



S E R M O N III.

The insufficiency of any atonement the sinner can make.

MICAH, vi. 6, 7, 8.

Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD? Shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?

The first SERMON on this text.



WHEN God in his providence or grace is pleased, in a peculiar way, to distinguish a people with spiritual or temporal privileges, as hereby he lays them under the strongest engagements to obedience, so the disregard of their divine

Benefactor, in the midst of the enjoyment of his favours, bespeaks the most disingenuous behaviour. The general conduct of the people of the jews affords us an eminent discovery of this perverseness of human nature. And in the whole of their history, from *Moses* to *Christ*, as transmitted to us, in its several parts, by *holy men as they were moved by the Holy Ghost*, we may read ourselves, who naturally, in all the affluence of the bounties of providence, say unto God *depart from us*, and on whom the greatest obligations too frequently make little or no impression.

THE prophet *Micah* was sent upon a very awful errand to the children of *Israel*, to reproach them for their ingratitude to their greatest and best Benefactor, and to denounce destined vengeance upon them. And as the judgments threaten'd were of a very severe and destructive kind, that God might appear to be righteous in inflicting them, in the chapter before us, we have a plea lodged in their consciences, and an expostulation with them, as to the ungrateful returns they had made the Lord for his kindness and care. And it is observable that this is ushered in with the greatest solemnity, by an invocation of the *hills and mountains* to witness to the controversy between God and his people. *Hear ye now what the LORD saith, arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills bear thy voice. Hear ye, O mountains, the LORD's controversy, and*

and ye strong foundations of the earth: for the LORD hath a controversy with his people, and he will plead with Israel.^a As if he had said, “Were it possible, the most inanimate parts of the creation would be sensible of the inequality and disproportion between my ways of mercy, and your paths of rebellion.” You have then an affectionate enquiry into the cause of their ingratitude. *O my people, what have I done unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee? testify against me.*^b “If you have any charge against me produce it. If I have been unjust or unmerciful, enter your plea, and it shall be heard.” But on the contrary, he goes on to remind them of what he had done for them. “Have I not brought thee up out of the land of *Egypt*? did I not hear thy groans in the state of bondage, and redeem thee from that burdensome servitude? did I not give thee *Moses* as a leader and a lawgiver, *Aaron* as a priest, and *Miriam* as a prophetess? did I not turn *Balak*’s designed evil in hiring *Balaam* to curse thee, into a blessing? Reflect on these things, and then witness against me, if you have the least ground for it.” In consequence of this awful charge, the people of *Israel* are represented as enquiring, in the former part of our text. *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high*
GOD?

^a Micah vi. 2.^b Ver. 3.

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GOD? *shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?* To which the prophet replies, *He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy GOD?* In which words you have,

- I. A CONVICTION of guilt fastened on their consciences.
- II. A RESOLUTION taken by them, to wait upon God, and worship in his presence.
- III. AN inquiry into the way of expiation, or means of atonement.
- IV. AN intimation of the impossibility of making an atonement, by any thing men can do, or give. And then,
- V. AND lastly, you have the rule of human obdience, or what it is that God expects, or requires of us.

EACH of these heads contains matter of the highest importance, and deserves very special attention. And, I begin,

I. WITH the conviction of guilt, which seems to be fastened upon their consciences.

THAT

THAT this was the case, I think is pretty evident, partly by their silence upon hearing the dreadful charge brought against them; but more especially, by their inquiring after an atonement. If the case had been otherwise, we should no doubt have heard of their innocence; for where there is any room for it, tho' only in our own apprehensions, we are naturally very prone to justify ourselves, and especially when accused of ingratitude. But when the Spirit of God brings the charge home, and we feel that we are really the persons who have thus come short of the glory of God, and abused his infinite goodness, there is no longer any dispute: but, with *Paul*, when *sin revives*^c in this manner, and we compare it with the purity and perfection of the divine law, we are disabled as to our usual attempts to excuse ourselves, or extenuate our guilt. And from the method that the Holy Ghost makes use of, to bring the *Israelites* to a sense of their evil, we may learn, that the best way to fasten a thorough conviction of guilt on the soul, is to represent the mercy and kindness of God as abused, and despised by its rebellion. Sometimes the Lord indeed works by terrible things upon his people: but this issues not in the sorrow which the gospel recommends, without some displays of the divine mercy. We never sorrow truly after a godly sort, but when we consider our
God

^c Rom. vii. 9.

God as the best, as well as the highest of beings, as full of mercy and compassion, as well as possessed of indisputable authority; and so view our sins as injurious to his goodness, as well as affrontive to his sovereignty. Thus you find the Lord reasons with his people here. First, he shews them what he had done for them, that they might the better know what they had done against him. All moral suasion, indeed, or reasoning, how just so ever in itself, or founded on the best principles, will be fruitless and inefficacious, unless the Spirit first create a light in the darkened understanding, and implant a principle of love to God in the soul. And thus it would have been to no manner of purpose for the prophet to have set before the people the mercies of God, had he done this in ever so moving and reasonable a way, unless *the arm of the Lord* had been *revealed*.^d But supposing him to be, as certainly he is, the author of all grace in the soul, yet the way or means by which he excites this grace of evangelical repentance, is by representing to the sinner those bowels of God's compassion, and the multitude of his tender mercies, which have been neglected, and trampled upon by his carelessness, and wickedness. The terrors of God's wrath against sin have a tendency to drive us to despair, without some discoveries of his mercy and compassion; and indeed until then, we shall

^d *Isai. liii. 1.*

shall never have a just sense of our guilt, or of the desert of our iniquities. Thus it was with *David*, when the prophet *Nathan* told him that *the Lord* had put away his iniquity^c, he cries out in the bitterness of his soul, *against thee, thee only have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight.*^f And, as it is in the first exercise of repentance, so, in the whole of the christians conversation afterwards; there is nothing hath so great a tendency to melt him into ingenuous contrition for sin, as the belief that God *will heal his backslidings, and love him freely*^g, that he *will be merciful to his unrighteousness, and his sins and his iniquities he will remember no more.*^h But again,

II. You have the resolution of this people to come before the Lord, and bow in his presence.

WHEN we are made sensible of our deficiencies in duty, and are awakened to a sense of our guilt upon that account, we are naturally very ready to enter into resolutions that we will now serve the Lord with full purpose of heart; his worship, that hath been neglected, shall be now constantly, and diligently attended to; we will *come before the Lord*, we will bow to his authority, and be obedient to his laws. There is indeed a presence of the most high God from which we cannot separate

^c 2 Sam. xii. 13. ^f Psal. li. 4. ^g Isai. xiv. 4. ^h Heb. viii. 12.

