

# SERMONS

ON

Various Subjects, (*viz.*)

*Christian Faith,*

I. II. III. A Rational Defence of the Gospel.

IV. Faith the Way to Salvation.

V. None excluded from Hope.

*Christian Morality,*

VI. VII. VIII. Truth and Faithfulness.

IX. Gravity. X. XI. Justice.

XII. Temperance. XIII. Chastity.

XIV. A Lovely Carriage.

XV. Things of good Report.

XVI. Courage and Honour.

*With HYMNS suitable to every Subject.*

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By I. WATTS.

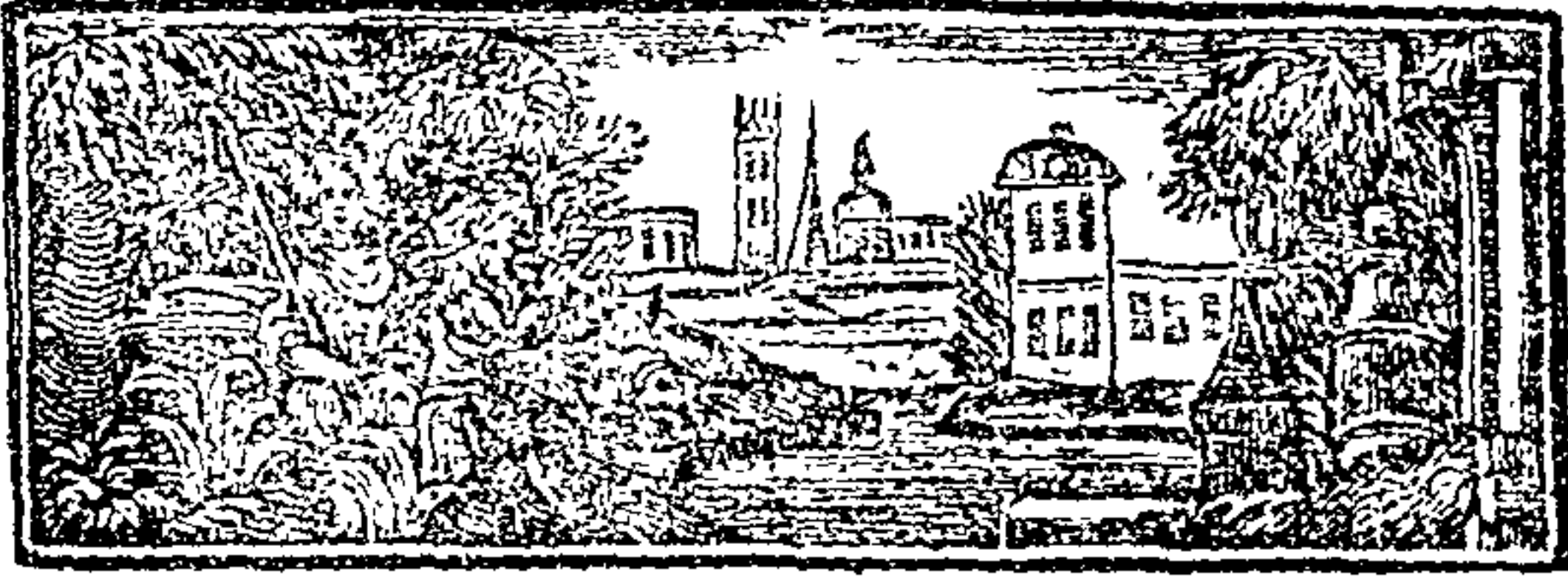
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VOL. II.

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T H E  
P R E F A C E.



*T*HE Glory of God and the Good of Men are the great and general Ends which we profess to aim at, whether we Preach or Write: But there are two more particular Motives which send these Discourses into the Publick, and I shall take the Liberty to mention them here.

The World has much surpriz'd me with the Favour it has shewn to those Sermons which were printed two Years ago; for the Demand of a second Impression has been attended with the Desire of a second Volume. Now if the Providence of God hath made me so happy as to please and profit the Age by any of my Studies, I would endeavour to follow the Leadings of Providence, and to gratify the World, which hath treat-

*ed my Writings with uncommon Civility, hoping to find my best Account in their spiritual Improvement.*

*My slow Returns of Health, and want of Capacity to fulfil my weekly Ministrations in the Church where God has placed me, is another constraining Motive to attempt their Edification in this manner. I give Thanks to my God who has blest this last Year with some growing Measures of Strength for their Service. I wish I had no need of so frequent Retirement and Rest. I know they join their Prayers with me for my perfect Recovery; and I long and wait daily for the Pleasure of constant Labour amongst them. My Duty demands this, and their Love deserves it at my Hands. And since I must not, I cannot be quite idle in my retiring Days, I thought of imploying the Press again for the Service of their Souls, to make some Compensation for the Inconstancy of my publick Ministry.*

*These things came before my View at the latter End of the last Summer, when I was engaged in finishing some Dissertations which I had written relating to the Christian Doctrine of the Trinity, and which I had promised in the Preface to that little Book: And having had further Occasion given me by some publick and private Opposition, that has been made to it in a candid manner, I was the more solicitous to pursue these Studies,*  
*both*



## The P R E F A C E. v

*both for the Correction and Defence of what I had written on that important Subject.*

*But when I had survey'd all Circumstances, and consulted my Friends what might be of most Service to God and the World, I was determin'd by their Advice, and applied myself to transcribe these Sermons. My Health allows me but a very few Hours of Study in a Week, and it was not without some Reluctance I broke off my Enquiries into that glorious and controverted Doctrine: But I trust the good Providence of God will enable me to resume and finish them with divine Aid and Evidence.*

*The Subjects of this Book are Faith and Practice. The five first Sermons are a Discovery of the Way of Salvation by the Gospel, thro' Faith in Jesus Christ, with a Defence of it from the most exceptionable things that Unbelievers imagine to belong to it; and I hope it may guard the humble Christian from any ill Impressions that might be made by the scoffing Infidel. The eleven last Discourses are spent in the various Parts of Christian Vertue; and I trust they may not be unacceptable to an Age that loves to hear of Duty as well as Grace, tho' I could wish Grace were more honoured, and Duty more practised.*

*The first Volume which I gave the World contain'd some of the spiritual Parts of Religion, such as relate more immediately to*  
*the*



*the secret Transactions of the Soul with God our Maker. I have here attempted to explain many of the Duties of the Christian Life, that refer to our fellow-Creatures. I hope no Man who loves the Gospel of Christ, will knit his Brow at the Title-Page, or throw Disgrace upon the Book, with a Contempt of dull Morality: If such a Person would give himself leave to peruse these Sermons, perhaps he would meet with so much of Christ and the Gospel in them, that he might learn to love his Saviour better than ever he did, and find how necessary moral Duties are to make his own Religion either safe or honourable: While we are saved by Faith in the Blood and Righteousness of the Son of God, we must remember also, that 'tis such a Faith as works by Love, for Faith without Works is dead and useless to all the Purposes of Hope and Salvation.*

*My Design in these Sermons is to represent Vice and Vertue in their proper Colours. I foresee that many Readers will quickly spy out their Neighbour's Names amongst the vicious or unlovely Characters; but it would turn perhaps to their better Account if they would search whether they can find their own: For there's many a Description here that a hundred Persons may lay a righteous Claim to it. 'Twas my Business to set a faithful Glass before the Face of Conscience, by which we may examine our selves, and learn what manner*

manner of Persons we are; and I pray God to keep it daily before my own Eyes. I acknowledge my Defects and stand corrected in many of my own Sermons. Blessed be God for a Mediator who is exalted to give Repentance and Forgiveness of Sins!

Yet it may not be an improper or unsuccessful Method of Reproof, to fold down a useful Leaf now and then for a Friend, and give him Notice in such an inoffensive manner of any Blemishes that may belong to his Character. Thus the silent Page shall bestow upon him the richest Benefit of Friendship; it may whisper in his Ear a Word of secret Admonition, and convey it to his Conscience without Offence. Such a gentle Monitor may awaken him to inward Shame and Penitence; may rouse his Vertue to shine brighter than ever, and scatter the Clouds that hung dark upon the Evidence of his Graces.

The Length of my Sermons in the first Volume was a Matter of Complaint, because it render'd them more unfit to be read in Families. I have endeavour'd to mend that Fault here: But perhaps some of these Discourses will be accused of want of Spirit, being cut so short in the pathetic Part: And after all I find I have not so happy a Talent at contracting my Composures, and reducing them all to one certain Size. Yet to remedy this Inconvenience, I have divided

ded some of them into two distinct Parts: In others I have placed this Mark ¶ both at the Beginning and the End of such Parts of the Discourse, as may best be omitted without breaking the Sense; so that when the Readers find this Mark at the Beginning of any Paragraph, he may skip over 'till he comes to the same Mark at the End of a Paragraph, and thus shorten the longer Sermons.

There is one thing more that I would excuse to some of my Friends, and that is, These Sermons have unexpectedly taken up so much Print and Paper as to exclude others that I had design'd, prepar'd and promised to the Press; but now they must lie conceal'd, unless the World shall be so favourable to this Volume as to desire a Third to succeed it in due Time. And whether I preach or print my Thoughts on sacred Subjects, I entreat my Friends to join with me in their Addresses to Heaven, for the divine Presence and Blessing on all my Labours for the good of Souls.

London, March 25<sup>th</sup>

1723.



S E R M O N S





# SERMONS

ON

## Various Subjects, &c.

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VOL. II. SERMON I.

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A Rational Defense of the Gospel : Or, Courage in professing Christianity.

ROM. i. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth.*

The first Part.



**S**HAME is a very discouraging Passion of the Mind : It sinks the Spirits low, it enfeebles all the active Powers, and forbids the vigorous Execution of any thing where-

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of

of we are ashamed. It was necessary therefore, that *St. Paul* should be endued with sacred Courage, and rais'd above the Power of Shame, when he was sent to preach the Gospel of Christ among the *Jews* or the *Heathens*, to face an infidel World, and to break thro' all the Reproaches and Terrors of it. *I am a Debtor*, says he, *v. 14. to the Greeks and to the Barbarians*, that is, to the learned and the unlearned Nations, *to the wise and the unwise*: I have a Commission from Christ to publish his Gospel among all the Nations of Men, and I esteem my self their Debtor 'till I have deliver'd my Message: And though *Rome* be the Seat of worldly Power and Policy, the Mistress of the Nations. and Sovereign of the Earth, where I shall meet with Opposition and Contempt in Abundance, yet I have Courage enough to preach this Doctrine at *Rome* also, *for I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*.

My Friends, this is an Age wherein the Gospel of our Redeemer meets with much Contempt and Opposition. There are many in a baptised Nation, and who have been brought up in the Christian Belief and Worship, that begin to be weary of Christ and his Religion; they are endeavouring to find Blemishes and Defects in this sacred Gospel, and in that Blessed Word of God that reveals this Grace to  
us.

SER. I. *of the Gospel.* §

us. The Divine Truths, that belong to this Gospel meet with Mockery and profane Reproach from *Deists* and *Unbelievers*. I may call it therefore *a Day of Rebuke and Blasphemy*. God grant we may never become a Land of Heathens again! Those of us that believe this Gospel from the Heart have need of Courage to maintain our Profession of it, especially in some Companies and Conversations. We should prepare ourselves to encounter the false Reasonings of Unbelievers, as well as harden our Faces against their Ridicule. Let us therefore meditate this sacred Text, that each of us may pronounce boldly the Words of this great Apostle, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*.

Now That our Meditations may proceed regularly on the present Theme of Discourse, let us consider,

- I. *What the Gospel of Christ is, that we may not mistake it.*
- II. *What is included in this Expression, I am not ashamed of it.*
- III. *What there is in this Gospel that might be suppos'd any Way to expose a Man to Shame, and I shall take Occasion under this Head to give particular Answers to some of the most important Objections that might be made against the Gospel, and shew*  
B 2 that



that there is no just Reason to be ashamed of it.

IV. I shall consider what is *that General Answer to all Objections*; that universal *Guard against sinful Shame* which is contain'd in my Text, and which will bear out every Christian in his Faith and Profession of the Gospel of Christ, (*viz.*) that *It is the Power of God to the Salvation of every one who believes.*

V. I shall draw *some proper Inferences.*

First, *What is the Gospel of Christ?*

I answer in general, *It is a Revelation of the Grace of God to fallen Man through a Mediator.* Or, *It is a gracious Constitution of God for the Recovery of sinful and miserable Man, from that deplorable State into which Sin had brought him, by the Mediation of Christ:* Or, in the Words of my Text, *It is the Power of God, or his powerful Appointment for the Salvation of every one who believes.*

The Word *Gospel*, in the Original, εὐαγγέλιον, signifies *Good News* or *Glad Tidings.* And surely when a Sinner, who is expos'd to the Wrath of God, is sensible of his Guilt and Danger, it must needs be *glad Tidings* to him to hear of a *Way of Salvation*, and an *Allsufficient Saviour.* e

This

SER. I. *of the Gospel.* 5

This *Constitution of God for our Salvation* has had various *Editions*, if I may so express it, or *gradual Discoveries* of it made to Mankind, ever since *Adam* first sinned, and God visited him with the first Promise of Grace before he turn'd him out of Paradise.

But the last and most compleat Revelation of this Gospel was made by the personal Ministry of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, and more especially by his Apostles, when his own Death, Resurrection and Exaltation had laid the compleat Foundation for it.

From the Books of the New Testament therefore we may derive this larger Description of the *Gospel of Christ*.

*It is a wise, a holy and gracious Constitution of God for the Recovery of sinful Man, by sending his own Son Jesus Christ into the Flesh, to obey his Law which Man had broken, to make a proper Atonement for Sin by his Death, and thus to procure the Favour of God and Eternal Happiness for all that believe and repent, and receive the offer'd Salvation; together with a Promise of the Holy Spirit to work this Faith and Repentance in their Hearts, to renew their sinful Natures unto Holiness, to form them on Earth fit for this Happiness, and to bring them to the full Possession of it in Heaven.*

It might be prov'd that this is the Sense and Substance of the *Gospel of Christ* from many of the Prophecies of the Old Testament, and the Ceremonies and Figures of the *Jewish Church*, as well as from a Variety of Citations from the Writings of the Evangelists and Apostles : Yet there have risen some Persons (I mean the *Soci-nians* and their Disciples) in the last Age and in this also, who call themselves *Christians*, but they so curtail and diminish the *Gospel of Christ*, as to make it signify very little more than the Dictates and Hopes of the Light of Nature, (*viz.*) “ That if  
 “ we repent of our Sins past, and obey  
 “ the Commands of God as well as we can  
 “ for the future, *Christ*, as a great Prophet,  
 “ has made a full Declaration that there is  
 “ Pardon for such Sinners, and they shall be  
 “ accepted unto Eternal Life ; ” and all this without any Dependance on his Death as a proper Sacrifice, and with little Regard to the Operations of his holy Spirit.

Now I need use no other Argument to refute this mistaken Notion of the *Gospel* than what may be deriv'd from the Words of my Text (*viz.*) That *St. Paul* expresses it with a Sort of Emphasis, and as a Matter of Importance, that he was *not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ* ; Whereas if this had been all the Substance of the *Gospel*, he had no Reason to be ashamed of it

*eithe*



either among the *Jews*, or the *Heathens*. The *Jews* had a Knowledge of Forgiveness upon Repentance, and a Belief of it long before Christ came : And the *Heathen Philosophers* would have readily receiv'd it, as a Thing very little different from what their Natural Reason might lead them to hope for ; tho' it could not fully assure them of it : They would never have sought to expose and ridicule the Preaching of *St. Paul* as meer *Babbling*, and call'd him a *Setter forth of strange Gods*.

But on the other Hand, if we suppose him publishing the glorious Doctrine which I have described, there was Something in this so strange to the Ears of the *Heathens*, as well as of the blinded *Jews*, that might well be supposed to awaken their Opposition and Rage ; and therefore it was a great Point gain'd with him, when he had Courage enough to maintain such a Gospel, and to say, *I am not ashamed of it*.

This leads me to the *second thing* proposed.

Secondly, *What is included in these Words, I am not ashamed of the Gospel?* To this I answer under these five Heads.

1. I am not ashamed *to believe it as a Man*.

2. I am not ashamed *to profess it as a Christian*.

3. I am not ashamed *to preach it to others as a Minister.*

4. I am not ashamed *to defend it and contend for it as a good Soldier of Christ.*

5. I am not ashamed *to suffer and die for it as a Martyr.*

1. *I am not ashamed to believe this Gospel as a Man.* My Rational Powers give me no secret Reproaches. My Understanding and Judgment do not reprove and check my Faith. I feel no inward Blush upon the Face of my Soul, while I give the fullest Assent to all these Truths, to this Scheme of Doctrine, to this Heavenly Contrivance and System of Grace. A Rational Man, especially who has been bred up in Learning, should be ashamed to believe Fables and Follies, but I believe all this Gospel, and am not ashamed. My own Reason approves it, and justifies me in the Persuasion and Belief of such a Gospel as this is.

I believe it with so firm and unshaken a Faith, that I venture all my own Eternal Concerns upon it. I lay all the Strefs of my Hopes of a blessed Immortality on it. My Soul rests here, and I am not ashamed of my resting Place: I am not ashamed of my Saviour and the Method of his Salvation. I am persuaded my Hopes shall never disappoint me.

Surely,

Surely, if the Gospel had been so very Irrational a Thing, as some Men pretend it to be, *St. Paul* being so rational and wise a Man would have been ashamed to believe it. But I believe it, says he, and *am not ashamed.* I do not think it casts any just Reflection upon my rational Capacities, or my learned Education at the Feet of *Gamaliel*, for me to give a full Assent to this Gospel.

II. *I am not ashamed to profess it as a Christian.* I am ready to tell the World that I believe it, and I take all Occasions to let the World know it. I am coming to profess this Gospel at *Rome*, and am not ashamed: I have owned it before my own Countrymen, the *Jews*, already, where it has been most reproached. I have been telling the *Gentiles* what the Gospel of Salvation is, and I long to see you at *Rome* that I may tell you what my Belief is in the Gospel, and may hear how far you have believed, and may be *comforted by the mutual Faith both of you and me, Rom. i. 12.* I shall be glad to tell you what Doctrines I venture my own Soul upon, and shall be willing to hear from you whether you venture your Souls upon the same Doctrine, or no; and shall rejoice to hear we are both interested in one Salvation.

III. *I am not ashamed to preach it to others as a Minister,* That is, *to invite others*



*to believe it. It is a communicable Good, and I am sent to diffuse it, nor am I ashamed of my Commission. See 2 Tim. i. 12, 13. Our Lord Jesus Christ has abolished Death, and brought Life and Immortality to Light by the Gospel, and has appointed me a Preacher, and an Apostle to the Gentiles: I Preach the Gospel and am not ashamed, though I have suffered for it. I venture my Soul upon it unto the last great Day, and I bid thee, Timothy, as a Preacher unto others, to hold fast the same Form of sound Words which thou hast learn'd of me. I long to teach the whole World this Faith and this Doctrine, therefore I am a Debtor to the Greeks and Barbarians; I would make others Partakers of the same Hope. Would to God, that not only thou, Agrippa, but all those that hear me, were not only almost, but altogether such as I am, except only these Bonds, these Sufferings which I endure for Christ's sake. Acts xxvi. 29.*

IV. *I am not ashamed to contend for it as a good Soldier of Christ; to defend it when it is attack'd, and to vindicate the Cause of my Lord and Master. Where it is assaulted I endeavour to secure it, tho' with many Reproaches from the carnal Prejudices of Mankind. I oppose them all; for they oppose my Saviour and his Cross, and I build my Everlasting Hopes there. I am set for the Defense of the Gos-*  
*pel*

*pel of Christ, Phil. i. 17. and I will contend earnestly for the Faith once deliver'd to the Saints.* And he gave us an Instance of it, that when *Peter*, who was an Apostle, seemed to diminish some of the Glory and the Liberty of the Gospel, he *withstood him to the Face, Gal. ii. 11.* “ There  
 “ shall no Man silence me, or stop my  
 “ Mouth, when I am preaching a cruci-  
 “ fied Saviour, and when I express my  
 “ Faith in the Liberty and Latitude of the  
 “ Gospel of Christ. For if I durst with-  
 “ stand an Apostle under his criminal Con-  
 “ cealments, and in his Diminution of the  
 “ Honour of this Doctrine, surely I dare  
 “ oppose all the World besides.

V. Lastly, *I am not ashamed to suffer and die for it as a Martyr.* Load me with Reproaches, ye *Jews*, my Countrymen, and load me with Chains, ye Magistrates of *Rome*; of none of these am I ashamed or afraid, but with all Boldness I am always ready that *Christ* should be magnified in my Life, or my Death, *Phil. i. 14, 20.* And as for my Friends that are full of Sorrow lest *Paul* should be sacrificed for the Faith of *Christ*, What mourn ye and break my Heart for? *I am not only ready to be bound, but to die for the Sake of Christ. I count Nothing dear to me, no nor my Life precious to my self, that I may finish with Joy the Course of my Ministry of this*

Gospel, *that I may testify the Grace of my God.* Act. xx. 24. and xxi. 13.

I might add also, That St. Paul intends and means more than he expresses by a very usual Figure of Speech, *I am not ashamed of it*, that is, *I glory in it*, I make my boast of it; if there be any Doctrine worth boasting of, it is the *Gospel of Christ*. If I have any Profession to glory in, it is that I am a *Christian*. Once I was a *Pharisee*, and I counted it my Gain and my Honour, *Phil. iii. 4, &c.* But what things were Gain to me; these, for Christ, I counted Loss; yea doubtless, and I count all things but Loss for the Excellency of the Knowledge of Christ my Lord. I glory in being a Minister of the Gospel; it is the highest Honour God could have put upon me, *who am less than the least of all Saints*. To me is this Grace given to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable Riches of Christ. *Eph. iii. 8*: I glory in it to that degree, that I am dead to all things else. God forbid I should glory in anything save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus, whereby the World is crucified to me, and I to the World. I glory in my Sufferings for Christ; and, my Friends, if ye understood the Value of these things, they are your Glory too. *If I am offered up a Sacrifice for the Service of your Faith; I joy and rejoice together with you all*, O! that you would but rejoice together with me in it. Thus



Thus I have shewed you that all these things are implied in St. Paul's *not being ashamed of the Gospel of Christ*, and I have proved it to you from other Parts of his Epistles.

The *Third General Head* I proposed to speak to was this, *What is there in this Gospel that may be supposed to expose any Man to Shame?*

And this *Question* is very needful; for if there were nothing in it that Men might take Occasion to throw their Scandals and Reproaches at, it had been no great Matter for St. Paul to have cryed out, *I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ.*

To this I answer in general, This was a Gospel that contradicted the rooted Prejudices of the *Jews*, and was severely reproached by those that professed great Knowledge in their Law; it was also a new and strange thing to the *Gentiles*. A *Crucified Christ* was a *stumbling Block to the Jews*, and *Foolishness to the Greek*. 1 Cor. i. 23. There was something in the Faith, and Practice, and Worship of the Gospel so contrary to the Course of their Education in the World, so opposite to their carnal Inclinations, and to the Customs and Fashions of their Country, that a Man might well be afraid and ashamed to profess it, when they lift their Tongues, and their Hands, and their Swords against it, and the



the Chief of them *crucified the Lord of Glory*, and put the Preachers of it to death.

Thus in general. But while I descend to Particulars, I shall confine my self only to those *Occasions of Shame*, which the same Gospel meets with in our Day, that so the Discourse may be more useful to the present Audience; and as I mention each *Objection* or *supposed Occasion of Shame*, I shall endeavour to take off the Force of it; and shew that it is unreasonable.

Now the Things that might any ways be supposed to expose this Gospel to Shame may be ranked under these two Heads.

I. *Those which arise from the Doctrines of the Gospel*: And

II. *Those which arise from the Professors of the Gospel*.

I. The occasions of Shame that arise from the Doctrines of the Gospel, are these five that follow.

1. *That there are Mysteries in it which are above the Powers of our Reason to comprehend, and I will never believe a Gospel that I cannot comprehend.* This is the Language of *Socinians*, Men that pretended so much to Reason in our Day.

But to relieve this Occasion of Shame, let us consider that *Mysteries* are of two Sorts.

*First,*

*First*, Such as we could never have known but by Divine Revelation; but being once revealed, they may be fairly explained and understood. Such is the Doctrine of the Satisfaction of Christ, of the Resurrection of the Dead, of Forgiveness of Sins for the sake of *Christ's* Sufferings, and of Eternal Life in a future World. I say, these are all Mysteries that were *hid from Ages*, that is, they are such Truths which Nature or Reason could not have found out of itself, but being once revealed to us of God, may be fairly explained and well understood.

Other sort of *Mysteries* are those, which when revealed unto us, we know merely the Existence, or Reality and Certainty of them, but cannot comprehend the Mode and Manner how they are. And of this Kind there are but two that I know of in our Religion, which are the chief Objects of Offence to some Men. These are the Mystery of the Blessed Trinity, and the Mystery of the Incarnation of Christ. The Mystery of Three Persons who have some glorious Communion in one Godhead; and the Mystery of Two Natures united in one Person.

Now, tho' the Way and Manner how three Persons, Father, Son, and Spirit, should be one God, and how two Natures, Human and Divine, should be one  
Person

Person in *Christ Jesus*, I say, tho' the Way and Manner how these Things are, is not so easy to be explained and unfolded by us, and above our own present Capacity to comprehend and fully explain, yet I could never find these Things proved impossible to be. If I must refuse to believe a Thing that I know not the Manner and Nature of, there are many Things in the World of Nature and in Natural Religion that I must disbelieve. Let them explain to me in Natural Religion what is *The Eternity of God*, what Ideas they can have of a Being that never began to be, and then perhaps I may be able to explain to them how Three Persons can be one God, and how two Natures can be in one Person. I am well assured, there are some Doctrines in Natural Religion as difficult to be explained, and hard to be understood, and the Manner of them is as mysterious, as these Doctrines of Revealed Religion, which are also render'd more Offensive by some Men's Attempts to explain them.

But we may go a Step lower to meet this Objection, and confound it. In the World of Nature there are Mysteries of this Kind, which are as unaccountable, and as hard to be unfolded, as the Mysteries of Grace. 'Tis the *Doctrine of Unions* both in the *Trinity* and the *Incarnation*, which renders them so mysterious. Now this

*Doctrine*

*Doctrine of Unions in Natural Philosophy* hath been hitherto insolvable. We know that *Spirit and Body* are united to make a Man : But the *Manner How* they are united, remains still a most difficult Question. We know that some Bodies are *hard*, and some are *soft* ; but what it is that ties or unites the *hard Bodies* so closely together, and makes them so difficult to be separated, is a Riddle to the best Philosophers which they cannot solve ; or what it is that renders the Parts of *soft Bodies* so easily separable. And many other Things there are in Nature as mysterious as this.

Besides, if it were possible for us to explain all Things in Nature, and to write a perfect Book of Natural Philosophy with the most accurate Skill, yet it would not follow that we must know God the Creator to Perfection. The Things of God are infinitely superior to the Things of Men. The Nature of a Creator in his Manner of Existence is infinitely above the Nature of Creatures in theirs. 'Tis fit there should be something belonging to God an Infinite Spirit, that is incomprehensible, and above the Power of finite Spirits to comprehend, and fully search out and explain. It ought therefore to be no just Ground of Shame to the Gospel of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, that it has *Mysteries*



*series in it*, that is to say, that it has some Doctrines in it, which we could never have found out by the mere Light of Reason; and some Truths, the full Manner of Explication whereof we can never attain to, since there are many Things in the World of Nature, in the World of Bodies and Souls, and many Things in Natural Religion, which we cannot fully explain.

2. Another Occasion of Reproach, which Men fasten upon the Gospel, is, that *some of the Doctrines are so singular and contrary to the common Opinions and Reasonings of Men*; such as that the ever Blessed God should want a Satisfaction, in order to pardon Sin with Honour; that he should punish the most innocent and obedient Man that ever lived, even his own Son, for the Sins of wicked and rebellious Creatures; that we should be freed from Hell, which we had deserved, by the Sufferings of another in our Stead; that one Man should be justified by another's Obedience; nay, that ten thousands of Men should be pardoned and justified for the Sake of the Obedience and Death of one single Man; that all our own Repentance is not sufficient of itself to obtain our Pardon, and our Holiness, be it never so great, does not procure us a Title to the Favour of God and Heaven; that dead Bodies, though mouldred in the Grave for thousands of Years,

Years, should be raised again to Life and Immortality: These are such strange Doctrines, so very foreign to the common Sentiments of most Men, that some of the *Athenians* cried out, *What does this Babbling mean?* A Man should be ashamed of these Things; the very Heathen Philosophers called it *Foolishness*.

But now to remove this Scandal, let us consider that many of these Things are not so contrary to the Reason of Men as some think: As for the *Satisfaction made for our Sins by the Sufferings of Christ*, did not almost all the *Heathen World* suppose that God would not pardon Sin without Satisfaction? What else mean all their bloody Sacrifices? And why did they sometimes proceed so far as to murder Men and offer them to God for their Sins? I confess indeed, that many of the Philosophers and learned Men amongst them, who derided the Gospel of *Christ*, did also despise the Sacrifices and Religious Ceremonies of their own Countrymen, believing that God would be merciful to Men that were penitent and pious, without any Rites of Atonement and Sacrifice. But it is as evident also, that the People had a general Notion of the Necessity of some Atonement for Sin, and that the more valuable the Sacrifice was, the sooner was their God appeas'd, and the Benefit procur'd  
would

would be more extensive, howsoever the Philosophers might ridicule it. It is manifest then, that many of the *Heathens* did imagine that the Death and Sufferings of one Person should procure Pardon and Immunities for a whole Multitude. And upon this Principle some of the antient *Romans*, now and then out of Nobility of Spirit, devoted themselves to Death, to appease the Anger of the Gods, for their whole Country. Thus it appears, that the Business of *Satisfaction for Sin*, and the Doctrine of *Expiation and Atonement by the Blood and Death of a Surety*, was not so utterly unknown in the World.

I add farther, that the Notion of *one Person's making Satisfaction for the Crime of another* in human and political Affairs, has been sometimes practised, and thought to be very intelligible; and why should it be counted so very monstrous and absurd in Things Divine? Do we not understand what it is for one Man to become a Surety for another, or for a Criminal to be set free from Punishment by the voluntary Substitution of another Person in his stead? Are we not well acquainted what it is for one Man to pay the Debt of another, and the original Person that was obliged thereby, to become free? Do we not know what it is for a whole Family of Children to inherit a Possession for many Ages



Ages one after another for some noble Acts and Services of their Father? Therefore Honour, and Glory, and Happiness bestowed upon a Multitude for the sake of what one Man has done, is not so unintelligible a thing as some Men would persuade us. Why should that be esteemed impossible in the Affairs of Religion, which is evident and plainly practicable in the Affairs of this World?

Again, they think it strange that *our Repentance should not be enough to obtain the Pardon of past Sins, and our own Obedience should not procure Heaven for us.* But are not Traytors, and Robbers, and all notorious Criminals punished in all Governments notwithstanding their Repentances? Can their Sorrow for what is past procure a Pardon of their Prince? Who then would be punished? And is Man's Government in punishing Criminals without a Satisfaction just and reasonable? And shall God's Government be counted unreasonable? Can future Obedience among Men obtain Forgiveness for past Treason and Rebellion? And why then should you think the great God is obliged to accept of it?

As for the *Resurrection of the Dead*, tho' it was counted a strange thing among the *Heathens*, when it was first preached to them, yet in these latter Days, since the  
Know-



Knowledge of God and his glorious Attributes has been so much increased, and the Reason of Men has freely exercised it self upon Things Divine and Human; the *Resurrection* is not counted any impossible thing, nor the Doctrine of it incredible. And I am verily persuaded if Men, whom God has endued with large Capacities and great Skill in reasoning, would but employ those Talents to write a *Rational Account* of most of the Doctrines of our Lord *Jesus Christ*, it might be done with much Glory and Success.

3. Another Occasion of Reproach is, *that the Gospel teaches Mortification and Self Denial in a very great Degree, conflicting with our natural Appetites, and fighting against our own Flesh and Blood: And all that it promises is an unseen Heaven, a future Reward, a far distant Happiness in another Country, which Eye has not seen, nor Ear heard of, nor the Heart of Man conceived.* A mere spiritual Pleasure, that is to be enjoyed by the Mind, and which the Body shall not taste of, till perhaps after a thousand Years or more. Now, as under the former Head, the Doctrines of the Gospel are a Scandal to the *Men of Reasoning*, so under this they become a Scandal and Reproach to those that are generally called *Men of Sense*, who are carnalized and immersed in Sensuality.

They

They think it strange to forego the Joys of Sense for the Hopes of enjoying a Happiness in a World they dont know when or where.

But I need not stand long to answer this Calumny; for even some of the refined Philosophers gave sufficient Rebuke to this sensual Temper: The very Heathens could say enough to abate this Censure, and to remove this Occasion of Shame, tho' the Gospel of *Christ* does it infinitely better.

*Christianity* does not abridge us of the common Comforts of Flesh and Blood, nor lay an unreasonable Restraint upon any natural Appetite; but it teaches us to live like Men, and not like Brutes; to regulate and manage our animal Nature with its Desires and Inclinations, so as to enjoy Life in the most proper and becoming Manner; to eat and drink, and taste the Bounties of Providence, to the Honour of our Creator, and to the best Interest of our Souls.

But, suppose, we were forbid all the Indulgence of our Appetites, and the Delights of Sense, by the Gospel; surely, those who know what intellectual Pleasures are, who can relish the Joy that belongs to Spirits, will not be much terrified with these Objections, nor deride the *Faith of Christ*, because it does not propose

pose to them the Reward of an *Earthly Paradise*. The Rewards of the Gospel are indeed Spiritual 'till the Resurrection, but those Spiritual Pleasures shall vastly over-balance all that Toil, Sorrow and Suffering, we have passed through on Earth, and all that Self-Denial which we have exercised. But when the Body shall be raised again, our refined Delights of all kinds shall be infinitely satisfying: We shall not say, that God has dealt out Happiness to us with a niggardly Hand, but that he has exceeded all his Promises, when we shall come to taste the *Things God has prepared for us, which Eye has not seen, or Ear heard of.*

4. Another Prejudice against the Gospel is this; some Persons charge it *with much of Enthusiasm*; and that the *Doctrine of the Operations of the Spirit, and the Expectation of his Divine Assurances to instruct us in Truth, to mortify Sin in us, and to enable us to perform holy Duties, has too much of a visionary and fanciful Turn of Mind, and does not become Men that profess Reason.*

But if such *Objectors* were but better acquainted with themselves, and knew the Weakness of their own Reason in the Search after Truth, and the various and plausible Errors that attend their Enquiries on every Side; if they were better acquainted

quainted with the Strength of Temptation, the Power of their own sinful Appetites, and the Weakness of their Will to resist Sin, and to fulfil the Rules of Righteousness; surely they would not think it a ridiculous Thing to lift up a Prayer to the Great God to guide them into Truth, and to assist them to walk steadily in the Paths of Religion and Virtue. If they had but a deep and lively Sense of their own Insufficiency for every Thing that's good, and of the many Dangers and Enemies that beset them, they would rather see infinite Reason to bless their Creator, that has given them any Promise or Hope of the Aids of his Grace.

Nor is it at all fantastical or irrational to suppose, that the Great and Blessed God, who made these Spirits of ours, should kindly act upon them, and influence them by secret and divine Methods, to their Duty and their Happiness; that he should send his own Spirit to help them onward in their proper Business, which is, *To serve him here*, and assist them in Pursuit of their true Blessedness, which is *To enjoy him hereafter*.

Methinks 'tis one of the Glories of this Gospel of *Christ*, that God has not only *sent his Son to purchase Heaven for us*, but continually sends down his own Spirit to lead every humble Christian in the Way thi-



*ther.* When a poor penitent Creature, distressed under a Sense of the Power of Sin dwelling in him, who has long and often toil'd and labour'd to bring his Heart near to God, and to suppress the irregular and exorbitant Appetites of his Nature, addresses himself to the Throne of God, and cries earnestly for divine Help, 'tis a glorious Provision that is made in the Gospel of *Christ*, that the Spirit of God is promis'd for our Assistance. Nor is it at all unworthy of a Person of the greatest Reason, and the best Understanding, humbly to wait and hope for the Accomplishment of this Promise. Thus the Charge of *Enthusiasm* vanishes, and the Gospel maintains its Honour.

5. The last Objection against the Doctrines of the Gospel of *Christ* is, that *they are not sufficiently attested, that there is not Ground enough given to credit the Divinity of them in our Age.*

They are ready to say, "These Things were done (according as ourselves profess) above Sixteen hundred Years ago, and we have not sufficient Credentials to venture our Faith upon at this Day.

It would be too long here to repeat over to you half the Grounds we have for Faith in this Gospel. That there was such a Man as *Jesus Christ*; that he lived at such a Time at *Jerusalem*; that he wrought

wondrous Works in his own Country, is not at all disbelieved by those that profess any reasonable Faith in Human History. The *Jews* themselves, who were his greatest Enemies, do not deny that he wrought those *Miracles*, which others could not work; but they pretend, that he did it by some magick Art, by diabolical Charms; and wrought Miracles not by the Power of God, but by Virtue derived from Spells and evil Spirits. So that the Miracles he wrought were not disbelieved and denied, but the heavenly Spring of them is impiously perverted and turned downward, as though Christ borrowed his Power from Hell to transact these Affairs. But the *Holiness and the heavenly Temper of the Gospel of Christ* refutes this Accusation. *Satan* was never known to demolish his own Kingdom of Ungodliness in such a Manner as this. The *Gospel of Christ* in every Part of it has a most singular and sublime Tendency to advance the Name, the Attributes and the Honour of God, whom *Satan* hates with a perfect Hatred: He would never lend his assisting Hand to support a Scheme of Religion so Divine and Holy.

Never was any Body of Doctrines and of Duties so composed and calculated to promote the Glory of God, nor the Good of Man, as this Gospel does: Our Peace

and Happiness would be secured by it on Earth, if all Men would comply with it, and our Felicity after Death is the great and indefeasible Proposal and Design of it: Now *Satan* is a restless Enemy to Men, his Fellow-Creatures, as well as to God, his Maker; and he would never exert the Remains of his Angelic Power to encourage and defend such a Pious and Beneficent Religion.

But the *most amazing Progress and Success of the Gospel* is another Argument that proves it to be Divine, even when Devils and Magicians opposed it as well as Princes and Philosophers. That the Gospel itself, without the Force of Arms, that a naked Gospel, that seems so incredible as this did, should spread itself throughout the World in so short a Space of Time, and that by the Preaching of a few despised Persons, and several of them Fishermen that were utterly unlearned: That this Gospel should triumph over all the Powers and Policies of Men and Hell: That it should make its Way in Opposition to the Wisdom of Philosophers, and the Will of Princes, and all the Temptations and Terrors of this World: This is another Miracle, which perhaps is as Divine and convincing as any of the preceding Wonders, that attested this Gospel, when 'twas first preached.

I add also the Testimony of *Prophecy* to that of *Miracles*. The wondrous and exact Accomplishment of many Prophecies, since our Lord *Jesus Christ* dwelt on Earth in the Days of his Flesh, confirm his Gospel. The Prophecies that he himself gave forth from God, is another Testimony to this Gospel which is uncontrollable. The Destruction of *Jerusalem*, the Time and Methods of its Destruction, and the Terrors of it, may be read in *Matthew xxiv*. And if you read the History of *Josephus*, a *Few*, you find so many Parallels, that you must say *Christ* did foretell it indeed.

I might here subjoin the *Predictions of the Apostles*, particularly that of *St. Paul*, and *St. John*, concerning the *Rise and Spirit of Antichrist*, wherein the Church of *Rome* so clearly answers the Language of the Visions and Prophecies.

But the brightest and most uncontrollable *Witness of Prophecy* to the Truth of the Gospel is the *most exact and punctual Accomplishment of all the Predictions of the Old Testament, in the Life and Death, the Resurrection and Glory of Jesus Christ our Lord*. From the first Promise given to *Adam* in the Garden, down to the Words of *Malachi*, the last of the Prophets, you find every thing that was said of him fulfill'd in his History. And thus the Books of the *Jews*, wherein they placed all their

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Hopes,



Hopes, confirm the Gospel of *Christ*, and refute and confound their own Infidelity : So that if ever I had been a *Jew*, and did believe *Moses* and the Prophets, I think I am constrain'd to be a *Christian*, and believe in *Jesus Christ*.

Thus I have endeavour'd to answer those Objections against the Gospel, which are pretended to arise from the *Truths or Doctrines of it* : And before I proceed to answer those Cavils which are rais'd against it, *because of the Professors of it*, I must finish the present Discourse with a Word or two of Improvement.

USE 1. If this be a Gospel not to be ashamed of, then *study it well* : *Learn the Truths and Doctrines of it thoroughly* : Truths and Doctrines, which *St. Paul*, so wise and so great a Man, did not blush to profess, and preach, and die for. Value it as he valued it : The more you know it, the more you will esteem it ; and the better you are acquainted with all the glorious Articles of it, the less you will be ashamed of it : The Divine Harmony of the Whole will cast a Beauty and Lustre on every Part.

