoided, or apprehended very remote, are

not fear'd. But Evils that are imminent and destructive, are the most powerful Objects of Fear. Now every Man in his sinful State, hangs by slender Strings over the bottomless Pit: and for his under-prizing and neglect of Heaven, falls under the Sentence that determines his State in an everlasting Hell. There is no dawning in that Darkness of Sorrow, no refreshing in those Flames. There is a restless Remembrance of what is lost, as a Light that comes through a Cranny in a Dungeon, that the forlorn Caitiff may remember the pleasant reviving Light of which he is deprived. A thousand Years of Torment cannot expiate the Offences of those who disobey the Gospel: they are full of Misery, and fuller of Guilt, that remains in its Weight upon them for ever.



The fear of this, if duly believed and considered, will bridle the strongest Desires after this vain World, and make Men wise, that they may not perish in their Choice.

To conclude; Let those who are invited to this Heavenly Feast, come with *the Wedding-Garment*: 'tis an Allusion to the decent Custom of wearing rich Apparel for Ornament and Lustre at Marriage-Solemnities, to express Joy, and to honour the Persons that are married. Accordingly all that are in the Visible Church, should adorn the Gospel by a Conversation becoming the Dignity and Purity of their high and holy Calling. Unfeigned Faith that unites us to Christ, and is effectual and evident in all good Works, is the *Wedding-Garment*. The Apostle exhorts the *Romans to walk honestly, as in the Day, not in Rioting*



Practice? They live in the bold Contempt of the Divine Law, as if they were afraid the Justice of God should not have cause enough to condemn them, or they would put it to a venture, whether he would be true to his Threatning, and punish according to his Law? Others, tho of a fair Conversation, are but half-Christians: they do not sincerely and entirely comply with the Terms of the Gospel, to receive Christ for their *Prince and* Mar. 22.  
*Saviour.* Let such remember, *the* 11, 12.  
*King came in to see the Guests, and saw a Man without a Wedding-Garment:* this signifies God's judicial Observation of all that are in his Church, not one can escape his all-discerning Eye, the closest Hypocrite is transparent in his Sight. It follows in the Parable, *He saith unto him, Friend, How camest thou in hither without a Wedding-Garment?* Nothing will be available in Judgment,

ment, nor the most specious and glittering Profession, without Faith in Christ, and a renewed Heart and Life: yet many fondly dream they may be saved, tho' not sanctified. *He was speechless, reduced to a defenceless Silence, and Confusion.* The Heart of Man is deceitful above all things, and above all things deceitful to it self: How often in the trial of his Spiritual State, by Excuses and false Glosses he deceives and satisfies himself. But there are no Apologies before the King: all things are entirely open to his Eyes: the Thoughts of Men will be their Accusers, and their Works will depose against them. And how fearful is the Judgment that follows! *Then said the King to the Servants, Bind him Hand and Foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer Darknes; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth. Bind him Hand-and-Foot:* the Expression signifies

signifies that the revenging Power of God is inevitable and irresistible. *Cast him into outer Darkness*, that signifies the Separation from the reviving Presence and Communion of God: *there is weeping and gnashing of Teeth*; the Expression signifies the deepest Sorrow and highest Fury in the Damned. What a Discord and Tumult of the tormenting Passions is *there*? What Misery, when the quickest Sense to feel, and the greatest Evils to be felt, are *there*? Hell is an intolerable Climate, where cold Despair and hot Rage are in Extremity for ever.

F I N I S.

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## ERRATA.

**P**age 208. line 10. for. *toft*, read *loft*. P. 209. l. 10.  
f. *brightest*, r. *highest*. P. 225. l. 15. f. *rest on*, r. *restore*.  
P. 232. l. 18. f. *Revelation*, r. *Elevation*. P. 248. l. 7. dele  
*Can*. l. 20. f. *of*, r. *to*. P. 251. l. 23. f. *furiously*, r. *furious*.  
P. 259. l. 8. f. *make a shew*, r. *feel the Restraints*. l. 24. f.  
*our*, r. *their*. P. 274. l. 20. f. *take*, r. *taste*. P. 350. l. ult.  
f. *Sin and the Judgment*, r. *the Sin*. P. 351. l. ult. f. *'tis*, r.  
*bis*. P. 360. l. 7. f. *frequently*, r. *frequent*. P. 324. l. 1. f. *it*,  
r. *and*. P. 336. l. 13. f. *directing*, r. *decrecing*. P. 341. l. 7.  
f. *is*, r. *which is*. l. 10. del. *not only*. l. 13. f. *but with*, r.  
*bath*. ☞ P. 372. l. 19. f. *mortal*, r. *immortal*.

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