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rate ourselves, as he *sits upon the circle of the earth*, and beholds, by one all-comprehending view, things done in both worlds. But there is also a special presence of God in the ordinances of his appointment, and worship of his sanctuary, which, how much soever it may be despised, and neglected by persons estranged from him; yet, when they are apprised of their guilt, they will in some measure see the folly of their ways, and resolve to return unto the Lord. And this is the practice of every soul under religious awakenings. When our sins were first set in order before our eyes, we entered into the firmest resolutions, that we would for the future be more conscientious in all our ways, especially with respect to our attendance on religious worship: and this hath often served to still the clamours of conscience about past guilt, till the work has been carried on with power, and the soul put upon enquiry after a proper worthiness, in which to appear before the Lord, as a just and holy God. And this leads us to the next general head. Which is,

III. THAT having thus resolved to *come before the Lord*, they enquire in what way they must approach, so as to find favour in his sight. *Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high GOD?*

THIS supposes a discovery made to the soul of the infinite distance, and direct contrariety, that

that there is betwixt the most high and holy God, and itself, as nothing but a poor sinful creature. It was a very just observation of the apostle, that it is through *ignorance of God's righteousness*, that we go about to *establish our own.*¹ Were we apprised of the perfection and purity of his nature, and the rigorous demands of his law, we must either contradict our own experience, or believe it impossible to appear before God with comfort, but as cloathed with perfect innocency and purity. It is because, either we think not at all of the Almighty, or else regard him as one like ourselves, that we rush into his presence, *as the horse rusheth into the battle.* Were we sensible that he is as necessarily just, as gracious, and therefore can by no means acquit the guilty, any more than he can deny himself, we should be more earnest in our enquiries *wherewith to come before him.* One single transgression renders him our enemy, as well as leaves us incapable of *serving him in spirit and in truth.* Angels approach him with awe, but then it is with the freedom of spotless creatures, that never offended him. Man being fallen from his original integrity, and having lost his beauty, upon the least spiritual awakening, must be sensible of the enmity there is between God and him. And it is observable, that this seems to have been a principle common to the whole world, though
known

¹ Rom. x. 3.

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known only in the glory of it, by that gospel which hath brought life and immortality to light. As there is no nation without its God, so they have all by their practice acknowledged that they had a sense of guilt, in those sacrifices, of some kind or other, which they have been used to offer to their offended deities. And as it thus supposes that we *know God* in some measure, before we can *obey the gospel of his Son*^k, or shall be solicitous after a righteousness in which to approach unto him; so you have here several methods proposed, some of God's institution, though designed to other purposes, and some of man's invention, that were abominations in his sight. And,

THE first of these is that of *burnt-offerings, and calves of a year old*. These were appointed by God to be observed by the children of *Israel*, through all their generations, not as expiatory in themselves, but as specifying, and shadowing forth *good things to come*.^l “ Shall I come, “ says *Israel*, with these? they have divine authority for their sanction; or will God be “ better pleased *with rams*, or with *thousands* “ of them? or if *oil* should be more acceptable, “ will *ten thousand rivers* of it be sufficient to “ take away my guilt? or if he be *wearied* out “ with his own appointments, so that he will “ have *no more* such *oblations*, shall I give him “ *my first born*, according to the barbarous su- “ perstitious

^k 2 Thef. i. 8.

^l Heb. x. 1.

“ perstitious custom of the heathens, the
 “ child of my strength, the son of my affec-
 “ tion *for my transgression, or the fruit of my*
 “ *body for the sin of my soul?* This is all that
 “ I have in my power, except I give my body
 “ to be burnt; and this shall be readily offered,
 “ if it may be accepted.” From which we
 may learn these two things:

1. How easy a matter it is to mistake the design of God in his institutions. It is a very great unhappiness to converse with the ordinances of God from wrong principles, or with mistaken views. All the services of the old testament-dispensation, many and pompous as they were, had no immediate influence upon the people’s acceptance with God, nor were designed to eclipse the glory of Christ, as *the Lord our righteousness*: and whenever they were regarded as expiatory, it was an abuse put upon them, contrary to the intention of the great Lawgiver. And, would to God the children of *Israel* were alone in their abuse of divine institutions. How easy is it to observe, in ourselves and others, the aptness there is to rest in duty, or to regard the sacrifice of praise, or a broken heart, as the ground of God’s delight in us? There is a wide difference between neglecting or despising, and idolizing a duty or ordinance. By the one we condemn the authority of *Christ*, and by the other we diminish his glory, by making any thing a partner, or competitor with him.

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2. HENCE

2. HENCE we may also see that persons under convictions will naturally turn to any thing, how expensive or unnatural soever, rather than submit to God's righteousness. They will heap up oblations, give *thousands of rams, and ten thousands of rivers of oil*, nay, lose the tenderness of a parent, in their concern for sin, and give up the *fruit of their bodies*, as a sacrifice for their *transgressions*, rather than look to him whom God has *set forth as a propitiation*. And how agreeable is this to the conduct of many in our day? If constancy in their attendance upon divine worship, or the largest charity may suffice, they may have some light into the way that leads to everlasting life. But if they must cease from pride, and glory only in the Lord, if *Christ* must have all the honour of salvation, and they be no sharers with him, they practically say they will rather have no life, than receive it from his hands. O the vileness and enmity of our natures! the pride of our hearts! and the obstinacy of our wills! This ought to be matter of lamentation unto us. What grievous penances do the poor deluded *papists* submit to? what large contributions do they cheerfully make, to gain salvation out of God's way? And I am persuaded, that, what seems to be most contrary to nature, would rather be submitted to by the carnal mind, than that *Christ* alone should be exalted. What necessity then is there for his mighty power to subdue every
high

high thought and imagination, before we shall become his willing people? Which leads us,

IV. To shew you the impossibility of any thing of ours, to make atonement, or to take away sin.

WE may offer *burnt-offerings*, or *thousands of rams*, and, if possible, do every thing of this kind mentioned in the text; but all will not do. And that for these two reasons: *first*, they were never designed by God to this end; nor, *secondly*, are they in themselves sufficient for it.