USE 2. *Furnish your selves with Arguments for it daily, that you may profess it without Shame, and defend it without blushing.*

*ing.* This is a Day of Temptation, and you know not what Conversation you may be called into by Divine Providence ; you know not what Cavils you may meet with to assault your Faith, and attack Christianity. *Be ready therefore to give Reasons of the Hope that is in you,* and to make a just and pertinent Reply to Gainsayers, and convince those (if possible) that are led away Captive by the Wiles of the Devil to forsake *Christ* and his Gospel. Let not every Turn of Wit, or Sleight of Argument and Sophistry, make you waver in your Faith. It is a Gospel that will bear the Trial of Reasonings and Reproaches. It has something in itself that is Divine, and therefore it is able to support the Professors of it against an Army of Cavillers.

USE 3. *Submit to all the Institutions of it.* Profess the whole of this Gospel ; not only the Doctrines, but the Ordinances of this Gospel, are Divine and Glorious ; they have something in them that shew they come from God, and they have something in them that evidently leads to God. They have all something in their Sense and Signification that discovers Divinity. Wait upon God therefore in all his Ordinances, in the Assemblies of Christians, that you *may see his Power and his*

*Glory in his own Sanctuary*, and that you may from your own Experience be able to say, that the Gospel is too great, too glorious, too divine a Thing in its Doctrine and Worship, and in all its Institutions, for you ever to be ashamed of. It has now, for sixteen Ages, endured the Test of the Wit and the Rage of Earth and Hell, and it shall stand in Power and Glory 'till the Heavens be no more.  
*Amen.*





## SERMON II.

A Rational Defense of the Gospel : *Or*, Courage in professing Christianity.

ROM. i. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth.*

The second Part.



HERE are many in the World who call themselves *Christians*, and boast in the Name, yet if you ask them what the *Gospel of Christ* is, they are either struck into Confusion and Silence, or they give such an awkward and impertinent Answer as sufficiently discovers they know little of the



Religion of *Christ*, or of the sacred Name into which they were baptiz'd. Now that we may act and speak as becomes Persons indued with Reason, I thought it necessary at first to give some Account *What this Gospel is*, that you might know and understand the Religion which you profess; and if ye will glory in the Name of *Christian*, ye may be able to tell what it is you mean by *Christianity*.

By reading the Books of the New Testament, wherein the *Gospel* is contain'd, you will find this to be the Sum and Substance of it, (*viz.*) That it is a wise, a holy and a gracious Constitution of God for the Recovery of sinful Man, by sending his own Son Jesus Christ into the Flesh, to obey his Law which Man had broken, to make a proper Atonement for Sin by his Death, and thus to procure the Favour of God, and Eternal Happiness, for all that believe and repent, and receive this offer'd Salvation; together with a Promise of the Holy Spirit to work this Faith and Repentance in their Hearts, to renew their sinful Natures unto Holiness, to form them on Earth fit for this Happiness, and to bring them to the full Possession of it in Heaven.

I have shewn, in the next Place, *What St. Paul meant*, when he told the Romans he was not ashamed of this Gospel: He was neither ashamed to believe it as a Man, nor

to profess it as a Christian, nor to preach it to others as a Minister, nor to defend it as a good Soldier of *Christ*, nor to suffer and die for it as a Martyr.

The third Thing which I propos'd, was to make it appear, that *all the Occasions of Shame, which Men of Infidelity pretend to raise from this Gospel, may be answer'd upon the fair and just Principles of Reason and Argument.* The *first Sort* of Reproaches are those which are cast upon the *Doctrines of the Gospel*, and I hope I have roll'd them away.

I repeat no more of these Things, but proceed to the *next Sort* of Occasions of Shame, and these are such as are suppos'd to *arise from the Professors of this Gospel*; and I shall endeavour to shew you also how they may be answered. They are chiefly these three.

I. Some will say, “ *The Professors of this Gospel in the Beginning were the weak and foolish and mean Things of this World; but it was despis'd by the Wise, it was scorn'd by the Great and Honourable, and persecuted by the Mighty. Why should a Paul, a Pharisee, a Doctor of the Law, become the Follower of a Carpenter's Son, and associate with a Parcel of Fishermen? This is a Scandal and foolish indeed. Who among the Pha-*”

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“ *risees*

“ rises or the Rulers have believed on him ?

“ John vii. 48. ” This was the Stumbling Block of the Gospel in that Age, and it is the Stumbling Block at which many Persons take Offence in our Age too. “ It is the unthinking Multitude, say they, the meer Mob of Mankind, that are led away with the Noise of strange Things and the Gospel. And it is only those who have no Relish of good Sense that can dispense with Mysteries. The poorer and weaker Sort of Men and Women flock after your powerful Preachers of the Gospel, but Wise Men despise it.

I am very glad, my Friends, if in your Conversation you meet with no such Persons that ridicule the Gospel at this rate. But there are many in our Age and Nation arrived at this Height of Pride, and Contempt of the Gospel.

This Objection may have more Answers than one given to it; as first, *'Tis a Matter of unjust Reproach, and it is false in Fact; for all the Professors of this Gospel are not weak and unlearned.* There have been in the very Beginning of Christianity some Wise, some Great Persons, that have given Testimony to this Gospel by their believing it. *St. Paul* was a Man of no weak Reason, no mean Understanding, no small Learning, and yet he believes this Gospel,

Gospel, and professes he is not ashamed of it.

And there have been in most Ages of the Church some Instances of the Power and Success of this Gospel in converting *Philosophers*, and *Senators*, and *Princes*. The Learned, the Ingenious, and the Noble amongst Mankind have sometimes given up their Names to *Christ*, have yielded their Assent to his Doctrines, and conformed their Hearts and Lives to the Rules of his Gospel. *Men of Wit and Reason* have been converted to the Faith, and then have exerted their peculiar Talents in the Defense of *Christianity*, and they have convinced the World that they had neither left their Reason nor their Wit behind them when they became *Christians*. *Men of Grandeur and Power* have sometimes also supported it with Honour.

But the Number of these has not been exceeding great. God has ordained that there should be *some*, to shew that 'tis no foolish and unreasonable Doctrine, that 'tis not a Religion unworthy of Kings, nor unbecoming the *Wisest and the Greatest* of Characters. But if there have been but few *Great and Wise* have embraced it, 'tis evident that its Success and Glory is not owing to the *Wisdom and Power* of Men, but to the Divinity of its Doctrines and the Power of God.

Besides,



Besides, I might tell you, *secondly*, that Riches, and Grandeur, and elevated Degrees of Wit and Learning become a fore Temptation to Pride of Mind and Self-sufficiency. Now the Faith of the Gospel is founded in Humility, and Self-diffidence, and Poverty of Spirit; and this is one plain Reason why it was received by so few of the Rich, and the Learned, and the Mighty among Men, tho' it was contrived and invented by God himself.

I answer in the *Third Place*, that it is one of the designed Characters of the true Gospel of *Christ*, and it is foretold by the antient Prophets, that when it should come to be preached upon the Earth, *the Poor should receive it. Its Reception by the poor and weak among Men is one Evidence that it comes from God. Matth. xi. 5.* When *John the Baptist* sent his Disciples to our Saviour to know whether he was the *Messiah*, or must they expect another? *Go tell, John, The Blind receive Sight, the Deaf hear, and the Lame walk, and to the Poor the Gospel is preach'd; Blessed is he that is not offended in me, &c.* Go and give *John* this very Account I now relate to you, and tell him these are my Credentials, these are the Testimonials I bring. *John* will infer that I am the *Messiah*, and this is the true Gospel that I preach; for the Great and Rich, and the Pretenders to Wisdom among the  
*Jews,*

*Jews, account it a Stone of Stumbling, and a Rock of Offence, and only a few of the Poor receive it; as it was foretold by the Prophets.*

Each of us may say therefore, If only the Wise or the Great, or the Rich believed it, it must have been such a Gospel as I could never have believed; for it wanted one Character which is necessarily adjoined to it, that is, that the *Poor receive the Gospel: Father, I thank thee,* says our Lord, *that thou hast hid these Things from the Wise and Prudent, but thou hast revealed them unto Babes,* Mat. xi. 25. *It pleased God, when the World by Wisdom knew not God, to darken all their Wisdom, and turn it into Folly, and to call those that were esteemed Fools, and make them wise in believing the Gospel of Christ. It has pleased God to chuse the mean and weak and contemptible Things of this World to confound the Wise and Mighty. It has pleased him to chuse the Things that are not, to bring to nought the Things that are, that no Flesh might glory in his Presence.* 1 Cor. i. 27, &c.

II. It is another Occasion of Stumbling or Shame in the Gospel of Christ, that *some of the Professors of it are vicious in their Lives.* “Will you believe such a Gospel (says an Infidel) that does not  
“restrain

“restrain the Professors of it from the  
 “worst of Sins.”

This, I confess, gives it great Dishonour among the Men of the World, and is sometimes ready to shake the Faith of younger Christians; they know not how to go on farther in Christianity, for such and such that made great Profession, *you see* how they are fallen. This is a common Temptation of the Devil; it's a frequent Snare, and there hath been many a pious Soul that hath been in Danger of being caught hereby. The Vices of some Professors were great even in *St. Paul's Days*: There were some among the *Philippians*, Phil. iii. 18. *Of whom I have told you often, and now even weeping, that they walk as Enemies to the Cross of Christ, and*  
 “cast Scandal and Shame upon it. It  
 “makes my Eyes flow with Tears, and  
 “my Soul bleed within me to hear of it;  
 “The Gospel of *Christ* is so much disho-  
 “noured by these Means.

But if we take a nearer View, we shall see that no Doctrine ought to fare the worse, because some wicked Men are Professors of it. It was not counted a Discredit to *Philosophy*, that some of the Professors of it, who hated the Gospel, were vicious in their Lives. I would ask the *Deist* now, Is there any ground to disbelieve Natural Religion, because there are  
 some



some that make Profession of it are fallen into great Sins? The Gospel it self *teaches us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts,* and does not indulge one of them. And they are said to be *Enemies to the Cross of Christ,* when their *Conversation is all earthly,* when their *God is their Belly,* and their *Glory is their Shame.* This is no Fault of the Gospel, for they felt not the Power of it. Nor is there any Religion or Profession in the World that would have had any Followers at all, if Men must have entirely cashier'd that Religion, because there have been some Persons vicious that have been Professors of it. There is no Sect, no Religion in the World, tho' the Institution and the Rules of it have been ever so pious, but what has produc'd some Persons that have been vicious in their Lives.

But this *Cavil* is still carried on, and urg'd with much Vehemence. “ If the  
“ Gospel of *Christ* were a Religion so hea-  
“ venly, and so divine in its Original as  
“ you pretend, surely the Nations that pro-  
“ fess it would eminently exceed all other  
“ Nations in Piety, in Justice and Good-  
“ ness; whereas the Nations that now-a-  
“ days imbrace *Christianity*, are not at all  
“ superior to the *Mahometans*, nor to some  
“ of the *Heathens*, either in Duty that  
“ relates to God or Man: And if we may  
“ give Credit to antient History, the Vir-  
“ tues



“ tues of the old *Romans*, long before the  
 “ Days of *Julius Cæsar*, shone much brigh-  
 “ ter than any of the Virtues of the bap-  
 “ tiz’d Nations : There was more Truth  
 “ and Honesty, more Devotion to the  
 “ heavenly Powers, more of a publick  
 “ Spirit and Zeal for their Country’s  
 “ Good, than we can find in any *Christians*  
 “ Kingdoms or States now-a-days. To  
 “ this I would give these three Answers.

1. The Accounts which we have of the  
 shining Virtues of these best Ages of *Hea-  
 thenism* is given us only by their own Poste-  
 rity who lived in succeeding Ages. Now  
 ’tis the well-known Temper and Custom of  
 Mankind to magnify the Virtue of their  
 Ancestors, and to say, *That the former  
 Times were better than these* : But you have  
 scarce any *Heathen Writers* who do not  
 describe their own Age as vicious enough,  
 if they have Occasion to talk upon that  
 Subject. And therefore there is just rea-  
 son to suspect the strict Truth of these  
*Encomiums* of their Fore-fathers.

2dly. Altho’ some social Virtues in a  
*Heathen* Country might really flourish  
 more for an Age or two, springing from  
 the Principles of Ambition, and Honour,  
 and Love to their own Country, yet there  
 were such Vices also practis’d among ma-  
 ny of the *Gentile* Nations, which are sel-  
 dom heard or known among *Christians* :  
 The

The Apostle describes them in *Rom. i. 26.* and that in such a manner as leads us to believe that they were practis'd by those who profess'd Wisdom among them.

It must be acknowledg'd also, that these Nations were gross *Idolaters*, and worshipp'd many Gods, and that even in the Times when their social Virtues were most conspicuous. Now this is most highly criminal in the sight of the Great and Sovereign God, the Creator of all Things: And the warmer and the more zealous were their Devotions which they paid to these Idols, with the Neglect or Contempt of the True God, the greater was their Guilt and Abomination.

But 3dly, The *chief Answer* I give is this, That when whole Kingdoms are made *Christians* meerly by Birth, Education and Custom, 'tis not to be supposed that a twentieth part of them believe the Gospel upon any just and reasonable Principles of Knowledge and Choice. When whole Cities and Nations are Worshipers of *Christ*, no otherwise than the *Ephesians* were Worshipers of *Diana*, or the *Turks* of *Mahomet*, 'tis not reasonable to expect that there should be much difference in the Virtues of such a national sort of *Christians*, *Mahometans*, or *Heathens*; for the Principle from which all their Religion springs is the same, namely,

ly, their Education, Custom and Fashion of their Country; and therefore their Vices are much the same as they would be according to the present reigning Humour, Disposition, or Political Temper of the Nation, whatsoever were their Form of Religion and their establish'd Worship.

The true Way therefore to put these Things to the Test, is to consider those *Christians* only who believe and profess the Gospel from Knowledge, and Choice, and inward Conviction, and who make their Religion a Matter of Solemnity and Importance, and not of meer Form and Custom. Now if you separate these from the rest of Mankind, I'm well assur'd that as bad as the *Christian World* is, you'll find all the Human and Divine Virtues more gloriously practis'd among such *Christians* as these, than among an equal Number of the Professors of any other Religion under the Sun: for inward *Christianity* and the *Faith of the Gospel*, when it is built upon just Foundations, will necessarily draw along with it such a Train of Virtues and Graces as shall *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour*; and by such a Comparison as this Men would be constrained to *confess that God is among us of a Truth*.

III. *The various and divided Opinions, the Sects and Parties that are found in the Christian World,* have been another Occasion of Scandal and Offence to the Infidels. “How  
“ can we ever come, say they, “ to any  
“ Certainty what your Religion is, since  
“ you don’t agree about it among your  
“ selves?

“ All *Europe* pretends to be *Christian,*  
“ and to believe the Gospel; yet *France,*  
“ and *Spain,* and *Italy,* and *Poland,* and  
“ a good part of *Germany,* tell us that *true*  
“ *Christianity* is found only amongst them.  
“ But in the Countries of *Denmark* and  
“ *Sweden,* and the *Northern* parts of *Ger-*  
“ *many,* and in the *British Islands,* there’s  
“ another Religion profess’d, of a very  
“ different kind, and they call theirs the  
“ *pure Gospel and reformed Christianity.*  
“ The *Protestant* and the *Papist* divide  
“ these *Western* parts of the World, and  
“ they are ready to tear one another to  
“ pieces upon the account of their diffe-  
“ rent Opinions and Practices. Now if  
“ the Books that contain the *Religion of*  
“ *Christ* be of so very uncertain sense and  
“ signification, truly we are asham’d of  
“ such a doubtful Religion; ’tis e’en as  
“ well for us to content our selves with  
“ the Religion that the Light of Nature  
“ teaches us, and the Dictates of our own  
“ common



“ common Reason, which we think has  
 “ more Certainty in it.

To this I *answer*, that 'tis a great Mistake to imagine that the Light of Nature and Reason, if left entirely to it self in this corrupt and fallen State, has more Certainty in its Determinations than Scripture hath. How many wild Opinions hath the corrupt Mind of Man produced among the Inhabitants of the *Heathen* World, and this same *Light of Nature* has not corrected them? What infinite Diversity of vain and monstrous Fancies hath past for Religion and Devotion among them? And the Light of Nature has been suppos'd to dictate some of them, for they did not always pretend Revelation for them. There have been wide and irreconcilable Differences among the *Philosophers*, as well as among the *Priests* and the *People* of different Nations. The *Light of Nature and Reason* is a poor dark bewilder'd thing, if it hath no Commerce, nor Communication with Persons who have been favour'd with Divine Revelation. It is only the Scripture that has establish'd and ascertain'd the Doctrines of *natural Religion*: And 'tis to the Scripture that the *Deists* of our Age are oblig'd for their greater Acquaintance with *Natural Religion* than ever their Fore-fathers, the *Heathen Philosophers*, arriv'd at, tho' they are too proud

to

to acknowledge it. If they agree better, and are more uniform in their Principles now, than the old *Epicureans*, the *Stoicks*, and the *Platonists* were, 'tis all owing to a more intimate Acquaintance with the Writings of *Moses* and the Prophets, the Evangelists and the Apostles; so that 'tis with a very ill Grace that our present *Infidels* can object to *Christians* their *Difference of Opinions*, and pretend that this is a Ground of Shame to the *Gospel of Christ*, and a Reason why they do not believe or profess it.

But I come now to give some Account of the true Reasons of such Divisions of *Sect and Party* among *Christians*. There are two great Causes of these Divisions, and the Charge is not to be laid upon the *Gospel of Christ*, nor upon the Books that contain it.

1. The first Cause is, that the *Papist* does not pretend to derive his Religion meerly from the Bible; but he brings in the *Jewish Apocryphal Writers* of antient Ages, and lays them also for a Foundation of his Faith; and he makes the *Traditions of the Christian Church*, which he pretends to have been deliver'd down from Age to Age, of almost the same Authority as the Scripture it self: And some of their Authors have rais'd these Traditions to equal Dignity with the Scripture, as being built  
upon

upon the same Foundation (viz.) *the Authority of the Church*. As they have many things in their Religion which they cannot find in the Word of God; so they think 'tis sufficient if they can support them by these pretended *Traditions of the Church*. Whereas the *Protestant* takes nothing for the Ground of his Faith, but the Books of the *Old and New Testament*; and what he cannot find written there, nor deriv'd thence by most obvious and evident Consequences, he does not profess it as any necessary part of his Christianity. The Religion of the *Protestant* therefore is abundantly more conformable to the *Gospel of Christ*, both in the Doctrines and the Worship of it, because it derives the whole from the Word of God: But 'tis no Wonder at all that there should be such a Difference between them and the *Papists*, when they lay such different Foundations for their Faith and Practice.

2. Another Reason why the *Protestant* and *Papist* differ so much is, because the *Papist* pretends that there is an *infallible Judge* among them to determine all Controversies; and that their *Popes*, and their *Councils*, which they call the *Church*, have Authority to appoint what shall be esteem'd the *true Articles of Faith*, and to bring in *Rites and Ceremonies into their Worship* according to their own Invention and Pleasure.

Pleasure. And that all the People are bound to believe as the Church bids them believe, and to practise in Matters of Worship whatsoever the Church bids them practise: And upon this Account they forbid the Scripture to be read by the Common People, that they may not learn the Truth of the Gospel, but may take all for *Gospel* which they teach them, and be content with it. Whereas the *Protestant* has nothing else but his *Bible* to have Recourse to for the Conclusion of all Controversies; and he encourages every Man to use his Bible, and to judge for himself concerning the Sense and Meaning of it, using the best Helps that he can obtain for this End: The *Protestant* Ministers teach him not only what they know of the Gospel, but they put the Bible into his Hand, and bid him search and see whether things are so or no, that thence he may learn what are those Doctrines and those Duties which *Christ* has requir'd him to believe and practise. Thence it comes to pass that there are almost a thousand things in *Popery*, which the *Protestants* utterly disown, because they disown the Power of the *Pope*, or *Church* to stamp new *Articles of Faith*, or invent new *Forms of Worship*.

¶ *Object.* But it may be said still, There are so many different Sects and Parties among the *Protestants* themselves as encour-



rages the *Deist* to maintain his Charge and Accufation. “Why do you, faith he, who profess to derive all your Religion from the Scripture, differ so much among your selves, both in Doctrine, in Worship, and in the Order of your Churches, if the *Gospel of Christ* be so excellent a Religion, and if the Books that contain it can give you so plain and certain a Knowledge of it?”

*I answer,* That almost all those things wherein *Protestants* differ, are but of smaller Importance in Religion, in comparison of those many and great Things wherein they agree. The *chief and most important Points of Christianity* are written with so much Plainness and Evidence in the Word of God, as would lead all humble, honest, sincere and diligent Enquirers into a Belief of them, and Consent in them. Now 'tis not necessary that the *lesser Matters of Christianity* should be written down so expressly in Scripture: for the All-wise God thought it proper to leave many of these Articles of less Importance more dubious and obscure, both to awaken the Diligence of Men to study his Word, and to leave amongst them some Occasions for the Exercise of their mutual Charity and Forbearance. Our Blessed Lord has thought it proper to put the *universal Love*, which he requires amongst his Followers,

lowers, to this Test or Tryal, to see whether they will cultivate Peace and Charity to one another amidst their various and divided Opinions in things of less Concernment.

I confess there are some Differences among *Protestants* in the great *Doctrines of the Trinity*, and the *Satisfaction of Christ*, which must be acknowledged to be Articles of very high Moment and Importance in Christianity. But if we compare those few who profess dangerous Opinions in these Points with the Millions that agree in the same general Profession of Faith, 'twill be found that their Number is but very small. If we consider the great *Ignorance* of God which is found in all Men by Nature, and take a Survey of the unhappy Influences that *Education, Fancy, Passion, Pride, Friendship, Aversion, Precipitance and Laziness* have upon Mankind in forming their Judgments and Opinions, we shall not wonder to find some Persons here and there falling into strange Sentiments, contrary to the plain and sufficient Evidence of Scripture. We believe in general, that whoever puts off all Prejudices, and is piously sincere in his Search of the Word of God, shall certainly find, thro' Divine Assistance, all needful Truth. If therefore a *Disbeliever* come with a serious, humble, and pious Mind, and apply

himself with Diligence and fervent Prayer to read the Scripture; I am well assur'd he will become a *Christian*, and find out so much of the Doctrines and Duties of the Gospel as are necessary to his eternal Happiness.

But there will be *Heresies* arising sometimes in the Church. Tares will grow up sometimes in the Field that is ever so well cultivated and sown with Corn: And what unknown Reasons there may be in the Counsels and Providence of God in permitting Heresies to arise for the farther Trial of his own People, is too high and hard a Point for us to determine. The Apostle saith, 1 Cor. xi. 19. *There must be also Heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest.* If such a thing as this is shall be abus'd by Men of corrupt Minds, to turn them quite away from the *Gospel of Christ*, and to support their own Infidelity, they must answer for it at the Great Day, to *Christ* their Judge. ¶

Thus I have done with the *Third Charge or Accusation brought against the Gospel*, and remov'd the Scandal and Shame that some Men have thrown upon it, because there are *such Sects, and Parties, and divided Opinions among the Professors of it.*

IV. Another Occasion of Scandal which Infidels charge upon the *Gospel of Christ*, is this, “ *That some who have long profess’d*  
 “ *it have forsaken it ; and one should be a-*  
 “ *sham’d to imbrace such a Faith as this is,*  
 “ *for it has been tryed and found to be vain*  
 “ *and groundless, even by those who have*  
 “ *known it long and search’d it thro’ and*  
 “ *thro’, and therefore at last they have a-*  
 “ *bandon’d and cast it off.*”

But in *Answer* to this, give me leave to say, *first*, That the chief and most common Reason why Persons who have profess’d *Christianity* cast it off, is not because they found any just Reason of Blame either in its Principles or Rules; but because they think it too strict for them, and it curbs their vicious Appetites more than they like.

I will allow, that perhaps there may be some Persons who have abandon’d the *Christian Religion* from a Wantonness of Fancy, from a Licentiousness of Thought, from a Pride of Reasoning, and who make it their Glory to have thrown off the Bonds of their Education, and to have obtain’d the Honour of *Free-thinkers*, or from a presuming Conceit that they must comprehend every thing in their Religion, and will believe nothing that hath *Mysteries* in it. Such vain Principles as these may



have influenced some Minds, and given them up to Apostacy: But far the greatest part of those who forsake the Gospel have been tempted to it by the Power of their Lusts, which the Gospel would restrain; and some of these Persons upon their Death-Beds have confess'd it too.

This is also sufficiently visible in the World, that when Men have long profess'd this Gospel and forsaken it, they seldom grow more pious, more sober, more honest or good than before; but on the contrary, they generally have indulged vicious Excesses and neglected all Piety. And this is rather a Ground of Glory to the Gospel than a just Reason of Shame.

If these Persons had generally grown more holy, if they had fear'd God more afterwards than ever they did before, if they had more aimed at the Glory of God, and lov'd him better, when they forsook *Christ* and his Gospel, then we might have some Reason to suspect this Gospel was false, and a meer Mistake or Imposture. But when these Persons grow more unjust than before, love their Neighbours less, are become more sensual, more selfish, disregard God more than they did before; I repeat it again, this is rather a Ground of Glory to the Gospel of *Christ*, than of Shame. *Demas hath forsaken us, saith Paul, because he loved this present World,*  
2 Tim.

2 Tim. iv. 10. A covetous *Demas* is no good Argument why *St. Paul* should forsake *Christ*, or be ashamed of the Gospel. And the Apostle has shewn that those who have made shipwreck of their Faith, have parted with a good Conscience too, and lost their Virtue. 1 Tim. i. 19, 20.

But there's another Answer which the Apostle *John* gives to this Objection in his first Epistle, chap. ii. v. 19. *They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.* They might make a Profession of the Gospel, and perhaps give a real Assent to the Truths and Doctrines of it by the convincing Influence of Miracles and Human Reason, or perhaps they became *Christians* meerly by the Force of Education, because they were taught this Religion from their Childhood, and profess'd it without Thought; but they never had such a powerful Belief of this Gospel of *Christ*, as to change their Hearts, to renew their Natures, to form their Souls after the Image of *Christ* into real Holiness; and therefore like the *Hearers* that are compar'd to *stony Ground*, the Seed did not sink deep into their Hearts, tho' they might receive the Word at first with Joy; but having not Root in themselves,

they endure but for a while, and when any Temptation arises, they are offended, and depart from the Faith which they once profess'd, *Matth.* xiii. 20, 21. Thus it appears, that the *Gospel of Christ* is never the worse in it self, nor does it deserve the less Esteem in the World, notwithstanding such Apostates as these, no more than Seed-Corn should be pronounced naught, because it does not bring forth a Harvest in every Soil.

I have now finish'd the *third general Head* of Discourse which I propos'd, and have shown, whatsoever Occasions of Shame might be suppos'd to arise either from the Doctrines of the Gospel, or the Professors of it, are unjustly charg'd as Blemishes on the Gospel, and I have given particular Answers to both sorts of Cavils, and defeated the Accusations.

*One word of Advice to Christians* shall conclude the present Discourse, and that is this.

### *A Word of Advice.*

Since the *Gospel of Christ* gives no just Occasions of Shame, you that are Professors of it should take Heed that you do nothing to cast Shame on this Gospel. Don't mingle the Christian Faith with doubtful Notions of your own. Don't defile your Christian Conversation with sinful Practices.

tices. Don't make the lesser Circumstances and Appendages of your Religion the Matter of loud Contest, and a Party Strife; for all these Things expose the Gospel to Shame, and may justly put its Professors to the Blush, in the Face of the World, when they are guilty of these Practices.

Let me insist a little upon each of these :

1. *Don't mingle the Christian Faith with doubtful Notions and Fancies of your own.* The Articles of our Christianity, and the necessary Truths of the Gospel are divine and glorious : Take heed you don't bring in your peculiar Sentiments and favourite Opinions, which have no sufficient Evidence from the Word of God, and join them in the same Rank of Dignity with the Articles of your Faith; and much less should you dare to impose them upon the Consciences of your Fellow-Christians. The Gospel it self will suffer by it, and sink in the Esteem of the World, when the Divine Doctrines of it are mingled with our Weaknesses, and debas'd by the Addition of our doubtful Sentiments.

2. *Defile not your Christian Conversation with sinful Practices.* Indulge not a Conformity to this present evil World in any of the corrupt and unlawful Customs and Courses of it. Mingle not your Practice of the lovely Duties which this Gospel en-



joyn, with lying, and flandering, and railing; do not interline your Lives with Religion and Sin, with Devotion and shameful Lufts. 'Tis a Gospel that forbids all Iniquity, it requires that you mortify Sin, and *cleanse your selves from every Defilement of Flesh and Spirit*, and that you go on to *perfect Holiness in the Fear of the Lord*, 2 Cor. vii. 1. The very Design and End of it in God's eternal Counsels and Contrivance, is, *that you might be Holy and without Blame before him in Love*, Ephes. i. 4. If you pursue this Advice, then shall others, who behold you, confess that there is something Divine in Christianity, when you thus adorn the Doctrine of God your Saviour. Thus you give the Gospel its due Honour, by believing all it reveals, by worshiping according to the Methods of its Appointment, and by that Purity of Conversation which it enjoyns.

3. *Make not the lesser Circumstances and Appendages of your Religion the Matter of loud Contest, and a Party-Strife.* We are call'd to contend earnestly for the great and necessary Doctrines of Faith, which were once deliver'd to the Saints: but we are commanded also to receive those that are weak in the Faith, without involving them in doubtful Disputations about Matters of less moment. Give no Occasion to the  
Infidel

Infidel to blaspheme the Gospel by your Factions and Quarrels, and the Rage of a bitter and un sanctified Zeal. Oh that the Time were come, when the *Wolf and the Lamb shall lie down together, and there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the holy Mountain!* But surely, 'tis very hard if the Lambs themselves, who belong to the Flock of *Christ*, cannot live without hurting and destroying one another; that *Christians* cannot live without exposing their divine and heavenly Religion to the Blasphemies of sinful Men. Happy were the *Christian* World, if we could all behave our selves so as never to give Occasion to the Adversary to reproach the Professors of the *Christian* Faith, not throw Shame and Dishonour upon the Gospel of *Christ!* May the blessed Spirit of God teach us this Lesson effectually, and let it be copied out in our Lives daily, 'till we arrive at the Regions of perfect Holiness and Love!  
*Amen.*





## SERMON III.

A Rational Defense of the Gospel : Or, Courage in professing Christianity.

ROM. i. 16.

*I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ, for it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that believeth.*

The third Part.



HO' the Passion of *Shame* has something in it that sinks our Nature, and enfeebles our Spirits, yet 'tis a very becoming Passion, where *Sin* is the Object of it ; and indeed 'twas wisely ordained by our Creator to be a Guardian to those small Remains of natural Virtue that  
abide

abide in us since the Fall. We find the first young Sinners cloathed with Shame in the Garden of *Eden* at the Presence of God. But the growing Corruption of our Natures, the Subtilty of *Satan*, and the Temptations of this World have join'd together to take this Piece of Artillery out of the Hands of Virtue, and make use of it in their Attacks upon Religion and Goodness. We ought to be asham'd indeed of nothing but *our Sin, our Folly, and our Wretchedness*; but we have been too ready to be asham'd, even of the *Grace of God*, and the *Methods of our Recovery* from Folly, Wretchedness and Sin. The *Gospel* itself, the *glorious Gospel*, has been made a Matter of Reproach among Men, and its Professors have been sometimes tempted *to be asham'd of it*.

The Blessed Apostle in my Text had gain'd a Victory over this Temptation, for *he was not asham'd of the Gospel of Christ*. Whatsoever there might be contain'd in *the Doctrines* of this Gospel, or whatsoever might be found *among the Professors* of it, from which Infidels or Unbelievers might take occasion to throw Shame and Scandal upon it; yet I have shown in the two foregoing Discourses, that all this is unjustly charged on the Gospel, and have given particular Answers to both sorts of Cavils.



I go on now to the *last Proposal*, which is to *explain the Force of the Apostle's Argument against Shame* in professing and preaching *this Gospel*, and to make it appear, that the Words of my Text contain a general and most extensive Guard, or Defense, against all possible Occasions of Shame in the Profession of Christianity, and that is, *that the Gospel of Christ is the Power of God for the Salvation of all that believe.*

Now this is an Argument which you, who believe in *Christ*, may all assume to your selves as well as the Apostle: You cannot preach this Gospel so well as he, nor explain the Reasons of your Faith to others, and establish it upon so solid and unshaken Foundations of Argument, as *Paul* could do; but every Christian, that has embraced the Faith, and felt the Power of this Gospel for his own Salvation, may give this Reason for his Profession of it, and may support his Courage in Opposition to all the sharpest Temptations of Mockery and Reproach.

When the Apostle says, *'tis the Power of God*, we must suppose him to understand, *'tis a most powerful Means, or effectual Instrument that God uses, to save Souls, and 'tis attended with divine Power for that End.*

*'Tis more powerful than the Light of Nature*; for we have no just Reason to believe,  
 lieve,

lieve, that the mere Light of Nature, without some Helps of Divine Revelation, or some unwritten Traditions of it ever saved any Souls at all ; and if there have been any of the Sinners of the *Heathen Nations* made Partakers of Grace, I think it is otherwise to be accounted for than merely by the poor Remains of the Light of Nature.

It is more *powerful than any Religion that Men or Angels could invent*, and more powerful too than *any Religion that God himself ever invented, or reveal'd, and propos'd to Men* before the *Gospel of Christ*. His Revelations to the Patriarchs were but few ; they were made here and there to a House or two, or to a Family ; they were particular Favours that he bestow'd upon Persons call'd out of Idolatry, nor had they a very long, nor spreading, nor lasting Influence, except in the Family of *Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob*, where they were frequently renew'd.

It is *more powerful than all the Revelations of Grace, which God made by Moses to the Children of Israel*, and intermingled with the *Jewish Law* : For these Discoveries reach'd but to one single Nation, and wrought but feebly toward the Conversion of sinful Souls to God and Holiness, in Comparison of what the *Gospel of Christ* has done.

Besides,

Besides, let it be consider'd, that all the Power which all the former Discoveries of Grace to the *Patriarchs*, or to the *Jews*, had to save Souls, was derived from the *Gospel of Christ*, which was contain'd in them in lower Measures, and in a more obscure Manner. Therefore, since the *Gospel of Christ* now stands forth in open Light, and in full Glory, 'tis most eminently powerful to convert Sinners, to bring this Apostate World back again to God, and to save Millions of Souls.

- I. 'Tis the most powerful Means of Salvation consider'd in itself, and in its own Nature and Influence.
- II. 'Tis the most powerful Means, as it is accompanied with the Influences of the Holy Spirit.

The first of these may be call'd a *Moral or persuasive Influence*; the last is *supernatural and sovereign*. Let us meditate on each of these distinctly.

I. It is the most powerful Means, *if we consider the Gospel in itself, and in its own Nature*. Not that the mere Word of the Gospel, reaching the Ears of Men, is sufficient to change the Heart, and to save the Soul, without Divine Influences: For 'tis said to be the *Power of God to Salvation*;

tion; i. e. it is that Doctrine whereby God exerts his Divine Power to save sinful Man. But still it must be granted, that the Doctrine it self in its own Nature has a very great and evident Tendency to this glorious End, as it is the noblest, the richest, and the brightest Discovery of Grace that ever was made to Man.

If we consider it *in its own Nature*, it has the greatest *Moral Power*, or *persuasive Influence*, toward the *Salvation of perishing Sinners*. This is easily prov'd by explaining what this *Salvation* means.

*Salvation* includes in it a Freedom from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin, together with a Right and Title to Heaven: it implies also a Freedom from the Power of Sin, and thereby a Preparation for Heaven, and a final Possession of it. Under each of these Considerations it will appear with great Evidence, that the *Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ is the Power of God to Salvation*.

1<sup>st</sup>. 'Tis the *most powerful Means to set Sinners free from the Guilt and Punishment of Sin*, and to relieve a distressed Conscience under the Sense of Divine Anger: It gives the most effectual Security to a Believer against the Terrors of Hell and Eternal Death; for it not only declares, that there is Forgiveness with God, but it shews us the Foundation upon which this For-  
giveness



givenness stands, namely, the Satisfaction made to the offended Justice of God by the Death and Sacrifice of *Jesus Christ*, his Son. Suppose, 'twere possible for a Philosopher, or Wise Man, to prove that God would forgive the Sins of the Penitent, yet there's nothing but the Gospel that can set the Conscience at such joyful Ease from the Terror of Guilt, and release the Soul from the Chains wherewith it was held :

“ For Now, says the Believer, I not only  
 “ hear it proved by Divine Testimony, that  
 “ there is Pardon of Sin to be obtain'd  
 “ from God, but I see how God may do  
 “ it with Honour : I behold the Atonement  
 “ that is made by *Christ Jesus*, his  
 “ own Son : The Atonement is equal to  
 “ the Offence : He can justify me, tho'  
 “ I am a Sinner, upon the Account of  
 “ this perfect Righteousness, and he can  
 “ do it with Glory to all his terrible Perfections,  
 “ therefore I may venture my  
 “ Assent to this Doctrine, and I may rest  
 “ my Soul upon it.

2<sup>dly</sup>, The Gospel is a powerful Means also to raise undeserving Sinners to a Hope of Heaven and Eternal Life. It shews us what Heaven is, by the Discoveries of one that has been there, even the Son of God himself. Life and Immortality are brought to light by this Gospel, which lay hid under much Darkness before. 2 Tim. i. 10. It teaches

teaches us also, how the Happiness of Heaven is procur'd for us, even by the Obedience and Blood of the Son of God; and therefore, some think, Heaven is call'd the *purchased Possession* in *Ephes. i. 14.* It assures us, that this Blessed State of the Enjoyment of God in unchangeable Peace, and in the Company of Blessed Spirits, waits for every Believer, when he is dislodg'd from this Flesh, and when the Habitation of the Body is no longer fit to retain the Spirit: And it reveals also the final Heaven of the Saints, when the Body shall be rais'd into Immortality. “ Without this Gospel, says the *Soul*, I could have no just Ground to hope for Heaven; for all my best Righteousnesses are imperfect, my fairest Acts of Holiness have many Defects in them; but I behold the perfect Righteousness of my Saviour that has procur'd it. A Life of Holiness without Defect, and a most submissive Obedience to a painful and shameful Death, has been the Price and Purchase of it.

3<sup>dly</sup>, This Gospel is a *most powerful Means to subdue Sin in the Soul, to mortify corrupt Nature, to inspire us with Virtue, to wean our Hearts from Vice, Sensuality and Trifles, and from all the insufficient Pretences to Blessedness that the World can flatter us with.*

The

The *Gospel of Christ*, both in his own personal Ministry of it, and in the Writings of his Apostles, *sets before us the most Divine Scheme of Morality, Piety and Virtue, that ever the World knew.* The sacred Dictates of Probity and Goodness toward *Men*, as well as the venerable Rules of Piety toward *God*, which are scatter'd up and down in an imperfect and obscure Manner among the Philosophers, and shine like a Star here and there in the Midnight Darkness of Heathenism; these are all collected and refin'd in the *Gospel of Christ*, and fill the Christian World with a pure and universal Light like the Sun unclouded in a Meridian Sky: We know our Duty infinitely better from the Instructions of *Christ* and *St. Paul*, than all the *Plato's* and the *Plutarchs*, all the *Zeno's* and the *Antonines* of Greece or Rome, could ever teach us.

The most Divine Rules of the Gospel are attended also with the *noblest Motives* to love Virtue, and to hate all Vice; for Never was the *Evil of Sin* so displayed to the *Eyes and Senses of Men*, as by the *Cross and Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*: Never did Sin appear so hateful, so abominable, so justly the Object of Divine and Human Hatred, as when it appear'd pressing the Soul of the *Holy One of God* into Agonies and sharp Anguish. : A Believer,  
who



who has seen the Evil of Sin, as revealed in this Gospel, will hate it, and will be led powerfully to a Conquest over it.

Besides, *the Terrors of Hell are revealed to us* among the Doctrines of Christianity, as the just Punishment of Sin, and that in such a Manner as no other Religion pretends to : For, as the Doors of Heaven are opened by our Lord *Jesus Christ*, both by his Ministry on Earth, and by his Ascend into Heaven, and by the farther Discoveries which his Apostles have made of the future unseen happy World, so the Doors of Hell are open'd too. Our Lord *Jesus* himself preach'd Hell and Terror to Sinners with a sacred Vehemence, and set Everlasting Fire in a clearer and more dreadful Light than ever had been done by all the Philosophers in the World. The Soul of every Saint has been in some measure a Witness of this Truth, when it lay under the Work of Divine Conviction.

And not only the horrid Nature and Evil of Sin, and the dreadful Consequences of it, are powerful Motives to make us stand afar off, and fear it ; but “ *the sweet and*  
 “ *constraining Influence of the Love of Christ*  
 “ does most effectually incline me (saith  
 “ the Believer) to hate every Sin, and to  
 “ follow after universal Holiness : Shall  
 “ I build up again the Things which my  
 “ Saviour died to destroy ? This would  
 “ be



“ be to make him suffer Agonies in vain,  
 “ and run counter to all the Designs of  
 “ his bleeding Love, and the voluntary Sa-  
 “ crifice of his Soul.

“ I have also the *glorious and perfect Ex-*  
 “ *ample of my Blessed Lord* : Never did  
 “ Virtue and Religion shine so bright,  
 “ and look so amiable as in his Life, and  
 “ he has set it before me as my Pattern :  
 “ I feel the attractive and Divine Power  
 “ of it : Where my Lord leads, I must  
 “ follow; for I would fain be like him.