I. THEY were never appointed by God unto this purpose. The apostle to the *hebrews* shews us at large, that none of their rites were designed to be substituted in the room of *Christ*: and accordingly you find, when they were abused by the people, God very strongly declares his abhorrence of them: which must be understood as respecting rather the abuse of these institutions, than the institutions themselves; for they were not only good, but then in their full force. There are two remarkable passages in the prophecy of *Isaiab* to this purpose. *Hear the word of the Lord, ye rulers of Sodom, and give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord: I am full of burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts, and I delight not in*

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*the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me, the new moons, and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with, it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons, and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me, I am weary to bear them.^m And, they are rejected with greater abhorrence, if possible, in another passage in the same prophecy, He that killeth an ox, is as if he slew a man: he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck: he that offereth an oblation, as if he offered swine's blood: he that burneth incense, as if he blessed an idol.ⁿ It must be very surprising to every considerate mind, to observe here, with how much detestation the Lord rejects those very institutions, which he himself had so positively commanded. But when we consider, how strangely they were abused by the jews, in the regard they paid them, and the dependance they had upon them, as making atonement, then the wonder ceases; for it is very evident from the whole tenor of God's word, that he never designed *the blood of bulls and goats, or the ashes of an heifer to take away sin*; ^o for then there would have been no occasion to have *laid the iniquities of his people on his Son*, or to have
made*

^m Isai. i. 10, — 14. ⁿ Chap. lxvi. 3. ^o Heb. ix. 13. and
x. 4.

made *his soul an offering for sin.*^p But, as that which may fully satisfy us that God never intended it, compare what you find in *Romans iii. 25.* where we are told of *Christ*, that *God hath set him forth*, or as it should have been rendered ^q, *pre-ordained him to be a propitiation thro' faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins*, compare this, I say, with *1 Corinth. i. 30.* *But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption*, and you will easily see, that it was never the design of God, that burnt-offerings or rivers of oil should satisfy for sin. And we know that *his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure.*^r

2. THIS will further appear, if we consider the insufficiency of these rites, in themselves, to answer the demands of divine justice, or to come up to the perfection which the law of God requires. Now the law requires perfection of nature, and universal uninterrupted obedience; and, in case of failure, threatens death. And let us then consider what is proposed here. And here is nothing to answer for that perfection of obedience that is required. All that can be thought of by those, who would give *the fruit of their bodies for the sin of their souls*, is, that it should take away the penalty threatened: But then, it is also neces-

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sary

^p *Isai. liii. 6, 10.* ^q *ωροίθετο.* ^r *Isai. xlvi. 10.*

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sary that the law be made honourable by a perfection of obedience. Further, as all that is proposed answers but to one part of a sinner's case, so it is altogether insufficient for that; for what is there in the blood of bulls or of goats that can satisfy for the breach of the divine law? Is there any proportion between a created life, and the affront offered against an infinite Being? What tho' we could give the whole world, and all the lives of men and angels in both worlds, would it equal the debt we owe to God? No, sin, as it carries in it a contempt of the divine authority, leaves the sinner helpless, as well as hopeless in himself. This the apostle treats with such a force of reasoning in the 10th of the *hebrews* that he that runs may read it. *For the law, says he, having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices, which they offered year by year, make the comers thereunto perfect: for then would they not have ceased to be offered.*^s

We come now,

V. To consider what it is that *the Lord our God requires of us*, and that is, *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him.*

BUT of these things I shall consider hereafter, and conclude this discourse with a few remarks on what has been said. And,

I. WE

^s Heb. x. 1, 2.

1. WE may here justly reflect on the great unhappiness and folly of the jewish nation, who fell into so general and fatal a mistake with respect to the design of the ceremonial law, notwithstanding such great care was taken, to guard them against resting in the performance of its rites, for their justification in the sight of God. This led them to add many inventions of their own to those divine appointments, and into a neglect of him who is *the end of the law for justifying righteousness*, and consequently into a carnal apprehension, and very partial discharge of the moral law itself, and upon the whole, exposed them, in the end, to the severity of the divine resentments. Again,

2. WE may from hence see the infinite advantages we enjoy under the gospel dispensation: by which we are delivered from this yoke of ceremonies, and have so clear a revelation of *Jesus Christ* in all the glory of his satisfaction, and perfection of his righteousness.

3. THIS will surely teach us the aggravations of their crimes, under these superior advantages, who attempt to add their own foolish inventions to the appointments of God, or rest on any thing but Christ Jesus, and what he has done, and suffered, for their justification before him. To which I will add,

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4. AND

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4. AND lastly, The double obligation we are under, both from our deliverance from the burden of the legal ceremonies, and the clear revelation we enjoy of Christ and his salvation, to manifest our firm and humble faith in him, by the holiness of our lives and conversations.



S E R-



S E R M O N I V .

Of the duties of justice, and mercy.

MICAH vi. 8.

*He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good,
and what doth the Lord require of thee,
but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to
walk humbly with thy God?*

The second SERMON on this text.



HAVING, in a former discourse, from the foregoing words, considered the representation which the prophet gives of a conviction of guilt fastened upon the consciences of the people of *Israel*; and upon this the resolution taken by them, to wait upon God, and to worship in his presence; having considered the enquiry they make into the way of expiation, and treated on the intimation that is given of the impossibility of making an atonement by any thing men can do. I proceed now,

V.

V. To consider *what* it is that *the Lord our God requires of us*, and that is, *to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with him.*

AND, from what hath been offered under the former heads, it is evident, that he requires none even of these at our hands, as the ground of our reconciliation to him, or acceptance with him. For if the *fruit of our bodies* is insufficient to take away the guilt of our souls; how much more insufficient must those services be, which God hath a natural right, as our Creator, to demand, and which, at the same time, in the best of men are so very imperfect, as to need the perfuming incense of the interceding *Jesus* to be accepted at all. Supposing therefore that we are redeem'd, and only so, by the blood of *Christ*, from the curse of a violated law, regarding I say ourselves, as heirs of the grace of God, and expectants of eternal glory, I shall enquire what it is, in the sense of the prophet, that the Lord, as our God, looks for at our hands, and for the performance of which, he will supply us with necessary measures of his grace. And this is,

1. *To do justly.*

JUSTICE towards our fellow creatures, is one great branch of natural, as well as revealed religion. As it would be impossible, that society among men shou'd be preserved, and
order

order maintained without it ; so it is a received principle, agreed to by the common consent of all nations, that fraud, extortion, violence, and oppression, which are opposed to justice, and faithfulness, are destructive to community, wherever they are allowed of, or connived at. This part of natural religion receives very considerable improvement from revelation, as represented in the strongest light, and enforc'd by the most conclusive reasonings.

It may be considered under two branches ; *first*, as it respects the substance ; and *secondly*, the character and reputation of our fellow creatures, or fellow christians.

(I.) THEN, we are *to do justly* towards the substance or the estates of others. That is, in the whole of our conversation, we are to endeavour, as near as may be, to give to every one his due : and, though we shou'd have it in our power secretly to defraud or over-reach our neighbour, we are to be as conscientious in avoiding it, as we wou'd the most barefac'd injury or oppression.

In the several callings in which the providence of God hath fixed us, we are to be faithful and honourable in our dealings. This you find expressly commanded under the first dispensation : *Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, and the wages of him that is hired, shall not abide with thee all night, until the morning.* ^a And so again, *ye shall do no unrighteousness,*

^a Lev. xix. 13.

ousness in judgment, in mete-yard, in weight, or in measure. *Just balances, just weights, a just ephah, and a just hin shall ye have: I am the Lord your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt. Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes and all my judgments, and do them: I am the Lord.*^b And if the people of *Israel* were obliged to this, not only from their relation to God as their creator, but as especially favour'd with his providential appearances for them; how much more does it become christians, who profess to believe that *Christ* hath deliver'd them from the condemnation of the law, and from the bondage of sin, and the destruction of hell, to be faithful and holy in all manner of conversation. The reason of this command I take to be founded in our mutual relation to each other as creatures. No man can apprehend himself to be wrong'd, or injur'd in his substance, with pleasure and satisfaction. As we therefore would have others act towards us, we are to deal by them. The prophet *Malachy* reasons upon this subject with a great deal of force. *Have we not, says he, all one father? hath not one God created us? why do we deal treacherously every man against his brother?*^c

(2.) WE are to do justice to the character, and reputation of our fellow creatures, or fellow christians, as well as to their substance. I doubt not but there are
many,

^b Ver. 36, 37.

^c Chap. ii. 10.

many, under a profession of religion, who would not allow themselves in any instances of fraud or injustice in their dealings, and yet, make little or no conscience of their words, forgetting that an invasion on our property in worldly things, is a much inferior injury to a wound or stain in our reputation. It is mention'd as one of the greatest branches of wickedness for which God will *reprove*, that a man *sitteth, and speaketh against his brother, and slandereth his own mother's son.*^d And Solomon reckons among the seven things that *the Lord abhors, a false witness that speaketh lies, and him that soweth discord among brethren.*^e And, under the new testament, the apostle *Paul* recommends it to *Titus*, to put the brethren in mind, *that they speak evil of no man, and assigns a good reason for it, for we our selves also were sometimes foolish, and disobedient.*^f

THIS then is one part of the reasonable service that the Lord requires of us, that we *do justly* to the estates and characters of our fellow creatures, and surely, (by the way) hence we may conclude, that if God will be the avenger of injustice towards his creatures, much more so towards his Son. If the wages of every instance of injustice is *death, of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall they be thought worthy, who have trodden under foot the Son of God; and counted the blood of the covenant an unholy, or common, thing?*^g

Will

^d Psa. l. 20. ^e Prov. vi. 19. ^f Chap. iii. 2, 3. ^g Heb. x. 29.

Will not the righteous Lord, think you, severely resent the refusal to render to Christ his due; which must be the case where the glory that is essential to his person, and the honour that is due to his atonement are refused him? But then again,

2. WE are to *love mercy*, as well as to *do justly*.

MERCY supposes the objects of it to be miserable, and so to stand in need of a compassionate regard. Accordingly, it is highly agreeable to the laws of nature, as well as the revealed will of God, that we should pity, and sympathize with our fellow creatures in distress. *Solomon* tells us, that *he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.*^b It must needs be most barbarous to insult a person in misery, and to triumph over distress. The gospel carries this matter further, obliging us not only, in general, to pity persons in affliction; but if our very *enemy* should *hunger*, we are to have *mercy on him*, so as to *feed him*; and thus by returning good for evil, we are to *heap*, as it were, *coals of fire upon his head:*ⁱ and for this we have not only the command, but example of our great Lord, who died praying for those that embred their hands in his blood, and breathed his soul into his Father's hands, with this amazing request, *Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.*^k And the apostle *Paul* seems to want words to

^b Prov. xvii. 5. ⁱ Rom. xii. 20, 21. ^k Luke xxiii. 34.

to express to us this great and glorious principle, when he says, *Put on therefore, (as the elect of God, holy and beloved) bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, even as Christ forgave you.*¹

AGAIN, a person may not only be miserable by his necessity, but through his own folly and miscarriage; and then if the offence be private, if we observe repentance in our brother, we are to be *easy to be entreated*, and forgive him, though it be to seventy times seven^m Nay, if the offence be of a more public nature, as far as our regard for the honour of *Christ*, and the good of society will admit it, we are to judge favourably: and whilst we are faithful to our Lord, we are to be as merciful as may be to our fellow creature. This you find eminently in the example of the incestuous person: the apostle *Paul* was as earnest that the *corinthians* shou'd receive him upon his repentance, with all the respect and love due to a brother; as he was solicitous they shou'd reject him, whilst he was insensible of his offence.ⁿ And where any professing christians are above receiving returning sinners, in all the bowels of mercy, they, as really, and, perhaps, as heinously offend against God, as in any other injury or oppression. For the same God who says, *thou shalt not steal*, has also said, *thou shalt*

¹ 1 Col. iii. 12. ^m Luke xviii. 22. ⁿ 1 Cor. v. compared with 2 Cor. vii.

shalt love thy neighbour as thy self. He who requires us to *do justly*, will have us also *love mercy*.