“ He draws me *by his Example, and he*  
 “ *draws me too by his heavenly Promises.*  
 “ He spreads the Glories and the Joys of  
 “ Heaven before me to allure my *Hope,*  
 “ I see those sacred Glories, I long after  
 “ the Possession of these unfading Joys,  
 “ and I must and will keep the Path that  
 “ leads to Paradise, that *where my Lord is,*  
 “ *I may be also.*

“ The *Rules and Precepts of Holiness,*  
 “ which my Lord has taught me, are  
 “ more pure, more clean, more perfect,  
 “ more Divine and Godlike, than ever  
 “ any other Scheme of Rules and Duties  
 “ was ; and the Joyful and Dreadful *Mo-*  
 “ *tives given me* to press after this Holi-  
 “ ness are infinitely beyond all the Mo-  
 “ tives that any Doctrine or Religion has  
 “ proposed. Blessed be God that I ever  
 “ learnt these holy *Rules,* that I ever felt

“ the Power of these Divine *Motives*, and  
“ am become a Lover of Holiness.

4<sup>thly</sup>, Thus the Gospel *prepares the Saint*  
*for Heaven, and fits every Power of his*  
*Soul for the Business and Blessedness of those*  
*happy Regions.* “ Once, says he, I had  
“ no Delight in spiritual Things ; I had  
“ no Relish of spiritual Pleasures ; but  
“ now I taste them with Delight, and I  
“ rejoice in the Hopes of a sweeter and  
“ more compleat Taste of them on High.  
“ Once I had *no Love to God* ; ’tis true,  
“ I fear’d him as some *unknown and extra-*  
“ *ordinary Terror* ; but I had no Delight  
“ in him, no Desire after him. Now he  
“ is the Object of my warmest Love, and  
“ of my sweetest Meditations. *Heaven*  
“ *itself*, as it is described in the Word of  
“ God, was not pleasant to me. What ?  
“ The everlasting Continuance of a *Sab-*  
“ *bath*? Perpetual Employments of Wor-  
“ ship and Service to be done for God e-  
“ verlastingly ? These are Things that  
“ were not agreeable to carnal Nature ;  
“ but by the Influence of this *Gospel of*  
“ *Christ* my Heart is new-molded, and  
“ I delight in the Fore-thoughts of such  
“ a Heaven as the Gospel describes. ”  
Such Instances as these of the sweet Effi-  
cacy of the Gospel upon the Soul of Man,  
turning it into a Divine Temper, and fit-  
ting it for the Enjoyment of God, are so  
many

many *Proofs of the Power of this Gospel unto Salvation*, and so many Grounds and Reasons why the Believer cannot be ashamed of it.

But I must add in the 5<sup>th</sup> Place, 'Tis the Gospel of Christ *that brings Believers to the final Possession of Heaven*. Then, and not 'till then, is the Salvation perfect. 'Tis the Gospel that has given us an unchangeable Promise of Heaven, when our State of Tryal is ended here on Earth, and Christ is bound to fulfil it. The Gospel assures us, that when we are *absent from the Body*, we shall *be present with the Lord*. When we see the Heavens open at the Death of *Stephen* the first Martyr, and *Jesus Christ* standing there to receive his departing Spirit, we believe that the same *Jesus* will fulfil the same kind Office to us also, and receive our Spirits, if we have been found *faithful to the Death*.

The same Gospel also gives us a more distant Hope and glorious Assurance of the *Resurrection of our Bodies* from the Prison of the Grave. When we behold the Body of our Blessed Saviour rising from the Tomb, and ascending to Glory, and when we are told that his Resurrection is a Pledge and Pattern of ours, then with a joyful Expectation we wait for the same Blessedness. The Gospel lays an Obligation upon *Christ* himself to raise his Saints from the

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the Dead; for he himself tells us, that 'tis the Will of his Father, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, should have Everlasting Life, and I will raise him up at the last Day, John vi. 40.

Hence it comes to pass, that the Believer triumphs over Death under the Influence of these Hopes. "Now, saith the Saint, I can venture to die; for my Spirit shall be received to dwell with my Saviour among the *Spirits of the Just* that are *made perfect*. These feeble and withering Limbs of mine, I can cheerfully commit them to Dust and the Grave; for the great Trumpet must sound, the Dead must arise, my Redeemer will call my Flesh from its dark Prison; *He will call, and I shall answer him; I shall arise to meet the Lord in the Air,* and dwell with him for ever in unknown Worlds of Blessedness.

Thus I have shewn you the first Thing I propos'd, (*viz.*) *How the Gospel in its own Nature has a very proper and powerful Tendency in a moral or persuasive Way towards the Salvation of the Soul, as it ensures pardoning Grace and final Blessedness to Believers.*

II. I come now to show *how the Gospel is made powerful to the Salvation of Sinners by the accompanying Influence of the Spirit*

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of God, and this is supernatural and sovereign. If I should run over all the Particulars I have just before mention'd, I might make it appear in each of them, how the Spirit of God by the Word of his Gospel works this Salvation.

It is this *Blessed Spirit* that awakens the *stupid and thoughtless Sinner* to a Sense of his Guilt and Danger. 'Tis he shows him the Evil of Sin, and makes him groan after Deliverance, and cry out, *What shall I do to be saved?* And it is the *Spirit* that reveals and discovers *Christ Jesus* to him as the only and all-sufficient Saviour: 'Tis he who shows the convinced Sinner that there is Righteousness and Grace to be found in *Christ* to answer all his present Complaints and Necessities. The Word of the Gospel says these Things indeed, but 'tis like a *Dead Letter*, 'till the *Living Spirit* speaks them over again, and, as it were, constrains us to hear the Voice of Encouragement and Hope. 'Tis he represents the Death and Sufferings of the Son of God, as an effectual Atonement for Sin, and makes the Soul believe it, and teaches us how to lay hold on this Hope, to flee to this Refuge, to receive this Atonement: 'Tis the *Spirit of God* that softens the hardest Heart, and melts it into godly Sorrow: 'Tis he makes us willing to accept of *Jesus* as a Prince and a Saviour, to renew  
our



our sinful Natures, to refine our Hearts, and thereby to reform our Lives: 'Tis he that takes the *Blood of Christ*, and applies it to a distressed Conscience under the Guilt of Sin, and thus gives the disquieted Soul Rest and Peace: *He takes of the Things of Christ, and shows them unto us* in all their Glory and Sufficiency for our Salvation, and thereby justly obtains the Name of the *Paraclete*, that is, an Advocate for *Christ*, and a *Comforter* to us, *John* xiv. 26. and xv. 26. and xvi. 14, 15. He composes the Ruffles of the disturbed Mind, and speaks all the Waves of the Soul into a Calm: He makes all within us peaceful and easie, under the Apprehensions of Divine Forgiveness through the Merit of *Christ*.

'Tis only the *Spirit of God* that can make the Discoveries of Heaven in the Gospel effectual to awaken our Hope, and to raise our Joy: He shews us how 'tis purchas'd by the Blood of *Christ*, and that 'tis made sure to all those that believe: He stamps his own Holy Image upon us, and seals us up for the Inheritance of Heaven, *Ephes.* i. 13. *When ye heard the Word of Truth, the Gospel of your Salvation, and believed it, ye were then sealed with the Holy Spirit of Promise, which is the Earnest of our Inheritance.* The Spirit is sent into our Hearts as a *Spirit of Adoption*, whereby we call God *Father*, *Gal.* iv. 6. And he changes us from



Children of Wrath into the Sons and Daughters of the Living God ; and he himself dwelling in us is a Pledge *and Earnest of that Inheritance*, which is reserved for us *among the Saints in Light*.

'Tis the same *Blessed Spirit* that makes *the Gospel of Christ powerful to mortify Sin in us* ; for tho' the Words of the Gospel forbid all Iniquity, and require us to renounce the Lusts of the Flesh and the Vanities of the World, if we belong to *Christ* : yet 'tis *by the Spirit of God* alone that we are enabled *to mortify the Deeds of the Body*, that we may obtain *Eternal Life* : 'Tis he that makes the *Commands of Christ* come with *Divine Power and Authority* upon the Soul, and gives the *Motives of the Gospel Power* to persuade us : 'Tis he that renews our *Affections*, makes us hate *Sin*, and love *God supremely*, and causes us to delight in the *spiritual Pleasures of a future, unseen World*, which before we treated with *Contempt, or Disregard* : 'Tis *by the Sanctification of the Spirit, and the Belief of the Truth*, that we are prepar'd for the *heavenly Glory whereunto we are call'd by the Gospel*. *2 Thess. ii. 13*. And since the *Spirit of God* is promis'd to *dwell in us for ever*, *John xiv. 16, 17*. we have good Reason to believe he will be our *Eternal Sanctifier in Heaven*, and our *Eternal Comforter*.

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There is such a Thing as the *Influence of the Spirit of God* attending the *Gospel of Christ*. The Apostle argues thus with the *Galatian Christians*, *Received ye the Spirit by the Works of the Law, or by the bearing of Faith?* Gal. iii. 2. And 'tis the great Promise of the Gospel, or the New Covenant, that God would *send his Spirit* to make it powerful for the blessed Ends for which he has design'd it, *Ezech. xxxvi. 25, 26, 27. Joel ii. 28. Zach. xii. 10. Esa. xlv. 3.*

In the primitive Days of Christianity, and the Age of Miracles, the *Holy Spirit* attended the preaching of the Gospel with his extraordinary *Gifts of Tongues, of Healing, of Prophecy*, as well as with the *Graces of Conviction and Sanctification and Comfort*: And the Suddenness and the Glory of the Change that was wrought on Sinners carried with it an illustrious and uncontested Proof of the Presence and Power of God and his Spirit. Nor have some fainter Resemblances of such glorious Grace been altogether wanting in later Ages. There have been some most remarkable Instances of great Sinners converted at once by the *Gospel of Christ, and the Demonstration of the Spirit*.

But in his more usual and ordinary Communications of Grace he works so gently upon our Natures, and in so sweet and con-

natural a Way, as not to distinguish his Agency in a sensible manner from the Motions of our own Souls ; for he never disturbs our rational Powers, nor puts any Violence upon the natural Faculties ; yet when we are changed, when we are renewed, when Sin is mortified, the Scripture tells us, that 'tis the *Spirit of God* has done it : When our Souls are prepared for Heaven, and our corrupted Natures sanctified and suited to the Things that are prepared in Heaven for us, we are assur'd by the Word of God that the *Holy Spirit* has been the great Operator, and has wrought this Change in us.

Thus I have made it appear at large, How the *Gospel of Christ is the Power of God to Salvation*. I apply my self immediately to raise a few *Inferences* from the Subject I have been treating of.

#### I N F E R E N C E S.

I. INF. *How unreasonable are all the Reproaches that are cast upon this Gospel! A Gospel that saves Mankind from Misery, and from Sin, and eternal Death! A Gospel that teaches Men how to appear before a Holy and Terrible God with Comfort, tho' their Sins are many, and their Righteousnesses are imperfect! A Gospel that gives the Hope of Pardon to Criminals*  
and

and Rebels, and the Hope of Heaven to undeserving Creatures ! And all this upon such solid Grounds and Foundations, as justifies its highest Promises and Proposals to the Reason of Men ! 'Tis a Gospel that changes our sinful Natures into Holiness, and reforms our Hearts as well as Lives ! A Gospel that, aided by Divine Power, creates Souls anew, and raises Dead Sinners to Life ! 'Tis a Gospel that turns Wolves into Lambs, and makes ravenous Vulturs meek as Doves ! A Gospel that so disturbs the Kingdom of *Satan*, as to take thousands of Slaves and Captives out of his Dominions, to transfer them into the glorious Kingdom of *Christ*, and make them chearful and willing Subjects ! A Gospel that fulfils gloriously the first Promise, and makes it appear, that *the Seed of the Woman* hath broke the *Serpent's Head*, and destroy'd the Works of the Devil. You have never seen, you have never known, you have never learn'd this Gospel aright, if you have not felt it to be *the Power of God unto Salvation*. Those that can speak Evil of this Gospel, it may be universally said concerning them, *They speak Evil of the Things they know not* ; for if they had known this Gospel as they ought to know it, they would have seen it all over glorious and divine ; they would have felt it to be attended with divine *Power to their*



vation, and then they would never speak Evil of it.

¶ The *Heathen World* may be ashamed of their Doctrines and their Religion; the *Heathen Worshipers* may be ashamed of their Sacrifices, their Superstitions, and their Forms of Devotion; for they have no Power to save their Souls: And many of them were indeed brutish and shameful. *Mahomet*, the Founder of the *Turkish Religion*, may be ashamed of his *Alcoran*, a Volume of Fables and incredible Lies; all his Followers may be ashamed of their Prophet, and of the sensual Paradise that he promises them. The *Jews* under the Eye of *Christ*, and the Sun-beams of the Gospel, may be ashamed of the vain Traditions of their *Rabbins*, which were never Divine; and even of the old Rites and Ceremonies which *Moses* gave them; for all these are now but *weak and beggarly Elements*; the Spirit of God calls them so, *Gal. iv. 9*. They have now no Power to save Souls, since God hath abolish'd them; nor indeed had they ever any Power but what they borrow'd from this *Gospel of Christ*, which lay conceal'd in them: But let none of us that believe and profess the Gospel of Christ, be ever ashamed of any of the Doctrines, or Precepts, or Promises of it; for they are all holy, they are all heavenly; all of them have Divine Power

Power accompanying them to lead Souls to Salvation. ¶

II. INF. *Learn hence the true Method of obtaining Christian Courage ; Courage to profess the Gospel of Christ against all Opposition ; It is by getting it wrought into your Hearts and Lives by Christian Experience, and not by learning a mere Form of Words in a Road of Education and Catechism. You must feel it as the Power of God to your Salvation, or you will never suffer much for it. Let it be an ingrafted Word able to save your Souls, Jam. i. 21. and then it will harden your Faces against all blaspheming Adversaries, and the Terrors of a persecuting World ; then you will be able to render a most powerful Reason why you are bold to profess this Gospel, and to answer every One that asks you a Reason of the Hope that is in you ; you will be able to oppose those that set themselves against the Gospel of Christ, when you feel this Divine Spring of Courage within you.*

I have encouraged you before, to acquaint your selves with Reasons and Arguments that may defend your Religion, and support your Faith : But Hours of Temptation may come, when all the Knowledge and learned Furniture of your Head, all the Arguments that are treasur'd up in your Memory, and all the Reasonings that

your Invention can supply you with, will hardly be able to keep your Faith and Hope firm and steadfast; for *Satan* goes before you in Skill and rational Argument; and tho' your Arguments are strong and solid, yet he may baffle you by his hellish Sophistry, and thus cheat you of your Faith, and your Hope, and your Heaven; if you have not got this Gospel wrought into your Hearts with Power, if you have not felt it to be the *Power of God unto Salvation*.

Hence it comes to pass, that in Times of great Temptation and Persecution there are many fall away, as the *Leaves of a Tree in the Blasts of Autumn*, when but here and there one stands and endures the Shock: It is because there are so few of the Professors of the Gospel have felt it to be the *Power of God* to the Conversion of their Souls, and turning their Hearts to God and Heaven.

And hence it comes to pass also, that several unlearned Christians in all Ages, that could *not argue much for the Faith* in a rational Way, yet could *dare to die for it*, because they had this Argument wrought in their own Souls; they had felt a Divine Power going along with it to change their Natures, to make them new Creatures, to give them the Hope of Heaven, and a Preparation for it.

III. INF. From what you have heard of this Subject *learn the wide Extent of this Argument for the Defense of the Gospel of Christ, and the invaluable Worth of it to every Christian (viz.)* that the Gospel is the Power of God to your Salvation.

It is an Argument of *wide Extent*; for it *belongs to every Christian, to the Wise and to the Unwise, to the Weak and the Strong*; there is no sincere Christian, no true Believer in *Christ*, but hath got the Foundation of this Argument wrought within him: He knows this Gospel is Divine, and he should not be ashamed to believe and profess it; for he hath felt it support his Soul under a Sense of Guilt, and give him solid Hope of pardoning Grace: He hath found it change his sinful Nature, soften his Heart into Repentance, and turn him from a Sinner into a Saint; it hath laid the Foundation of Eternal Life within him.

And as it is an Argument that belongs to every true Christian; so *it answers every Objection that an Infidel can bring against the Gospel, either from the Doctrines, or from the Professors of it*: And methinks, I would fain have you all furnished with this glorious Argument, and learn to manage it for the Defense of your Faith.



Do they tell you that the Doctrines of the Gospel *contain Mysteries* in them, and Things that are *unsearchable*? Do they endeavour to put you out of Countenance by ridiculing the Truths of Christianity, as being *contrary to the common Opinions and Reasonings of Men*? Do they reproach them as *foolish and unreasonable*, and do they endeavour to persuade you that they are *not sufficiently attested*, and there is not Ground enough to give Credit to them? Though there have been particular Answers given to each of these Cavils in the first Discourse; yet you may give this *general and short Reply* to all of them, and say, “ I am sure they are not contrary to  
 “ Reason; for they are Divine. They  
 “ are not incredible, nor do they want  
 “ sufficient Evidence; for God himself by  
 “ his own Spirit has born Witness to them  
 “ in my Heart: He has wrought an ‘Al-  
 “ mighty Work there by the Means of  
 “ this Gospel: He has created me anew  
 “ unto Faith, and Hope, and Holiness:  
 “ He has turned my Heart from Earth to  
 “ Heaven, and subdued the sinful Inclinations of my Nature by the Precepts,  
 “ by the Promises, by the glorious Discoveries of this Gospel: He has made use  
 “ of it to save my Soul; and I carry about  
 “ me an uncontrollable Proof that it came  
 “ from Heaven.” Now though this sort  
 of

of Argument may have but little Force in it sometimes for the Conviction of the *In-fidel*; yet it is of sufficient Force to establish the *Believer*.

But I proceed. Do they fill your Ears with the *mean* and *contemptible* Character of the Professors of this Gospel? Do they charge many of them with *vicious Practices*? Do they tell you of *their different Opinions, their Contests and their Quarrels*? And do they discourage you by pointing to the *Apostates that have forsaken the Faith*? You may defend your self and your Profession against all these Objections by the same *General Argument* thus; “Are the  
 “ Professors of it some of the *mean and*  
 “ *base* Things of this World? But they  
 “ are *Saints*, and this Gospel has made  
 “ them so; they are the Sons and Daugh-  
 “ ters of the Most high God by Faith in  
 “ this Gospel; and I will not be ashamed  
 “ to reckon my self of their Society, and  
 “ to number my self amongst them. Are  
 “ there many that are called *Christians*,  
 “ whose *Lives are vicious*? Surely, they  
 “ never knew this Gospel in Truth; they  
 “ are but false Professors of it. There are  
 “ Thousands that can bear this Witness to  
 “ the Gospel, that it has chang’d their  
 “ Hearts; it has renewed their Natures;  
 “ it has made them hate every Vice, and  
 “ their Lives shine amongst Men *glorious*

“ *in Holiness, and resembling God himself.*  
 “ *Are the Sentiments of some of them dif-*  
 “ *ferent from others? ’Tis chiefly in Points*  
 “ *of lesser Importance ; but the substan-*  
 “ *tial Truths of it, which are the Power*  
 “ *of God to Salvation, are profess’d and*  
 “ *acknowledg’d by us all. And though a*  
 “ *Thousand should forsake this Gospel, and*  
 “ *become Apostates, yet I can never part*  
 “ *with it, while I feel the Blessed Effects*  
 “ *of it abiding upon my Heart, and I*  
 “ *trust thro’ the Grace of God they shall*  
 “ *abide for ever.”*

This leads me to the last *Inference.*

IV. INF. *What strong Engagements is*  
*every true Christian under to maintain the*  
*Profession of this Gospel? Not only is he*  
*laid under many Obligations from the Com-*  
*mands of God, and the Bonds of Duty,*  
*and Gratitude, and Love, but he has a*  
*constant pressing Obligation within him.*  
 “ *How can I be ashamed of my Hope,*  
 “ *my Portion, my Everlasting all? Shall*  
 “ *I be ashamed of that Gospel, upon which*  
 “ *my Salvation is founded, and my best*  
 “ *and highest Interest, even my Expecta-*  
 “ *tions of endless Felicity? If I let go this*  
 “ *Faith, if I loose my Hold of this Gos-*  
 “ *pel, I let go my Hold of Christ, of*  
 “ *God, and his Love ; I let go my Hold*  
 “ *of Heaven and all my Happiness: My*  
 “ *Sins*

“ Sins all return upon me with their un-  
“ sufferable Loads of Guilt and Anguish  
“ of Conscience, if I lose my Faith in this  
“ Gospel ; for all my Hope of Pardon is  
“ built on this Foundation : Heaven with  
“ all the Joys of it vanish from my Soul,  
“ if I part with this glorious Gospel of  
“ *Christ* ; and Death and Hell face me with  
“ all their Terrors.

There is an awful and solemn Motive deriv'd from the great Judgment-Day to maintain the Profession of this glorious Gospel ; for our Lord himself has pronounc'd this Threatning, and he will fulfil it, *Who-soever shall be asham'd of me and of my Words amongst a sinful Generation of Men, I will also be asham'd of him before my Father and his Holy Angels.* But this Text shall be the Subject of some future Discourses.







## S E R M O N I V.

Faith the Way to Salvation.

R O M. i. 16.

— *The Gospel of Christ, --- it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that Believeth, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*



*S*ALVATION is a frequent and familiar Word in the Mouth of all who call themselves *Christians*. It is a sort of *Asseveration* or *Oath* among the looser and meaner part of Mankind; *As I hope to be sav'd*. But little do they know what *Salvation* means. All the Notion they have of it is  
this,

this, that they would be *saved from going down to Hell, a Place of Fire and Torment, and that they would go up to Heaven when they die, to some fine unknown shining Place above the Skies, where they shall be free from all Pain and Uneasiness.* This is the utmost Point to which their Idea reaches, and I think I have hit their Sense exactly in this Description. Alas ! Poor ignorant Creatures ! They have no Thought of being saved from Sin, of having their Hearts made holy, their sinful Inclinations rectified, their Passions subdued or refined, their Love turn'd toward God and Things spiritual, and their Desire and Delight fixed upon Things Divine and Holy, instead of their sensual Entertainments of Flesh and Blood. They have no Concern about the Pardon of the Guilt of Sin, and Restoration to the Favour or Image of God, and not so much as a Wish for the Joys that arise from his Love, or from the Blessed Presence of our Lord *Jesus Christ* in the World to come.

I have shewn you therefore in the foregoing Discourse *what this Salvation is,* and made it appear that the *Gospel is the Power of God to Salvation ;* that is, it is a powerful Means in the Hand of the Spirit of God to save us from the Guilt of Sin, and to give us a Right to Heaven ; to save us from the Power of Sin, to fit us for the

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Business and the Joys of Heaven, and ensure to us the actual Possession of it.

There are two Things yet remain to be consider'd in discoursing on this Subject.

I. *The Place or Influence that Faith, or Believing, hath in this Salvation*; for the Gospel provides this Blessing only for Believers. It is called the *Power of God to Salvation to every one who believes*.

II. *The wide Extent of this glorious Benefit*: It belongs to every one that believes, whether *Greek, or Jew*.

I shall treat of each of these particularly.

*First*. Since the Gospel is the Power of God to the Salvation of them that believe, let us enquire, *What Place or Influence has our Faith in this sacred Concernment?*

To answer this, we may consider *Faith in its various Acts or Degrees of Exercise*, as it begins in *Assent*, as it proceeds to *Assurance*, and as it is compleated in *Assurance*; and shew what Influence each of them hath in the Work of Salvation.

I. *An Assent to the Truths of the Gospel* must begin the Work of Salvation in us: There must be a Belief and inward Conviction of our sinful and dangerous State, which

is more clearly reveal'd under the Gospel, and that there is an Atonement made for Sin by the Blood of *Christ*: We must believe, that there is Forgiveness to be found with God for the sake of this Atonement; and that there is Grace enough in our Lord *Jesus Christ*, to renew our sinful Natures, and to fit us for Heaven. This usually begets in the Sinner who is truly awaken'd some Desire toward this Salvation, and some distant Hope of attaining it. When the poor perishing Creature believes and beholds the glorious Influence of the Death and Righteousness of *Christ* to justify a Sinner in the Sight of God; when he surveys the Love, the Wisdom, the Grace and the Power of *Christ*, answerable to all his Wants, he then comes to determine thus with himself, "This  
 " Salvation is glorious and desirable; the  
 " Methods propos'd, even for my own  
 " Attainment of it, are practicable and sufficient, and why should not I apply my  
 " self to this Saviour, and seek this unspeakable Happiness?"

2. *Affiance or Trust in Jesus Christ the Saviour* is the next Degree of *Faith*. When we are willing to be deliver'd from the condemning Guilt of Sin, and from the defiling Power of it, and have seen an All-sufficiency of Atonement, Grace and Power in *Christ*, then we commit our Souls in-

to



to the Hands of *Jesus* the Mediator for this blessed Purpose, and make a solemn Surrender of our whole selves unto his Charge and Care, that we may be pardon'd for the Sake of his Death, that we may be accepted of God thro' his Righteousness, that we may be sanctified and made holy by his Grace and Spirit, and that we may be fitted for and preserved to his heavenly Kingdom. We reflect upon our past Iniquities, and mourn to think that we have been Rebels so long; we are ashamed and griev'd for our Rebellions, and we now most earnestly desire to be made willing Subjects to his holy Government; and therefore we entrust our Souls with him, and beg that he would take us under his Care for this End, and bring us into the Father's Presence with Comfort and Joy. This is the Soul's *Coming to God by Jesus Christ*.

Now such an *Act of Faith*, as this is, has some sensible Tendency to promote the Peace of a distressed Conscience, the Sanctification of a sinful Nature, the solid Hope of Heaven, and a Preparation for it. But still it must be acknowledg'd, that its Original and chief Influence arises from Divine Appointment. The Gospel is the *Power of God to Salvation*, and 'tis by Divine Promise and Power that Faith saves the Soul. Such a *Faith, or Trust in Christ*,  
has

has all the Promises of Gospel-Blessings belonging to it. God has appointed in his Word, and 'tis the standing Rule of the Gospel, *He that believes shall be saved,* Mark xvi. 15, 16.

All the Parts of Salvation come by Faith: *Justification*, and Favour in the Sight of God, *Rom. v. 1. Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God. Adoption* comes also by Faith, *Gal. iii. 26. Ye are the Children of God by Faith in Christ Jesus. Sanctification* is ascribed to the same Principle, *Act. xv. 19. The Gentiles had their Hearts purified from Sin by Faith. Joy and Hope* come in this Way also, *Rom. xv. 13. The God of Hope fill you with all Joy and Peace in believing, that ye may abound in Hope thro' the Power of the Holy Ghost.* And you may read several of these Benefits of the Gospel, these Divine Ingredients of our Salvation put together, and all attributed to Faith, *Act. xxvi. 18. I send thee now to the Gentiles, saith the Lord Jesus to St. Paul, to open their Eyes, to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God, that they may receive Forgiveness of Sins and Inheritance among them which are sanctified, by Faith that is in me.*

*Faith* or *Affiance in Jesus Christ* is an Acceptance of this Salvation, 'tis a Trust in the offer'd Grace, 'tis a Dependence on

the Promises of the Gospel confirm'd by *Christ*, 'tis the Surrender of a sinful Soul to *Jesus* the Saviour to perform his whole Work of Grace for him and to him ; and thereby the believing Sinner, according to the Appointment of God in his Gospel, partakes of all the Benefits that are treasur'd up in *Christ*.

Faith in the Gospel relieves the distressed Soul under a Sense of the Guilt of Sin, and the humble weary Sinner finds Mercy to forgive, and Strength to subdue it. Faith appropriates and applies the *Blood of Christ*, that sovereign Medicine, to the Wounds of a guilty Conscience, and the Conscience finds Ease and Refreshment. It applies *the Grace of Christ*, that powerful Antidote, to expel the Venom of in-dwelling Sin, and the Soul is heal'd in some measure, and the Poison is expell'd. It lays hold on the Power of *Christ* to assist in the Performance of every Duty, and it obtains divine Assistance. Every True Believer has experienced something of these Benefits by a sincere Surrender of himself to *Christ* in such a Way of Trust and holy Dependence.

Can the thirsty Soul taste of the running Water, and not find Refreshment, since God, who created Water, has ordain'd it to refresh the Thirsty ? Can weary Limbs lie down on a Bed, and not find Ease, since

a Bed is made to give Ease and Rest to the Weary? Can a fainting Creature drink a Divine Cordial appointed to give Life, and yet feel no Revival? No more can a guilty, distressed, and penitent Sinner believe the Truths of the Gospel, and trust in *Jesus the Saviour*, and yet find no Relief; for this is the Will and settled Law of the God of Heaven, that Peace and Holiness shall be obtain'd this Way.

3. When *Faith* grows up to *Assurance*, it approaches toward compleat Salvation. Then the Christian can say, “*I know I have believed on the Son of God, I know I enjoy his Favour.*” Then the Holiness and the Joy increase, for the Salvation enters into the Soul in fuller Measures: The nearer Faith arises to Assurance of our own Interest in the Grace of *Christ*, the more it supports the Soul, the more it comforts, the more it sanctifies, and the more evidently doth the *Gospel* appear to be divinely powerful to save us from Sin and Hell.

“Can I believe God has pardon'd me,  
 “so vile a Rebel, and forgiven me so many  
 “and aggravated Offences, and yet is  
 “it possible I should not love him, and  
 “rejoice? Can I be assur'd he loves me,  
 “and not make him a Return of my highest  
 “and warmest Love? Can I believe  
 “that *Christ the Son of God* died for me,  
 “and



“ and shall I not consecrate my self and  
 “ all the Powers of my Nature to him,  
 “ that I may live devoted to his Service ?  
 “ He has *bought me with a Price*, a dear  
 “ and valuable Price, that of his own  
 “ Blood, and I must *glorify him with my*  
 “ *Body, and with my Soul, which are his,*  
 “ 1 Cor. vi. 20. Can I believe that I am  
 “ redeem’d from Hell and Destruction,  
 “ and shall I dare to walk in the Road  
 “ that leads to it ? And not rather *run*  
 “ *with Patience and Joy the Race that is*  
 “ *set before me,* ’till I arrive at the Gates  
 “ of Heaven ? Am I assur’d that *Jesus* the  
 “ Beloved of God suffer’d Death for my  
 “ Sins, and shall I not hate Sin, which  
 “ caus’d his Suffering ? Sin, which was  
 “ the Occasion of his Agonies, and the  
 “ very Sting of his Sorrows ! *I am cruci-*  
 “ *fied* and dead to Sin and *to this World*  
 “ by my Union with a crucified Saviour ;  
 “ yet *I live*, saith the Divine Apostle, and  
 “ *the Life that I now live in the Flesh I live*  
 “ *by the Faith of the Son of God, who hath*  
 “ *loved me, and gave himself for me,* Gal.  
 “ ii. 20. How is it possible that I should  
 “ hope to be made like *Christ* in Glory,  
 “ with a full Assurance of arriving thi-  
 “ ther, and not *purify my self as he is pure ?*  
 “ 1 *John* iii. 2, 3. While I believe and am  
 “ persuaded, that the Promise of the Joys  
 “ of Heaven shall be fulfilled to me, I  
 “ would

“ would awaken my self hourly to the joyful Prospect, and be ever preparing for the Possession of that Blessedness.

Thus when Faith rises to a sublime and eminent Degree in this World, the Believer may be said *to rejoice with Joy unspeakable, and full of Glory, and to receive the End of his Faith, even the Salvation of his Soul,* 1 Pet. i. 8, 9.

Before I pass to the *second Head*, I desire leave to make these few *Remarks*.

REMARK I. *Though the first Degree of Faith or Assent to the Gospel be necessary to Salvation, yet it is not of it self sufficient; and tho' the last Degree of Faith or Assurance be gloriously useful in this Work, yet it is not absolutely necessary.*

*A mere Assent to the Truths of the Gospel is not sufficient to save; for there are many who by the Force of Education, or by the Force of Argument, yield their Assent to the Doctrine, and believe it to be true, yet it is a cold, feeble, languid Assent; it begins and ends in the Head, and never reaches the Heart; it does not awaken them throughly, nor make them long after the Pardon and the Grace promised: They seem to sit still contented with the Forms of their Catechism, and a general Belief of the Christian Religion, so far as they know it; but are under no painful*  
F
Solicitude

Solicitude, or Concern of Soul about the Forgiveness of their Sins, the Sanctification of their Natures, their Interest in the Favour of God and eternal Happiness; and therefore they proceed no farther, they never heartily apply themselves to *Jesus Christ* the only Saviour, and they fall short of the Blessing. The *Devils* believe as much as they do, but are in a State of *Damnation* still.

Again, consider that a *full Assurance* of our own Interest in the Favour of God thro' *Jesus Christ* is the highest Degree of Attainment on Earth; but 'tis not necessary to the Being of Christianity, nor doth it belong to every Christian. 'Tis true indeed, that every one ought to seek after it by the frequent Exercise of Faith and Love, and every Grace, thus brightning the Evidences of his saving Interest in the Blessings of the Gospel daily; and where Assurance is obtain'd upon solid Grounds, Holiness and Joy will rise by swift Degrees, and the Soul will make glorious Advances towards the heavenly State and compleat Salvation: But some Christians scarce ever arrive at this Attainment all their Days.

Since therefore a *meer Assent* to the Gospel in general is not sufficient for Salvation, and a *full Assurance* of our own Interest is not necessary, it follows, that an *Assiance* or *Trust* in *Christ* as a Saviour is the most  
essential

*esseneial and important Act of Faith.* This is that sacred and appointed Duty of a convinced Soul, whereby 'tis made Partaker of the Blessings of Salvation according to the Gospel, if it be practised in the Way which I have just before described.

REMARK II. *Take notice here of the Difference between the Law and the Gospel, between the Covenant of Works and the Covenant of Grace.* The one gives us Life upon our *Working*, the other saves us from Death, and gives us a Right to Heaven upon our *Believing*. Therefore one is call'd, *The Law of Works*, and the other *The Law of Faith*, Rom. iii. 27.

It is proper here to observe that the Scripture sometimes speaks of *two Covenants*; the *Old* and the *New*; and means chiefly the Oeconomy or Dispensation of the *Jews* under *Moses*, and the Oeconomy of *Christ*, or the Dispensation of the Gospel since the *Messiah* came. But by the *two Covenants* I now speak of, I would be understood to mean *the Law or Constitution of Innocency*, and the *Constitution of Grace*.

By the Constitution, or Law of Innocency, Man was to have obtain'd eternal Life before his Fall; and as this Law or Covenant was given to *Adam* as the Head and Representative of all Mankind, so



every Son and Daughter of *Adam* continues under it, 'till they accept of the Covenant of Grace, or the Offers of the Gospel, either in the darker or brighter Discoveries of it: And therefore all Mankind, *Jews* and *Gentiles*, are laid under Condemnation by it in the Writings of *Saint Paul*, in the second and third Chapters to the *Romans*. By this Law of Works every Mouth is stopped, and the whole World is become guilty before God, Rom. iii. 19. Tho' the Nations of the *Jews* and *Christians*, and perhaps the greatest Part of the *Heathen World* have had some Revelations of the Gospel or Covenant of Grace, and have been under the outward Offers of it, yet *Jews*, *Heathens*, and national *Christians*, are all under the Sentence of the Covenant or Law of Works, 'till they enter into the Covenant of Grace by Repentance and Faith in the Mercy of God.

But the *Covenant of Grace*, or the Gospel, is a New Constitution, which God hath ordained for the Relief of poor fallen miserable Man, condemned and perishing under the Curse of the Law of Works. 'Tis a *Constitution of Grace*, whereby alone fallen Sinners can obtain Salvation.

*The Law of Works* demands universal Obedience to all the Commands of God, Obedience perfect and persevering; for  
this

this is the Language of it ; *The Man that doth them shall live in them*, Rom. x. 5. and it curses every Sinner without Hope or Remedy ; *Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things that are written in the Book of the Law to do them*, Gal. iii. 10, 12. But the Voice of the Gospel, *the Righteousness of Faith*, or the Way of Justification by Christ, speaketh on this wise, *With the Heart Man believeth unto Righteousness, and with the Mouth Confession is made unto Salvation ; for the Just shall live by Faith*, Rom. x. 10. Gal. iii. 11. The one proclaims *Eternal Life* to all that perfectly obey, the other publishes *Salvation* to all that believe, tho' their Obedience be very imperfect.

¶ I grant indeed, that the Apostle cites these Descriptions of the *Law of Works* out of the Books of *Moses*, and therefore some Persons would suppose him only to mean *the particular Law given to the Jews at Mount Sinai*, and not the *general Covenant of Works* made with *Adam*, and with all Mankind in him.

But to this I give these two Answers.

1. *Answ.* *The Law of Works*, which the Apostle speaks of in the Epistle to the *Romans*, particularly in the second and third Chapters, cannot signify merely the *Jewish Law* ; for it is such a *Law* as includes

all the *Heathen World*, as appears plain, *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* and by which the *Heathens* as well as the *Jews* were condemned, and could never be justified, *Rom. iii. 20.* *By the Deeds of the Law shall no Flesh be justified in his Sight, for by the Law is the Knowledge of Sin*; therefore this must be a Law that extended to all Mankind, since it stops every Mouth, and proclaims the whole World guilty before God.

2. *Answ.* The Law given to the *Jews*, or the *Covenant of Sinai*, so far as it is purely *Political*, was indeed a *Covenant of Works*; and their Continuance in, or Rejection out of the Land of *Canaan* depended upon their own Works, their Obedience or Disobedience to this *Law*, as is often expressed in the Writings of *Moses*: And upon this Account 'tis used sometimes by the Apostle as a very proper Emblem or Representative of the *Covenant of Works* made with our first Father *Adam*, who was to have enjoyed or forfeited some earthly or heavenly Paradise according to his Obedience or Disobedience. It is plain then, that though *St. Paul* may cite the *Law of Moses* to shew the Nature of a *Law of Works* in general, yet it does not follow that he means only the *Law* or *Covenant of Sinai*; and 'tis as plain, by his including the *Gentiles* under it, that he does

does not mean the *Law of Sinai*, but the *Original Law or Covenant of Works* made with all Mankind in *Adam* their Father and their Head, and of which the *Law of Sinai* was a proper Emblem or Figure.

All *Laws of Works* therefore are insufficient for the Salvation of sinful Man, and his Restoration to God's Favour and Image, and Eternal Life. The *Law of Sinai* was a *Law of Works*, promising an *Earthly Canaan* to the Obedient *Jews*. The *Law of Innocency in Eden* was a *Law of Works*, promising Life and Immortality to Obedient *Mankind*. But they have been both wretchedly Broken; *Man* was turn'd out of *Paradise*, and the *Jews* out of *Canaan* because of Disobedience. But now the Gospel, whereby the *Jews* or *Gentiles* are to be saved, or to obtain Eternal Life, requires *Faith in the Mercy and Promises of God in and through Jesus Christ*; and by this Means it saves us, though our Obedience be far short of Perfection. This was the Way whereby the *Jews* themselves were saved under the Old Testament; for the Gospel was preached to them as well as unto us; *Heb. iv. 2.* tho' it was in darker Hints, and Types, and Figures. And in this Way were *Abraham* and *David* justified, as the Apostle teaches, *Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5, 6.*



Tho' the *Jews* Enjoyment of the Land of *Canaan* depended on their good Works and Obedience to the *Law of Moses*, yet their Hope and Enjoyment of Heaven depended on their Faith or Trust in the Mercy of God, which was to be farther revealed in the Days of the *Messiah*. And it is the same Gospel by which we are to obtain Salvation, since *Christ is come in the Flesh*; but with this Difference, that we are now more expressly requir'd to make *Jesus Christ* the Object of our Faith, and we have a thousand clearer Discoveries of his Righteousness and Grace than ever the *Jews* were favour'd with. ¶

Happy Mankind! tho' fallen and ruin'd in *Adam*, yet recover'd and rais'd to Righteousness, Grace and Glory by *Jesus Christ*. How dreadful is that Law which pronounces a Curse and Death upon every Transgressor! *Tribulation and Wrath, Indignation and Anguish upon every Soul that doth Evil, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile, Rom. ii. 9.* But how sweet and reviving is the Grace of that Gospel, which becomes *the Power of God to the Salvation of every one that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek!*

The Great and Blessed God saw the Frailty of his Creature Man, how ready he was to ruin himself under a *Law of Works*; therefore he has appointed his Recovery

covery by a *Law of Faith*. And *what the Law could not do, in that it was weak thro' the Infirmity of our Flesh, that he has sent his own Son Jesus Christ in the Likeness of sinful Flesh, to do for us, to fulfil all the Demands of the Law both in the Penalty and the Precept, to finish Transgression, to make an End of Sin by his own Sufferings, and to bring in an everlasting Righteousness, that whosoever believes on him should be saved.* Blessed God! How kind and condescending are thy Ways to the Children of Men! How full of Compassion to Rebels, who had destroyed themselves! How gentle are the Methods of thy recovering Mercy! If we will but confess our Sins, mourn over our own Follies, return to the Lord our God by humble Repentance, and put our Trust in an Almighty Saviour, there is Peace and Pardon, there is Grace, and Life, and Glory provided for us, and laid up in the Hands of *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

REMARK III. *Tho' the Gospel offers us Salvation by Faith and not by Works, yet it effectually secures the Practice of Holiness, since Holiness is a Part of that Salvation.* We are saved from Sin as well as from Hell by this Gospel; and we must have our Souls prepar'd for Heaven, as well as brought to the Possession of it. He that pre-

tends to trust in *Christ* for a Deliverance from Hell, and has no Desire to be made Holy, he has no Desire after such a Salvation as *Christ* proposes in his Gospel, nor is he like to attain it.

We must be sensible then of the Corruption of our Natures, the Perverseness of our Wills, the Vanity of our Minds, the Earthliness of our Affections, our Inability to do that which is Good for Time to come, as well as our Guilt, Condemnation and Misery, because of our Transgressions past : We must desire that a thorough Work of Repentance may be wrought in our Hearts, that the Power and Reign of Sin may be broken there, and that we may become new Creatures as well as desire to escape the Wrath of God, and Hell, and Eternal Death, if ever we would be Partakers of that Salvation which the Gospel proposes. *Christ* will not divide one Part of his Salvation from the other : And in vain do we presume to trust in him for Happiness, if we are not willing to be made Holy too.

How false and unreasonable are all the Reproaches that are cast upon the *Doctrine of Salvation by Faith*, as though it tended to promote Looseness of Life, and to indulge Iniquity ; when *that very Salvation* includes in it a Freedom from the Power of Sin, and a Delight in all that is Holy ?  
This

This is the very Character of *Christ* our Saviour, and the Reason of his Name *Jesus*, that *he shall save his People from their Sins*, Matth. i. 21. If we are *deliver'd by Christ*, 'tis from this present wicked World, Gal. i. 4. If we are *redeemed*, 'tis from all *Iniquity*, that we might be a peculiar People purified to himself, zealous of Good Works. Tit. ii. 14.

REMARK IV. Tho' the *Gospel* is such a glorious Doctrine of Grace, that there is no Reason to be ashamed of it, yet since it saves us by *Faith*, and not by *Works*, there is no Reason for us to boast when we are saved. We may glory indeed in the *Cross of Christ*, and make our Boast in the *Redeemer* all the Day long; but the *Gospel* for ever cuts of all Ground of *boasting in ourselves*. Here the Justice and Mercy of God shine forth gloriously; here the *Righteousness of God is declared*, Sinners find *Remission or Pardon*, God is just and a *Justifier of him who believeth in Jesus*. Where is *boasting then*? It is excluded. By what *Law*? Of *Works*? Nay; but by the *Law of Faith*. Rom. iii. 25, 26, 27. By *Grace ye are saved through Faith*, and that not of your selves, it is the Gift of God; Not of *Works*, lest any Man should boast. Eph. ii. 8, 9.



The Gospel concurs with the Law in this Respect, that it shows us our own Guilt and Vileness, our Ruin and our Impotence to restore ourselves, and therefore it has put all our Help upon another. God has *laid our Help upon one that is mighty to save*, Psal. lxxxix. 19. and he has ordain'd that the Way whereby we should derive this Salvation, is by renouncing all Dependence upon Self, and trusting in *Christ* and Grace for all that we enjoy and hope for. *This is the Business of Faith*; this is the very Nature of that Christian Virtue, to disclaim all Self-sufficiency, and receive all from mere Mercy; and therefore it is appointed to be the Means of our Justification under the Gospel; therefore it is said so often in Scripture, that *we are justified by Faith*, that Divine Grace may have all the Glory, Rom. iv. 16. *Therefore it is of Faith, that it might be of Grace*. We are ignorant and foolish, and must derive *Wisdom* from *Christ*: We are guilty, and must receive *Righteousness* from him: We are unholy, he is the Spring of our *Sanctification*: We are Captives and Slaves to Sin and Satan, and we must have *Redemption* from him: *He is made of God to us Wisdom, Righteousness, Sanctification, and Redemption, that no Flesh might glory in his Presence; but he that glories must glory in the Lord.* 1 Cor. i. 29, 30.

†

Man,

Man, innocent Man, had Power and Righteousness, and Life put into his own Hands ; but the *first Adam* grew vain in his Self-sufficiency, and he foolishly sinned, and lost it all : Therefore God, in order to our Recovery, would put Power, and Righteousness, and Life into the Hands of another, even his own Son, *the second Adam*, that we might go out of our selves, and seek it all from another Hand. Now *Faith*, or *Trust*, is the proper Act of the Soul to express our own Emptiness, and our Dependence on another for all.

*This is the Language of Faith,* “ Lord,  
“ I am a sinful and guilty Creature ; I  
“ have no Righteousness, no Merit, to  
“ recommend me to thy Favour ; I have  
“ no Power to change my unholy Nature,  
“ and rectify the criminal Disorders of  
“ my Soul ; I am unable to subdue the  
“ Sins that dwell in me, or to practise the  
“ requir’d Duties of Holiness ; I deserve  
“ Condemnation and Death, and I am by  
“ Nature walking in the Way to Hell ;  
“ helpless and hopeless for ever in my self,  
“ but in thy rich Grace is all my Hope :  
“ I rejoice in the Discoveries of thy Mer-  
“ cy ; I come at the Call of thy Gospel,  
“ upon the bending Knees of my Soul I  
“ accept of the Proposals of thy Grace ;  
“ I give up my self to thy Power and  
“ Mer-

“ Mercy, as ’tis reveal’d in *Jesus Christ*,  
 “ thy Son, that I may be saved from Sin  
 “ and Hell. To me belongs nothing but  
 “ Shame and Confusion of Face: I re-  
 “ nounce for ever all Self-sufficiency, and  
 “ if ever I am sav’d, thy Grace shall have  
 “ all the Glory. ” Now when a poor  
 humbled Sinner is brought thus far, and re-  
 ceives the Salvation of God in this lowly  
 Posture of Soul, the Great God has ob-  
 tain’d a good Part of his Designs in the  
 Gospel upon him; *Self* is humbled, *Grace*  
 is glorified, and the *Sinner* is sav’d by  
*Faith*.

REMARK V. *Heaven is made up  
 of Believers.* The whole Number of the  
 Saved were once Sinners, and obtained  
 Salvation by Faith.

The holy Angels indeed never sinned,  
 and yet whether their confirmed State of  
 Holiness and Glory is not secured to them  
 by *Trust* or Dependence on *Christ*, may be  
 a reasonable Enquiry; for *all Things in  
 Heaven and Earth* are said to be gather’d to-  
 gether, and reconciled in him, Ephes. i. 10.  
 Col. i. 20. But this we are sure of, that  
 not one of all the Race of *Adam* hath  
 been restored to the Love of God, or rai-  
 sed to Heaven, by their own *Works*, but  
 all by *Faith*. ’Tis sovereign and glorious  
 Grace that has saved them all, and that by  
 the

the Gospel too, in the various Editions of it, from the first Promise in *Eden* 'till the full Discovery of Grace at the Days of *Pentecost* after the Ascension of *Christ*.

O 'tis a pleasing Entertainment of Soul to send our Thoughts forward to the last great Day, or to send them upward to the Courts of Heaven and Glory, and to hear how the Millions of redeemed Sinners shout and sing to the Honour of *Divine Grace* ! How all that happy World of Believers assist the Melody, and dwell upon the delightful Sound. “ Not unto us, O *God our Father*, not unto us, but to thine own Name, and to thy Mercy be all our Honours paid through the Ages of Eternity. We were a Race of guilty and perishing Rebels, who had sinned against thy Majesty, and ruin'd our own Souls : We lay upon the Borders of Death and Hell without Help, and without Hope : We could do nothing to procure thy Love, nor merit any thing by the best of our Works : But thou hast call'd us to believe thy Gospel, to trust in thy Grace, to lay down the Arms of our Rebellion, and to receive the Blessings of Salvation by Faith : We have nothing to boast of, for we are mere Receivers : Thou hast put forth thine Almighty Arm, and hast made thy Gos-  
“ pel



“ pel the Instrument of thy Power to  
 “ save us ; and while we feel and taste  
 “ the compleat Salvation, thy Power and  
 “ thy Mercy shall have all the Praise.

“ Not unto us, *O Lord Jesus our Sa-*  
 “ *viour*, not unto us is any Honour due ;  
 “ but to thy condescending Love ; to  
 “ thy Compassion and Death shall our  
 “ Honours be paid, and our Acknowledg-  
 “ ments made for ever. We saw our  
 “ selves helpless, and were directed to  
 “ thee for Help : We trusted in thee,  
 “ and thou hast saved us ; 'tis thy Suf-  
 “ ferings that have procured our Pardon ;  
 “ 'tis by Faith in thy Blood we find an  
 “ Atonement ; 'tis through thy Righte-  
 “ ousness that we are justified and accept-  
 “ ed of God, and made Partakers of these  
 “ heavenly Glories that shine all around  
 “ us. All our sacred Comforts, our Ex-  
 “ cellencies, and our Joys are thine. Pride  
 “ is hidden from our Eyes for ever,  
 “ and Boasting is banished from all our  
 “ Tongues : 'Tis thou hast fulfill'd the  
 “ Law ; 'tis thou hast suffer'd the Curse ;  
 “ 'tis thou hast purchas'd, and promis'd,  
 “ and bestow'd the Blessing. We be-  
 “ liev'd thy Word, we receiv'd thy Grace,  
 “ and behold, we dying Sinners are rais'd  
 “ to Life, and advanc'd to Glory. There  
 “ is not a Soul of us but delights to join  
 “ in

“ in those sublime Anthems of Worship;  
“ *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to*  
“ *receive Power, and Riches, and Wisdom,*  
“ *and Strength, and Honour, and Glory,*  
“ *and Blessing : Blessing, and Honour, and*  
“ *Glory, and Power be to him that sits up-*  
“ *on the Throne, and to the Lamb for ever.*  
“ Amen.





# SERMON V.

None excluded from Hope.

ROM. i. 16.

*— The Gospel of Christ, --- it is the Power of God unto Salvation to every one that Believeth, to the Few first, and also to the Greek.*



WE have seen the *Gospel of Christ* vindicated in the former Discourses on this Text, and the glorious Doctrines of it guarded against the various Reproaches of an unbelieving World : We have heard what a powerful Instrument it is in the Hand of God for the Salvation of perishing Sinners : We have been taught

taught the Way to partake of this Salvation, and that is *by Believing*; and we have learnt what Influence our Faith has in this sacred Concernment. I proceed now to the last Thing which I propos'd, and that is to shew the *wide Extent of this Blessing of the Gospel*; for it brings *Salvation to every one that Believes, to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.*

Where the Word *Greek* is used in Opposition to the *Barbarian*, as it is in the fourteenth Verse before my Text, it signifies the *Learned Part of Mankind*, as distinguished from those that are *Unlearned*; the *Greeks* being the most famous among the Nations for Wisdom, Knowledge, or Learning in that Day: But when this same Word stands in Opposition to the *Jew*, as it does here in my Text, then it includes all the *Heathen World*; so that when the Apostle says, the *Gospel* brings *Salvation both to the Jew and the Greek*, he shews the Extent of this Benefit to all Mankind that hear and receive it.

It may be worth our while to spend a few Hints upon the Order in which the Apostle represents the Communication of this Blessing, (*viz.*) *to the Jew first, and then to the Greek or Gentile.*

When he describes in the second Chapter of this Epistle the *Terms or Conditions of the Covenant of Works*, he sets Man-  
kind



kind in the same Order; he pronounces *Indignation and Wrath* upon every Soul that doth Evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; but *Glory, Honour and Peace* to every Man that worketh Good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile. So when he declares the *Blessings* of the *Covenant of Grace* or the *Gospel*, he brings the *Salvation* first upon the *Jews*, and then upon the *Gentile Nations*: And one Reason of it may be this, That the *Jews* having been favour'd with an earlier and more express *Discovery* of the *Nature and Will* of God than the *Heathens*, they seem to stand fairest for the *Participation* of *Divine Blessings*; and that, even by the *Law of Works*, if *Life and Righteousness* could have been obtained by it, as well as by the *Covenant of Grace*, or *Law of Faith*. But if they abuse their *Knowledge*, and their sacred *Advantages*, to the *Neglect* of God and *Godliness*, *Faith* and *Works*, they justly fall under a more severe *Condemnation* every Way, because their *Guilt* is greater.

¶ But there may be some special Reasons given, why God thought it proper in the Course of his *Providence* to send the notice of this *Salvation* by *Jesus Christ* among the *Jews*, before he sent it to the *Gentile World*.

I. *The Jews were the chosen People of God, the Sons and Daughters of Abraham, his Friend, the first Favourites of Heaven considered as a Family and a Nation; and as he first preach'd to them the Purity and Perfection of his Law, whence they might discover their own Sin and Misery, so he published his Gospel of Grace by Jesus Christ first among them, and sent his Son with the Messages of Peace and Forgiveness first to their Nation. The great God thought it becoming his Equity to publish his abounding Mercy first toward them, amongst whom he first published his Law, to show them their Guilt and Misery thro' the abounding of Sin. By the Law is the Knowledge of Sin, and where Sin has abounded, Grace has much more abounded. Rom. 3. and 5.*

II. *The Jews had this same Gospel preached to them many Ages before in Types and Emblems, in sacred Ceremonies and dark Prophecies. Now it was fit, that the Types and Prophecies should be explain'd, and the Grace contain'd therein reveal'd first to them; for hereby the Gospel obtain'd a great Confirmation, and establish'd its own Truth, when it appear'd in all the Parts of it so exactly answerable to the ancient Figures, and to the Predictions of many*

many hundred Years. It was fit that the *Messiah* should appear among them first, where his Character and Picture had been drawn for many Ages before, that so he might be known and distinguish'd whenever he should visit the World. It was fit that his Doctrine should be first publish'd in plain Language, where it had been long written and spoken in Metaphors. Thus the Gospel went forth first from *Jerusalem*, that it might be preach'd and proclaim'd with more glorious Evidence among the rest of the Nations.

III. *Jesus Christ, who is the Subject and Substance of the Gospel, was himself a Jew, of the Seed of Abraham, of the Nation of Israel.* He was born, he lived, he died amongst them. All the great Affairs of his Birth, his Life, his Ministry, his Death and Resurrection, were transacted in their Country, and in the midst of them. It was fit the Benefits thereof should be first offer'd to them. :

If this *Gospel of Christ* had been first preach'd to the *Gentiles*, while it was kept silent and secret amongst the *Jews*, there might have been Reason to suspect that there was some Fraud or Falshood at the Bottom, and that this Doctrine would not bear the Light in the Country where these Things were done, and that it would  
not

not stand the Test of Examination in the Land of *Judea*, and therefore the Story was told first among Strangers : And thus the *Gentiles* might have found some Difficulty to receive it, and been prejudic'd against the Belief of it. But now, when 'tis publish'd thro' all the Land of *Israel*, and the Apostles appeal to their own Country-men for the Truth of these Transactions ; when it has stood the Test of publick Examination there, where the Things were transacted, it goes forth to the rest of the Nations with brighter Evidence and Glory.

IV. I might add in the last Place, *That it was fit it should be first publish'd to the Jews who seem'd to have the first Claim to it ; that since they refused it, it might be offer'd to the Poor Gentile Nations with greater Justice and Equity, even the Jews themselves being Judges. Such are the frequent Hints given by St. Paul, Acts xiii. 46. It was necessary that the Word of God should have been first spoken to you ; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of Everlasting Life, Lo, we turn to the Gentiles. Be it known therefore unto you, that the Salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it. Acts xxviii. 28.*

When



When we think of that poor unhappy Nation, the *Jews*, scatter'd abroad among all the Kingdoms of the Earth, banish'd from their own promised Land for their Rejection of *Christ*, and yet harden'd in their Unbelief, methinks we should send out a Groan of Pity for them; for they are the Sons and Daughters of *Abraham*, the first Favourites of our God. *Jesus* our Saviour was their Messiah, their Kinsman, and their rightful King. We should send up a kind Wish to Heaven upon their Account, “ How long, O Lord, how long  
 “ shall *Israel* be cast off? How long wilt  
 “ thou be angry with the Children of *A-*  
 “ *brabam*, thy Friend? When shall the  
 “ Day come for the opening of their Eyes,  
 “ that they may look on *Jesus* whom they  
 “ pierced, and believe and mourn? When  
 “ shall the *Vail* be taken off from their  
 “ *Hearts*, that they may read the Name  
 “ of *Christ* in the Books of *Moses*, and  
 “ trust in *Jesus* of *Nazareth*, whom their  
 “ Fathers crucified? ¶

When we see one and another of the *Jewish* Nation in this great City, and think of their Blindness and their Zeal for the idle Traditions of their Teachers, and observe their ignorant Rage against our Blessed Saviour; when we behold the vain Superstitions of their Worship, the thick Darkness that hangs upon them under the  
 brightest

brightest Beams of Gospel-Light, and their wide Distance from Salvation, we should let our Eyes affect our Hearts, and drop a Tear of Compassion upon their Souls.

“ These were they to whom the Promises of Salvation did first belong, and to whom the first News was brought that *Jesus the Saviour is born.* These are they to whom the Gospel was first preached. God himself dwelt in the midst of them, and the Son of God was their Brother, their Flesh and their Blood. Though they are for a Season cast off for their Infidelity, yet God has told us, that he has a secret *Love for that Nation still for their Father Abraham’s Sake,* Rom. xi. 28. and this Love shall break forth in its full Glory one Day. Make haste, O *Deliverer,* who didst *come out of Zion,* make haste to fulfil thy Promises, and *turn away Ungodliness from Jacob.* Let the *Fulness of the Gentiles be brought in, and let all Israel be saved.* Bring them back from all the Lands whither thine Anger hath scatter’d them. Release thy antient People from their long Captivity to *Satan,* and their Bands of thick Darkness. Be thou, O *Jesus,* who *art the Light of the Gentiles,* be thou also the *Glory of thy People Israel.*

But I would endeavour to make a *larger Improvement* of this general Head of Discourse.

Does the Gospel bring Salvation to every one that believes without Exception; to all Ranks and Characters, and Degrees, and Orders of Men? then let this Grace be spread far abroad: And let not the more polite and nicer Hearers grow tir'd, or drowsy, or disdainful, while I amplify a little and diffuse my Thoughts into various Particulars, pointing out the Variety of the Subjects of this Grace; for I would (as it were) mention every Sinner by Name, that they may not be left only to *unaffected general* Notions, but being *specially* address'd to, they may all come and partake of this *Salvation* by believing this Gospel.

A glorious and extensive Gospel indeed, and a wide spreading Salvation! *To every one who believes!* None excluded from this Blessing.

1. 'Tis not confin'd to one Nation, or one Family, not to one Tribe or Kindred of Mankind, as the Law of Moses was. Go preach the Gospel, says our Lord, to every Creature, Mark xvi. 15. Preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in my Name among all Nations, beginning at Jerusalem, Luk. xxiv. 47. To the Jew first, but let not this Grace be confin'd to them: Publish this blessed Doctrine

Doctrine also to the Sinners among the *Greeks* and *Gentiles*. You that are afar off from God, even in the *Ends of the Earth*, ye are called to *look unto Christ, and be saved, Isa. xlv. 22.* 'Tis no Matter, Oh Sinner! what thy Father was, or what thy Kindred are; if thou art but a *Believer in Christ*, thy Soul is happy, thy Sins are pardon'd, the *Gospel is the Power of God to thy Salvation.*

2. 'Tis not confin'd to *one Sex* only, or to *one Age*. The *Children* are call'd as well as the *Fathers*, and *Men* and *Women* are invited to partake of this Blessing together in *Christ*. *There is neither Male nor Female*, neither *Young* nor *Old*, neither *Greek* nor *Jew*, that have any Distinction put upon them, to exclude them from this Grace; *they are all one in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 28.* *Children*, have you seen the Evil of your Sins and the Danger of Hell? Do you long for pardoning and saving Grace, and are you willing that *Christ* should make your Peace with God, that he should enable you to serve him on Earth, and prepare you for Heaven? Come then, trust in this Gospel, give up your selves to *Jesus Christ* the Saviour in the Manner I have spoken, and the Salvation is yours. Nor let *Old Sinners* thrust away this Mercy from them, under a Pretence that they have long abused it. You are now under



*the joyful Sound* of the Gospel ; you sit now under the Language of inviting Love: Are you willing to be made new Creatures before you die, and to accept of a Deliverance from Hell, tho' you are upon the very Borders of it ? Behold Power enough in this Gospel to deliver you : The Blood of *Christ* can wash out Stains of the longest Continuance ; the Spirit of *Christ* can change the *Skin* of an *Old Ethiopian*, and create an old inveterate Transgressor into Holiness. This Gospel could save the *Thief upon the Cross*, and ensure Paradise to him. It can rescue a dying Rebel from Eternal Death, for it gives Life and *Salvation to every one that believes*.

3. 'Tis not limited to *one Rank or Condition of Men* in the *Civil Life*, but reaches to Persons of every Circumstance. The *Rich* and the *Poor*, the *Master* and the *Servant*, the *Prince* and the *Peasant*, must partake of Salvation by the same *Faith in the Son of God*. The *Barbarian* and the *Scythian*, who seem to be born for Slaves, and the *Romans* who are Lords of the Earth, *the Bond and the Free*, have all an equal Call to receive this Salvation. *Col. iii. 11*. Ye are all rich enough to obtain it : There is no Purchase of these Blessings by any other Price but that of the *Blood of Jesus*. Silver and Gold, and the Treasure of Kings are all contemptible Offers in so  
sacred

sacred a Concernment as this is. The Benefit is too valuable to be bought at any meaner Rate : *Christ* who paid for it, will bestow it freely on all. If the *Rich* will receive it, they must come *without Money, and without Price,* and accept of the free Gift of God, as humble Petitioners at his Footstool; and the Poor *that have no Money, Come ye and buy ; Isa. lv. 1, 2.* Let the vilest meanest Creature come to this Treasury of Grace, and with Thankfulness receive the Salvation, for 'tis bought already. You are called only to trust in this Gospel, to surrender yourselves to this Saviour, and the Salvation shall be yours. Ye that are mean and low and base in this World, there are many of your Brethren already join'd in the Fellowship of this Gospel : Come, enter yourselves into the Blessed Fraternity. *To the Poor the Gospel is preached, and the Poor receive it.* But there are some Noble, there are some Great; there are some Rich, that have felt the Power of it too : There's *Philemon* the Master, and his Servant *Onesimus,* join'd in the same Faith; and Partakers of the same Salvation. *Philem. 16.*

Again, 4<sup>thly</sup>, 'Tis not confin'd to Persons whose intellectual Excellencies are superior to their Neighbours, or who exceed others in Understanding and the Acquirements of the Mind. St. Paul was Debtor

*both to the Wise and the Unwise ; to the learned Greek, and to the ignorant and unpolish'd Barbarian, Rom. i. 14. He preach'd the Gospel to all of them, for Christ had a chosen Number amongst them all. If the Witty, and the Wise, and the Learned, will lay down their Pride, and submit to the Doctrine of Christ crucified, and not call it Foolishness : If they'll humble their Understandings to receive the sacred Mysteries of our Religion, God manifest in the Flesh, and put to Death for the Sins of Men, and will place the Concerns of their eternal Welfare into the Hands of him who hung bleeding upon the Cross : If they are willing to be converted, and become as little Children, there is a Door for them to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And as for you, whose Understandings are weak and unpolish'd with Human Learning, this is a Doctrine and a Gospel exactly fitted for your Character : 'Tis no Business of great Sagacity, no ingenious Matter to become a Christian. Believe the Truths that are plainly reveal'd concerning your own Sin and Misery, and the Power of Jesus Christ to save you, bewail your own Wretchedness and Guilt, and intrust yourselves in the Arms of his Grace, that ye be made Holy and Happy, and ye also shall become Possessors of the same Kingdom. Father, I thank thee, Lord of Hea-*



*ven and Earth, that tho' these Things may be hidden from the Wise and the Prudent, yet thou hast revealed them to Babes, Matt. xi. 25, 26.*

But I pursue the Distributions of this Grace yet farther.

5. *No particular Tempers or Constitutions of Men, no different Qualities of Soul or Body can exclude those that believe from the Grace or Blessings of this Gospel. Let not the strong Man glory in his Strength, nor the comely Figures of Human Nature boast themselves in their Beauty. Let not the Weak be over-whelmed with Despair, nor the Deform'd or Uncomely stand afar off and abandon their Hopes; the same Saviour proposes the Riches of his Grace to all. Learn therefore to look upon all your natural Advantages, and all your natural Discouragements, with a negligent Eye in the Matter of your Salvation. If you would be strong to win Heaven, you must borrow all your Strength from Christ and the Gospel. If you would appear Comely and Honourable before the Face of God, you must be cloathed in the Robe of Righteousness and the Garments of Salvation, which he has prepared. Isa. lxi. 10.*

Nor can any Difference in the *natural Qualities of the Soul* forbid any Person who believes in *Christ* to hope for this Salvation. Those who are by Nature *Proud*



or *Peevish*, *Sullen* or *Passionate*, *Angry* and *Revengeful*, have been made Partakers of this Grace, as well as those who by the Complexion of their animal Frame, and the original Temper of their Minds, have had more of the Natural Virtues belonging to them ; such as *Gentleness*, *Meekness* of Spirit, *Good Humour* and *Kindness*. Those who have something in their very Frame that is *Sly* and *Crafty*, or *Covetous*, *Wanton* and *Intemperate*, have felt the Power of this Gospel as well as those that have been *Generous* and *Sincere*, *Modest*, *Chaste* and *Abstemious* ; for the Grace of the Gospel, which was typified by the *Ark of Noah*, takes in all Manner of Animals, clean and unclean, and saves them from the Deluge of Divine Wrath that shall come upon an ungodly World. But there is this Blessed Difference, that the Brutes went out of the Ark with the same Nature they brought in ; but those who come under the Protection and Power of this Gospel by Faith, they are in some measure changed, they are refined, they are sanctified : The Wolf that came in is turning into a Lamb, and the Raven by Degrees becomes a Dove ; surely, the Gospel has begun to make them so, for it has begun their *Salvation*.

I will grant indeed, that the perverse Temper of Blood and Spirits, and the very  
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Make of the Man as to his *natural vicious Qualities* is seldom intirely alter'd by the Grace of God here on Earth. There will be some Sallies of animal Nature, some Out-breakings of the irregular Fire that is pent up in the Constitution; and these will too often mix themselves with our Conduct, and interline our Acts of Virtue and Duty. But the Holy Soul, who *believes in Christ*, will be humble, will mourn, will accuse and chide itself before God in secret, and will be importunate and restless in Prayer for the Victory. The *Christian* will not suffer himself to be carried away willingly by the Stream of vicious Inclinations; for *he that is born of God sinneth not*, 1 John v. 18. and 'tis in vain to talk of the *Gospel and Salvation, of Faith and Grace*, if we give up the Reins to vicious Nature, and bid a careless *Farewel* to any one Virtue.

But to proceed yet farther in reckoning up the *various Characters of Men*, whom the Gospel makes *Christians* by the Grace of Faith.

6. As no Persons are excluded because of their *Natural Constitution*, so neither are any forbid the Blessing of Salvation because of their *former ill Characters in the moral Life*. Not the *greatest of Sinners* are shut out from this Blessing, if they repent and believe the Gospel. Not the *Jews*,  
 G 5 who

who crucified the Lord of Glory : Not the Gentiles or Greeks, who were Slaves to Superstition and Idolatry, and drench'd in most infamous and abominable Practices; the Greeks, who gave themselves up to work Uncleannefs with Greediness, without God, and without Hope in the World. One Gospel has saved them all. No former Follies or Faults, no not the greatest of Sins against Man, or against God himself, ought to shut up a humble Soul under Despair; for this is a faithful Saying, and worthy of all Acceptation, that Jesus Christ came to save the chief of Sinners, 1 Tim. i. 15. And that's a Word of most extensive Grace which our Saviour speaks, Matth. xii. 31. *All Manner of Sin and Blasphemy shall be forgiven unto Men.*

You who have enjoy'd a happy Education, and had pious Parents to boast of, as the Jews boasted of *Abraham*; you who have many shining Works of Sobriety and Righteousness, you are called to come and trust in this Gospel: But you must renounce all your pretended Merit, and accept of pardoning Grace, or you can never be saved. And you that have nothing that looks like a good Work to glory in, Sinners as bad as the worst of *Gentiles*, come and believe this Gospel, and surrender yourselves to *Jesus* the Prince and the Saviour; his Blood is All-sufficient for the Pardon of

YOUR



your Sins, his Righteousness is All-sufficient for your Justification; and his Spirit can purify your sinful Natures. *Where Sin has abounded, Grace has much more abounded,* Rom. v. 20. 'Tis to the everlasting Honour of the *Gospel of Christ*, that it has appear'd to be the *Power of God to the Salvation* of Multitudes of such as you. *Such were some of you* (saith the Apostle to the *Corinthians*) *But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God,* 1 Cor. vi. 11.

And surely, if *great Degrees of Sin* cannot exclude the Penitent Soul from the Benefit of the Gospel, then 7<sup>thly</sup>, neither shall any Person be excluded *because of the weak Degrees of his Faith.* *Him that is weak in the Faith receive ye, for Christ has received him,* Rom. xiv. i. 3. Read that kind condescending Promise, and believe it; *Matth. xii. 20. He will not break the bruised Reed, nor quench the smoking Flax, nor suppress nor despise the least, the lowest Desires of Grace:* He will encourage the youngest and the feeblest Acts of sincere Repentance and true Faith, though struggling under much Sin and Darkness, 'till it break out into evident and active Flame. The little tender Seed of Grace under his heavenly Influences shall bud and blossom, and spring up into full Glory.



How large and glorious is the Salvation that attends Faith in this Gospel! How extensive is the Grace of God our Saviour! How unsearchable are the Riches of his Mercy! *O the Heights and the Depths, the Lengths and Breadths of the Love of Christ, that pass all Knowledge!* None of the Sons or Daughters of *Adam* the Sinner are excluded from this Salvation, where the Gospel is preached, but those who exclude themselves by Stubbornness and Unbelief. Persons of every Kind, every Character, Condition and Quality, amongst Men, have found this Gospel become the *Power of God to their Salvation*, when they have fled to this Refuge and believed in this Saviour.

What *Improvement* now shall I make of the last Part of this Discourse, *this wide Extent of Salvation bestow'd on all who believe?* Has every single Believer this Salvation in some measure confer'd on him, and wrought in him? Then here is a *plain and evident Test, whereby to try our Faith,* or a *certain Sign* whereby we may judge, *whether we are true Believers, or no.*

*The Gospel* is the Manifestation of the *Power of God for the Salvation of every one that believes.* What have you found of *this Salvation* begun in you? What have you felt of your own Guilt and Wretchedness by Reason of Sin, and of your Dan-  
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ger of Eternal Death? Have you seen the Death of *Christ* as an effectual Atonement to procure the Forgiveness of an offended *God*? Have you beheld the Power and Grace of *Christ* sufficient to renew your sinful Natures, and to form them *after the Image of God in Righteousness and true Holiness*? Have you found your Conscience resting upon the Sacrifice of *Christ*, and your Souls humbly expecting Pardon and Peace there? Are your Hearts turned away from every Sin? Is the Temper of your Mind made Divine and Heavenly, and suited to the Business and Blessedness of the upper World? This is the *Salvation of Christ* which the Gospel proposes, and bestows upon all that believe.

Upon such solemn *Enquiries* as these, I am persuaded there is many a Soul must take up *this heavy Complaint*, “*Alas! I*  
“*fear I am no Believer*: I have sat long  
“under the Sound of the Gospel, and I  
“have heard the Doctrine of *Christ cruci-*  
“*fied* many Years to no Purpose; for I  
“have never found this *Gospel* attended  
“with any such powerful Impressions as  
“to begin *Salvation* in me. I have been  
“too thoughtless about the Guilt of my  
“Sins, and about the Forgiveness of them  
“in the Court of Heaven. Nor have I  
“found my sinful Nature changed, nor  
“my

“ my Affections sanctified. I have very  
 “ little of these spiritual Desires and De-  
 “ lights which have been before described  
 “ as part of my Salvation. I feel the in-  
 “ ward Workings of my Soul vain and  
 “ carnal still; I am not prepar’d for the  
 “ heavenly World, and surely then I have  
 “ never truly believed in *Christ*, nor re-  
 “ ceived his Gospel.

To such *Complaints* as these I would propose these three several *Answers*.

*Answer I.* It may be so indeed. All this Complaint may be just and true; and perhaps thou art an Unbeliever still, dead in *Trespases and Sins*, and expos’d every moment to the stroke of Death, and to everlasting Misery. This is the Case of many a thousand beside thy self: Even the greatest part of those who are call’d *Christians*, are yet afar off from God and from Salvation, and have no just ground to suppose that they are *Believers in Christ*. But ’tis of infinite Concern for thee, O Sinner, to busy thy self about this Enquiry. There is not any one act in thy Life, in which thou canst be engag’d, that is of greater and more awful Importance than this, for thy Heaven or thy Hell depends upon it.

Some sit all their Days under the Gospel, and hear nothing but the outward Sound, always unmov’d, unawaken’d and unaffected;

unaffected; slumbering and nodding upon the Borders of eternal Fire; while others hear the Voice of the Son of God, arise from the Dead, and receive a new, a divine Life. Some in the same Family, perhaps of thy own Kindred, thy Flesh and Blood, or some that are upon the same Seat in the publick Assembly, are convinc'd and converted, believe in *Christ*, and are saved; while thou remainest a hard and impenitent Sinner under the Voice of the same Grace, and the preaching of the same Salvation.

And if this be thy Case, 'tis a dreadful one indeed. Consider, how will thy Condemnation be aggravated, that thou hast heard the Gospel publish'd with so much glorious Evidence in such a Land, and such an Age of Light as this is, and yet thou abidest in the State of Impenitence, and Unbelief, and Death. Thou hast had the Blessings of Heaven offer'd at thy Door, and hast hitherto refus'd to receive them. Thou hast sat, as it were, on the Banks of the *River of Life*, and never desir'd to taste the living Water. Thou hast dwelt near the Shadow of *the Tree of Life*, but art an utter Stranger to the Fruit. O! with what a stupid and a careless Ear hast thou heard the Things of thy everlasting Peace? Think of it therefore, and be horribly afraid: If the Gospel be not *powerful for*  
*the*



*the Salvation of thy Soul, it will become, thro' thy own Impenitence, a powerful Means to increase thy Damnation, to make thy Hell hotter, and thy eternal Sorrows more intolerable. Wo to thee, Capernaum; Wo to thee, Bethsaida; Wo unto you, O Sinners of Great Britain, ye have been exalted to Heaven in Divine Favours, and ye shall be thrust down to Hell if ye continue in Unbelief. It shall be more tolerable in the Day of Judgment for Sodom and Gomorrha, than for you, Matth. xi. 21.*

But art thou indeed yet an Unbeliever? Yet sleeping the Sleep of Death? It may be this is thy awakening Time: It may be this is *the Hour* when thou shalt begin to bear the Voice of God in order to Life. O cherish such important Thoughts as these. Let them arise with thee in the Morning, let them lie down at Night with thee, and give thy self no Rest, nor give Rest to the God of Heaven, nor to *Jesus Christ* the Saviour, till he has received thee Soul into the Arms of his Love, forgiven thy Sins, and made thee a new Creature, that the Gospel may not be to thy Soul the *savor of eternal Death.*

*Ans. II.* But perhaps the Person who makes this Complaint, may be some *humble melancholy Christian, some sincere Believer in Christ,* and yet under dark and  
timorous

timorous Apprehensions concerning his own State. It may be, poor trembling Soul, that thou hast found the preaching of the *Gospel* to be the *Power of God to thy Salvation*, tho' thou art not able rightly to evidence it to thy own Conscience.

Thou hast not the Joy of Pardon indeed, but hast thou not some glimmering Hopes? Surely thou dost not abandon thy self to utter Despair. Thou hast not Assurance that *Christ* has accepted of thee; but art thou not sincerely willing to surrender thy self to him, to receive his *complete Salvation* in the Holiness as well as the Happiness of it? Dost thou not long to be pardon'd and accepted of God for the sake of his Death and Obedience? And art thou not heartily desirous to give him all the Honour of thy Salvation? Thou hast not much Power against Sin, but dost thou not hate it with immortal Hatred, and esteem it thy constant Enemy? Does it not often cause thee to mourn before the Lord because of thy captive State, and the working of indwelling Iniquities? Perhaps thou dost not yet feel thy self to be manifestly sav'd from Sin, but art thou not sav'd from the Love of Sin? It dwells in thy Flesh, it may be, and raises Tumults there, but not in thy Desire and thy Delight. Canst thou not say with the Apostle, *Rom. vii. 23. 24.*  
*There*

*There is a Law in my Members warring against the Law of my Mind? But 'tis a daily Torment to me, O wretched Man that I am! Who shall deliver me? Thou dost not love God, it may be, according to thy Wish and Desire; but is there any thing which thou valuest more than God and his Love? Art thou not truly willing to love him above all Things, to be renew'd and sanctified in all the Powers of thy Nature, to be fitted for the Business of Heaven, and suited to the Blessedness?*

If thy Heart can eccho to this sort of Language, and the Grace of God has prevail'd thus far in thee, then *thy Salvation is begun*; the Gospel has shewn its *Divine Power upon thee*, and thou art indeed to be numbred among the *Believers*.

*Answe. III.* But I would conclude my Discourse with a Word that may have equal Respect to *Saints* or *Sinners*. If you are concern'd sincerely about your eternal Welfare, but *can see no comfortable Evidences in your selves of the Work of Faith or the Beginnings of Salvation*, if all within you appear to be Guilt and Sin, and there is much of Hell and Darkness in the Soul, yet don't cast away all Hope: *Arise and come to Jesus the Saviour, Behold he calleth you.* This is the Season of the Grace of the Gospel, *This is the accepted Time,*

*Time, this is the Day of Salvation.* Make haste now to the City of Refuge, fly now to the Hope that is set before you.

The Promises are held open to thee, O Soul ! whosoever thou art, even the Promises of Light and Life, of Grace and eternal Glory. *Christ Jesus* invites thee by the Messengers of his Gospel : If there be some Darkness upon thy Spirit, don't spend all thy Time in laborious and fruitless Enquiries whether thou hast heretofore believed in *Christ*, or no ; but come now with an humble Sense of thy guilty and sinful Circumstances, and surrender thy self to his Charge and Care *by a new Act of Faith, or Trust or Dependence.* Plead with him to accept a vile Criminal over-loaded with Guilt and Misery, and to make thee accepted with God by a Righteousness which was not thy own. Beseech him to look with Pity on thy unholy Soul, to sanctify and renew it, to take thy hard Heart into his Hand, and soften it into Repentance. Plead with him, and say, *Lord, art not thou exalted to give Repentance as well as Remission?* Entreat of him to subdue thy Sins, to new-mold and create all the Powers of thy Nature in the Beauties of Holiness, and to prepare thee for the heavenly State. Go and complain humbly at his Mercy-Seat, how long thou hast sat under the Ministry  
of



of his own Gospel, and felt no Divine Power attending it. Intrust thy Soul now to his Care, and place thy self by Faith under his Divine Influences. *He that comes in this manner shall in no wise be cast out,* for the Lord has promised to receive him, *John vi. 37.* Wait on him with daily Importunity, follow all the Means of Grace which he hath appointed, and the *Gospel of Christ* shall appear in due time to be *the Power of God,* even thy God, *to thy Salvation.* Amen.





## SERMON VI.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Truth,  
Sincerity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Finally, Brethren, Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, (or grave) whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good Report, if there be any Virtue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.*

"Ὅσα ἐστὶν ἀληθῆ, &c.



*F* AITH and *Practice* make up the whole of our Religion: A Sacred Compound, and Divinely necessary to our Happiness and our Heaven! Nor does the blessed Apostle in any of his Writings

Writings ever dwell so entirely on one of them, as to forget the other. In this Letter to the Saints at *Philippi*, *Practice* has the largest Share : Through every Chapter he scatters up and down *particular Directions* for the Conduct of those Believers who dwelt among the *Gentiles* ; but he gives them two *General Rules*, by which they were to walk.

The first is in the Beginning of his Epistle, *Philip. i. 27. Let your Conversation be as becomes the Gospel. Act always agreeable to the Temper and Design of that Gospel, which brings Salvation by Jesus Christ, and then you will certainly practise every Virtue of Life ; your Carriage can never be amiss.*

And toward the latter End of his Letter he saith, *Finally, Brethren, before I take my leave of you, I would give you another General Rule to direct your Practice ; I would recommend Holiness to you under another View, and describe it in such Colours and Characters, as will not only approve themselves to your Fellow-Christians, but even to the Heathens among whom you live, that ye may be, as he expresses it in Chap. ii. v. 15. that ye may be blameless and harmless, the Sons of God without Rebuke in a wicked and perverse Nation, among whom ye shine as Lights in the World ; that they that have a mind*

to

to speak Evil of *Christianity*, and cast what Reproaches they can upon the Doctrine of the Cross, may not be able to find any Flaw in your Conversation, or any Ground to slander the Doctrine which you profess.

The Rule is this, *Whatsoever the Light of Nature*, and the better Sort of *Heathens* esteem *true and honest, or decent, and just, and pure, and lovely, and of good report, let these Things be your Meditation*, let these be your constant Aim and Design, let these be the Business of your Lives, and your perpetual Practice: *Think of these Things*, says the Apostle, and think of them so as to perform them.

In a Day wherein the Professors of *Christianity*, and of the Glorious Doctrines of the Gospel, grow degenerate and loose in their Lives, and fall sometimes into Vices, which the better sort of the *Heathens* have utterly condemned, I think it may not be amiss to stir you up together with my self to all holy Watchfulness and Caution; that *Christianity* in our Profession and in our Practice may appear and shine in its own bright Raiment; that the *Doctrine of God our Saviour* may be adorn'd in all Things, and that it may look, as it is indeed in it self, a *Doctrine according to Godliness*.