WE are not only to *be merciful*, but to *love mercy*: And this may imply either the readiness, or chearfulness with which we are to shew it; or the degree of our regard to this disposition.

FIRST, We are to do it, readily, not only as our duty, but our privilege. This is to be *followers of God as dear children*, ° for he *delights in mercy*. P And wherever this is the case, it doubles the favour, and renders it the more peculiarly acceptable to the person on whom it is bestowed. When we are not driven to pity the distressed merely from the extremity of their case, but as those who are sensible that we are under higher obligations to God for the freedom and sovereignty of his kindness to us, it appears to flow from the spiritual tenor and disposition of our souls. Thus what we do, in this respect, is to be done with all our hearts. Again,

SECONDLY, It may imply the largeness of our mercy. We are to *love mercy*. Whatever a man delights in, he wou'd do it frequently, and fully. And in this we are to measure our duty by the circumstances of the distressed, and the ability God hath given us. If we have it not in the power of our hands to communicate of our substance, we are to help them by our advice, and by our prayers.

° Eph. v. i.

P Micah vii. 18.

prayers. But where God hath given us largely of the good things of this life, *freely have we received*, and *freely* also are we to *give*. And the necessity a man is in of a continual supply of the abundant mercies of God, is a very just rule by which he ought to measure his pity and bounty to his fellow creatures.

THUS then I have considered the two first branches of our duty, *to do justly, and to love mercy*; under which two heads may be reduced all the commands of the second table, respecting our fellow creatures. And before I enter upon the first table, or our duty towards God, it will be necessary to make some remarks upon what I have said. And,

I. FROM hence then we may learn the glorious perfections of the great Lawgiver. As we may know something of the nature of a prince by the laws he enacts; so we may read the glory of God in the rules that he hath prescribed for us to walk by. He must needs be a *holy* and a *gracious* God, who requires us *to do justly, and to love mercy*. That is a very magnificent description of the holiness of God, which *Moses* gives us in his song. *Who is like unto thee, O Lord amongst the gods? who is like thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?*⁹ And it is a very instructive representation, which we have in the *revelation* of the worship of perfected saints in the upper world. *They sing the song of Moses*
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⁹ Exod. xv. 12.

the servant of God, and the song of the lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God almighty, just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? for thou only art holy. ^r And as God is just, so he also is merciful; that is, in a way consistent with his justice. For otherwise, whatever notions we may have of this attribute, it must be rather a weakness than a perfection. And therefore you find them both joined together by the psalmist, *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before thy face.* ^s So that, whilst we are learning our duty, we may observe the infinite and harmonious perfections of that God who hath commanded it; that he is a being, as strictly just and holy, as he is merciful and good. Again,

2. FROM hence we may infer the imperfection of our obedience. Is there a mouth in the whole world, but what must be stopped before God, with respect to the duties of the second table? Were we never unfaithful to any trust reposed in us? did we never wrong our neighbour, either in his person, or his estate? have we, upon all just occasions, been ready to put on bowels of compassion, pity, and tenderness? can we say that we have been fully, and always faithful in these things? No, surely. If conscience performs its office faithfully, it must tell us how infinitely

^r Rev. xv. 3, 4.

^s Psal. lxxxix. 14.

ly short we have all come of our duty in these respects: agreeable to what the apostle *Paul* observes at large to the *Romans*; when speaking of the person, *whose damnation is just*, *What then?* says he, *are we better than they?* No, in no wise: for we have before proved both *Jews and Gentiles*, that they are all under sin, as it is written, *There is none righteous, no not one.*^t From whence he concludes, *that every mouth should be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God. For by the deeds of the law, shall no flesh be justified in his sight.*^u Let us remember then the imperfection of our circumstances at best, and consequently the unworthiness of our conduct, that, whenever we glory, it may be in the Lord. But again,

3. HENCE we see the intire consistency there is between our looking to *Christ* as *the Lord our righteousness*, and our regard to the precepts of the moral law, as good in themselves, and necessary to us, both as to life, and godliness. He that hath commanded us to believe on his Son, and hath promised eternal life and happiness through him, and on his account, hath left it as our duty to *maintain good works.*^w The same *Jesus* who came to destroy and abolish the condemning, hath left in full force the commanding part of the law. He hath indeed removed the enmity, that was betwixt God and us, for the breach of it; but he hath establish'd the spi-

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ritual

^t Rom. iii. 9, 10.^u Ver. 19, 20.^w Tit. iii. 8.

ritual part, and requires our regard to it: and as he knows we are impotent, as well as unworthy, he hath directed us to look to himself for assistance for the discharge of duty, as well as merit for the favour of God. You see the prophet in the text, at the same time that he assures us that nothing on our part can answer for our transgressions, tells us what God expects of us. As it is impious to say we have liberty to sin in our practice, because grace hath abounded in our experience; so it is the highest idolatry to present our services, as an offering to God for our acceptance. It will be allowed, I apprehend, that our Lord was a judge in this matter: and he says to his disciples, *When ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.* * Which he illustrates by this question, *Will a master thank that servant that doth the things that were commanded him? †* Will he think himself obliged? much less then the sovereign Lord of all, who fills heaven and earth with his presence and glory. But because he will not thank him for his services, as an obligation laid on him, does he therefore cease from his right to those services? by no means. So that you see there is the highest consistency betwixt keeping the commandments, as a rule given
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* Luke xvii. 10.