Without any farther Preface, or Division of the Words, I shall take these several

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veral Sentences in the Text as so many distinct Characters of *Morality*, or *Virtue*, which the Apostle recommends; and in discoursing of each of them I shall follow nearly the same Method; (*viz.*)

- I. Shew, the *Sense, Latitude and Extent of the Duty.*
- II. Make it appear, that these *Duties are required by the Law of Nature.*
- III. Discover *what additional Influence the Gospel should have upon our Consciences to the Meditation and Performance of such Duties*; and sometimes,
- IV. I shall give *Directions toward the Performance of them, and guard against the contrary Sins.*

*Whatsoever Things are true.*

The First Thing that the Apostle mentions is this, *Whatsoever Things are true, Let these be our Meditation, and our Practice.*

First, Let me shew the *Sense, Latitude, and Extent of this Advice.*

*Truth* in general lies in a *Conformity of one Thing to some other, which is made the Standard or Rule of it.* So a *Picture* is said to be *true*, when 'tis conformable to the Face and Figure of the Person: So a *Copy* of any *Writing* is *true*, when 'tis conformable

formable to the Original. So a *Narrative* or *History* is *true*, when it describes Matters fairly as they were transacted, and tells the Circumstances just as they are. And that is *true Doctrine* which is conformable to the Word of God, which is the Rule and Standard of Divine Truth.

But none of these agree to the Design of my Text. For the Apostle here is describing *Moral Characters*, and the Duties of a Christian. *Truth* in this Place is not so much to be considered as seated in the Understanding, as it is in the Will. It signifies here *Integrity* and *Uprightness*, in Opposition to *Hypocrisy*, *Insincerity*, or *Moral Falshood*. And there are three Things that make up the perfect Character of *Truth* or *Integrity*.

1. *That our Words be conformable to our Hearts.*
2. *That our Deeds be conformable to our Words.*
3. *That our whole Carriage be conformable to itself, and consistent with itself at all Times, and in all Places.*

1. The first Thing wherein this Virtue consists, is in the *Conformity of our Words to our Hearts*. This is sometimes call'd *Veracity*, sometimes *Sincerity*; a necessary Duty that belongs to every Christian; and

that in all the Affairs of Life. We must be *sincere* in all *Relations of Matters of Fact*; in all the *Narratives or Accounts* we give either of *Persons or Things*, in all our *Discoveries of our Esteem* for other Men, and in all our *Professions of Love or Goodwill* to others. Whatsoever we speak it ought to be agreeable to the Sentiment of our Souls.

Let us first consider what is that *Truth* that is required in *relating Matters of Fact*, and *Narratives* concerning Things or Persons. This is what *Solomon* mentions, *Prov. xii. 17. He that speaketh Truth sheweth forth Righteousness, but a false Witness Deceit.* In the *15<sup>th</sup> Psalm, v. 2.* 'Tis the Character of one of those who shall *inhabit the holy Mountain of God*, that he not only *worketh Righteousness*, but *he speaketh the Truth in his Heart*. That which he thinks in his Heart to be true, he cloaths it in Words, and thus delivers it out to his Fellow-Creatures. The Apostle in *Ephes. iv. 25.* makes mention of the same Duty, and presses it upon those to whom he writes; *Wherefore putting away Lying, speak every Man Truth with his Neighbour; for we are all Members one of another: Members one of another, as we belong to the same Original, as we are born of the same first Parents, as we are made of one Flesh and Blood, as we are Parts of the*  
same

same Civil Society or Nation, and especially as we that profess Christianity are related to one another in nearer and diviner Bonds, as we are Members of the general Church or Body of *Christ*. Now it does not become those that are join'd in so near a Relation to lye and speak falsely, and deceive one another, no more than the *Members of the Natural Body* would do Injury to each other, whose single Welfare lies much in the Welfare of the whole Body.

I grant it is possible for the best and wisest of Men sometimes to be *mistaken in their Apprehensions of Things*, and they may happen to speak something that is false in the Course of their Conversation; for they may be deceived themselves, and not know the Truth. But in Matters which they have Occasion to speak of, they ought to be as well inform'd of the Truth of Things as present Circumstances will admit, and to say nothing to their Neighbour but what they really believe themselves.

When we speak a Thing which we sincerely believe, and it happens not to be true, this is properly called a MISTAKE, for we had no Design to deceive the Person we converse with. But when we speak the Thing that is false, and we know it to be false, or do not believe it to be true, this is wilfully to deceive our Neighbour;



and is properly call'd by the odious Name of LYING.

¶ It is granted also, that *no Person is always obliged to speak all that he knows*, when he is giving an Account of some particular Affair or Concern of Life. There are several Seasons, wherein it is a Piece of great Prudence to be silent, and not to publish all the Truth. We have a most remarkable Instance of this in the Prophet *Jeremiah*, when he had been admitted to the Speech of *Zedekiah* the King, and had given him divine Counsel, *that he should submit himself to the Chaldeans, and save his Life, and preserve the City from Burning*, and at the same Time had intreated for himself, *that he might not return to Jonathan's House and the Dungeon, lest he died there*. A little after, the Princes of *Israel* demanded of him what Discourse he had with the King; he conceal'd his chief Business from the Princes, which was about *Submission to the Chaldeans*, and told them that *he presented his Supplication to the King, that he would not cause him to return to Jonathan's House; so the Princes left off speaking with him, and the Matter was not perceived*, Jer. xxxviii. 24, &c. There may be various Occasions in Life, wherein it is proper to keep ourselves upon the Reserve. Silence is much commended by *Solomon*, who was made divinely wise, *Prov. xxix. 11. A Fool uttereth*

*uttereth all his Mind, but a Wise Man keepeth it in 'till afterwards.*

Yet it must be confest too, that sometimes the Concealment of *Part* of the Truth, when it is necessarily due to the Hearer, in order to pass a right Judgment of the *Whole*, is almost as criminal as a *Lie*: And herein consists the Guilt of *partial Representations*. But I cannot stay to discuss this Point at large. ¶

The *great Rule of Veracity* in general lies in *being just and fair in our Narratives and Representations of Things*, and in *saying nothing but what we believe to be true*. Whatsoever therefore we have to speak to our Fellow-Creatures, let us lay a Charge upon our Consciences perpetually, that we speak according to the Sentiments of our Hearts; and remember, that what Disguises soever our Tongues put on, God our Judge sees through them all.

And not only when we *relate Matters of Fact*, but when we *express our Sentiment of the Characters of Men*, let us be just to Truth. I confest, Brotherly Love generally requires us to put the most favourable Colours on a blemish'd Character, and say the softest Things that the Matter will bear; *Love covereth a Multitude of Faults and Follies*, and in this Case Silence often becomes us best. But when Providence and Duty require us to speak, no

Pretences of Love or Charity are sufficient to excuse a *Falshood*.

Again, when we have a *bright Character* upon our Tongues, or when we are *paying Civilities to our Neighbours or Friends*, let us take heed of being lavish beyond what *Truth* will allow. *The Sins of Complaisance* may be connived at or applauded by Men, and miscalled by the Name of *Good Breeding*, but the Eye and Ear of God take a juster and more severe Notice of the softest and smoothest *Falshoods*.

In *all the Discoveries of our Esteem for other Men*, let us speak no more than we in our Hearts believe. It is a Character of a very vicious Time, and a very degenerate and corrupt Age, in *Psal. xii. 2. They speak every one with his Neighbour, with flattering Lips, and with a double Heart do they speak; but the Lord shall cut off all flattering Lips, for he hates them, v. 3. They speak Flattery with their Tongue, while at the same Time their Throats are open Sepulchres, and they (it may be) attempt to waste, devour and destroy. This Character of the basest of Men you read in the 5<sup>th</sup> Psalm; and you find the same hateful Practice among the Jews in their deepest Degeneracy, Jerem. ix. 5, 8. They will deceive every one his Neighbour, and will not speak the Truth. One speaketh peaceably to his Neighbour with his Mouth, but in Heart he*

*he layeth wait for him.* But this which was so abominable in a *Jew*, surely a Christian ought to stand at the greatest Distance from it at all times.

As in *Discovery of our Esteem*, so in the *Profession of our Love and Good-will to our Neighbour*, we must observe Truth. When your Heart is not with your Neighbour, be not profuse of the Language of Friendship. *Let Love be without Dissimulation.* Rom. xii. 9. Let Love be sincere to your Fellow-Creatures, and Love to your Fellow-Christians be upright and cordial. Let not that Affection appear in a Flourish of fine Words, if it be not warm in your Soul.

This is the first Character of Truth, that *our Words agree with our Hearts.*

II. The next Instance of the *Truth* required in my Text is, *when our Deeds are conformable to our Words*: And this is called *Faithfulness*, as the former is called *Veracity*, or *Sincerity*.

*Faithfulness* or *Truth* in this Sense has Respect to our *Vows*, our *Promises*, our *Resolutions*, or our *Threatnings*.

I. *Vows* are properly made to God alone; and when they are made, if the Matter of them be lawful, they ought to be performed. *When thou vowest a Vow unto God, defer not to pay it. Better it is thou shouldst*



not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay. Ecclef. v. 4, 5.

2. Promises of Things lawful made to our Fellow-Creatures, must also be fulfill'd with religious Care. As for Things unlawful, they ought not to be promised. We bind ourselves to perform what we promise, and the Law of God binds us as well as the Laws of Social Life.

In the 15<sup>th</sup> Psalm, v. 4. 'Tis another of the Characters of him that shall inhabit the Mountain of God, That he sweareth to his own Hurt, and changeth not; i. e. He makes a Promise to his Neighbour, and though it be much to his own Disadvantage, yet he doth not alter the Word that is gone out of his Lips, nor make a Forfeiture of his Truth by Breach of his Promise.

We should remember, that when we bind ourselves by a Promise to give any good Thing to another, or to do any Thing for the Benefit of another, the Right of the Thing promised passes over from us to the Person to whom the Promise is made, as much as if we had given him a Legal Bond, with all the Formalities of Signing and Sealing; we have no Power to recall, or reverse it without his Leave. Always except the Promise be made with a Condition express'd, or necessarily and evidently imply'd; Then indeed if the Condition fail, the Promise is void. But the Lips  
of

of a Christian, when they have once uttered an *absolute Promise*, have laid a Bond upon his Soul; and he dares not break the Law of his God, though the Law of Man should not bind him.

3. The Case of *Threatnings* is somewhat different. A *Promise* makes over the Right of some Benefit to another who may justly claim it; but a *Threatning* only shews what Punishment shall be due to another for such a particular Fault or Offence. If a Superior propose and publish a Law, and therein threaten an Inferior with some Penalty, the Superior is suppos'd to be at liberty whether he will execute the Threatning of his own Law, or no; for the Criminal will not claim it. Thence arises the Power of a Superior to pardon a Fault.

But if over and above the *Proposal* and *Publication* of this Law, a *Father*, for instance, or a *Master* does solemnly *foretell* or *declare* that he will certainly execute the Penalty upon the Child or Servant offending, I think he ought generally to esteem himself bound to fulfil such a *Declaration* or *Threatning*, if it were made in a prudent and lawful manner; unless the Repentance of the Offender, or some other Change of Circumstances, give him a just Reason to change his Mind and alter his Purpose.

And in the fourth place, the Case is much the same *when we make a solemn Resolution, and publickly declare it, that we will do such or such a thing in time to come.* If this *Resolution* be solemn and publick, and be in all respects lawful, it should generally be perform'd; unless some other Circumstances arise which we did not foresee, or which escap'd our present Notice when the Resolution was made: Otherwise we justly expose our selves to the Censure of *Fickleness, Inconstancy, Rashness, and Folly*: And such a Conduct seems to intrench upon *Truth*. But this leads me to the third or last Instance of *Truth*.

III. Another part of the Character of *Truth*, is when *our whole Carriage is conformable to it self.* When we are always of a piece with our selves, and our Conduct is still consistent with our own Character and Profession. This is called *Constancy*.

Something of this might have been introduced indeed under the *first* or *second* Particulars, when I shew'd how *our Words should agree with our Hearts, and our Deeds with our Words*, for both these demand that our *Practice should correspond with our Profession*. But I chuse to cast all that I have to say on this Subject under the Head of *Constancy to our Professions and Pretences*, which implies a perpetual

tual and persevering Honesty of Thoughts, Words and Actions, and a *regular Consistency with our selves.*

Now that I may throw this Matter into the easiest Method, I shall shew how this Exercise of *Christian Truth* will appear in a good Man *at all Times, in all Conditions of Life, in all Places, and in all Companies.*

1. *At all Times a good Man is the same:* He ever maintains the same pious and religious Design, and having set his Face heavenward, he travels on in the sacred narrow Path, and never wilfully turns aside to the right Hand or to the left: Or if at any time he make a false step, he recovers it again with Humility, and Shame, and Repentance, and his Feet return to the Ways of Holiness.

Here let it be observ'd, that a good Man may change his Practices in some lesser Points of Christianity, and alter his Principles too in Doctrines of less Importance, and yet he is not to be charged with criminal *Inconstancy* or *Falshood*: For he never renounces all Improvement of Knowledge, but is ever ready to receive further Light, and to retract his former Errors and Mistakes: And indeed this is one glorious Evidence of his being a *constant Friend to Truth.* But being well establish'd in the *necessary and fundamental*



*Points of Faith and Practice*, he walks on regularly in his Christian Course without wavering, or wandering into forbidden Paths, ever pursuing his last great End: And this is a *constant Christian*, tho' his Sentiments in the later part of his Life may differ in several Points from the Thoughts of his Youth.

¶ When the Eye of the World smiles upon his Profession, and the Sun shines bright upon his Party, or when the Clouds arise, and the sharp Winds of Persecution blow, he is still the same steady Christian; composed, quiet, undisturbed; not doubtful what he should do, but aiming at Heaven, he marches on homewards, with the regular Discharge of all his Duties to his God on high: Nor does he forget his Obligations to his Fellow Creatures on Earth, though in twenty Instances they may forget or refuse to fulfil their Duty to him. His supreme Obligations are to God his Maker, and to these he must be *true and faithful*.

How various were the Trials that Saint Paul met with from the *Jews* and from the *Greeks*, from the *Jewish Christians*, and the *Heathen Converts*? But how bright and blessed an Uniformity ran like a golden Thread thro' his whole Life and Ministry? Hear the holy Man often in his Writings declaring his own steadfast Adherence to the Gospel: Hear him appealing to his  
*Ephesians*

*Ephesian* Disciples concerning his own Conduct, and proving it to their Consciences that he had in some good Measure acquitted himself according to this Rule of Christianity, *Acts* xx. 18. When the Elders of *Ephesus* were come to him, *Ye know*, says he, *that from the first Day that I came into Asia, after what manner I have been with you at all seasons (and that was by the space of three Years, as in v. 31.) Serving the Lord with all Humility of Mind, with many Tears and Temptations that beset me: And I was constantly testifying to the Jews and Greeks, Faith and Repentance, and shunned not to declare the whole Counsel of God to you, coveting no Man's Gold or Apparel, &c. I have shew'd you now that for these three Years together I have maintain'd the same holy Conduct, that so ye might follow my Example, that ye might always act agreeable to your selves, and be constant to your own vertuous and holy Character. ¶*

But what an inconstant Christian is he who changes his Principles and Practices, being blown about with the Wind of prevailing Party, and the Humour of the Times? Who seems active in the Cause of Religion, when Religion is the Fashion of the Age, but he grows ashamed of every part of Godliness when the Times turn upon him! His Religion dies, when Piety

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is discouraged in the World, and a *Saint* becomes a Name of Reproach! To-Day for the *God of Israel*, and to-Morrow among the Worshippers of *Baal*! Now a Zealot for pure Doctrine and Worship, anon so lukewarm and indifferent about every thing of Religion, as tho' it had no Place near his Heart! Multiplying Duties of Godliness one Week, and grossly negligent of all Duty the next! To-Day preaching and practising the Rules of *Christianity*, and to-Morrow talking and living like a Man of *Heathenism*! True and constant to nothing, but to his own fickle Temper and Inconstancy!

Is it not a glorious Character when we can say of a good Man, that “all that  
 “ have known him give him a good  
 “ Word; that those who have lived ma-  
 “ ny Years with him, and seen him in  
 “ his unguarded Hours, and in the un-  
 “ dress of Life, pronounce him the *same*  
 “ *Man* as he appears in the publick  
 “ World.” They who have known him  
 longest, admire him most, and love him  
 best, and they bear a noble Testimony to  
 his Virtues and his Graces. His Graces  
 and his Virtues advance with his Years,  
 they imitate the Morning-Sun, which  
 keeps the same steady Pace thro' the Hea-  
 vens, but rises higher hourly, and shines  
 with a brighter Lustre, and with warmer  
 Beams.

Beams. *The Path of the Just, like the Morning Light, shines more and more unto the perfect Day, Prov. iv. 18.*

But what a wretched Satyr it is upon any Man to say, “If you see him for an Hour his Talents will surprize and please you, but if you have a Year’s Acquaintance with him, his evil Qualities are so many and so hateful, that all his Charms vanish, and he sinks and loses all your Esteem?” So a Torch blazes high when ’tis first kindled, but the Flame grows lower as it burns, till it expire in Stench and Smoke. Where such a Censure is just, or such a Simile well applied, the Man is far from that fair Character of *Truth* and *Constancy* which the Gospel recommends.

2. *A True Christian is the same in all Conditions of Life.* Let the Favours or the Frowns of Men attend him, or the awful Providences of God make a surprizing Change in his Affairs, still he ceases not to look and live, to speak and act like a *Christian*. Is it not a very honourable account that you have heard sometimes given of a Person in the height of Prosperity, and in the depth of afflictive Circumstances, that he is still *The same Man*? That he maintains his Probity and his Integrity, and every Virtue, in the midst of all the **Revolutions of Providence!** Se-  
rene



rene and cheerful, calm, peaceful and heavenly, holy and humble amidst them all ! *St. Paul* was eminent for this Grace. *I know, saith he, how to be abased and how to abound, to be full and to be hungry; I have learned to be content in whatsoever State I am, and to appear a Christian under every Change of Circumstances, Philip. iv. 11, 12.*

The *Man of Truth and Constancy*, when he is exalted and walks upon the Mountains of Prosperity and Honour, is not vain and haughty in his Treatment of Inferiors, nor does he look askew upon his former Friends, nor cast his Eye down with Contempt on his meaner Brethren. When his Mountain shakes and falls, he descends calmly into the Valley; but he is not of a mean abject and desponding Spirit: Ever mindful of his high Birth as a Christian, and of his heavenly Home, he bears up with a sacred *Constancy of Soul*, with a generous Contempt of this World and all the vanishing Honours and the uncertain Possessions of it. His Behavior is ever *true* to his holy Profession, and to his sublimest Hope. Is not this a Character which each of us wish our own? Is it not worthy of our Aim and Ambition, our daily Pursuit and Labor to obtain?

There are some Christians that *know not how to bear the Smiles of Providence:*

and some who are as much *untaught to bear the Frowns of it*: For their Piety is ever changing as their Circumstances are.

The *first sort* are they who are never very serious and devout but when they lie under the Chastisements of God: They seem humble, penitent and pious when the Rod of Heaven is upon them, but when that is once remov'd, they forget their Sorrows and their Seriousness together. Such were the rebellious and inconstant Jews of old, *when the Lord slew them, they sought him early and enquired after God, but they took every new Occasion to murmur and rebel again; There was no Truth in their Religion, their Heart was not right with God, nor were they stedfast in his Covenant, Psal. lxxviii. 34. In Trouble they visited thee, O Lord, and poured out a Prayer when thy Chastening was upon them; but their Goodness was like a Morning-Cloud, and as the early Dew it vanished away, Isa. xxvi. 16. and Hos. vi. 4.*

There is *another sort of Men* who behave well enough in Matters of Virtue and Religion when they are in peaceful and easy Circumstances; but if once they are smitten in their Flesh, in their good Name or their Estate, or have any of the Comforts of Life imbitter'd to them, they grow peevish and passionate, and nothing can please 'em; they vent their Im-  
 patience

patience on their Friends, and throw their Vexation of Spirit all around them, as tho' they resolved to imitate that brutal Character which the Prophet mentions, *Like a wild Bull in a Net*, struggling, and raving, and *full of Fury* under the Rebuke of *the Lord*, Isa. li. 20.

Surely both these Qualities are very contrary to that serene and uniform Practice of true Godliness that becomes a Saint.

3. *In all Places*, as well as in *all Times and Circumstances*, *The True Christian appears the same*, and is just to his own Profession. Wheresoever he dwells, or sojourns, where he spends an Hour or a Year, he is *constant* to himself, and *consistent* with himself still. He ever maintains the same pious Designs, and adorns and glorifies the Doctrine of the Gospel in all things. When at home and when abroad, he is the same Person. When at Church paying his Honours and Devotions to Heaven; when in his own Family among his Children and Servants, or when in his Shop and in the Affairs of Life; when in the Street or on the Exchange conversing with the World, Friends and Strangers, known and unknown; when in his Closet and secret Chamber, still he is the same good Man: Still acting consistent with himself and his Profession,

Profession, still pursuing a regular steady Course of Piety, and his dying Pillow confirms the Sincerity and Practice of his Life. Religion is ever uppermost in his Heart, and all his Affairs and Businesses in the World, are managed with regard to his last great End. Thus tho' his *Engagements* and *Actions of Life* be very various daily, according to the various Calls of Duty; yet his *Design* is ever the same, and the *Rule* that governs all his Practices is the *Word of God*, the *Gospel* of our Lord *Jesus*.

How far from the Glory of this Character were the false-hearted Sons of *Israel* in *Jeremiah's* Time! They were guilty of *stealing and murdering* in the Streets, or *By-ways*, or *private Houses*, yet *they came and stood before the Lord in the House which was called by his Name*, *Jerem. vii. 3, 4, &c.* There were also in our Saviour's Days Men of the same deceitful Spirit, whom he frequently and sharply reprov'd under the odious Name of *Hypocrites*, who made *long Prayers* in the Temple, and in the *Corners of the Streets*, but *devoured Widows Houses*, and neglected *Judgment, Mercy and Faith*; who made clean the *outside of their Cup*, but filled it with all *Extortion, Luxury, and Excess*. You read their infamous Manners at large in the *v<sup>th</sup>* and *xxiii<sup>d</sup>* Chapters of *Matthew*.  
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They had no more *Truth* in them than *Whited Sepulchres* or flowry Graves, *fair indeed and beautiful* on the outside Covering, but all within is *Death, and Horror, and Rotteness*. O, how inconsistent were the two pieces of this Character one with another! How far from that *Truth* and *Uprightness*, that *Sincerity* and *Constancy* that the Gospel requires, and so much approves of?

What a most sharp and shameful Re-  
proach is it, and yet a righteous one too,  
that is thrown on some Persons, They  
are *Saints at Church and Devils at Home!*  
'Tis pity we must borrow a word from  
*Hell* to describe any sort of Men that dwell  
on *Earth*: I would not willingly apply  
it to any particular Person living: But in  
describing a general Character of this kind,  
we can hardly paint it in Colours fright-  
ful enough. In Publick they are all  
Meekness and Innocence, all demure, and  
abstemious, and heavenly, and they *trans-*  
*form themselves* as their Father does, *into*  
*Angels of Light*, 2 Cor. xi. 14. but follow  
them to their Houses, and you see a sur-  
prizing Change: There *Luxury* and *Riot*,  
there *Fury* and *Passion* reign in every  
Room; their Dwelling is without God,  
without Prayer, without Piety or Peace,  
and has more of *Hell* than of *Heaven* in  
it. O my Soul, come not into their Secret,

to their Family, my Honour, be not thou united! for Truth and Goodness are far from them.

4. The *True Christian* is the same in all Companies: And tho' he does not think himself obliged to cast his Pearls before Swine, to give that which is holy to Dogs, or to impose a Discourse of Religion upon those that hate it; yet he never forgets his Religion in the worst of Company, nor does he throw off the *Christian* in the midst of *Heathens*. The general Course of his Life shines in the Beauty of Holiness, and glorifies his God in an impious World. And there are Seasons too, when he sees it necessary to rebuke publick Iniquity, and bear a noble Testimony against a vicious Age: He has never any Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of *Darkness*, but rather he reproveth them, Eph. v. 11. Yet sometimes his *Prudence* directs his *Christianity* to lie conceal'd, but he never dares do any thing that contradicts it. 'Tis like a Garment that he ever wears about him, tho' he does not always wear it uppermost: He keeps it ever as his *Guard*, tho' he does not always expose his *Glory*.

What a Scandal is it to any Person who professes the Name of *Christ*, that he can sometimes lay aside all his *Christianity*, and bury it in an Hour of Riot! That  
he

he can drink till Midnight when he gets among Drunkards, and take his Cup as merrily and as often as they! That he can relish a lewd or prophane Jest, and make one too, when he sits in the Company of lewd or prophane Jesters! That he can lisp out an Oath, and stammer at a Curse, or perhaps he can swear roundly when he is in the midst of swearing Wretches! And yet he can pray and talk devoutly when he falls into religious Company, and pretend to tremble at the Prophane-ness of the Age. What shameful *Hypocrisy* and *Falshood* is this?

There are some Persons who have appear'd in the *Country* to be Professors of Religion, and perhaps may have obtain'd a Name of Piety; but when they come up to *the City* among loose Libertines, where their Vices are better hid, they give themselves up to loose Practices, and indulge a licentious Month or two. They are pious amongst their Acquaintance, and prophane amongst Strangers. They have not *Impudence* enough to be *constant in Vice*, nor have they *Grace* enough to be *true to Virtue*.

There are some that *speak fair to the Face* of their Neighbour, and spread their Complements abroad before him; but *behind his Back*, in other Company, they are as *liberal of their Reproaches*, and can hardly

hardly endure a good thing to be said of him. Their Behaviour has brought an infamous Word into the *English* Tongue, for they are justly call'd *Backbiters*.

There are some *Children* that pay the *utmost Deference* to their *Parents* in Appearance and Shew, and will not dare any thing vicious while they are under their Eye; but when they are mingled with their *vain young Acquaintance*, they run into many Extravagances, and give a loose to the wild Appetites of the Flesh. But these are not the *Children of Truth*.

There are some *Servants* who make their Zeal and Diligence appear while their *Master's Eye is upon them*; but they are meer *Eye-Servants* and *false Creatures*, for when they are out of his sight they can waste his Substance among merry Companions, and perhaps purloin and pilfer to gratify their own Covetousness, or Luxury; or at best they make no Conscience of acting for their Master's Interest, when he is absent.

Thus *different Company* hath a *different Influence* on the Thoughts, the Words, and the Works of Men: And some Persons will run into every Vice and Folly rather than to oppose their Company; they had rather *sin* against God, and be *false* to their Profession, than venture to be (what they call) *rude* or *uncivil* to Company.



Company. So tender are they of giving Offence to Men, and so careless of offending the great and dreadful God!

There are some of all Ranks and Orders, of all Sexes and Ages of Mankind that seem to be sober, but have nothing of this Divine Virtue of *Truth* or *Constancy* in them. They would neither Swear, nor Drink, nor Game, nor speak a lewd or impious Word, when they are in a sober Family: But when at any time they happen to come into Houses without Godliness, they can follow the Course of the Family in all manner of Iniquities, and grow *false* to all their former Appearances of Goodness.

¶ I might multiply Instances of this kind to shew what *Falshoods* and *sly Deceits* are practised amongst Men who call themselves *Christians*, and how inconsistent many of their Actions are with their own Professions and Pretences: But this part of my Discourse hath already exceeded its just Bounds. Yet I think I ought not to leave it till I have answer'd one Objection.

*Object.* It may be said here, Does not *St. Paul*, one of the *truest Christians* and the best of Men, tell us, that when he *was among the Jews, he became as a Jew,* and appear'd like one that was *under the Law*: But *when he was among the Gen-*  
tiles,

tiles, *who were without Law*, he appear'd like a *Gentile* too, for he was not willing to offend the one or the other, according to his own Advice, *Give none Offence, neither to the Jews, neither to the Gentiles, nor to the Church of God*, 1 Cor. ix. 20. and chap. x. 32. To this I answer,

*Ans<sup>r</sup>.* The Blessed Apostle, when he had none but *Jews* about him, practis'd so much of the *Jewish Law* as was consistent with *Christianity*: When he had none but *Gentiles* with him, he declar'd his Freedom and Release from the Bonds of the *Jewish Law*, and neglected the *Jewish Ceremonies*: for some Parts of the *Jewish Law* were lawful for a Season, tho' they were so far abolish'd, that they were not necessary for a *Christian*. And the Apostle managed this Affair with holy Prudence, and with a religious Design to ingratiate himself and his Ministry, as much as possible, both with the *Jews* and *Gentiles* for the Salvation of both of them: For you find this was his great End, *I am made all things to all Men, that I might by all means save some; and this I do for the Gospel's sake*, ver. 22, 23.

Yet you may observe, that tho' he appear'd free from the *Jewish Law* when he was among the *Gentiles*, yet he did not carry it like a *Lawless Man*, but confin'd all his Practice within the Bounds of his

Duty to God and his Saviour, *Being not without Law to God, but under the Law to Christ, ver. 21.* So that neither one sort of Company nor t'other tempted him to neglect any Duty, or to indulge any Sin.

You may observe also upon another Occasion, where *Jews* and *Gentiles* were both present, when he thought a Conformity to any of the *Jewish Customs* might give greater Offence to the *Gentile Christians*, and be likely to do more hurt than good, he *withstood Peter to the Face* for his sinful Compliance with the *uncharitable Jews*: He reprov'd him for *dissembling*, and chid him because he *walked not uprightly according to the Truth of the Gospel*, and would not *give place to him by Subjection*; *no, not for an Hour*, Gal. ii. 5, 11, 14, &c.

There are some Seasons therefore when we may indulge an innocent Compliance with our Company in things lawful, in order to do Credit to the *Gospel of Christ*, and make our Profession appear lovely and honourable in the Eyes of all: But there are other Seasons when Circumstances are so placed, that we may not indulge the same Compliances, lest our Liberty be construed to an evil Purpose, and we bring more Scandal than Honour to our Profession by it.

I grant there are some *Difficulties* attending particular Cases in the Christian Life, and 'tis hard to know sometimes how far we may go. 'Tis no easy Matter to tread in the Apostle's Steps, *to become all things to all Men, and yet be true to Christ.* In the general, let this be our *great Rule,* To act always with honest Zeal for the Glory of God, and see that we please him in the first place; and then as far as possible *to please all Men, not seeking our own Profit, but the Profit of many that they may be saved,* 1 Cor. x. 31, 32, 33. And if while we endeavour to be *true to God,* we should happen to be *less complaisant to Men,* we shall certainly find Favour at the Throne of God, and then we ought not to be over solicitous whether Men be pleased, or no. ¶

Thus I have finish'd the *first General Head,* which was to shew the *Extent and Latitude of this Virtue,* or what is included in the Nature of this *Truth,* which the Apostle recommends to Christians. It contains in it *Veracity or Sincerity, Faithfulness and Constancy:* And a lovely Character it is indeed when it shines in its full Glory.

But 'tis time now to enquire, Which of us can say, *“ This Character belongs to me? Am I this true, this sincere, this faithful, this constant Christian? Am I*

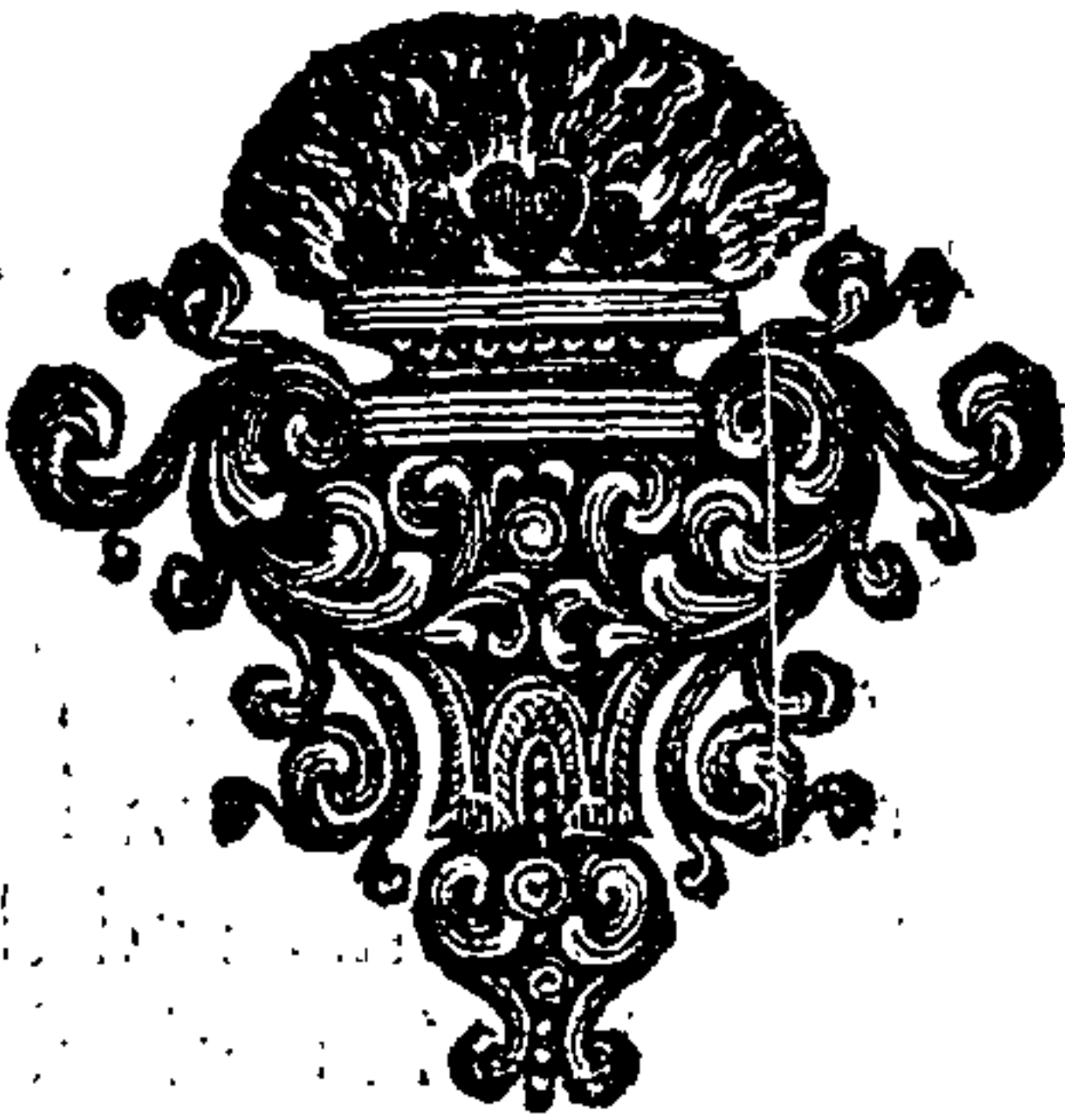


“ always careful that my Words are con-  
 “ formable to my Heart, and express the  
 “ honest Sense of my Soul? Do I speak  
 “ nothing but what I believe to be true,  
 “ and set a continual Guard upon the  
 “ Door of my Lips, lest they utter De-  
 “ ceit and Falshood? Do I neither flatter  
 “ my Neighbour, nor spread a false Re-  
 “ port of him? Am I watchful to make  
 “ no Promises, but what I mean sincere-  
 “ ly to fulfil? And am I as careful to per-  
 “ form my Vows and all my Engage-  
 “ ments? Am I sincere in the Profes-  
 “ sion of Godliness, and constant in my  
 “ Practice of it in all Times and Circum-  
 “ stances, in all Places and Companies  
 “ whatsoever?

Let us ask our Hearts again, “ While  
 “ we have heard this Discourse, How  
 “ many of us have sat here judging our  
 “ Neighbours, and not our selves? Have  
 “ we been distributing abroad the shame-  
 “ ful Characters of *Insincerity, Falshood,*  
 “ *Unfaithfulness,* and *Inconstancy* among  
 “ our Acquaintance? Or have we ap-  
 “ plied the Word as a Test to our  
 “ own Souls, as a Trial of our Chri-  
 “ stianity? Have we taken a secret and  
 “ malicious Pleasure in fixing these Scan-  
 “ dals upon others? Or have we begg’d  
 “ of God to fix the Conviction upon our  
 “ selves if we are guilty? And which of

SER. VI. *Truth, Sincerity, &c.* 173:

“ us can stand up and say in the Face of  
“ Heaven, We are innocent, entirely  
“ innocent of all these Charges ? ” O  
may the Blessed Spirit, the *Convincer* and  
the *Sanctifier*, shew each of us our own  
Concern in this Sermon, awaken each of  
us to a sense of our own Iniquities, and  
by his Almighty Grace work in us Re-  
pentance, and restore us to Truth and  
Holiness! *Amen.*





## SERMON VII.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Truth,  
Sincerity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are true — think  
on these things.*



**T** *RUTH* is a Name of wide Ex-  
tent. It includes in it the *Bles-*  
*sings* of the *Head* and the *Heart*.  
Happy the Man whose Head is  
furnish'd with a large Knowledge of di-  
vine and human Truth, and so far deli-  
ver'd from Mistakes and Errors as to lay a  
Foundation for *Wisdom* and *Holiness*! But  
all the Furniture of the Head is not suf-  
ficient to make us truly *wise* and *holy*,  
without the *Honesty* and *Integrity* of the  
Heart.

Heart. *Truth* demands a Room and Place there also : And this is the *Truth* which my Text recommends.

The *first thing* I proposed, was to *shew the Latitude and Extent of this Duty*—— and I have described it as consisting in these three things, (1.) *Veracity*, which is, when our Words are conformable to the Sentiments of our Mind. (2.) *Faithfulness*, when our Actions agree with our Words. (3.) *Constancy*, and that is when our Practices are consistent with our pious Principles, and the whole Course of our Life is of a piece, govern'd by the same Rules and Dictates of Morality and Religion. Where these are wanting, that Person is *false, faithless, fickle and inconstant*, and acts neither agreeable to his Nature as *Man*, nor to his Character as a *Christian*.

The *second thing* I design'd to shew, was, that the *Light of Nature dictates and requires the Practice of this Virtue*: And it will appear, if we consider our *Relation* either to *God or Man*.

I. If we consider *our natural Relation to God*, both as our *Creator or Father*, and as our *Lord or Governor*.

Consider him as our *Father*, the Author of our Being. *Truth and Faithfulness* are the Attributes of his Nature, and



the necessary Characters of his Conduct toward his Creatures ; And many of the *Heathens* could tell us, that a Likeness to God the Father of our Spirits, in such moral Perfections of his Nature, is the Duty and Glory of Mankind. *We are his Offspring*, saith *Aratus* a Heathen Poet, *Acts xvii. 28.* and Children should be like their Divine Parent.

The *Light of Nature* tells us, that he is not only our Creator, and *our Father* in this sense, but he is our *Lord and Governor* also. And he has Knowledge and he has Power to answer and fulfil this high Character and Station. The great God who looks into our Hearts, who sees our Souls thro' and thro', he knows what our inward Sentiments are while the Falshood is on our Lips ; he remembers what our Engagements and Contracts are while we renounce and break them ; He hates Deceit, Lying, and Falshood ; and all the civiliz'd Nations have ever suppos'd that he will avenge it with peculiar Judgements.

'Tis upon this Supposition of an *All-knowing and Avenging Power*, that *Oaths* are administred in all Countries which are reformed from utter Barbarity. *An Oath* is appointed to be the *Confirmation of Truth in what we say or do.* Therein God himself, with all his Knowledge, his Power  
and

and his Terrors, is called upon to bear Witness to what we speak, and to be an Avenger of Perjury and Falshood. Surely we might venture to say, that a Day will come when the great and holy God will shew himself terrible to *Lyers* and *Deceivers*, if we had nothing but the Light of Nature to tell us so.

II. *If we consider our Relation to Mankind*, Truth will appear to be a necessary Duty. *Man* is a sociable Creature, He is made to love Society; But no Society can be maintain'd without *Truth*: All *Falshood* therefore is inconsistent with the social Nature of Mankind, and consequently it becomes contrary to the Law and Light of Nature. Without *Truth* we should all become Deceivers to one another, every Man a Lyar to his Neighbour. No Contracts would be of any Force; no Commerce could be maintain'd; none of us would be able to trust another, nor could we live safe by those that dwell nearest to us.

He that indulges himself in *Lying* takes away his own Credit, and gives sufficient Occasion for his Neighbour not to believe him, even when he happens to speak the Truth; for a Man that will *lye* and *deceive* sometimes, how can we tell that he is not dealing deceitfully with us, even

when he professes to be most faithful and true? And *Children* should take Notice of this, that if once they indulge the Sin of *Lying*, there's no body will ever believe what they say.

A *Lyar* is such an abandon'd Character amongst Mankind, that tho' there are too many who deserve the Name, yet every one is asham'd of it. 'Tis esteem'd a *Reproach* of so hainous and hateful a Nature for a Man to be called a *Lyar*, that sometimes the Life and Blood of the Slanderer has paid for it. The very Nature of Man resents it highly, for it implies in it, that a Man guilty of this Vice deserves to be cut off from all Society with Mankind, and to be thrust out of Cities and Families like a wild Beast of the Earth.

The same thing may be said of an *unfaithful Man*, a Man who makes Promises, Contracts and Agreements, and takes no Care to perform them. All Commerce and Traffick is confounded, and the Laws of it dissolv'd by a Person of this shameful Conduct. He that loses his Credit and Honour by this sort of Falshood, he cuts himself off from many of the Blessings of Civil Society, and stands as it were excommunicated from the Friendship, the Company and Commerce of his Neighbours among whom he dwells. His Character becomes hateful among Men,  
and

and his Name is a Word of Scandal and Infamy. But where a Man is *true* to his Word, and *punctual* in all his Correspondences, how fair is his Reputation! How honourable is his Name! And he stands intitled to all the Blessings of the Society where he resides.