† Ver. 9.

us by God to walk by, and not trusting in our obedience, as satisfactory for our acceptance with him.

4. AND lastly, in all our actions towards our fellow creatures, we are to be careful that one duty does not shut out another. We are *to do justly*, but then so, as *to love mercy*; and we are to exercise *mercy*, so as to *do justly*. That which would be justice in one case, may be cruelty in another. And that which would be mercy in one circumstance, may be injustice in another. Thus, supposing a crime committed in which the good of society is concerned, to take no notice of this, is to be unjust: because it is injuring a whole community. But supposing the case of a private nature, in which a man's self is only concerned, to take all the advantage of justice, in many instances, would be unmerciful.

I SHOU'D now have proceeded, under the last general head, to consider the other branch of our duty, and that is *to walk humbly with our God*; where we have a very large field of discourse, as what includes the whole first table. The former hath a more immediate respect to our conversation with men, this to our actions towards God. Under the first we are viewed as in the world, under the latter as conversing more immediately with the divine Being. But that I shall not enter upon at present: and only

add, that we have abundant cause to bless the name of the Lord our God, that whilst we must plead guilty before him, he hath revealed a way, in which justice and mercy are reconciled, all his perfections glorified, and yet that there is hope in *Sion* concerning the greatest of finners.



S E R-



SERMON V.

Of walking humbly with God.

MICAH vi. 8.

He hath shewed thee, O man; what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

The third SERMON on this text.



O be admitted into the friendship of a great and good man, and much more of a powerful and mighty prince, is justly esteemed among the most valuable blessings of this life; and in proportion to the greatness, or wisdom of the person, his conversation is regarded as an honour and a privilege. It is but now and then that we hear of a peasant being received into the confidence and familiarity of his prince. How extraordinary an instance of

condescension is it then in the great and holy God to allow, nay even to require, his people to walk with him in a way of friendly communion? When, with *David*, we consider the heavens the work of his hands, the sun moon and stars which he hath ordained, and turn our thoughts to those ministring spirits, those sons of the morning, who enjoy a constant view of the perfections of his nature, and incessantly adore his glory, we may well say, *What is man that thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that thou visitest him?*^a That God should require us to make him our fear and our dread, to walk before him in uprightness, and to tremble in his presence, is not so surprizing: but, that he should fix an inseparable connection betwixt our happiness and our duty, or betwixt our reasonable service and our privilege, how amazing is such condescending goodness as this? To measure the dimensions, or fathom the depths of this grace calls for the enlarged capacities of a perfected spirit, and yet even so it is, that he who will not be pleased with thousands of rams, or ten thousands of rivers of oil, he who will not admit of the sacrifice of the fruit of our bodies for our transgressions, hath not only required us to do justly, and to love mercy, but to walk humbly with him. The two former duties, I have shewn you, respect the second table, in which the Lord

calls

^a Psa. viii. 3, 4.

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calls for equity in our dealings, and for the love of mercy towards the objects of compassion, among our fellow creatures. We proceed now,

3. To the last clause of the words, and which contains the last branch of our duty, *viz. to walk humbly with our God.*

THIS indeed includes the whole of the first table; and I hope to make it evident that what God calls for at our hands, as agreeable to our relation to him as creatures, and especially as redeemed by the blood of his Son, is one main branch of our happiness, and the fruit of our belonging to the covenant of grace. And here, you will easily observe, that there are these *three* things to be inquired into from this clause of our text.

FIRST, The duty it self, and that is *to walk with God.*

SECONDLY, The manner of its performance; it is to be done *humbly*: and,

THIRDLY, The reason, or authority by which it is enjoined; *the Lord hath required it of us.* I begin,

FIRST, with the duty itself, and this is *to walk with God.* In his *presence*, we are told, *is fulness of joy, and at his right hand are pleasures for evermore.*^b To enjoy the favourable

^b Psa. xvi. 11.

vourable smiles of the fountain of all excellency must needs give *joy unspeakable, and full of glory*. *Happy is the man, that is in such a case, yea thrice happy is the man whose God is the Lord.* ^c It is said of *Enoch* that he *walked with God.* ^d And you find the same expression, with little alteration, very frequent in scripture. As this evidently takes in the whole of our religion, so there are many things necessarily presupposed, as antecedent to such an honourable and gracious intimacy with the divine Being, as is intended by this phrase. For,

1. You know there must be a mutual agreement between two parties, before they can *walk* together. Enmity implies aversion; and there can be no friendly communion, much less agreeable *walk*, between two that are directly opposite to each other. So that to *walk with God*, supposes that he is at peace with us, and we with him. This was the case originally betwixt the great *Jehovah* and our first parents, whilst they retain'd their integrity. God could converse with them with delight, and they commune with him with freedom. But no sooner had they sinned against him, than they discovered a principle of enmity, in flying from his presence. And methinks we need no other evidence, that in this we all bear their image, than the constant experience we have of a corrupt principle

^c Psal. cxliv. 15,

^d Gen. v. xxiv.

principle within us, which says unto the Almighty, *Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways.* * And hence it is the apostle observes, that whilst we are in the flesh, or strangers to the work of the Spirit upon our souls, we cannot please God; and assigns this reason for it, *because the carnal mind is enmity against God:* † it is in league with his enemies, sin and satan, and filled with the strongest aversion to him. And, as we are enemies to God by wicked works, so he is at enmity with us; being of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, he must abhor the workers of it, considered as his enemies. Of this you have many intimations in his word. See, instead of many others, these two very awful passages, psalm v. 4, 5. *For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee. The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.* To which you may add what is mentioned in psalm xi. 5, 6: *The Lord trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence, his soul hateth. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.*

Now this being the enmity that is naturally between God and us, as the prophet Amos observes, ‡ *Can two walk together ex-*
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* Job. xxi. 14. † Rom. viii. 6, 7, 8. ‡ Chap. iii. 3.

cept they be agreed? The way in which, or the person by whom, we arrive at this privilege is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is stiled our peace,^h *and, is said, to have destroy'd the enmity betwixt God and us. As we are made nigh to God through him, he having finished transgression, and made an end of sin, and reconcil'd God unto us by his everlasting righteousness. The means of our reconciliation to God, is the agency of his Spirit; who reveals the Saviour, in the glory of his person, and perfection of his atonement, and powerfully destroys every high thought and imagination, that wou'd exalt it self against the Lord, and his Christ; and leads the believer into a discovery of the excellency of the wisdom, grace, and glory of this way of redemption; enabling him to bless God for it, and rejoice in it. This you have represented to you, in both the branches of it, in a very just light by the apostle Paul: And all things are of God, says he, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation. To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made*
him

^h Eph. ii. 14.