I might borrow Arguments also from the *Light of Nature*, to shew what an excellent *Virtue* is that of *Constancy*; how useful in the whole Course of Life, how honourable a Name does it gain a Man in the World! With what a happy Regularity his Affairs proceed both in his Household and in his Shop or Business of Life! He maintains a sacred and steady Peace of Mind, and all Men bless him: But the Character of a *fickle, wavering, inconstant Man* is always mean and contemptible; he is compar'd to a *Weather-Cock* that is blown about by every Wind; and his Name is thus exalted or stuck up on high, there to become a more publick Mark of Jest and Ridicule.

The *third Thing* I propos'd, is to consider what are those *additional Arguments* that might be drawn from the Gospel for the Practice of this *Truth* and *Sincerity*, this *Faithfulness* and *Constancy*: For the Gospel doth not only confirm all the *Duties of Morality* that the *Light of Nature* dictates, and establish all the *Reasons* of 'em that the *Light of Na-*



ture more feebly proposes, but it adds also many *Arguments and Motives* to enforce the same virtuous Practices, which the meer Light of Nature knows nothing of; and I shall represent all these Advantages of the Gospel here. But I will not overload your Memory with Particulars, and therefore I shall speak them more generally, and heap them together; and may your Souls and mine feel the united Force of them!

'Tis a *Gospel of Truth* we profess, even the Eternal Truth of God revealed to Men concerning our Salvation and his Glory. There are a multitude of Scriptures where the Gospel it self is called *the Truth*, and *the Word of Truth*: and 'tis a most inconsistent thing for the Professors of this Gospel to be guilty of *Falshood*.

*God the Father* is the *God of Truth*; and never did he give so glorious a Demonstration of the *Sincerity* of his Love, of the *Faithfulness* of his Promises, and of the *Constancy* of his compassionate Design to Man, as in sending his own Son into the World, according to his antient Prophecies of a thousand Years, and bestowing upon us *Jesus the Saviour*.

*Jesus Christ*, by whose Name we are called, he is the *True and Faithful Witness*, Rev. iii. 14. *Truth, and Grace, and Peace came by him*, John i. 17. He is called

called *the Truth*, *John* xiv. 6. He came down to bring *Life and Immortality to light by his Gospel*; He came to tell us (and he well knew) that in *his Father's House* were *many Mansions*; and “if it were not so, “ says he, *I would have told you*: But it’s “ not my Business to be a Deceiver to “ Men; Therefore all the *Life, Light* “ and *Immortality* that I have discovered “ to you in my Preaching, it’s all sincere, “ it’s all real. When you enter into the “ other World trusting my Promises, you “ will find all my Words fulfilled. I “ would not have raised your Expecta- “ tions if it had been otherwise.

Again, the *Holy Spirit* is a *Spirit of Truth*; ’tis he that *guides us into all Truth*, *John* xvi. 13. And the *Name* of this *Father*, and this *Son*, and this *Holy Spirit*, is called upon us in our first admission to Christianity: So that we wear the Name of the God of Truth upon us, and shall we indulge Temptations to Falseness? Shall we practise Deceit, who profess a Gospel of such Truth, and upon whom the Name of *the Father*, and *the Son*, and the *Holy Ghost*, the Name of the God of Truth is pronounced in Baptism?

*God is sincere in his Revelations of Grace, and Discoveries of his Pardoning Mercy*; for he sent his own Son to dye for us, and this is a proof of his *Sincerity* in his  
Designs

Designs of Love. Let us then be sincere in Love to our God, to our Fellow-Creatures and Fellow-Christians.

*Jesus Christ is sincere in the Profession of his Love, and he hath given us an infallible Pledge of it, for he hath given his Life for us. Greater Love hath no Man than this, than that a Man lay down his Life for his Friends. But he hath laid down his Life for Enemies, and therefore he hath magnified his Love, and divinely demonstrated it to be sincere and true, beyond all possibility of Jealousies and Exceptions.*

*God is faithful to all the Promises of his Gospel; all his Ways are Mercy and Truth to his People: He is a God keeping Covenant thro' all Generations. This is the illustrious Title that he assumes to himself and glories in: And this is the Name by which the antient Saints have delighted to make their Addresses to him. These Heavens shall be dissolved and perish in the Flame, and this Earth become a smoking Cinder; Heaven and Earth shall pass away, but the Word of the Lord and his Truth abide for ever; not one jot or tittle of them shall perish, but all shall be fulfilled.*

*By two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lye, that is, his Oath and his Promise, he hath established his Covenant of Grace, that the Heirs of Sal-*  
vation



*vation might have strong Consolation, Heb. vi. 18.* Hereby it comes to pass that we have a sure Hope of eternal Life, for *God that cannot lye hath promised it to us in Christ Jesus before the World began, Tit. i. 2. and 2 Tim. i. 9.* And tho' it was so long ago since the first Promise was made, (the first Promise made to *Christ* before the Foundations of the World, and the first Promise made to fallen *Adam* a little after the Foundations of the World were laid) yet our God hath not forgotten his Promises and his Covenant; he remains still faithful to fulfil every Word of Grace that is *gone out of his Lips, Psal. lxxxix. 33, 34.* And should not this oblige us to like Faithfulness to our Fellow-Creatures, since God, who is so infinitely our Superior, is pleased thus to bind himself by Promises, and thus to fulfil them?

*The Constancy and Immutability of God in his Designs of Mercy to Sinners, should influence us to the Practice of the same Constancy of Spirit in our Professions of his Gospel.* God acts always like himself, conformable to the Glory, and Holiness, and Dignity of his Nature; so should we who are the Sons and Daughters of the most high and holy God. He is uniform in his Counsels and Methods of Grace and Peace, he is unchangeable in his Love,  
and



and always the same: And *Jesus Christ is the same Yesterday and for ever*, constant to himself, and consistent with himself in all the Purposes of his Mercy, and in all the Prosecutions of those divine and eternal Purposes in Heaven and on Earth. No alteration of Circumstances, no change of Place, from a Cross on Earth to a Throne in Heaven, can change his Compassion and Love to his Saints. And shall we suffer our petty Changes here on Earth, from a higher to a lower part of a little Mole-hill, to make such a shameful Alteration in our Conduct to our Friends, as too often endangers our *Truth*, and discovers our *Inconstancy*?

Let us consider that by our *Profession of Christianity we renounce Deceit and Falshood*, and all *the hidden things of Darkness*: We are *Children of the Light*, then let us *walk in the Light, and do the Truth*, and let our *Deeds be made manifest that they are wrought in God*, i. e. in the Faith and Fear of God, *John iii. 21.* Why should a *Christian* be a Deceiver, when he bears the Name of *Christ the Faithful and True*? How inconsistent a Character is it for a *Christian* to be a *Liar*? For a *Christian* to be false, and violate and break his word? How dishonourable is it to the holy Name we bear?

Let

Let the Children of *Satan*, who is a *Liar from the beginning*, delight themselves in *Falshoods*, and *sport themselves in their own Deceivings*: Let those who renounce all Hope in the Promises of God, imitate the Devil who is the *Father of Lyes*: But let us who trust in the *God of Truth*, who believe in Jesus the Saviour, and make his Truth our Hope, let us imitate our heavenly Father and our blessed Lord; let us speak the Truth and practise it. It was by a Lye of the Devil that our first Parents were deceived and ruined: All our Sin and Misery sprung from that Falshood, *Ye shall not surely dye*. And it is by our Faith in the Truth and Promise of God that we hope for Salvation: While we therefore remember either the Spring of our Ruin, or the Means of our Recovery, we should *love the Truth* and *hate Lying*.

But there are *Motives of Terror* as well as *Arguments of Grace and Love*, that should ever influence us to Sincerity and Truth. We should remember that Christ our Lord has *Eyes like a Flame of Fire*, that he *searches the Hearts and the Reins*, and *will render to every one according to their Works*, Rev. ii. 23. We should remember the *dreadful Threatnings* that Christ the faithful and true Witness, Christ the Lord and Judge of all Men hath denounced against *Hypocrites*. You scarce find him  
preaching

preaching a Sermon of any length, but he has one or more *Woes* in it ready for those that practise Hypocrisy.

There is no sort of Sinners that he treats with such infamous Names, and such killing Reproaches as he does the Hypocrite. They resemble the old Serpent, the *Devil*, in Subtilty and Falshood, and therefore the Language of *Christ* to them runs in this manner; *Ye Jews* who are false to the inward Conviction of your own Consciences, *Ye are of your Father the Devil, and the Lusts of your Father ye will do: He was a Murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the Truth, because there is no Truth in him. When he speaketh a Lye, he speaketh of his own: for he is a Lyar, and the Father of it.* 'Tis as if our Lord had said, "The first Lye that ever was made, was made by the *Devil*; and by his telling a Lye, and our Mother *Eve's* believing it, he murder'd Mankind in *Adam* their Head. And yet you false *Jews* would imitate him, and make him your Father." And again, *Wo unto you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, ye Serpents, ye Generation of Vipers, Sons of the Old Serpent, how can ye escape the Damnation of Hell?* John viii. 44. Matth. xxiii. 29, 33. Your eternal Punishment is most just and unavoidable.

In another of his Discourses he makes the *Punishment of Hypocrites* to be (as it were)



were) the Pattern of the Punishment of the worst of Wickedness. The *Servant* who is intrusted with the Household of his Lord, that shall *beat his Fellows*, and *shall eat and drink with the Drunken*, his Lord shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his Portion with the Hypocrites; there shall be weeping and gnashing of Teeth, Matth. xxiv. 51. And when you read the black Catalogue of Sinners, who are doom'd to everlasting Destruction, Rev. xxi. 8. the Name of *Lyars* is put in with a peculiar Remark, *The Unbelievers, the Murderers, the Whore-mongers, the Sorcerers, Idolaters, and all Lyars shall have their part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death.* As if he had said, whosoever escapes Hell, no Liars shall escape it; and 'tis repeated again in the next Chapter, *Without the Gates of Heaven are Dogs, and Murderers, and Idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a Lye,* Rev. xxii. 15.

Whosoever therefore we find a Temptation to Falshood, let us set our selves under the immediate Eye of God our Judge, God who shall bring to light the hidden things of Darkness, and shall judge the Secrets of every Heart one Day by Jesus Christ our Lord, 1 Cor. iv. 5. Rom. ii. 16. If we did but always place our selves

as



as in the sight of the great and dreadful God, whose Eye beholds every Falshood we practise, and all the hidden Hypocri-  
fy, the lurking Deceit of the Soul, whose Ear attends to every word of Falshood we speak, and records it all in his Book, a-  
gainst that great and terrible Day of Ac-  
count, surely we should find a more ef-  
fectual Influence of it upon our Spirits,  
to guard us from such Words and Actions  
as are inconsistent with the *Sincerity of a  
Christian*.

And let our Hearts be melted into Re-  
pentance for our past Iniquities of this  
kind, and moulded into the Love of Truth  
by a delightful Meditation of the Faith-  
fulness of our *Lord Jesus Christ* to us in  
performing his kind and dreadful Under-  
taking to suffer for our Sins. Let us dwell  
upon the Thoughts of his Faithfulness to  
all his Promises, and think thus with our-  
selves, that he has engaged us to *Truth* of  
every Kind by the strongest Bonds of Du-  
ty and Love: And if we are false and un-  
faithful to him in this World, how justly  
may he cut us off from all our glorious  
Hopes and Expectations in the World  
which is to come.

But this leads me to the *fourth General  
Head* that I proposed; which was to lay  
down some *Directions how Christians may  
be preserv'd in the Ways of Truth*; how  
they

they may secure and maintain this Blessed Character of *Integrity* and *Uprightness* which I have described. And I think this may be better performed by distinguishing *Truth* or *Integrity* into those three distinct Parts under which I treated of it before, (viz.) *Veracity*, *Faithfulness* and *Constancy*, and by giving some *Rules* for the Preservation of each.

The *Rules* to preserve *Veracity*, or to keep our Words conformable to our Hearts are such as these.

I. *Be persuaded in your own Minds that no Circumstances whatsoever can make a Lye lawful.* Tho' when a *Question* is asked, there are many Cases wherein it may be lawful to turn the Discourse aside, to wave a direct Answer, to be entirely silent; or in some Circumstances it may be both lawful, prudent and proper to conceal a part of the Truth, as I hinted in the former Sermon: yet in my Opinion 'tis neither prudent, proper nor lawful to *Speak a Falshood to deceive my Neighbour.* The *whole Truth* may not always be necessary to be spoken to Men; but such *Falshood* is always a Sin in the sight of God. *All Lying* is utterly forbidden; and the true Meaning of a LYE is, when we speak that which we believe to be false, with a  
*Design*

*Design to deceive the Person to whom we speak.*

Here may arise two Questions.

Quest. 1. *If I have a good and valuable End in speaking, and my Design is to serve the Glory of God, or the Good of my Neighbour, may I not then use the Art of Lying, or speak a known Falshood without Sin?*

Quest. 2. *Surely there are some sort of Persons who have no Right to Truth, such as Children, common Lyars, Knaves, or Cheats; may we not therefore deceive them by direct Falshoods either for their Good or for our own?*

These are Enquiries of very great Importance to the Honour of Truth, to the Satisfaction of Conscience, and to the Welfare of Mankind: And 'tis my present Opinion (and I think there is good Reason for it) that none of these Cases can make an *express and deceitful Falshood* to be lawful, or change the Nature of a LYE and make it innocent: But to debate these two Cases so largely as they deserve, would too much incumber the present Discourse; I leave them therefore to be read with an honest and serious Mind, as an *Appendix* to these Sermons of *Truth*, and so proceed to the next *Direction*, how to *preserve our Veracity*.

II. The second Rule to preserve Veracity is this, *Accustom your self to a sober modest way of speaking, and avoid all those Methods of Speech that border upon Falshood.* I shall mention a few of them, to give sufficient Notice of what I mean.

Some Persons affect to be *certain of every thing they speak, and pronounce all that they say with the highest Assurance.* If they are relating Matters of Fact, which they only learn by Report, they tell you every Circumstance without the least Hesitation, and endeavour even in a dubious Matter to make the Hearer believe it with the highest Confidence: They are never in the Wrong, never doubtful whether they are in the Right, or no. If they are declaring their own Sentiments of the most difficult Subject, 'tis always as clear to them as the Light, they are always as positive as if 'twere divinely reveal'd, and written in the most express Words of Scripture.

Now such sort of Speakers will often find they have been mistaken: and if they have Modesty enough to retract their Words, 'tis well: But for the most part they refuse Conviction, and often persist to maintain their own Error even almost against their own Consciences. In short, It appears to me, that a Man who dares frequently



frequently to assert doubtful Matters with the most positive Air of Assurance, has not so much *Tenderness* about his Heart, and such a religious *Fear of Lying* as a good Christian ought to have.

There are others again that affect *to tell you nothing that is common*, but would always surprize the Company with *strange things and Prodigies*; and all this out of the Pride of their Hearts, and an Ambition to have their own Stories applauded and admired by all that hear them. This sort of Affectation oftentimes betrays a Person into Falshood, and secretly and insensibly allures him to say things that are neither credible nor true. *Sailors and Travellers* should set a special Guard upon themselves in this respect.

There are a third sort of Talkers, that when they *discourse of common Things* are ever expressing them in *exalted and superlative Language*. If they speak of any thing small, 'tis *prodigiously small*; if they mention any thing great, 'tis *incomparably great*. If they name a Man of Wisdom, he is *the wisest Man in the World*; or a Woman of Piety, she is *the only Saint in the Nation*. An imprudent Man with them is the *greatest Fool in Nature*; and a little disappointing Accident in Life is an *intolerable Vexation*. If they happen to hear a good Sermon, *the Preacher was inspired,*

not an Angel could exceed him : If it was a mean Discourse, the Wretch had not a grain of Sense or Learning. Every Opinion they hold is *divine and fundamental* : All their own Sentiments, even in lesser Matters, are *the very Sense of Christ and his Apostles*, and all that oppose them are guilty of *Heresy and Nonsense*. Now Persons who have accustomed their Tongues to this Language in common Discourse, seem to want that due Caution which the strict Rules of Godliness may seem to require, and make a little too free with Truth. Either their Thoughts are very injudicious, if they can believe what they say ; or if they don't believe it, they should make their Words agree better with their Thoughts.

But besides the *Approaches to Falshood* in this manner of Conversation, there is something in it that is very *vain and almost ridiculous*. Methinks such an *extravagant Talker* is something like a Man that walks upon Stilts thro' the open Street, or like one who wears a Coat much longer than his Neighbours ; and how tall soever they may think themselves, the World will be ready to call one of them a *Child* and t'other an *Ideot*.

*Object.* But are there not a multitude of such Expressions in Scripture in the Books of *Job*, and the *Psalms*, and the *Prophets*,

wherein even the more plain or common Occurrences of Life are dress'd up in very magnificent Language, and in Expressions that far exceed the strict Truth of Things? Does not *David* in his *Elegy upon Saul and Jonathan*, say, *They were swifter than Eagles, they were stronger than Lyons?* 2 Sam. i. 23. And even in *St. John's History of the Life and Death of Christ*, does he not suppose that if all things which *Jesus did* were written, even the *World it self could not contain the Books?* John xxi. 25.

*Ans.* 'Tis the natural Language of *Poetry and Prophecy*, and the Custom of the *Eastern Nations* to express things in a lofty and sublime manner, so that there is no danger of being deceived by that Language when a Prophet or a Poet indulges such Figures of Speech. Now the *Book of Job and Psalms*, and *David's Elegy* are so many *Hebrew Poems*. The Business of *Oratory* is akin to *Versè*, and sometimes requires a figurative Style. But in *familiar Language and common Discourse*, 'tis not the Custom of Mankind to use such Extravagance of Expression: The Hearer is many times ready to be led into a Mistake thereby, because he supposes the Speaker to mean plainly what he says. And I would not willingly indulge a Habit of expressing my Thoughts in such a manner



manner in common Conversation, as should deceive my Hearers, to humor such a silly Affectation.

As for the Figure which St. *John* uses to represent the variety of useful things which were said and done by our Saviour, 'tis such as can lead no Man into a Mistake, for none can believe it to be understood in a literal Sense. Besides, if one would indulge the most superlative Expressions and boldest Figures that human Language can furnish one with to set out the Honours of any Person on Earth, there can be no such proper or deserving Subject as *Jesus Christ* our Lord.

III. The third Rule to preserve Veracity is this, *Practise nothing which you are ashamed of.* Do nothing that need be afraid of the Ear of the World: Walk carefully in the Ways of Virtue and Duty: fulfil your Obligations to God and Man to the utmost of your Power: Venture upon no Practice that needs a Cover, a Disguise or an Excuse: And then you will not be so often under the Temptation of *Lying*.

Let *Children* remember this, and have a Care of disobeying God or their Parents, even when they are alone, lest they be tempted to excuse their Faults by Lying, which indeed does but inlarge and double



them rather than diminish and excuse them. Let *Servants* take notice of this, and pay all due Honour and faithful Obedience to their Masters and Governors; or else the Devil and their own corrupt Hearts will frequently join together and help them to a Lye for the Cover of their Guilt. Let *every one that bears this Discourse* watch over all their Actions, and confine them within the Rules of Religion; otherwise their Practice, which will not bear the Light, will put them under a Temptation to hide it behind a Refuge of Lyes.

And under this Head I might particularly give this Advice, *Don't affect a cunning way of Life.* Don't aim at the Character of a *subtle and crafty Man.* Be not fond of being let into Secrets, nor of engaging in Intrigues of any sort. There are some Tempers of Mankind that are naturally addicted to Craft, and are ever seeking to out-wit their Neighbours: They seldom live upon the square, or walk onward in an open Path, but are still doubling, and turning, and traversing their Course. They take a special Pleasure in managing all their Affairs with Art and Subtilty, and call it *necessary Prudence.* But if you would shew your selves *tender of the Truth*, and preserve it, let your Course of Life be bold, and free,  
and

and open. There is much Prudence to be used in our daily Conduct without this *crafty Humor*. The *Integrity* of a Man will preserve him, and keep his Tongue from Falshood; whereas a Man who is much engaged in crafty Designs, will now and then be tempted to intrench upon Truth, and come near the brink of Lying to carry on and cover all his secret Purposes.

Methinks I could pity rather than envy the high Station of *Courtiers*. How often they are constrained to put on a Disguise to colour or to conceal their real Designs! How near they walk to the Borders of Falshood, and tread hourly upon the very Edge of a Lye! *David*, the Man after God's own Heart, while he kept his Father's Sheep was more secure from this Temptation; but when he became a *Courtier* and a *King*, he was often expos'd, and therefore he begs earnestly that God would remove from him the *Way of Lying*, Psal. cxix. 29. He had felt the mischievous Influence of this Snare, and dreaded the pernicious Power of it. To be ever *practising the Politician* at home or abroad is a constant Snare to Sincerity; and to live as a *Spy in a foreign Court* may be a Post of Service to our own Nation, but 'tis exceeding dangerous to Virtue and Truth.

IV. *Have a Care of indulging any violent Passion,* for that will tempt the Tongue to fly out into Extravagance of Expression, and out-run the settled Judgment of the Mind. Whether it be *Grief* or *Impatience,* or *Anger* and *Resentment,* it will engage the Soul to form Ideas far above and beyond the Truth of Things, and often arm the Tongue with unruly Expressions, even beyond the Sentiments of the Heart. *Strife,* and *Contention,* and *noisy Quarrels* are very dangerous Enemies to Truth.

And upon this Account, above all things, I would warn young Christians to *avoid the excessive Zeal of a Party Spirit in the lesser Differences of Religion.* There has been often a great deal of Darkness and Fire, of Rage, and Deceit, and Falshood in such sort of Quarrels as these. Men of natural Warmth, animated by an honest Zeal for God and Religion, taking it into their Head that every Doctrine besides their own is *damnable Heresy,* and all Forms of Worship different from their own are *superstitious* or *schismatical,* and abominable in the sight of God, they have under the Influence of these Principles kindled their Passions to a Flame: And to secure the Reputation of their own Party, or vindicate all their Principles

ples and Practices, they have made shameful Inroads upon Truth even in relating Matters of Fact: And as Dr. *Tillotson* well expresses it, That the *Zealots of all Parties have got a scurvy Trick of Lying for the Truth*, tho' he confesses he has never observed any that would be *so very fond of a false Report, or bug and cares a Lye* as the *Papists* have done; and I wish no *Protestant* had ever follow'd their Example.

I should proceed now to lay down Rules how Persons may best preserve their *Faithfulness to Vows or Engagements* of any kind. But this must be reserved to the next Discourse.







## SERMON VIII.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Truth,  
Sincerity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

— *Whatsoever things are true, &c.  
think on these things.*



**W**HEN we are never so well inform'd in the *Nature of our Duty*, we still want *Arguments* to make our Consciences feel the Obligation. Flesh and Blood are frail and sinful ; Grace is feeble and imperfect in the present State ; Temptations stand around us in this lower World, and are ever ready to allure or affright us from the Paths of Holiness : We have need therefore

therefore of *powerful Motives* to inforce every Duty upon our Practice.

In the first Discourse on this Subject we have heard the *Nature and Extent of that Truth or Sincerity* which the Gospel requires. In the second we have consider'd what *Obligations* are discover'd by the Light of Nature to be faithful, upright and constant in our Words and our Ways; and what *additional Motives* the Religion of Christ has furnish'd us with to practise the same Virtues; and may the good Spirit of God make our Souls feel the Power of them!

But Nature is *dark* as well as *feeble*. We are unskilful in the Matters of Holiness, and know not how to secure our Virtue, and to guard our selves from Temptation to the contrary Vice, unless we are informed by *particular Directions*. I begun this Work at the End of the last Discourse. And as Truth was divided into three parts, (*viz.*) Veracity, Faithfulness and Constancy, so I propos'd to give special Rules for the Preservation of each of them.

The *Directions to preserve our Veracity*, were these.

1. *Be well persuaded in your Minds that a known and wilful Lye is utterly unlawful:* Let your Heart be establish'd in this

Doctrine ; for a slight Conviction may be easily overcome by some advantageous Circumstances, and the Temptation will soon prevail.

2. *Be sober, modest and cautious in the manner of your Speech,* and do not allow your self in those Ways of Expression which border upon Lying ; for if you often accustom your Tongue to venture near a Lye, you will be in danger sometimes of falling into it.

3. *Take Care to do nothing that you need to be ashamed of,* that so you may not be under the Temptation of a Lye to cover or excuse it.

4. *Watch against the Violence of any Passion,* for this will sorely endanger the Veracity of your Lips. Passion will carry your Judgment beyond the Truth of Things, and then it will soon awaken your Tongue to an Extravagance of Language even beyond the present irregular Judgment of the Mind.

I persuaded you there to beware of *blind and fiery Zeal,* (and more especially in Matters of small Importance) lest you should be tempted to *tell Lyes* for a pretended *Defence of the Truth.* The *pious Frauds,* as they are call'd, or the *Religious Cheats* that have been practis'd in *Christendom* in all Ages, have brought much Dishonour to the Gospel of *Christ.*

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The second part of Truth is *Faithfulness* to our Vows, Promises, and solemn Resolutions. This is a *Conformity of our Deeds to our Words*, as the former was a *Conformity of our Words to our Thoughts*. And I come now to lay down *some Rules how we may secure our Faithfulness*, and maintain our Conscience and Conversation free from Guilt or Blame in this Respect also.

I. *Be very cautious in all the Promises Vows and Obligations under which you lay your self.* Use a pious Prudence in this Matter, and it will be more easy to you to perform them. Don't multiply needless Bonds upon your Soul. The more Care you take before you utter any thing with your Lips, you will be more secure of fulfilling what your Lips pronounce.

In the *Case of Vows* there is no Inconvenience of solemn Engagements to God *to do what his Law hath made your Duty before.* And this was the Custom of the primitive *Christians*, as *Pliny* a Heathen acquaints us, that they made Vows and swore in their secret Meetings, *not to commit Murder, or Theft, or Adultery, or indulge vicious Courses.* 'Tis good to remind our selves of what God requires, and establish all our Obligations to the general Practice of Holiness.



But you had need be well advised before you *make Vows in Matters that are indifferent*; for many times this has exposed Persons to greater Snares and Difficulties. They have hoped to restrain the Violence of natural Appetites by Means of their own devising, and thus they have been tempted to be unfaithful to God himself. The Word of God gives us this Advice, Eccles. v. 5, 6. *Better it is that thou shouldst not vow, than that thou shouldst vow and not pay. Suffer not thy Mouth to cause thy Flesh to sin, neither say thou before the Angel, 'Twas an Error. Wherefore should God be angry at thy Voice, and destroy the Works of thine Hands?* That is, “Don't hastily engage thy self in Vows, such as the Weakness of Flesh and Blood will not suffer thee to perform: Nor think of being absolv'd from thy own Obligations in the Presence of God and his holy Angels, by foolish Excuses, and saying, *'Twas a Mistake*, lest God, being angry and offended at thy broken Vows, should bring a Curse upon thee and thy Affairs.” There is most abundant Experience of the Folly and Danger of needless Vows in the Church of Rome.

In the *Case of Promises made to others, and publick solemn Resolutions*, be not too frequent in making of them. See that the  
Reason

Reason of Things, the Providence of God, and the Circumstances of Life seem to call you to it before you engage, that so you may better maintain your Faithfulness, and turn your Words into Deeds. Why should you make Chains to bind your self without Necessity or Reason? Why should you promise to *do this*, or to *go thither* in a thoughtless and trifling Way, and let your Tongue put needless Bonds and Fetters on your Hands and Feet for time to come? *My Son, if thou art Surety for a Stranger, or if thou make a Bargain without Discretion, or multiply Promises without Prudence, thou art snared with the Words of thy Mouth.*

There are some Persons who are very free of their Promises upon all Occasions, and often indulge this manner of speaking, *I am resolved to do such a thing to Day, or I'll certainly go to such a Place to-Morrow, &c.* Whereas sometimes they find the Thing impracticable, sometimes it is inconsistent with their other Duties of Life, sometimes it lays them under great Difficulties and Inconveniences to fulfil such Appointments, and often they forget them too, and so disappoint their Friends.

Before you tie your selves by your solemn *Resolves and Engagements*, ask your Hearts, Is it possible to be done? Is it lawful? Is it convenient? Is it proper?

Is

Is it consistent with other Promises? Is the Thing which I would promise due to my Neighbour upon Principles of Honor, Virtue, Gratitude, Religion? Is it necessary at all, and is it necessary at this time? Methinks I would have no Promise made but what should be kept, and therefore I would set all these Guards around my Lips. Experience of human Affairs will teach us the use of *these Prudential Rules*, if we can't learn them without it. A *watchful Caution* in all such sort of Language, as lays us under any Engagements to future Practices, is of necessary Use to secure our Faithfulness, and to maintain our Truth with Honour.

Besides, I might add also, that we should *bring in something of God and Piety into the common Engagements of Life*, and this would preserve a greater Guard upon our Tongues. Go to, now ye that say, *To-Day or To-Morrow we will go to such a City, and continue there a Year, and buy and sell and get Gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the Morrow; for that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live and do this or that, James iv. 13, &c.*

If therefore we would secure our *Faithfulness* as well as our *Veracity*, 'tis necessary to learn a modest and cautious way of speaking, and accustom our Tongues to practise it. When we are relating any  
I thing



thing past or present, the Words, *I think, I suppose, 'tis my Opinion,* are very proper where the Case has any thing doubtful in it: So when we engage our selves to do any thing for time to come, *I intend, I design, I hope, I will endeavour,* are more cautious Methods of Speech, and very proper upon most Occasions of Life, except where the Circumstances require a more express Promise, whereby we bind all our Faithfulness to the Performance.

II. I would add another Rule in the Case of *Vows and Promises,* which cannot but have some Force toward the Preservation of Truth. *Think solemnly with your self, how miserable and abandoned a Creature you must be, if neither God nor Man should fulfil any of their Promises or Engagements to you,* and thereby you should awaken your Soul and all your Powers to perform your Obligations to them. What if your *Governors* should break their Engagements to defend and protect you? What if your *Parents* and your *Friends* should refuse to help and assist, to feed, or cloath, or comfort you? What if your *Debtors* should refuse to pay what they owe you? And your *Servants* deny you their Obedience and Help in a most necessary Hour? What if your *Neighbours* should disappoint you in all the Agreements  
and



and Promises they make? What if the *great and blessed God* should seize all your forfeited Mercies because of your Unfaithfulness to him, and perform none of the Promises of his Word which regard this Life, or the Life to come? What a Load of Calamities would at once come upon you and overwhelm you in Soul and Body! You would fall under universal Distress and Wretchedness in this World, and have no Hope for Eternity; and yet if you are careless to fulfil your Covenants, or wilfully break your Engagements, why should you expect that God should fulfil any on his side? Or why should his kind Providence encline any Creature to fulfil any on their side?

“ O blessed and holy God, how false  
 “ have we been to thee! How fickle!  
 “ How unfaithful! How often have we  
 “ broken the solemn Engagements under  
 “ which we have laid our selves to thy  
 “ Majesty! Our Comforts are all forfeit-  
 “ ed into thy Hands, and yet we have  
 “ Food and Cloathing given us; the  
 “ Mercies of the Night and the Day  
 “ are continued to us; thy Compassions  
 “ are renewed every Morning, and in the  
 “ Evening thy Faithfulness is glorify’d.  
 “ We are ready to charge our Fellow-  
 “ Creatures with *Unfaithfulness*, and re-  
 “ proach *their Breach of Promise*, when  
 “ we

“ we our selves perhaps have been the  
“ *unfaithful Dealers*, and have broken all  
“ those Engagements and Bonds of Kind-  
“ nefs or Duty which were the Founda-  
“ tion of their Promises. We seldom or  
“ never think of our own *Unfaithfulness*  
“ to them or to thee, but delight our  
“ selves in *Accusations*, while thou de-  
“ lightest in *Forgiveness*. O, how often  
“ hast thou pardoned our broken Vows,  
“ and hast been slow to Anger! But we,  
“ though we are wretchedly unfaithful  
“ our selves, yet are slow and back-  
“ ward to forgive. We have been guilt-  
“ ty of many Failures in thy Covenant,  
“ and our everlasting Hopes had been ut-  
“ terly lost if thy Covenant had not stood  
“ firmer on thy side than it has on ours.  
“ Blessed be the Name of *Jesus* our glo-  
“ rious Surety, our Advocate at thy right  
“ Hand, to whom thy Promises were  
“ first given! He has fulfilled all his sa-  
“ cred Engagements: Thy Faithfulness  
“ to him can never fail; in him are all  
“ our Hopes established; by his Grace  
“ we are kept from an utter renouncing  
“ of thy Covenant, tho’ we have so of-  
“ ten wretchedly fail’d in the Perfor-  
“ mance of it. Glory, Honour and Praise  
“ be given to a kind and faithful God,  
“ to a kind and faithful Mediator.

I come

I come now to propose a Rule or two for the *Preservation of our Constancy*, which is the third Part of *Truth* or *Integrity*, and to give some Directions how we may keep the *whole Course of our Life consistent with it self*, and agreeable to our Profession.

I. *Fix your great and general End, your chief and everlasting Design, and keep it ever in your Eye: then you will certainly be more regular and uniform in all your particular Practices.* Set your Face towards Heaven betimes. Let it be the most solemn and unalterable Business of your Lives to please God on Earth, in order to enjoy him in Heaven, and then you will not be easily tempted aside by the Flatteries or the Terrors of this World, to go astray and wander in the Paths that lead to Hell. Give your selves up to *Christ* both in secret and in publick. Devote your selves to him, to his Fear, and Love, and Service in your private Retirements, and solemnize your Obligations to him among the Churches of his Saints. See that you are an *inward Christian*, and declare to the World that you are a *Follower of Christ*. Mix with the Sheep of his Flock, and you will find many Advantages thereby to secure your *Truth* and *Constancy*. When a Temptation comes to make you act like the Sinners of this World, tell the World, and  
tell.

SER. VIII. *Truth, Sincerity, &c.* 211

tell your own Heart, that *you are a Christian*, and *you must pursue Heaven*.

II. *Get above the Fear of the World, and the Shame of professing strict Godliness.* 'Tis sinful *Shame* or sinful *Fear* that has a thousand times tempted the Professors of the Name of *Christ* to be false to their Profession, to act unbecoming their Character, and inconsistent with Christianity. 'Tis from a certain Feebleness and Cowardise of Soul that they desire at any Cost, to keep well with all Men, and are afraid, sorely afraid to be out of the Fashion, or unconformable to this World: Therefore they venture upon some Practices in Company that their Hearts would abhor if they were alone: Therefore they indulge many sinful Compliances; sometimes they countenance the Lewd and the Prophan, they join in a Jest upon Things sacred, they make the Ministers of *Christ* their Objects of Ridicule, and sometimes they fall into Sensuality, Luxury, and Excess, because they must do as their Company does, and have not Courage enough to refuse.

If we would be *true to Christ* we must live above the World, and be dead to all its Threatnings and Reproaches. If we are afraid of being thought *truly religious*, we shall not be able to maintain Religion.

in



in the Truth of it. There needs a sacred Courage to be constant in the Faith. We must learn to *endure Hardship as good Soldiers of Christ*, if we would be true to the Captain of our Salvation. All that belong to his Army are *chosen and faithful*, Rev. xvii. 14. 'Tis a Coward that changes his side as oft as the Enemy makes a Flourish, and he lifts himself under every Banner: But the constant Christian is a Soldier *faithful to the Death*, and he shall *receive the Crown of Life*, Rev. ii. 10.

III. *Never venture into the World without having solemnly committed your self to the Grace of Christ.* Trust your Soul afresh in the Hands of Jesus every Morning, that he may keep you *true* to himself all the Day. All the Divine Motives you have learnt, and all the solemn Engagements under which you lay your own Souls, will prove but a weak Defence to Virtue without *Faith and Prayer*. Commit your selves to him who is *able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless*. Your Hearts, your Lips, and your Lives must be in his keeping, if you would have them *true to God or Man*. Your Adversary the Devil is watchful and busy with all his Wiles to tempt you to Falseness and Inconstancy; none but he who has conquer'd the Devil can be your sufficient

ficient Guardian. And when and where-soever we find Frailty and Folly in our selves, O may the *Strength of Christ* appear *perfect in our Weakness*, and be glorify'd in our Preservation!

Thus I have finish'd all that I propos'd concerning the *first Duty* recommended in my Text, *Whatsoever Things are True, think of these Things.*

There may be perhaps some other Instances wherein this divine Character of *Truth, Uprightness, or Integrity* ought to appear in the Conduct of Christians, which don't so directly and immediately fall under the general Heads which I have before-named: But they may be easily reduced to one or another of them. There are various other Methods of *Deceit and Falshood* practis'd in the World, which break in upon this sacred Character of *Truth*, which I have not expressly mention'd before; such as Subscribing with the Hand to testify our Assent to Opinions, which we do not believe; Counterfeiting the Names or Writings of other Persons without their Knowledge, Consent, or Approbation; Adding or blotting out any thing from Divine Writings; or doing the same to the Writings of Men in Civil Affairs or Contracts, whereby one Party or another may receive Damage; Practising Fraud or Deceit or any criminal Concealment in  
Matters

Matters of Traffick, or in Matters of Trust; and in general, *Forgery* and *Knavery* of all kinds whatsoever; some of these may, by natural and easy Consequences, be reduced to the Heads I have before spoken of, and are effectually precluded by the large Description of *Moral Truth*, which I have given: Others of them fall as naturally under the general Head of *Justice* and *Injustice*, which will be the Subject of one of the following Discourses.





A N

# A P P E N D I X

To the three foregoing SERMONS,  
wherein two important Questions  
about TRUTH and LYING are  
debated at large.

## QUESTION I.

**I** *F I have a good and valuable End in speaking, and my Design is to serve the Glory of God, or the Good of my Neighbour, may I not then use the Art of Lying, or speak a known Falshood without Sin? Did not Rahab the Harlot practise this, Joshua ii. 4, 5. when she hid the Spies of Israel, and told the Messengers of the King of Jericho, that she knew not whence they came, nor whither they went? And yet she is commended by the Apostle Paul, Heb. xi. 31. That by Faith the Harlot Rahab perished not with Unbelievers when she received the Spies in Peace.*

ANSW. I. When any Action, consider'd in its self, is utterly unlawful, 'tis not possible that the Goodness of the End

OR



or Design can so change the Law of God, or alter the Nature of Things, as to make that Action lawful. The Apostle *Paul* brings the same Objection, Rom. iii. 7. *If the Truth of God hath more abounded through my Lye unto his Glory, why am I judged as a Sinner?* But in the next Verse he speaks of it with Indignation as a heinous Slander cast upon him, that he should maintain this pernicious Doctrine, *Let us do Evil that Good may come:* And he adds concerning these Slanderers, or concerning those who hold this Doctrine of *doing Evil with a good Design*, that *their Damnation is just*, v. 8.

ANSW. II. The Case of *Rahab* is easily adjusted in this manner, without allowing a Lye to be lawful: *Rahab*, tho' she was a Woman of evil Fame in *Jericho*, yet had heard of the Promise of God to *Israel* to establish them in the Land of *Canaan*; she believed this Promise, and under the Influence of this Faith she entertain'd the Spies, and thereby assisted the *Israelites* in the Conquest of that City; so far her Action is approved of God, and mentioned with Honour: But she used a very sinful Method in compassing this Design, when she told a *plain Lye* to the Messengers of the King. The Timorousness of her Temper was a sore Temptation to her; and tho' she fell into a criminal Action,

tion, yet God so far excused the ill Conduct as to forgive the Falshood, and thereby put a more signal Honour upon the Eminence of her Faith. Her Name stands therefore recorded with Honour in Scripture among Believers, But the *Lye*, tho' it was pardon'd, remains still a Blemish to her Character.

There may be also a Reason given why the Scripture does not particularly make any sharp Remark upon this Falshood of *Rahab*; for the great Degree of her Ignorance does much lessen her Fault, tho' not cancel it. A Woman of *her Character*, living in a *Heathen Country*, may well be suppos'd to have had little Knowledge of the *Sinfulness* of so beneficial a Lye as that was, and no Scruple about it.

But it is by no means a sufficient Justification of her Conduct, that the *Scripture does not directly censure her for Lying*, for there are many Actions recorded in Scripture both of Saints and Sinners which are utterly unlawful in the Sight of God, which yet have not an express Censure past upon them. *Rahab's* being a *Harlot* is not censur'd in any part of her History; nor *Judah's* defiling *Tamar* his Daughter-in-Law; nor *Jacob* and *Rebecca's* Complication of Lies to gain the Blessing; nor the most express and wicked Lye of the *old Prophet* in *Bethel*, tho' it was the Cause

of the Death of another Prophet, 1 Kings xiii. yet surely these were Crimes of heinous Guilt. The plain *Commands* or *Prohibitions* of Scripture are the *Rules* to govern our Practice: Nor can we fetch the Lawfulness or Unlawfulness of any Matter of Fact from the meer Silence of the historical part of Scripture about it.

QUEST. II. *If there are some Persons who have not a Right to Truth, may we not lawfully speak Falshood to them? Now to prove that some have not a Right to Truth, it is urged, that Truth or Veracity is a Virtue or Duty of the social Life: But there are many Questions may be asked in the social Life which the Speaker has no Right to be inform'd of, and therefore he has no Right to Truth when they are answer'd, may we not then answer them with Falshood?*

There are also *some Characters of Persons* who seem to have no part in the social Life, as *Children* who are not capable of judging for themselves, nor acting regularly in Society, may we not speak a Falshood to them for their Good? *There are some who practise no social Virtues, such as Knaves and Cheats, Thieves and Pilferers; surely these have no Right to Truth, who are ever dealing in Falshood; and may we not cozen them who would cozen us?*

I will

I will first offer two or three *general Answers* to the *Question*, and then descend to consider the *particular Instances*.

ANSW. I. Truth seems to be a Matter of eternal Right and unchangeable Equity. And there are general and express Commands given us in Scripture to *Speak the Truth*, and there are as express Prohibitions of *Falshood* and *Lies*. Now if there were any such *Exceptions* as these against the general Rule, I think God would have given us some plainer Evidence of these *Exceptions* in so important a Point as *Truth* is, upon which the Welfare of all Mankind so necessarily depends: But I cannot find any such evident *Exceptions* given in the whole Word of God.

ANSW. II. When we say *a Person has no right to Truth*, it may signify one of these two Things,

(1.) That *he has no Right to demand of me a direct Answer to his Enquiry*: And I will readily grant it in this Sense, there are Thousands who have *no Right to the Truth*; and therefore I may wave the Question, I may give them an insufficient Answer, or I may be silent, and boldly refuse to give them any Answer at all.

But, (2.) If his *having no Right to Truth*, be intended to signify, that the *Character of his Person, or the Nature of his Question,*



tion, is such as releases me from all Obligation to Truth in answering him, and that therefore I may lawfully tell him a Falshood, then I deny the Proposition: For my Obligation to speak Truth doth not at all depend on the Nature of his Question, nor doth it depend meerly on the Character of the Enquirer, but on the eternal Rule of Equity, and the Command of God. And I think this appears from hence, that *tho' I were alone*, it would not be warrantable in me to assert with my Lips a known Falshood and in this Case the *Right or Claim of Man* can have no Place nor Consideration.

ANSW. III. If this Exception be made to the plain Law of God, that we may speak a direct and express Falshood to any Persons who in our Esteem *have no Right to the Truth*, in their Enquiry, this seems to break all the Bands of human Society, violate all the Faith of Men, and render the divine Commands of Veracity, and the Prohibitions of Falshood, almost useless. The Consciences of Men would find a way of Escape from the greatest part of these Bonds of Duty, and yet think they committed no Sin.

For let us consider, *Who it is that must judge whether the Person to whom we speak has a Right to Truth or no.* Is it not the *Speaker himself* who will be the Judge?  
Now

Now if the *Speaker* must judge whether his Neighbour has a Right to Truth, there is no Case, wherein the Speaker's Interest may be any ways endanger'd by the Truth, but his own sinful Heart will readily whisper to him, that the *Hearer has no Right to Truth* in such a Question, and Conscience will easily be warped aside, and comply to pronounce a known Falshood, under the Colour and Pretence of this Exception; as for instance, if the *Buyer* asks the *Seller*, *how much he gave for any Merchandise?* The *Seller* by this Rule may tell him double the Price that it cost; for he will say, *The Buyer has no Right to Truth in such a Question as this is.* So if I ask an *Artificer*, *How he fashions his Work, or what Tools he uses in it?* He may by this Rule give me a very false Answer, under pretence that *I have no Right to Truth.*

I readily grant in these Cases that the Enquirer has no Right to demand and claim an Answer to such Questions; therefore the *Buyer* or the *Artificer* may refuse to inform him. But 'tis surprizing to think that any Man should persuade himself, that such a Question being once asked gives him a Right to tell a Lye! That any Person should ever believe, that the meer Enquiry of a thing improper to be told absolves the Answerer from all the Obligations of Truth which

his Duty to God and Man have laid upon him! Surely such a Rule of Conduct as this had need have better Arguments to establish it.

But those who maintain this Principle must rather recur *to the Character of the Person who makes the Enquiry*, and here indeed they give a little better colour to their Cause.

I come therefore now to give particular Answers to the Instances alledged, (1.) Concerning Children. (2.) Concerning Knaves and Cheats.

I. Will you say, that *Children have no Right to Truth, because they are not capable of civil Society?*

But I reply, they are capable of knowing what *Truth* and *Falshood* are, and of being influenced by the one or the other; they are capable of being deceived, and of knowing when they are deceived; they are capable of judging when they are treated with Truth and Sincerity, and acting according to the things you tell them; or else to what purpose do you speak *Falshood* to them instead of *Truth*, and try to impose a *Lye* upon them?

They are capable of resenting your Conduct when they find out the Falshood, and of refusing to believe you another time: For the very Reason why they believe

lieve your *Falshood* at first, is, because they suppose that you speak *Truth* to them, and would not deceive them: And 'tis only upon this very Principle that you your selves can attempt to impose upon them.

*Again,* They are capable of learning from you and imitating your Conduct; and they will be so much more ready to *practise Lying*, and to deceive you with it, when they have found you *practising Lies* in order to deceive them. Suppose a Mother has now and then persuaded a Child to take a wholesome bitter Medicine by saying *It is not bitter*, or has allur'd it to Bed or to School by some of the Arts of Falshood, and this Child should imitate the Mother's Example, and grow up to a *confirmed Liar*, what inward and piercing Reflections must the Mother feel? *Alas! I have taught my Child this sinful Practice, I my self have led it into the Ways of the Devil: How can I chide and correct by my Reproof that Vice which I have taught by my Example?*

'Tis sufficiently evident therefore, that tho' *Children* are not capable of half the Duties of the social Life, yet they are so far capable of them as to know what *Truth* and *Falshood* are, and to resent and to practise accordingly: And this is sufficient to the present Argument, and fully answers



the Objection. I think therefore 'tis infinitely better to allure those, whose Understandings are weak, and whose Wills are obstinate, to the Practice of Duty, by all the gentle Arts of Softness and Fondness, of Persuasion and Love, than by venturing to make an Inroad upon our own *Sincerity*, and to trifle with so sacred a thing as *Truth*.

But the *Querist* may say, *Suppose these softer Arts have been tried and have no effect, and Children may be in danger of destroying themselves if they are not immediately prevented by some plain and express Falshood, is it then unlawful to preserve their Lives by a Lye?*

*Ans.* 'Tis a Command of God indeed to preserve Life, but it must be done by lawful Means. May a Man rob on the Highway to get Money to feed and cloath him? Surely we ought to trust the kind Care and Providence of God with our own Lives and others in the way of Duty, and not *do Evil that Good may come*, as was said under the former Question.

Thus much shall suffice for *the Case of Children, on pretence of their being incapable of civil Society*. But the *Querist* will insist still on the next Instances.

II. *Cheats and Knaves, and thievish Criminals, have no Right to Truth, for they*  
*have*

*have broken the Bonds of civil Society, (tho' not by a publick Renunciation of 'em) and therefore we may use all manner of Deceit toward them, and treat them with express Falshood and Lying wheresoever it may promote our own Interest and Safety.*

To this I reply, That the Rule of Christ is, *Whatsoever you would that Men should do unto you, do ye also that unto them.* Mat. vii. 12. But this licentious Doctrine cancels this divine Rule, and substitutes another in the room of it, (*viz.*) *Whatsoever Men do unto you, do ye also that unto them,* which is as widely different from the sacred Rule of Christ as Light is from Darkness, or Heaven from Hell. By this new Rule we are no longer bound to practise that Truth, that Justice, that Goodness to others, which we think reasonable they should practise toward us; but we have Leave to practise that Falshood and Knavery, that Fraud and Injustice, and Mischief to others, which they do actually practise toward us, or which we suspect they design to practise.

If one half of a City or a Nation were fallen into knavish Practices, thro' the great Degeneracy of the Age, or were become thievish Pilferers, t'other half would by this Rule practise Knavery with Licence toward them, and deal out Falshoods to them by divine Permission. And then the

Charge would quickly be just and universal, *There is no Truth in the Land.* As *Hos. iv. 1.*

There is indeed scarce any Censure of a degenerate and corrupt Age under the Old Testament but *Fraud* and *Deceit*, *Lies* and *Falshood*, make a considerable part of the Accusation or Complaint; and surely God would never allow any Principles or Practices that have so pernicious a Tendency. Hear how the Prophets *Isaiab* and *Jeremy* lament their multiplied Transgressions in *conceiving and uttering from the Heart Words of Falshood: Truth is fallen in the Street, yea Truth faileth, and Equity cannot enter.* *Isa. lix.* *This is a Nation that obeyeth not the Voice of the Lord. Truth is perished, and is cut off from their Mouth. They deceive every one his Neighbour, and will not speak the Truth, they bend their Tongues like their Bow for Lies.* *Jer. vii. and ix.* Now if this licentious Principle were allowed, neither God nor his Prophets would ever want Matter of Complaint.

By this means also it will come to pass, that if a Man happen once to get the Name and Character of a *Thief* or a *Cheat*, all his Neighbours will think themselves authorized to have no Regard to Truth or Honesty in all their Dealings and Discourse with him, for this Rule affirms that *he has no Right to Truth.* And when  
any



any Person fancies that he has seen reason to suspect or disbelieve *his Neighbour's Honesty*, he will think himself absolved from all Obligations to speak Truth to him. But what a wide and dreadful Flood-gate would be open'd by this means to let in an Inundation of Fraud and Falshood, and to practise all manner of Deceit!

Let it be remarked also, that this Doctrine is near a-kin to the Popish Abomination, “*That no Faith is to be kept with Hereticks*; for they are a sort of dangerous Men who would ruin the Church, and therefore *they have no Right to Truth.*” Now what shameful and horrid Perjuries, and what execrable Mischiefs, have sprung from this one impious Principle of the Church of Rome?

The Word of God gives no manner of Indulgence to such licentious Principles as these. We must *wrong no Man, defraud no Man*, we must *not render to any Man Evil for Evil*, nor Falshood for Falshood, but *overcome his Evil with our Good*: And we must *provide things honest in the sight of all Men.*

It will be said, perhaps, that the Scripture most frequently mentions a *Neighbour*, or a *Brother*, or a *Fellow Christian*, in the Prohibitions of *Lying* and *Falshood*, as in the ninth Commandment, *Bear no false witness against thy Neighbour.* 1 Thess. iv. 6.



*No Man defraud his Brother.* Eph. iv. 25.  
*Speak every Man Truth to his Neighbour.*  
 Levit. xix. 11. *Lye not to one another.*

But let it be reply'd, that the Scripture demands *Righteousness for the Stranger also.* Deut. i. 16. and in several other Places. And when God, by his Prophet *Malachi*, forbids *treacherous Dealing with a Brother*, he gives this Reason for it, *Have we not all one Father? Hath not one God created us?* Therefore all Mankind are *Brethren* in this Sense. Our Duty to speak and practise *Truth* arises from our Obligations to the Law of God; and since God has not released us by any such Exceptions, the lying and deceitful Carriage of Men does not authorize us to practise Deceit and Lying.

It is indeed a piece of an old *Latin Verse* that is in the Mouth of many, *Fallere Fallentem non est Fraus*, which may be *English'd* thus, *To cheat a Knave is no Cheating*: But I know no Verse in Scripture that gives us this Liberty. And I think we may by the same Rule *steal from them* that would steal from us, or *plunder those* who would plunder us.

I will grant readily, that when a *Contract* or *Bargain* is made, whereby both Parties are obliged mutually to perform something to or for each other, (whether this Contract be express'd in verbal Promises, or implied in the Nature of Things,  
 I and

and by the known Customs of Mankind) then if one of the Parties fail of Performance, the other is thereby releas'd from his Promise or Engagement: and the Reason is most evident, because the *Promise or Engagement was made in a conditional manner; and if the Condition on one Side be not fulfilled, the Agreement or Bargain on the other Side is void and utterly ceases;* so that a Man is innocent in this Case, tho' he does not perform his Promise. Now this is so well known to all Men by the Light of Nature and the easiest Reasoning, that there is no need to enlarge upon it.

According to this general and known Rule, suppose a *Merchant* order any Quantity of Goods from his *Correspondent* by the first Ship, and promise Payment by such a Day, if the sending of those Goods be neglected and carelessly delayed, the *Merchant* is not bound to keep his first appointed Time for Payment. A hundred Instances there are of the like Nature which a small degree of Reason and an honest Conscience will easily determine without intrenching upon Truth. Such is the Case of all *conditional* Promises and Contracts. But if a Man be never so great a Knave, and I should make him a lawful and an *absolute* Promise of any thing, surely I ought to perform it; and not satisfy my Conscience in the Practice  
of

of Deceit and Falshood, under a Pretence that *he had no Right to Truth.*

There are other Cases which may occur in human Affairs and create Difficulty in the Minds of sincere Christians, a Solution of which may be found in Books written on those Subjects: But I think most of them may be easily answered by the *general Principles* before laid down: And, to finish this Subject, I add, that I know of no Circumstances that can make a *plain and exprefs and known Lye to become lawful*: If Life it self were in Danger, yet the exprefs Prohibitions of *Falshood* and *Lying* in the Law of God make it safer in point of Conscience to venture the Loss of any earthly Comfort and Life also, rather than venture upon a plain and solemn Lye.

And, in my Opinion, that Man, who being assisted by divine Grace, maintains the Truth boldly, or refuses to speak a known Falshood to a Murderer, or a bloody Tyrant, and bravely resigns his Life upon the Spot, he dies a *Martyr to Truth*; his Name shall be register'd with Honour among the Saints of God on Earth, and his Soul shall have its Place among the *Martyrs* in the upper World.

S E R.



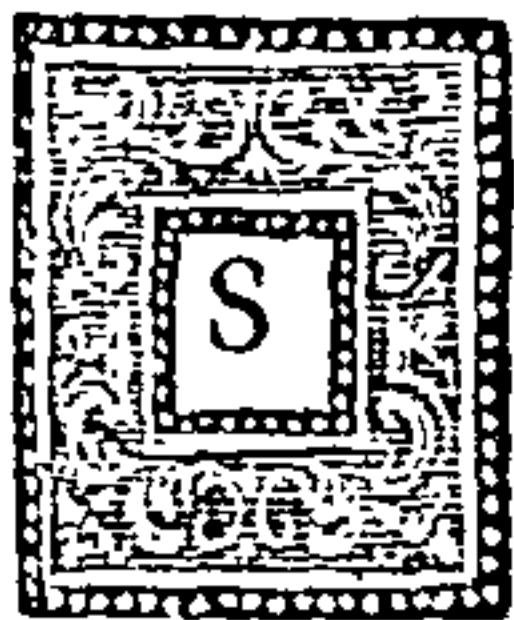
## SERMON IX.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Gravity, Decency. &c.

PHILIP IV. 8.

—*Whatsoever things are honest, or grave, &c. think on these Things.*

Ὅσα σεμνά, &c.



SINCE the Translation of the Bible into the *English* Tongue is so excellent a Performance in it self, and so necessary a Service to the Church, I feel a sensible Regret whensoever there is occasion to complain of it, or to correct it. In the main I may venture to say boldly, it teaches us all the necessary Doctrines and Duties



Duties of Christianity in a very ample and compleat manner, and sets them in an evident Light: And what the Spirit of God spoke in ancient Times in *Greek* and *Hebrew*, is sufficiently manifested to us for our Salvation in the *English Bible*.

But in this part of the Verse which I am now to discourse of, the Word which we render *honest* is not so well translated as I could wish; for *Honesty* is contain'd in the Words *true* and *just*, which go before and follow my Text. But the *Greek*, *σεμνός*, more properly signifies *grave*, *decent*, or *venerable*; and so you find it in the *Margin*, which will oftentimes help you when the Word in the *English Text* is not so expressive of the original Sense. The same Word *σεμνός* is render'd *grave* in several other Places of Scripture: 'Tis three times so express'd in the third Chapter of the first Epistle to *Timothy*, *ψ. 8. The Deacons must be grave. ψ. 11. Their Wives also must be grave. ψ. 5. A Bishop must have his Children in Subjection with all Gravity.*

'Tis a Word that is used in *Greek Authors* to represent the Character of an *aged Man*, a *Philosopher*, or a *Magistrate*, among the *Heathens*. It carries in it the Idea of an *honourable Gravity* and a *venerable Decency* of Behaviour, and this is what the *Apostle* recommends to the Practice of *Christians*. 'Tis as if he had said, "The  
" Character

“ Character of every common Christian  
“ should have something in it so *honoura-*  
“ *ble* as may command a sort of *Venera-*  
“ *tion* and *Respect* from all Persons they  
“ converse with, as much as the Charac-  
“ ter of a *wise old Man*, a *Magistrate*, or  
“ a *Philosopher*, does in the heathen  
“ World.”

To improve this Subject I shall shew,

I. Wherein this *Gravity* consists.

II. How the Light of Nature recom-  
mends it.

III. How the Gospel inforces it.

IV. Lay down a Direction or two in  
order to obtain it.

*First*, This *Gravity* and *venerable De-*  
*gency* which the Apostle recommends in  
my Text may be supposed to consist in  
these three things.

1. A Moderation and Decency in our  
Apparel.

2. A Gravity and Sobriety in our Speech  
and Conversation.

3. Honour, Decency and Dignity, in  
our whole Deportment and Behaviour.

I. *A Moderation and Decency in our Ap-*  
*parel*, such as becomes the Profession of  
Persons whose chief Ornament is *Religion*  
and

and *Godliness*. This the Apostles, both *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*, each in their turn, insist upon as a necessary Qualification of Women who profess Christianity, and as an Ornament to the Doctrine of the Gospel of *Christ*. 1 Pet. iii. 3, 4, 5. *Let your Conversation be with Fear; whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the Hair and wearing of Gold.* 1 Tim. ii. 9, 10. The Apostle *Paul* bids *Timothy* the young Evangelist teach the same Doctrine and Practice. *In like manner I will that Women adorn themselves in modest Apparel with Shamefacedness and Sobriety, as becometh Women professing Godliness.* Not that all Christians must utterly abandon those richer and more costly Methods of Ornament, *Gold or Pearls*, which the Apostle there makes mention of; for every one of us should wear such Raiment as suits our Character and our Age, our Company and Business in the World: But let not these be our chief Ornaments, still remembering that *we are Christians*; and let our Apparel as well as our Conversation shew that we despise Trifles, and thus maintain the Dignity of our high and holy Calling.

Here, saith a \* learned Commentator, " 'tis worthy to be noted by the

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\* *Dr. Whitby.*

" *Women,*

SER. IX. *Gravity, Decency, &c.* 235

“ Women, that this Precept ought not  
“ to be slighted by them, as of little Mo-  
“ ment, seeing it is so carefully inculcated  
“ by the two chief Apostles of the *Jew*  
“ and *Gentile*, *St. Peter* and *St. Paul*; and  
“ the contrary is represented as a Practice  
“ opposite to *Godliness*.

Nor while you are *dressing* should you forget that you are *Sinners*, and therefore should put on *Shamefacedness*, for all our Ornaments and Clothing are but a Memorial of our first Sin and Shame. And when we take a Pride in our Garments, it looks as if we had forgotten the Original of them, *the Loss of our Innocency*.

Nor is this sort of Advice to be confined to the female World: For as the same Author expresses it, “ If it be so  
“ unbecoming a *Christian Woman* to be  
“ thus concerned in adorning and trick-  
“ ing up her Body, it must be much  
“ more unbecoming a *Christian Man*, and  
“ that which makes him truly to deserve  
“ the Name of a *Fop*.

’Tis a token of a light and vain Mind to be too fond of gaudy Habits, a Mind not much affected with Sin or with Salvation. Surely Christians are born for greater things, and their Aim should point at higher Excellencies than these are. Let their chief Ornaments be the Graces of the Spirit, and the Virtues of the Heart  
and



and Life. A well adorned Body and a neglected Mind very ill becomes a Professor of the Gospel.

*Christians* should look like *Strangers and Pilgrims* here, and not think themselves undress'd unless they are conformed to all the Niceties and vain Fashions of the World. Sometimes (it may be) we are too much afraid we shall not look like the *Children of this World*, whereas the Apostle advises us rather to look like *Strangers*. We are travelling homeward thro' a foreign Country, having the Ornaments of *Holiness* on us, which is the Raiment of Heaven. I confess we are not required to affect *Singularity*, nor to seek a foolish and useless Distinction from the Customs of our Country, where they are proper, innocent and becoming; for the *Kingdom of God does not consist* in any *affected Peculiarities of Dress or Behaviour*; but let us remember too, that it is below the Glory of our Character and the Dignity of our Calling to have our Thoughts uneasy, if every Pin and Point that belongs to our Apparel be not placed in the most fashionable manner, to fret and rage if every Fold of a Garment be not adjusted in perfect Conformity to the Mode.

Then we may be said to fall short of that *venerable Decency in our Apparel* which Christianity should teach us, when we are

among

*among the first* in any new devised and gaudy Fashions; when we are some of the *foremost* in the Gayeties of the Age: When we *run to the Extremes* of every new Mode, and affect to vie with the vainest of our Sex: When the Business of *Dressing* is made one of the *most frequent, important, and solemn Enquiries and Concerns of Life*, and when it employs some of our most serious Thoughts and our warmest Passions: When we indulge a *greater Expence* in Finery than our Circumstances will allow, or our Stations require: When we *waste more Time* in adorning our selves than the Duties we owe to God or Man will reasonably permit; and especially if we *intrench upon the Hours which should be devoted to sacred Purposes*. I should add also, that then we certainly break in upon Christian Sobriety, when we indulge such sort of Clothing as in its own Nature *becomes a Temptation to Immodesty*, and brings Fuel to the impure Fire of the Eyes or of the Heart.

I would not be thought to treat too largely upon this Subject, or handle it too severely; but let us remember, that our biggest Danger in this Age is Excess, and Luxury, and Vanity of Mind: We are pretty secure now-a-days from too great a Carelessness in this Respect.

II. *Gravity and Sobriety in our Speech* is another part of that honourable Conduct and Character which we ought to maintain, and to which the holy Apostle invites us. In the second Chapter of *Titus*, Ver. 6, 7, 8. you have this Direction of the Apostle to *Titus* the Evangelist, how he ought to behave himself; and what he speaks to him chiefly as a Minister, may be given as a Rule to all Christians, whom he must *instruct in all things. Shewing thyself a Pattern of good Works; in Doctrine or in Discourse, shewing Uncorruptness, Gravity and Sincerity, sound Speech that cannot be condemned, that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no Evil to say of you.* He gives all the Christians at *Ephesus* the same Advice. Eph. iv. 29. *Let no corrupt Communication proceed out of your Mouth, but that which is good to the Use of Edifying, that it may minister Grace unto the Hearers. Talk of something that may improve one another in Knowledge, in Virtue, in Religion: And let each of us be ashamed to think that we have been an Hour or two in each other's Company, and have neither spoke nor heard any thing that is worth Remembrance. How often after a Visit among Friends must we take up this just and shameful Complaint, "Alas, I have*  
"said



“ said nothing for their Improvement, nor  
 “ heard any thing for my own!

In *Ephes. v. 4.* the Apostle there secludes some sort of Conversation from the Lips of Christians, *Neither Filthiness nor foolish Talking, nor Jestings, which are not convenient,* which are *ἐκ ἀνῆκοντα*, not agreeable to our Profession. *Foolish Talking* and *Jesting* are here forbidden as well as *Filthiness*. By *foolish Talking* we may suppose such sort of Language to be intended from which it is impossible any Profit or Advantage should arise to a wise or a good Man. And by *Jesting* the Apostle here designs such sharp and biting Jestings that wound the Reputation of a Person concerning whom they are spoken. Such a *Turn of Wit*, as the original Word signifies, that at the same time wounds a good Name and gives a bitter Reproach. Not that every thing *pleasantly spoken* is supposed to be unlawful; or that the Apostle any where forbids all manner of *Mirth* and *Jesting in Conversation*; for there are proper Times and Seasons for such sort of Discourse; and there may be valuable Ends in it too, when 'tis innocently used on purpose to recreate Nature and refresh the Mind. And how far this may be indulged I shall have occasion to speak toward the End of this Sermon.



III. Another thing that is included in this Word *Gravity* is *Honour and Decency in our whole Deportment and Behaviour*. Each of us should be careful to maintain our publick Character as a Christian with a due Sense of the Dignity of it. Christians should be ashamed to debase the Powers of their Nature to practise any thing that is sordid and unworthy; nor make the Members of their Flesh, nor the Faculties of their Mind, Slaves to that which is ridiculous or foolish.

How unbecoming is it to see a *Christian* spoil his Countenance, and disfigure a human Face by practising all the wild and wanton Grimaces of Folly and Madness! To see *Man*, who is made after the Image of the Son of God, distort his Body in the most antick Postures, and give up all the Honours of his Nature to base and senseless Merriment! Surely the Duties of *Christianity* lead us to nothing below the Dignity of *Man*.

Here I would not be mistaken, nor do I pretend that the Gospel requires such a constant *Solemnity of Countenance and Language*, as tho' we were *all Preachers*, or *always preaching*. There is no need to put on serious Airs at all Times: We are not bound to banish Mirth when we become Christians. *Laughter* is a natural Action,

Action, and the Faculty was not given to Mankind in vain, nor is the Exercise of it forbidden for ever.

The chief Ends of it seem to be these two; either to *recreate animal Nature* by Expressions of Mirth, or to put *Folly out of Countenance*.

There may be Times to *recreate Nature*, to unbend the Spirits from Business, and to indulge Mirth among our Friends. The Wise Man assures us, *There's a Time to laugh* as well as *to mourn*. *There are Times proper for Weeping*, and some Persons may have Times for *Dancing* too. *Eccl. iii. 4.* And in the 19<sup>th</sup> Verse of the 10<sup>th</sup> Chapter the same divine Writer says, *A Feast is made for Laughter*. At the mutual Entertainment of Friends we may be merry and not sin. Our holy Religion only demands this of us, that we confine our *Mirth* within the *Limits of Virtue*, and take heed lest when we give a Loose to the sprightly Powers of animal Nature, we should transgress the Rules of Piety, or trespass upon Things sacred.

Another Purpose for which *Laughter* was made, is *to reprove and punish Folly*, and *put Vice out of Countenance*. There are Seasons wherein a wise Man or a Christian may treat some criminal or silly Characters with *Ridicule* and *Mockery*. *Elijah* the Prophet condescended thus to correct the *Priests*

and *Worshippers of Baal*; but this sort of Conversation must by no means be the Business of our Lives, and the daily Work and Labour of our Thoughts and our Tongues. 'Tis *the Heart of a Fool* that is *in the House of Mirth*, for he would dwell there continually. *Eccles. vii. 4.* If we are always affecting to throw out some Turns of Wit upon every Occurrence of Life, and tack on a Jest to every thing that is spoken; if we interline all our Discourse and Conversation with Merriment, Banter and Joking, 'tis very unworthy of that *Gravity* and Honour that belongs to the Christian Life.

The *Second Head* of Discourse which I propos'd, is to prove, that *the Light of Nature, or the Law of Reason, requires something of this Gravity of Speech and Behaviour*; and this is manifest, if we consider the *Nature of Man* in Opposition to the *Brute that perishes*, or the *Growth and Age of Man* in Distinction from *Children and Babes*.

1. If we consider *Man in Opposition to the brutal World*: *Man*, who has a rational Soul, should act conformable to that sublime Principle within him, and not devote himself to a Life of fantastick Humour, or content himself with the Character of an everlasting Trifler. What  
a poor

a poor and contemptible Account is it of any Person to say, he is a *walking Jest*, a *meer living Trifle*? His Thoughts are made up of Vanity and Emptiness, his Voice is Laughter, and his whole Life is composed of Impertinences.

¶ There is a sort of Persons in the World who never think well of themselves but when they are *dress'd in gay Attire*, and hope to command the Respect of Mankind by spreading abroad their own fine Feathers. Their *Rayment* is the brightest and best Thing that belongs to them, and therefore they affect to shew it. There is another sort of Men who value themselves upon their *merry Humour*, and that they can make their Company laugh when they please. But the more refin'd and rational part of the World value all these Creatures as they do *Peacocks*, or other Animals that imitate the Voice and Actions of Man. They use them as an Entertainment for their Eyes or their Ears, to give a Fit of Diversion, or to pass away a merry Hour. We generally look upon this kind of People as very worthless Things, as something beneath our selves, and as sinking below their own *Species*. We seldom converse with them upon the Level, or to attain any of the nobler Purposes of Life. We only borrow their Wit, or their Folly, their Humour, or



their Finery, for a Season of Amusement, and justly despise them when the laughing Hour is at an end. Reason it self tells us that human Nature was made for something greater and better, for Contemplation and Action much superior to what these trifling Creatures are acquainted with. ¶

Again, 2<sup>dly</sup>, If we consider *Man as he stands in Distinction from Childhood*, surely a more grave and solemn Carriage becomes him. Children are pleas'd with painted Toys; gaudy Garments and sounding Trifles are their chief Delight. They are entertain'd with little Impertinences agreeable to their Ignorance and the Weakness of their Age: But 'tis a Shame to a Person of well grown Years to practise the Child for ever. He that devotes himself to a Life of useless Idleness, and treads round the Circle of perpetual Mirth and Amusement, without Profit to himself or the World, is but a *Child in longer Garments*, or an *Infant of larger Size*.

The *third general Head* leads us to consider *what forcible Arguments Christianity furnishes us with to practise this Sobriety, Gravity and Decency of Behaviour*: And I shall throw them all into a short Expostulation without distinguishing the Particulars.

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SER. IX. *Gravity, Decency, &c.* 245.

Do we not *bear the Name of Christ*, a sacred and a venerable Name? And shall we cast Disgrace upon it by any thing that is mean and dishonourable? Do we not profess to be the Followers of a crucify'd *Jesus*, to be Disciples of the Cross? But wherein do we follow him if we spend our Days in Mirth and-Trifling? His Conduct was all holy and heavenly, and we can never look like his Disciples if our Conversation favour of Earth and Vanity. What a noble Simplicity runs thro' all his Speeches, thro' all the Actions and the Behaviour of our blessed Lord! And how little do we imitate him if we fondly pursue all the gay Follies of Life in our Dress, in our Speech, and in every thing we do? No Glarings of affected Wit, nor insipid Pertness, can add any thing to our Character as Christians.

Let us remember that we are *the Sons and Daughters of the most high God*. We profess to separate our selves from the Triflings and Impertinences of this World, as well as from the Impiety and Guilt of it. *Come out from among them*, saith the Lord, *and I will be your Father, and ye shall be my Sons and my Daughters*, saith God Almighty. Surely the Children of a Prince should behave with Solemnity and Honour when they are in the midst of the lower Orders of Mankind; and the

Children of the King of Heaven should remember the Dignity of their Birth, and their high Relation, when they are conversant among the Sons of Earth. Their Carriage indeed should not be proud and haughty to the Men of this World; *Jesus* the only begotten Son was meek and lowly: And there's a sacred Art of maintaining a divine Humility among the meanest of our fellow Creatures, without indulging the Practice of any thing mean and ridiculous. Our blessed Lord was a Companion of *Fishermen*, but not of *Mimicks* and publick *Jesters*.

Let us think again, that *we are bought with an high and valuable Price, we are redeemed, not with corruptible things, as Silver and Gold, but with the precious Blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without Blemish and without Spot.* 1 Pet. i. 17, 18. And what is it that we are redeemed from? 'Tis from *this evil World, and from a vain Conversation.* The Son of God has *loved us and washed us in his own Blood,* and shall we defile these Souls of ours with the Meannesses of this Life which *Christ* has cleansed in so rich a Laver? He has *made us Kings and Priests unto God and his Father:* Let us now and then ask ourselves and enquire, Is our Language and our Behaviour becoming such illustrious Names, such Titles, such sacred Honours,  
as



as are put upon us by the Father and the Son?

Again, Let us review *our Profession; What is our Calling? What is our Design? What is our Hope?* Are we not born from above? Are we not Pilgrims and Strangers here? Do we not profess to seek a *better Country, that is, an heavenly?* Do we not live for Heaven and Immortality? How unbecoming is it then for Christians to be perpetually light and vain and frothy? How unbecoming our holy and heavenly Calling and our everlasting Hopes? If we are *Children of the Light and of the Day,* let us not live as tho' we belong'd to the Night and Darkness: *Let us not sleep, nor trifle as others do, but watch and be sober.* And especially if our natural Temper be sanguine and sprightly, and incline to assume vain Airs, there is more need of constant Watchfulness over the Heart and Life, and a Bridle upon the Tongue, lest we should speak Indecencies, and be guilty of Folly and Madness.

The *last Thing* I design'd, was to propose *some Directions in order to cure the Levity of the Mind,* and to maintain such a *decent Gravity in the Course of our Life as becomes the Gospel.*

DIRECT. I. *Let us meditate often on the most sublime and the most awful Parts of Christianity;* and thro' the Assistance of



the Spirit of God these will be effectual Guards against this Vanity of Temper.

The *sublime Truths of Christianity* demand our frequent Review. Let us often rise high in our Thoughts, and let our Faith look far backwards to the eternal Ages before this World was. Let us contemplate the Love of God the Father in contriving our Salvation before he stretch'd abroad these Heavens, or laid the Foundations of this Earth. Let us think of the Condescension of his Mercy, when he chose fallen perishing Sinners to be the Objects of his everlasting Love. Let us dwell upon his Compassion to Man when he appointed his own Son to take Flesh upon him, and to become our Mediator and Sacrifice. Let us survey with holy Wonder the various Glories of the Son of God, *by whom and for whom all things were made, who upholds all things by the Word of his Power, and who is the express Image of his Father.* Let us behold him consenting to hide all these Honours behind a Veil of Flesh and Blood, walking the Streets of *Jerusalem*, and travelling on Foot thro' the Villages of *Israel*, attended with a few poor despicable Men, or surrounded with the Reproaches of the blaspheming *Jews*. Let us look upon this illustrious Person, who was adored by Angels, yet *unknown and unglorified* among  
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the Sons of Men, and humbled even to Death and the Grave; then gaze on him rising again from the Dead, and *declared to be the Son of God with Power, exalted at the right Hand of the Majesty on high, and ruling all the Millions of Inhabitants of the visible and invisible Worlds.* Surely if our Souls were inur'd to the Meditation of such sublime Wonders as these, we should not easily immerse our selves in Trifles and Fooleries.

Again, Let us meditate on the *more awful Doctrines, the more solemn and dreadful Truths of our Religion,* and these will be an effectual Restraint to a vain Temper of Mind. Let us think on the *Justice of God* manifested in the Destruction of Sinners in all Ages, when it appear'd in a prodigious Flood of Water, and with a Deluge of Ruin testified against the Wick- edness of the old World; and when it came down in flaming Fire upon *Sodom* and upon the Cities of the Plain. Let us meditate on the *Wrath of God* that has been *reveal'd in numerous Instances against all the Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men.* Let us contemplate that divine and *severe Justice* that appear'd in the Sufferings and Death of God's own Son, when *it pleased the Father to bruise him, and to make his Soul an Offering for Sin.* Let us think of his Agonies in the Garden and

on the Cross, when he bore the Weight of our Iniquities and stood in the Place of Sinners. Let us send our Thoughts down *to the Regions of Death and Hell*, and behold the fallen Angels bound in Chains of Darknes, and groaning under present Torments, yet waiting for the Day of greater Vengeance. Let us think with our selves what Millions of our fellow Sinners, the Sons and Daughters of *Adam*, lie there banish'd from the Presence of the Lord, and tormented with Fire in their Consciences without Remedy and without Hope, and say, *Why are not we there too?*

Let us often look forward to the awful *Moment of our Death, and the Time of our Departure* from all the flattering Scenes of this present World. This will put a Damp upon the vainest Mind, and hang with a painful Weight upon the Sons of Mirth and Levity. This will be a means to restrain us from that foolish and trifling Behaviour, which otherwise our Tempers might incline us to: And let us remember *the solemn Hour when we must stand before the Tribunal of our Lord Jesus Christ*, divested of all these gaudy Shews of Life in which we are now ready to pride our selves, and there we must receive a Sentence without Repeal, which shall send us to Heaven or to Hell at once, and fix our everlasting State. These are Terrors or  
 Glories

Glories too solemn to be trifled with; these are Thoughts that will hold our Souls awake and serious; this will preserve that *Gravity of Mind* which becomes a Christian, and keep us in a prepared Temper to fulfil present Duty, and to wait the final Event of all things.

DIRECT. II. If we would maintain that venerable Decency in our Frame of Spirit and in our Deportment which becomes the Gospel, let us *set our selves about some useful Employment for the Service of God or our fellow-Creatures, or for our own best Improvement.* If Satan find the Mind empty of Thought, and the Hands void of all Business, he will be ready to fill them with Temptations to Iniquity and Mischief: And the Triflers of this World will be ready to seize upon such a Person as a fit Partner for their Impertinences, and allure him into Follies beneath the Dignity of human Nature and the Character of a Christian.

I have often pitied some of the Descendants of honourable and wealthy Families of both Sexes, the Unhappiness of whose Education has given them nothing to do, nor taught them to employ their Hands or their Minds: Therefore they spend their Hours in *sauntering*, not knowing whither to go, and are at a loss what to



do with themselves to wear their Life away. Upon this account they give themselves up sometimes to the mean and scandalous Pleasures of the lowest of the People, and spend their Hours in Chattering and vulgar Merriment. They make the Business of their Dress the Study and Labour of half the Day, and spend another part of it in trifling Discourse and Laughter, and in scattering Jest and Scandal upon their Neighbours or Acquaintance. All these Pieces of Folly and Immorality would be rectified if they would but find out for themselves some daily and proper Business to be employ'd in. King *Solomon* at his leisure Hours studied *natural* and *moral Philosophy*, he discoursed of the Nature of Vegetables *from the Cedar to the Hyssop*, and of Beasts, Birds and Fishes; besides *his Proverbs* and Rules of Prudence for the Government of human Life. 1 *Kings* iv. 32, &c. *St. Paul* when he was not employed in his sacred Work, yet he would not be idle; and having no need to study for his Sermons which he had by Inspiration, therefore he wrought with his Hands at *Tent-making*, and maintain'd himself by it: *Not*, says he, *because we have not Power* to eat your Bread while we teach you the Gospel; *but to make our selves an Example to you.* See *Acts* xviii. 3. and *2 Thess.* iii. 8, 9. And good *Dorcas*, when she

she had no Business of her own, *made Coats and Garments* for the Poor. *Acts ix. 36, 39.* Such honourable Examples as these deserve our Imitation.

DIRECT. III. *Let us keep a strict Watch over our selves when we indulge Mirth, and set a double Guard upon the Seasons of Recreation and Divertisement.*

The Rules of Religion do not so restrain us from the common Entertainments of Life, as to render us melancholy Creatures and unfit for Company. There is no need to become meer *Mopes* or *Hermits* in order to be *Christians*. The Gospel does not deprive us of such Joys as belong to our Natures, but it refines and heightens our Delights. It draws our Souls farther away from mean and *brutal* Pleasures, and raises them to *manly* Satisfactions, to Entertainments worthy of a rational Nature, worthy of a Creature that is made in the Image of God. The *innocent Entertainments of Life* are not utterly *forbidden* to Christians, but are *regulated* by the Gospel.

When we have consider'd and found them to be *lawful*, then they are to be regulated these two Ways.

1. All our Recreations and Divertisements must have some valuable End propos'd.

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2. We must distinguish the proper Time and Season of them, and confine our Diversions to that Season.

¶ 1. *They must always have some valuable End propos'd.* The chief and most useful Design of them is to *make us more cheerful and fitter for some Hours or Days of Service afterwards.* Recreation must not be our *Trade or Business*, but meerly us'd as a means to prepare us for the valuable *Businesses of Life.*

The Scripture indeed tells us, that *of every idle Word that Men shall speak there shall be an Account given in the Day of Judgment.* Mat. xii. 36. And much more of *idle Hours and Actions.* But this doth not utterly exclude all manner of *Recreations*, or all *Words of Pleasantry*, which may be innocently and properly used upon some Occasions; but whatsoever Words, whatsoever Conversation, whatsoever sort of pleasurable Entertainments, we indulge our selves in, which have no valuable End, no useful Design in them. These will bear but an ill Aspect before the Judgment-Seat of *Christ.* We shall not be able to give a tolerable Account of such *idle Words or Hours* at that Day; and 'tis the Judge himself who tells us so, and adds his *Amen* to it.

'Tis proper more especially for Persons that are of a *melancholy Temper*, or that have perhaps been *overwhelm'd with some bodily Diseases*, or *overloaded with some Sorrows or Cares or Businesses of Life*, to give themselves a little Looſe or Diverſion now and then in delightful Converſation, or other Recreations and Exercifs. Theſe may be as uſeful as a Glaſs of Wine to reſreſh Nature to make the Heart glad, and the Spirits lightſome; for they tend to fit this animal Body of ours for better Service to the Soul in future Duties that God calls us to: And ſo long as we confine our Recreations to this Deſign, and keep this End in view, our Words of Pleaſantry in private Converſation, and even our Recreations and Diverſions that are more publick may be agreeable to the Mind and Will of God; for 'tis his Will that our whole Nature, Fleſh and Spirit, ſhould be kept in the fitteſt Frame for Duty. And ſome Natures are ſo conſtituted, that they will hardly be kept in a Temper fit for Duty without ſome Divertiſements and Recreations. Where this therefore is the End, theſe Practices can't be called *idle*, that is *impertinent* and to *no purpoſe*. But where no reaſonable Deſign is propoſed, *Sports* and *Merriments* are hardly to be defended, for all rational Creatures ought to act with a View to ſome valuable End.