*him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*¹ In which passage you have, first an intimation of the way of reconciliation on God's part. It is by *Christ* that he becomes one with us; by putting away our sins, and imputing them unto his Son. Again, our being friends with God being necessary, as well as his friendship to us; he hath *committed* unto his ministers this *word of reconciliation*: in the ministrations of which they, *as ambassadors for Christ*, in his name, and by his authority, deliver this message of peace unto sinners; in which they earnestly *beseech* them *to be reconciled unto God*: and, in order to it, represent to them the grace of God, in making him *to be sin for us, who knew no sin*. So that before we can walk with God, we must be acquainted with his Son, and have some good ground to hope that we are accepted in him. God must be at peace with us, and we reconciled to him, other wise all our endeavours to *walk with God* will be insignificant. And, as one well observes, “All that we do for God, will in this case, be
 “ as the gifts of an enemy; and though they
 “ may possibly be rewarded in this life, yet
 “ as the *sacrifices of the wicked are an abo-*
 “ *mination to the Lord*, so they will be rejec-
 “ ted as to any worthiness in the day of the
 “ Lord.” But again.

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¹ 2 Cor. v. 18.—21.

2. It supposes such a reconciliation, as that the consequence of this agreement, the end and design of the persons shou'd be the same. Persons, you know, in walking together are travelling towards one and the same place; and, taking the words in a moral sense, where any are said to *walk together*, they are supposed to have one common aim and view. The design that God has in every thing, is the manifestation of his own perfections; to set forth to view the glory of his wisdom, power, and faithfulness. Thus he is said to *have made all things for himself*:^k and the world is said, with all things that are in it, to be created by his agency, and *for his pleasure*.^l In the work of our salvation, among other perfections, that of his grace is mentioned in a very peculiar manner, as illustrated in every part of it. Now to *walk with God* supposes, that we are regarding the same end with him. Does he design to be glorious in shewing mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin? then the saint that *walks with him* in truth, is breathing after the same; and would be better acquainted with the greatness of his kindness, and have the Lord alone exalted in his soul. He wou'd be glad to improve in the knowledge of his love, as sovereign, and undeserved; and is aiming, in every thing that he does, more or less, that Christ may
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^k Prov. xvi. 4.

^l Rev. iv. 11.

be magnified, as the foundation and glory of the whole spiritual building. Again, does the Lord design, after he hath guided the believer by his counsel, to receive him to his glory? or having finished the work of grace in his soul here, to crown him with the reward of eternal life? The believer is also, in some measure, one with him in this respect, waiting and longing to enjoy him, as the inheritance, and portion of his soul. He would be more and more loosened from time, and grow in his longings after the God of his salvation. As the Lord says unto him, *Fear not, I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward;*^m so he takes leave humbly to reply, *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.*ⁿ

3. AND lastly, before we can *walk with God*, there must be a spiritual principle of life and motion given to, or created in our souls. Natural death leaves the body inactive, destroys the power of the organs to discharge their several functions; and so, whilst, in a spiritual sense, we are dead in trespasses and sins, there can be no *walk with God* maintained: *We are alive unto sin, but dead unto God.*^o As the body of *Adam* would have been like the earth from whence it was taken, had not God *breathed into it the breath of life*; so our souls, while in this natural state, may very justly

^m Gen. xv. 1.

ⁿ Psa. lxxiii. 25.

^o Rom. vi. 11.

justly be compared to dry bones scatter'd at the grave's mouth. And as there can be no converse between the living and the dead; so, whilst we are spiritually dead, we must needs be strangers to communion with the saints, and much more with God himself. These things are necessarily supposed antecedent to our *walking with God*. He must be at peace with us in *Christ*, and we reconciled to him by the power of his Spirit, bestowing knowledge and faith upon our souls. We must have, in some measure, one and the same aim, and from *death in sin*, be made *alive unto God*.

HAVING premised these things, I proceed to a more particular enquiry into the duty itself. And you may observe, that the expression is metaphorical, and to be taken in a moral, and not a natural sense, consisting, as I apprehend, in the believers communion with the divine Being, as his God in covenant, and his regard unto his will as the Lord his Sovereign.

FIRST, To *walk with God*, is to maintain communion or fellowship with him as our God in covenant. And this may be considered either as extraordinary, or more common.

I. THERE are some seasons in which the christian walks with God in a more near and intimate way, as his own God, in whom he hath a special propriety. This I call a more extraordinary walk with God, as what

is not commonly maintained with constancy by the saints. It is impossible to give a just description of this to the man, who is a stranger to it in his own experience. When we think of the familiarity which a father allows his child, or that which one friend will take with another, both fall vastly short of this divine communion. For as there is the greatest disproportion between the two parties engaged in it, God, and man; so, when God manifests himself unto us, it is in a way that is agreeable to his infinitely glorious nature. The best account that I can give of it, is something like this. When the Lord designs to visit a believer with these remarkable intimations of his loving-kindness, he leads him, by the special agency of his Spirit, to his Son, as one in whom he is well pleased, discovers to him the largeness of his grace in him, and witnesses by his Spirit that he is interested in it, and thus, in a special and delightful way, he looks into such a soul with that love, that *seals it unto the day of redemption*; and as thus receiving the grace of God, he allows such an one the liberty to contemplate his divine perfections, as engaged in his favour. Of this the royal psalmist seems to have had frequent experience, *There be many, says he, that say, who will shew us any good?* but the voice of my soul is, *Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us*: and, as if the mercy had been given in upon

its being asked, he adds, *Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.*^p And therefore, in another place, he calls upon the saints, *Sing unto the Lord, (O ye saints of his) and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness. For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.*^q And again, he says, *I will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together.*^r And, to add no more, *How excellent, says he, is thy loving kindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house: and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. For with thee is the fountain of life, in thy light shall we see light.*^s Thus, as in the multitude of his thoughts within him, the Lord visited him with the special consolations of his Spirit; so, more or less, it hath been the experience of every chosen vessel: at some seasons such have been enabled to say, *Our beloved is ours and we are his,*^t *we know in whom we have believed,*^u and are even confident that
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^p Psa. iv. 6, 7.^q Psa. xxx. 4, 5.^r Psa. xxxiv. 1, 2, 3.^s Psa. xxxvi. 7, 8.^t Cant. ii. 16.^u 2 Tim. i. 12.

he will keep them from falling, and present them faultless, before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. ^w But then,

2. THERE is a more constant and habitual *walking with God* by faith, whereby we converse with him in his Son as a merciful God, and ready to communicate every necessary good unto us. Thus, though the apostle *Paul*, could not always say he felt the bliss of *the third heaven*, yet you know, as to his more common experience, he says, *The life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the son of God*; ^x that is, he was desirous to walk in Christ Jesus, as he had at first received him, as the Lord his righteousness for acceptance, and the Lord his strength for assistance. And thus the believer is said to *walk with God*, when he converses with him, as he manifests himself in his Son. And to this purpose you find the word explained in the eleventh of the *Hebrews*, where you have a large catalogue of worthies, who lived and died in faith, several of whom, as we are informed in the old testament, *walked with God*. And indeed there can be no walking with God without faith, for *without faith it is impossible to please him.* ^y Nay, it is the property of faith, in the hand of the Spirit of God to empty a man of himself, and to fill him with his Lord, or in other words, to lead him to look for all that in, and from Christ, of

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which

^w Jude 24.

^x Gal. ii. 20.

^y Heb. xi. 6.

which he finds he is deficient in himself, and which may be reduced to two heads, *viz.* righteousness and strength, as we are both impotent and guilty. But again.

SECONDLY, *As walking with God* implies communion with him and dependance upon him, so also it includes a regard unto him as the Lord our sovereign, or to his will as our law. We are expressly told, *his servants we are to whom we yield ourselves servants to obey, whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness.*² God calls, not only for all the regard of the soul as to its dependance on him, but also its obedience to him; and this must be, (1.) Universal in its extent; and, (2.) Ingenuous in its principle.

1. IT must be universal in its extent. It is impossible, indeed, that it should be perfect in the degree of it; because *every imagination of the thoughts of our hearts is only evil, and that continually.*^a But then we are not to say of this or that part of God's law, we will pay a ready obedience to it, in the neglect of any other of the same authority. He that hath enjoined one precept, hath enjoined all. *Abraham* not only left his native country, at the command of God, but parted with *Hagar* and *Ishmael*, and almost with his beloved son *Isaac*, and and that in a dreadful way too. Nor do we indeed justly acknowledge our Redeemer's dominion, or properly call him *Lord*, if we wilfully

² Rom. vi. 16.

^a Gen. vi. 5.

wilfully, constantly, and habitually neglect the things which he commands. It is said of *Zacharias* and *Elisabeth* that *they walked in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless*:^b by which we are not to understand that they were absolutely perfect in their regard to the law either moral or ceremonial; but had received a principle of grace from God, which, as far as it was in exercise, influenced them to an universal concern for his glory in all their ways. In walking with God no part of known duty is to be neglected, nor any instance of transgression wilfully to be allowed of. 'Tis true, when we have done all, we must say we have come vastly short of our duty, and therefore bless God for our salvation in his Son. And the ascribing our salvation wholly to *Christ Jesus* is so entirely consistent with an habitual desire to honour God by an holy regard to all his revealed will, that, in proportion to our increase in communion with him, we shall find those desires the more earnest to shew forth the praises of that grace, whereby we are made acceptable in the sight of God, by a conversation becoming the gospel. And, for my part, I must think that, let a man's pretensions to faith or privileges be ever so great, whilst he manifestly discovers no proper sense of his obligation to duty, and lives in an habitual neglect and contempt

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^b Luke i. 6.

of it, I ought to conclude that such a man's *faith is vain*, that is, that he hath no true faith at all. And I think what the apostle *John* observes very abundantly strengthens the conclusion: *Hereby, says he, we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments. He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.*^c And those are very awful words of the apostle *Paul*, that *the damnation of such persons is just, who only slanderously report, that is barely, though unjustly affirm, that we may do evil that good may come.*^d And if the very report of these things deserves condemnation, how much more the wilful acknowledgement of them in their daily conversation? How then can a man be said to *walk with God*, who allows himself, in the course of his conversation, to act contrary to his revealed will, to trample upon his authority, and neglect his grace?

2. THIS obedience must be ingenuous in the principle, as well as universal in the extent of it. *Paul* seemed to have an unlimited concern for the law of God, before conversion, as far as he was acquainted with it; but then it was the obedience of an enemy, and not of a son. He was *walking with himself* rather than with his *God*; but after his conversion, being experimentally acquainted with the mercies of God himself, he profes

^c 1 John ii. 4, 5.

^d Rom. iii. 8.

ses the faints at *Rome*, by these mercies to *present* their *bodies a living sacrifice*, holy, and *acceptable unto God*, as their most *reasonable service*.^e Our obedience can never deserve the name of gospel obedience, unless it flows from a view of our interest in *God through Jesus Christ*: this our Lord seems to intimate, when he says, *If ye love me keep my commandments*.^f Love must precede obedience. Which leads us to consider,

II. THE way and manner in which this duty is to be discharged. But of that and what follows in a future discourse.

^e Rom. xii. 1.

^f John xiv. 15.