2. Another



2. Another Regulation which ought to be given to all our Diversions is this, *We should narrowly watch lest the Time of our Recreations intrude upon the Hours and Seasons of Business or of Religion.* There is a *Time to laugh*, the Wise Man tells us, as well as a *Time to labour or to pray*; but *Laughter* must be confin'd to its proper Place and proper Time, and not intrench upon the Season where Affairs of bigger Importance, and Matters of grave and serious Consequence should be transacted.

Conscience has something to do in *Matters of Recreation* as well as in our religious or civil Affairs: And as it can never be lawful to rob God or our Families of any of the Time that should be devoted to their Service on purpose to lay it out in Diversion, so neither is it by any means proper to *let the Seasons of Diversion come too near the Seasons of Worship.* When a Loose is given to all the natural Powers in Mirth and Pleasure, they are not so easily recollected all at once for the sacred Service of Religion. Nor should we run hastily-away from the Duties of Worship, and plunge our selves into the midst even of innocent Merriment; for this would look as tho' we were weary of Devotion, and longed to be at Play. A wise Christian will divide his Times aright, and  
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make all the Parts of his Conduct to succeed one another in a decent Order.

Besides, *The Hours of Recreation should not be multiplied by those Persons who have least need of them*; such are Persons of a cheerful and healthy Constitution: And they will be used more sparingly by Christians of maturer Age and longer Standing in Religion. As a Child grows up toward Man he leaves off the Impertinences of Infancy, and the Sports and Trifles of Childhood; and as a Man grows up more and more toward a perfect Christian, his Methods of Pleasure will be changed from *light and gay* to that which is *grave and solid*. ¶

To conclude this Subject, I would mention only *one powerful Motive* to preserve *Christian Gravity*, and that is, that *hereby the Temper of your Spirit will be better prepar'd for every religious Duty*, whether it be Prayer or Praise, and *better fitted to meet every Providence*, whether it be prosperous or afflictive: Whereas those who perpetually indulge a merry Temper of Mind, when a *prosperous Providence attends them*, they are tempted to excessive Vanity and carnal Joy; their Hearts are not filled with Thankfulness to that God from whom their Mercies come, being too thoughtless and regardless of the original Donor. On the other hand, *when*  
*Affliction*

*Affliction smites them*, they are in Danger of despising the Stroke of the Rod, nor does the Correction of their heavenly Father make so deep and useful an Impression upon their Spirit as it ought to do.

When in the Course of our Lives we maintain such a *grave and composed Frame* as becomes a Christian, we find our Hearts more ready for all the Duties of Worship; we are prepar'd to receive evil Tidings as well as good, and to attend on the Will of God in all his Outgoings of Providence: We are ready to receive Messages of Sorrow, or the Summons of Death, for we are still conversing with God; we keep the invisible World in the Eye of our Faith: And our Spirits are ready prepar'd to depart from the Flesh, and to meet our God and our Saviour in the unknown Regions of Light and Immortality.





# SERMON X.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Justice, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, or grave, whatsoever things are just — think on these things.*

Ὅσα ἐστὶ δίκαια —



IN many Parts of the sacred Writings, there appears a very close Connexion of the Subjects which are handled, a natural Order is observed, and a beautiful Transition made from one to the other: But this is not to be expected in every Text, nor is it at all necessary that  
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it should be so. When *St. Paul* enumerates several Virtues or Vices, he sometimes heaps them together, and doth not design any Regularity or natural Order in placing them. Our Commentators therefore in such Cases, when they are once resolved to find these Beauties and Connexions where the Holy Writer did not intend them, they oftentimes torture and strain both their own Invention and the Words of Scripture. Thus, I fear, I should do, if I would attempt to give a Reason why the Apostle in this *Collection of Virtues*, named *Gravity* or *Decency* before *Justice*, which is of so much greater Importance in the Christian Life.

I take them therefore in the Order in which they lie, and having treated of *Truth* and *Gravity*, I proceed now to consider the *third* piece of Morality which he mentions, that is, *Justice*.

*Whatsoever things are just, think on these things*, let these be the Objects of your Meditation and of your Practice.

And here if I should entertain you in two Discourses with this single Subject of *Justice*, I hope I shall not exceed the Limits of your Patience: For 'tis what the Apostle frequently insists upon as a Glory to Christianity, that those that profess it be *Just* or *Righteous*. You who have fix'd your Hope on the Grace of God,  
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and have a Design to honour the *Gospel*, to you I would recommend this great Duty of the *Law*, and that in this Method:

- I. I shall endeavour to shew what is the *general Nature* of this *Justice*, and lay down the *universal Rule* of it.
- II. Discover in *various special Instances* what those things are which are *just*, or wherein our *Justice* or *Righteousness* must appear.
- III. I shall give some *Proof* of this great Duty of *Justice* or *Righteousness* by the *Light of Nature*, and according to the *Law of Reason*.
- IV. Shew what forcible Influence the *Gospel of Christ* has to recommend *Justice* to your Meditation and Practice.
- V. Propose a few *Directions* how to guard your selves against *Temptations to Injustice*, or rather point out some of the *chief Springs of Injustice* that you may avoid them.

And while I proceed in this Work you will rejoice inwardly if you find your own Consciences sincerely answering to the Characters of this Virtue in any good Measure: And if there be any shall find himself a guilty Sinner, and very deficient in this Practice, let him be reprov'd, ashamed, and amend.

First then, Let us consider *the Nature of this Justice, and what is the most universal Rule of it.*

In general, *Justice* consists in giving to every one their *Due*. According to the Stations in which God has placed us, and according to the several Relations in which Providence has joyn'd us to our fellow Creatures, every Person we converse with hath *something due to him*; and this we are bound to pay as *Men*, and much more as *Christians*.

But since Cases and Circumstances are infinite, and 'tis impossible for any Book to contain, or any Man to receive and remember so many special *Rules for Justice* as there may be occurring Circumstances in the World, which require the Practice of it, our Lord *Jesus Christ* has therefore given us one *short Rule* whereby to judge what is due to every Man, and fitted it to every Purpose, Matth. vii. 12. *All things whatsoever ye would that Men should do unto you, do ye even so to them, for this is the Law and the Prophets.*

I confess there may happen in human Affairs some Cases of such exceeding Intricacy and Difficulty, that very few Persons have Skill enough to determine precisely *what is due*, or what would be *strictly just and righteous*: Nor will this Rule infallibly lead us into the perfect Knowledge

ledge of it ; but even in such Cases a sincere honest Man consulting his own Conscience, and asking, *What he thought reasonable that his Neighbour, in the like Case, should do to him,* would seldom wander far from strict Justice ; and by practising agreeably to this general Law he would approve his Conduct both in the sight of God and Men.

Thus our Blessed Saviour has set up a Court of Equity in the Breast of every Man. This Rule is easy to be understood and ready to be apply'd upon every Occasion. The meanest of them may learn and practise it, and the highest are bound to obey it. This is that divine and comprehensive Rule of Justice or Righteousness, by which you must regulate all your Actions, and give every one their Due : *Do to others as you'd have them do to you :* Not as an *unreasonable* Self-love would wish to receive from others, but as your own *Conscience* would think it *reasonable* others should do to you, as I have explain'd it at large in a Sermon on that Text.

The *second* thing propos'd was to discover in *various Instances what those things are which are just, or wherein our Righteousness must appear.*

Here it is necessary to distinguish *Justice* into that which belongs to *Magistrates,*  
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and that which belongs to *private Persons*.

That which belongs to *Magistrates* is called *Distributive Justice*, because it divides and distributes such Rewards and Punishments as *are due to every one* according to the Merit or Demerit of the Person; and this is done either by the Law and Light of Nature, or by the Laws of the Land in which we dwell. Now in this sort of *Justice*, the *general Rule* of our Saviour, of which we have been speaking, is of excellent and constant Use. Let a *Prince* or a *Magistrate* place himself in the room of a *Subject* or *Inferior*, and ask what is equitable and just that his Governor should practise toward him, and let that be the Measure of his own Conduct toward his Subjects or Inferiors; let him exercise his Authority according to this sacred Rule of Righteousness.

But in our separate Assemblies we have very little Need to speak of the *Duty of Magistrates*, or of *distributive Justice*, since there are very few of that Rank and Order of Men among our Hearers.. We have Reason to give hearty Thanks to our present Governors, who distribute so much Justice to us, as to give us the Liberty of worshipping God in a manner that differs from theirs.

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I apply my self therefore immediately to consider that *Justice* which belongs chiefly to *private Persons*, and which is their Duty to practise. This is called *Commutative Justice*. This is that Equity of dealing, that mutual Exchange of Benefits, and *rendering to every one their Due*, which is necessary between Man and Man, in order to the common Welfare of each other. This is that *Justice* that is due from every Person toward his Neighbour, whether he be superior, inferior, or equal: And I think the following Instances which I shall mention, will comprehend most of the Cases wherein the Practice of Justice is requir'd.

I. 'Tis just that we *honour, reverence and respect* those who are our Superiors in any kind; whether Parents, Masters, Magistrates, Ministers, or Teachers, or whatsoever other Character of Superiority there be in the natural, the civil, or the religious Life; otherwise we do not pay them their Due.

Honour and Obedience are due to *Parents*. 'Tis the first Command of the second Table. *Honour thy Father and thy Mother, that thy Days may be long in the Land. Children obey your Parents, for this is right in the Lord. Manifest your affectionate Duty toward them. Pay all*

due Submission to their Commands, and all honourable Regard to their Advice.

*Honour the King as supreme*, and other Ministers of Justice as *subordinate to him*, and submit to them in all the just Executions of their Authority: This is due from Subjects to Princes.

*Servants, be obedient to them that are your Masters according to the Flesh, in singleness of Heart as unto Christ, with Goodwill, doing Service as to the Lord, and not to Men.* Your faithful, diligent and cheerful Service is their Due.

*Let those that labour in the Word and Doctrine* be counted *worthy of double Honour*, i. e. of Respect and Maintenance: It is due to them in the Church where they are set as *Elders, if they rule well.* I mention these Hints but very briefly, and for the most part in the Language of Scripture, as Instances wherein these Characters of Superiority demand Honour and Duty from Inferiors.

I grant there may be *other Obligations* to respect and honour our Superiors in some of these Cases, besides the meer *Law of Justice*: but this *Law of Commutative Justice* that I am now treating of, obliges us to it. The Light of Nature and Scripture both suppose and oblige *Parents* to take Care of their *Children*, to advise and instruct, nourish and provide for them;

them; therefore Obedience and Honour becomes their Due. The Command of Submission given to *Subjects*, supposes and obliges *Princes* and *Rulers* to protect and defend them from all Injury. The Precept of cheerful and willing Obedience given to *Servants*, supposes and obliges *Masters* to do the same things unto them, that is, to treat them with Good-will, and cheerfully give them their Food and Clothing, or their Wages and Hire, *Eph.* vi. 9. Nature and Scripture supposes *Ministers* and *Teachers* to be capable and willing to give good Advice, Counsel, and Instruction to those who are *younger*, or who accept of their Teaching; therefore let Respect and Honour be paid where it is due.

'Tis the Foundation and Rule of *Commutative Justice* in all these Instances, that whilst *Inferiors* are oblig'd to pay due Regards to those that are above them, the *Superiors* are equally oblig'd to confer those Benefits on Persons of a lower Character, which the Law of God, and the Light of Nature require; but some of the Cases I have mention'd will fall in naturally under the following Particulars.

II. Another Instance of *Commutative Justice* is the *particular Kindness that is due to near Relations*. This is a very beautiful



and a pleasant part of Life, where it is well managed, this affectionate and delightful Exchange of good Turns one for another.

¶ Now that it is due to all *near Relatives*, according to the Appointment of God, will be made evident in this manner.

God the great Creator of all Things could have produced all Men immediately by his own Power, and have made them arise up in several Successions of Time, without such a Propagation or Dependence one upon another if he had pleased; and then there would have been none of these tender and engaging Relations of *Father, Son and Brother*. But the wise Creator hath ordain'd otherwise; he hath appointed such Methods for the building of Families, and continuing Mankind in the World, as binds every Soul of us by the Ties of Nature to one another. Acts xvii. 26. *Of one Blood hath God made all the Nations of the Earth.* And those that are nearer akin to one another, especially in the same Family, as *Brethren and Sisters*, ought to look upon themselves under more peculiar and mutual Obligations to do Kindnesses to each other in the first place according to their Capacity. *The Obligation lies on each Party, because it lies upon the other.* My Brother is bound to love and help me, therefore it's my Duty to help and love my Brother: For a *Brother*

*ther is born for Adversity. Prov. xvii. 17.*  
'Tis the sovereign Will of Heaven, that there should be such near Relations, who should be bound by the Law of Creation and Duty to protect, to support and assist one another in a time of Adversity: This is the Design of God the Creator in the Course of his Providence, in his Subdivision and Propagation of all the Families of the Earth. ¶

And as it is a piece of *Justice* to confer this mutual Help which is due to *near Relations*, so there is something of *Justice* too in our distinguishing Acts of Kindness and Assistance according to difference of *Necessity*, and according to difference of *Merit*. I cannot believe I am bound to love or serve every Brother or every Sister, with *equal* degree of Affection and Kindness, whatsoever their Character be, whether virtuous or vicious: Nor to bestow *equal Benefits* upon them where there is not equal *Necessity*; this can never be of a divine Appointment. And tho' there is some Duty, some Kindness, some Assistance always due to those that are our near Relatives, yet this very *Rule of Justice* obliges us to give more Respect or Love to those that are in themselves more honourable and worthy, and those who merit more at our Hands, may reasonably expect it.

This will further appear from the next Particular.

III. Another Instance of Justice is *Love to those that love us, and Gratitude to those that have done us good.* Those that have been serviceable to us in the Concerns of our Souls or our Bodies demand Kindness from us, and Returns of Service, according to their Benefits and our Capacity.

Let us first take Notice of the *Gratitude that is due for spiritual Benefits.* The *Christian Galatians* who were converted from *Idolatry and Heathenism*, and reconciled to God by the preaching of *St. Paul*, had such a powerful and penetrating Sense of their Obligations to him, that *if it were possible, saith the Apostle, I bear you record, ye would have plucked out your own Eyes and given them to me, Gal. iv. 15.* And when the same Apostle writes to *Philemon*, who was converted to the Faith by his Ministry, he gently insinuates the Obligations he was under, *tho' I do not think proper to tell thee, saith he, how thou owest unto me even thine own self, v. 19.* Saint *Paul* speaks upon this Principle in many Places of his Epistles. *1 Cor. ix. 11. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? And when he gives an Account*  
of

of the Contribution which the Christians of *Macedonia* and *Achaia* made for the poor Saints at *Jerusalem*, he expresses himself thus: *It hath pleased them verily to make this Contribution, and their Debtors they are: for if the Gentiles have been made Partakers of their spiritual things, their Duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things; because it was from the Jews that the Gospel first came forth, and was preached among the Gentiles.*

There is some sort of *Gratitude* due also to those who by their Writings, or more especially by their Conversation or Instructions, have improved our *Understandings*, and added to our *Knowledge in things natural or moral, as well as divine.* There are some Persons in the World, who have advanc'd their Intellectuals in a very sensible manner by the Company of their Friends, but they have so much of *Pride* and *self* reigning in them, that they refuse to acknowledge it: They would fain have the World believe, that 'tis the rich Soil of their own Understanding has produc'd this Harvest of it self: They are ambitious and fond to have it thought that their Notions are all their own. Tho' they have plum'd themselves with borrow'd Feathers, they are unwilling to confess whence they received them, and pretend they are owing to Nature only.



But *Pride* is a secret Vice, and a cursed *Spring of Injustice* in more Instances than one, as I shall shew hereafter.

After the Benefits bestow'd on our *Souls*, we ought to consider what is due to those that have served our *Bodies* or our *natural Life*. Those that have healed our Diseases, that have saved us from imminent Dangers and Calamities, or present Death; those that have fed or clothed us, or supported Life when we were poor and destitute: All these deserve particular kinds of Remembrance, and due Returns of Service. Those that have either vindicated our Honour, or encreased our Reputation, and spread our good Name in the World, stand entitled also to some agreeable Returns of Benefit.

Don't let us imagine then that *Gratitude* is a meer *Heroick Virtue*, that we may pay or not pay at our Pleasure; for Nature dictates it to us as a piece of *strict Commutative Justice*, and Equity of dealing between Man and Man. We may be very properly said to treat our Neighbour *unjustly* if we refuse to serve him again, who hath first served us, when his distress'd Circumstances shall require our Assistance.

There are some Cases indeed wherein the Person who is obliged by his Neighbour's Kindness, cannot possibly make a  
Return

Return equal to the Benefit receiv'd, without ruining himself and his Family, or exposing himself much more than his Neighbour did to serve him. There are Cases wherein the Person who hath obliged us may over-rate his Kindness, and undervalue all our Acknowledgments: He may require most unreasonable Returns, and think he is never sufficiently recompens'd. There are Cases also wherein the Benefactor may repent of his past Services, may endeavour to take away the Benefit bestowed, may without Reason commence a resolute Enmity, and do what in him lies to cancel all former Obligations: In such Circumstances as these the Obligation of Gratitude may be diminished, and perhaps may cease altogether. And tho' sometimes in these very Cases there may be high and heavy Charges of *Ingratitude* brought by the first Benefactor against a Person of a very grateful Mind; yet these Accusations may be utterly unjust in the sight of God, who knows and weighs all Circumstances in a righteous Balance. But where no such Bars are laid in the Way, it is evident that the *Practice of Gratitude*, and a mutual Return of Benefits, is but a *piece of natural Justice*. The very *Publicans and Sinners do good to those that do good to them*. Matt. v. 46. Luke viii. 32.

IV. Another piece of *Justice* is the *Payment of the full Due to those whom we bargain or deal with, whether the Contract be made formally in Words, or implied in the Nature of Things, according to the Customs of Mankind.* And under this Head not only those who *buy and sell, who lend and borrow*; but all Ranks and Degrees of Mankind, who have any Commerce with each other, are included, from the *Prince upon the Throne to the Day-Labourer in the High-ways and the Hedges.*

The very Notion of *Commutative Justice* implies the *giving one good thing in barter or exchange for another.* And all Commerce amongst Men was originally carried on this Way, (*viz.*) The Husbandman gave Corn; the Graſier Cattle; The Draper gave Cloth; the Artificers and Labourers their Skill and Work; the Prince and Rich Man gave Food and Protection; the Poor and the Subject gave their Attendance and Service: And thus Mankind lived by an Exchange of Benefits. But when they found many Inconveniencies arise from this manner of dealing, they contriv'd another way of Exchanges, and that is by *Money*; which by universal Agreement is made the common Measure of all things in Contract:  
And

And since that *Time, Skill and Labour, Attendance and Services* are exchanged for *Money* as well as *Goods and Merchandizes*. Now herein consists the Practice of *Justice*, that every one render to his Neighbour that which is due upon the account of any of these Benefits or Conveniences of Life he receives from him.

¶ Let us give the first Place to *Kings and Rulers* in this Discourse as Justice requires. Tho' the *Distribution* of special Rewards and Punishments may have something in it of a distinct Nature, yet the common Protection which they owe all their Subjects, and the Obedience and Tribute which their Subjects owe them upon that Account, are properly a part of *Commulative Justice*. By their Oath of Magistracy, and by our Engagements of Allegiance expressed or implied, we bargain with them for *Protection*, and we ought to pay them *Tribute*. They accept of high and heavy Charge, and agree to execute the Laws of the Land for the Good of the People: Therefore not only the Purses, but the Consciences of the People are under Obligation to pay Taxes to the Magistrate for the Support of his governing Power, and the Maintenance of his Honour and Authority, that he may the better fulfill the glorious and useful Work. This is what the Apostle insists upon and

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argues in that known Place the 13<sup>th</sup> Chapter to the *Romans*. *Rulers are ordain'd of God, not for a Terror to good Works, but to the Evil. The Ruler is the Minister of God to thee for Good, and he beareth not the Sword in vain; he is an Avenger to execute Wrath upon him that doth Evil. Wherefore ye must needs be subject, not only for Wrath, i. e. for Fear of his Anger; but for Conscience sake, as a Matter of Justice and Duty: And for this Cause also pay Tribute.* And it is to be noted, the Apostle puts our Duty in this Respect upon the Foot of Justice, *ϣ. 7. Render therefore to all their Dues, that is, whatsoever things are just perform to them, Render Tribute to whom Tribute is due, Custom to whom Custom, Fear to whom Fear, Honour to whom Honour.* ¶

As the Payment of Tribute and Taxes to those who undertake our Protection, Defense and Safety is a necessary Duty, so the Payment of a *Salary* to a *Teacher*, of *Wages* to a *Servant*, of *Money* or *Merchandise* to a *Trader*, of *Hire* to the *Workman* are other Parts of Justice. Let not the *Labourer that hath reaped down your Fields*, or wrought in your Service, go without his Hire, which was a Practice the Apostle reproached in his Days, *James v. 4.* The Law of *Moses* is very strict in this Matter, *Deut. xxiv. 14, 15. Thou shalt*

*shalt not oppress a hired Servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy Brethren or a Stranger.* To express it in modern Language; whether he be *Christian* or not, a good Man or an evil Man, let him have his Hire. If he is so poor that he cannot tell how to provide for himself, to answer the Necessities of the Evening, then see that thou pay him the Hire of the Day, nor let the Sun go down upon it, for he is poor, and sets his Heart, or depends upon it. Trespas not upon his Poverty by thy with-holding his Due so long as may turn to his Prejudice; let not his Hire, which is detain'd by Fraud, cry against thee, for the Lord of Hosts, the God of Justice, will hear the Cry of the Oppressed.

And not only in the Case of a *poor Labourer*, but in every other Instance make Conscience of paying that which you have borrow'd, or what you owe to your Neighbour, and that not only in *full Measure*, but at the *appointed Time* of Payment: The *Time* is part of the Contract as well as the *Money*. Don't say, *I intend to be honest, but I won't pay this Week or this Month.* Do not with-hold what is due, and say to thy Neighbour, *Go and come again when thou hast it by thee: Withhold not Good from him to whom it is due, when it is the Power of thine Hand to do it.* This is forbid by the inspired Preacher Solomon,

*Solomon,*

*Solomon*, Prov. iii. 27, 28. Nor is this agreeable to the golden Rule of our Saviour, *Do to others as you would that others should do unto you.*

V. *Help to our fellow Creatures in Cases of great Necessity* seems to be another piece of human Justice, even tho' they have never done any thing actually for us. We are bound to defend our Neighbour from apparent Injury, so far as is consistent with our own Safety, and sometimes farther too. 'Tis our Duty to direct him in the right way when he is wandering or uncertain. 'Tis a piece of Justice to warn him of approaching Danger, and to give him some Assistance in case of sudden Calamity or Distress attending him. When we see his Soul, or his Body, or his Estate, in imminent Hazard, we ought to give him notice of it, we should put forth some Efforts of Kindness for his Security, and pluck him as a Brand out of the Fire. Our own Conscience dictates this to us, since we should think it a very reasonable thing to expect the same Kindness from our Neighbour, when we are found in the like Circumstances.

Can we suppose that the Law of God should appoint us to *lift the Ox or the Ass of our Neighbour out of a Pit*, or to *restore his Sheep to him when going astray.*  
Deut.

*Deut. xxii. 1.* and yet that we are not bound to fulfil the same Duty of Love toward our Neighbour himself? Nay, the Command of *Moses* reaches still farther, *Exod. xxiii. 4.* *If thou meet thine Enemy's Ox or his Ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again.* How much more should this be practised toward the Soul or the Body of a fellow Christian?

If the Law of Justice require us to secure the Cattle or Possessions of our Neighbour; surely then we are obliged to deal as kindly with *his Reputation* and *good Name*, which in some Cases is the best part of a Man's Estate, and is almost as dear to many as their Health or Life. When we happen therefore into such Company as give their Tongues a Loose to Scandal, and we hear our Neighbour vilified and reproached, we ought to ward off the Calumny, and to refute the Scandal, where we know that our Neighbour does not deserve it.

This piece of Justice or Duty, to assist a suffering Neighbour, arises from the social Nature of Man, who by the Law of Nature is so far born for a social Life as to come into the World with this Claim, and under this sort of Obligations; for a naked exposed Infant may claim the Patronage and Protection of every Eye that beholds him. And where other Circum-

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stances



stances are equal, those who are most capable of affording Help seem to be most obliged. Now if it be a Work of human Justice to preserve such an helpless piece of human Nature from Death, surely every Infant grown up to any Degrees of Capacity and Manhood ought in like manner to esteem himself obliged to afford some Assistance to his fellow Creatures according to their Distress and his Capacity well consider'd and adjusted.

Therefore, my Assistance or Relief of an injur'd or perishing Creature is a sort of Duty to Mankind, tho' the Person himself be an utter Stranger to me: The History of the *good Samaritan* in the Gospel tells me, that in such a Case every Man is my *Neighbour*, tho' he be of a different Nation, Sect or Party. But when Men are fellow Subjects, or fellow Citizens, or combin'd in any natural, civil or religious Society, this Rule of Justice appears with more Force and Evidence; it strikes a brighter Light upon the Conscience, and ought to have more Power upon the Heart and Practice; for Combination into Society is an implicit Contract or Promise of mutual Help under Necessity.

I confess, several of the Instances which I have mentioned under this fifth Head may be refer'd also to *Charity* and *Mercy*,

of which I shall speak hereafter; but for as much as the Light of Nature and the Law of God require these beneficial Actions of Men toward each other, I have here placed them under the Head of Justice.

VI. The last of piece of *Justice* which I shall mention, is *Reparation to those whom we have wilfully injured as far as possible*: And this is a certain Duty whether we have done them Injury in their Souls, in their Bodies, in their Estates, or their Reputation.

If we have led them into *Errors* or *Heresy* by our Conversation; if we tempted them *to Sin by our Allurement* or *Example*; if we have solicited their Assistance in any *base or guilty Practices* of our own, we ought seriously to employ our best Powers and Prayers toward their Recovery from the Snare of the Devil: If we have wilfully injured their Health; if we have blasted their Credit; if we have thrown a Blot upon their good Name; if we have defrauded them of any part of their Due, or wasted their Substance, let us know and consider that the Law of Justice requires us to make what *Restitution* we are capable of: But still it must be done in such a manner as must consist  
with

with our Duty to the rest of our fellow Creatures round about us.

'Tis a vain thing to pretend to be sorry and repent that we have done our Neighbour a wilful Injury, or to flatter him with idle Complements of *asking his Pardon*, while it lies in our Power to repair the Damage he sustains in a way of Consistence with our other Duties, and yet we obstinately refuse it: Such a Repentance as this cannot be sincere in the Sight of God, nor have we any Reason to hope that his Justice or Mercy will condescend to accept it.

We have heard these various *Instances of Justice*, this large and particular Account what is *due to our Neighbour*, in the manifold Relations and Businesses of Life. I grant there are several Difficulties that may attend some of these Instances in the particular Practice of them, by reason of the infinite Variety of Circumstances which may surround our Actions, and the unforeseen Occurrences of human Life. The *strictest Rules of Equity or Justice* in some Cases require a Mitigation; and 'tis impossible to say before-hand what shall be precisely and exactly due to our Neighbour in every new Accident or Occurrence. But a *sincere Love of Justice* wrought deep into the Heart, and a *sacred Regard to the*  
golden

*golden Rule of Equity* which *Christ* has given us, will lead us thro' most of these Perplexities into the Paths of Righteousness and Truth.

It is time now to have the *Question put close to Conscience*, “Has this been the  
“manner of our Life? Has this been our  
“Conduct toward our fellow Creatures?  
“Are we *Children*, and have we paid all  
“due Honour and Obedience to our *Pa-*  
“*rents*? Has the *Father* no cause to com-  
“plain that we have disobeyed his Au-  
“thority? Has the *Mother* no Reason to  
“say, that we have scorned her Advice,  
“or abused her Tenderness and Compas-  
“sion? Are we *Servants*, have we never  
“wasted the Goods of our *Master*, nor  
“spent that Time in idle Company, in  
“Folly or in Sin, which should have been  
“employed in his Service? Have we  
“dealt with our *Relatives* in the same  
“Family as becomes a *Brother*, a *Sister*,  
“or a near *Kinsman*, and fulfilled the Du-  
“ties to which we were born? Do we  
“never neglect to make *due Acknowledg-*  
“*ments* for Favours received? Have we  
“loved those that love us, and practised  
“the Law of Justice and *Gratitude* to  
“those who have rescu'd our Souls and  
“Bodies from Distress and Danger, or  
“laid Obligations upon us by peculiar  
“Benefits? Am I a *Trader*, and do I  
“practise



“ practise strict Justice and Truth in all  
 “ that I buy, and in all that I sell? Have  
 “ I been carefully solicitous to wrong no  
 “ Man, to defraud no Man, to cheat and  
 “ cozen no Man? Do I hate the Arts of  
 “ *Falshood* and *Knavery*? Have I paid the  
 “ full Due to all that I deal with, and do  
 “ I keep the proper Time of Payment,  
 “ which Contract or Custom have ap-  
 “ pointed? Have I defended my Neigh-  
 “ bour from Injury, and assisted him in  
 “ the Day of his Distress, as I my self  
 “ should reasonably hope for his Defence  
 “ and Assistance? Have I sought to rescue  
 “ his good Name from Reproach and  
 “ Slander when it has been attacked? Or  
 “ have I rather fallen in with the Slan-  
 “ derers and join’d in the wilful Scandal?  
 “ Have I honestly sought to make *Resti-*  
 “ *tution* to another where I have been  
 “ guilty of wilful Injury, and done what  
 “ in me lies to repair the Damage that my  
 “ Injustice has brought upon him? Have  
 “ I attempted to repair his Losses, so far  
 “ as is consistent with the Duties of my  
 “ other Relations in Life?” Where is  
 the Person that can lay his Hand upon his  
 Heart and say, I am guiltless before God  
 in all this? Who can wash *his Hands in*  
*Innocency* and pronounce himself Righte-  
 ous? Surely such a Discourse as this is  
 should awaken Conscience to sensible Acts  
 of

of Repentance and Mourning; we should be willing and ready to yield to the Conviction where the Word of God fastens the Charge upon us, and lay our selves low before the Throne of a righteous God. “ Blessed Lord God, *if thou art*  
“ *strict to mark Iniquities, who can stand*  
“ *before thee? But there is Forgiveness*  
“ *with thee that thou may'st be feared.*  
“ We have fail'd in many Instances of  
“ Duty toward our fellow Creatures as  
“ well as toward thee our Creator: We  
“ have neither given to God nor to our  
“ Neighbour the full Due of Love which  
“ thy righteous Law requires: We lie in  
“ the Dust before thee, and betake our  
“ selves to the Refuge that is set before  
“ us: *Jesus* the Righteous is our Hope,  
“ he not only paid to God and Man all  
“ their Due, in the Course of his holy  
“ Life, but he also restor'd that Honour  
“ to thy Justice by his Death which we  
“ had taken away by our Unrighteous-  
“ nesses. O may every Soul of us be for-  
“ given for his Sake, and created a-new  
“ in *Christ Jesus* unto good Works!  
“ *Amen.*



# SERMON XI.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Justice, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*—Whatsoever things are just—  
think on these Things.*



IF a bare Proposal of the *Rule of Duty*, and the mention of the *various Instances* of it were sufficient to persuade Mankind to the *Practice*, then I need not prolong my Discourse on this Subject of *Honesty and Justice*: For I have already propos'd the *sacred Rule* which our Saviour has given us, *Do to others as ye would that others should do to you*; and I have described the *several Instances*

*stances* wherein this Rule must direct our Conduct, that we may be just and righteous in all our Dealings amongst Men.

But alas! Our Natures are so corrupt, our Consciences are so unwilling to receive the Laws of Duty, and our perverse Wills and Passions have so much Reluctance to the Practice, that we have need of *Arguments* to inforce it upon Conscience, we have need of powerful *Motives* to awaken our Souls to Righteousness; and 'tis necessary therefore that I proceed to the *third Head of Discourse* which I propos'd, and that is to shew *how far the Light of Nature dictates to us the Duty of common Justice*, and what Arguments may be drawn from thence to influence Men to be *honest*.

¶ I. If we consider the *natural Right* that every Man hath to keep that which belongs to him, it will appear that this is the Gift of God as the *God of Nature*. God, the common Author of all our Beings, requires that this Right be held sacred and inviolable.

I shall not run back to ancient Ages to trace the *original Grounds of Property*, or how Men became intitled to any of their Possessions: 'Tis sufficient for me, that every Man is born into this World with a Right to his Life, to his Limbs, to his  
Liberty



Liberty and Safety, and to the good things of this World which he possesses according to the *Laws of Nature* and of *the Nation* where he is born. He has a Right also that these should be secure from the Hands of Injustice and Violence, unless he himself be some way concerned in the Practice of Injury to his fellow Creatures. That Man therefore who offers Injustice or Violence to his Neighbour in his Body, or his Soul, or Estate, he robs him of his natural Right which God hath given him, and which the Law of Nature secures to him: He sins against the *God of Nature*, the common Father of Mankind; and his Conscience hath reason to expect that the *God of Nature*, who is just and righteous, will avenge the Mischief done to his injured Creatures.

Let it be always observed and excepted here, that the great God himself (consider'd meerly as the *God of Nature*, and where he has not bound himself by Promise) reserves a Right to resume what he has given, and especially when his Creatures have made a Forfeiture of their Blessings by sinning against their Maker: But this does not authorise Men to deprive one another of their Possessions, unless he has appointed them from Heaven the Executioners of his Vengeance by a most evident and infallible Commission particularly  
given

given by God himself; as in the Case of the *Israelites* spoiling the *Egyptians* of their borrowed Jewels, and depriving the *Canaanites* of their Lands and their Lives: But I know not any Instance of that kind ever since.

II. If we consider *the Need that every Man stands in of the Help of his fellow Creatures*, Justice and Honesty will appear to be a natural Duty of the social Life: And God, as he is *the Governor of the World*, will take Vengeance of any Neglect or Violation of this Duty, either in this World or in the other. ¶

*Commutative Justice*, as it is described in the former Discourse, is built upon this Foundation, that one Man has need of another's Assistance: Nor is there any the meanest Figure amongst Mankind so very worthless, useless and contemptible, but he may be capable of doing us some Service either now or hereafter. 'Tis possible we may be in such Circumstances as to stand in need of the Help of the *Meanest* as well as of the *Mighty*; and therefore the *Duty of social Life* obliges us to practise the *Rules of Justice* toward all. The *Rich* stand in need of the *Poor* to perform the meaner Offices for their Convenience, as much as the *Poor* stand in need of the *Rich* to supply them with

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Food or Money. The *Master* has need of the *Servant* to assist and obey him, as well as the *Servant* stands in need of Maintenance or Wages from the Hands of his *Master*. One Man can never procure for himself all the Necessaries and all the Conveniences of Life; it is indeed impossible. The same Man cannot sow his own Corn, reap his own Harvest, keep his own Sheep, make his own Bread, form all his own Garments, build his own House, fashion his own Furniture, and secure his own Possessions; no Man can provide for himself in all Respects without the Assistance of his fellow Creatures. Now those from whom he expects to receive Help in any of these Instances, it's necessary he should give them Help in other Instances wherein they stand in need of his. This is one Foundation of Justice between Man and Man; that so every Man may have the Necessaries and Conveniences of Life by his Neighbour's Assistance. Thus *the King himself* (as *Solomon* says) *is served by the Field*. *Eccles. v. 9*. The Prince stands in need of the Plowman: The Plowman gives Food to the Prince, and the Prince gives to the Plowman Protection or Safety.

I might run thro' the various Instances wherein *Justice* is to be practised, and shew how the higher and lower Orders  
and

and Characters of Men have mutual Need of each other: The *Buyer* and the *Seller*, the *Artificer* and the *Merchant*, the *Teacher* and the *Scholar*; and thus I might make it appear, that unless a *due Exchange of Benefits* be maintain'd, and the *Practice of Justice* secur'd, none of us could enjoy the *Safety*, the *Ease*, or the *Conveniences* of *Life*.

Where there is no *Practice of Justice* amongst Men, no Man can live safe by his Neighbour: Every one that is mighty and malicious, that is proud or covetous, that is envious or knavish, would rob another of his *Due*, and either assume the Possessions of his Neighbour to himself, or make Havock of them and destroy them. There would be everlasting Confusion amongst Men, Slander and Theft, Cheating and Knavery, Plunder, and Slaughter, and bloody Violence would reign among all the Tribes of Mankind, if Justice were banished from the Earth; for neither *Life*, nor *Liberty*, nor *Peace*, nor any of our Possessions, nor our good Name, can be secur'd without it. Therefore the *Light and Law of Nature* sets a sacred Guard upon Justice, and has written the Necessity of it in the Consciences of all Men, who have not *sear'd those Consciences as with a red hot Iron*, and ras'd



out so much of human Nature from their Souls.

The *Practice of Justice* has so extensive an Influence into the whole Conduct of our Lives, and the Welfare of Mankind, that some of the *Heathen Writers* have made it to be *comprehensive of all Virtues*.

But because sinful Men are ready to break the Bonds of *Commutative Justice*, and invade the Property, the Peace, or the Life of their Neighbours, therefore *Government* is appointed, and *Magistrates* are ordain'd to maintain Peace and Equity amongst Men, and to punish the Breakers of it. This is the greatest Reason why there must be such a thing as *Magistracy* and *Distributive Justice* amongst Mankind; that those who commit Outrage upon their Neighbours, and practise Injustice toward them, may be punished by the Laws: For, as the Apostle says to *Timothy*, *the Law is not made for the Righteous but for the Disobedient, for the Ungodly and for Sinners, for Murderers, Stealers and Liars, &c.* That it may be a strong Restraint upon the violent Inclinations of Men, and bring just Vengeance upon them when they bring Injury upon their Neighbours. Therefore 'tis for the Welfare of the Innocent and the Righteous that the Laws have ordain'd Vengeance for the Guilty; that those who would not injure their fellow  
Creatures

Creatures may be guarded in the Enjoyment of their own Property and their Peace, and may have them secur'd from the Sons of Injustice.

And besides all the Punishment that such Sinners justly receive from Men on Earth, God the great *Governor of the World* has often revealed his *Wrath from Heaven against all the Unrighteousness of Men* as well as their *Ungodliness*. He has hereby proclaim'd his publick Approbation of Justice, and his Hatred of all Iniquity. His Terrors have sometimes appear'd in signal and severe Instances against those who have been notoriously unrighteous, and who have broken all the Rules of Equity in the Treatment of their fellow Creatures. This the *Heathens* themselves have taken notice of. And they thought this to be so necessary for the Government of the World, that their Priests have invented a sort of *Goddeſs* called *Nemesis*, whose Office is to avenge the Practice of Fraud or Violence, and to bring down Curses on the Head of this kind of Criminals.

As the ancient Records of the *Heathen* World give us some Histories of divine Vengeance, so the *Bible* abounds with more awful and illustrious Instances of this kind; which leads me to.

The *Fourth Head* of my Discourse; and that is, to consider *What forcible Arguments and Motives the Christian Religion affords for the Practice of Justice among Men.*

If I were to speak of *Distributive Justice*, or that which belongs to the Practice of the Magistrate, never was it more gloriously manifest than in and by God the Father, when he refused to pass by our Iniquities without Punishment, and laid the dreadful Weight of it upon the Head and Soul of his own Son. Never could *Magistracy* receive such a Glory as when our Lord *Jesus Christ* the Son of God hung and died upon the Cross, suffering the Penalty that the Law of God, the supreme Magistrate, had denounced against Sinners.

And as *Punishing Justice* was glorified in all its Terrors, so *Rewarding Justice* also appear'd most illustrious. Because our Lord *Jesus Christ* had fulfilled Obedience not only to the broken Law which we lay under, but to those peculiar Laws which God the Father also gave him as a Mediator, therefore it pleased God *highly to advance him* according to his own eternal Covenant. God rewarded him, as a Magistrate distributing Justice to a Person who had done the greatest Things for the Honour of his Sovereign: He *exalted him*  
at

at his own right Hand, and gave him a Name above every Name, that at the Name of Jesus every Knee should bow; for he deserved it at the Hands of his Father, and his Father distributed Rewards equal to his Desert.

*Rewarding Justice* again appears glorious, in that God the Father communicates unto us the Rewards of the Sufferings of his own Son. *God is faithful and just to forgive us our Sins*, because the Blood of Jesus Christ his Son hath paid for all our Follies and Unrighteousness, 1 *Job* ii. 9. *Faithful and just to his Son*, that he mayn't go without the Rewards of his Sufferings: *Faithful and just to us*, because it was in our Name and Stead that the Son suffered.

But not to insist upon this longer, *Commutative Justice* is abundantly enforced also by many Considerations drawn from the Books of the *Old Testament* as well as from the *Gospel of Christ*.

If we consult the *Moral Statutes of God* which were given to the Jews, we shall find them full of Righteousness. These Statutes are of everlasting Force, and their Divine Solemnity should impress our Consciences. *That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayst live and inherit the Land: And the Judges and Officers shall judge the People with righteous*



*Judgment, and shall shew no Respect to Persons, nor take a Gift to pervert Justice. Deut. xvi. 18, 19, 20. Ye shall not steal, nor deal falsely, nor lye to one another. Thou shalt not defraud thy Neighbour, nor rob him. The Wages of him that is hired shall not abide with thee all Night until the Morning. Ye shall do no Unrighteousness in Judgment, in Weight or in Measure. Just Balances and just Weights shall ye have; I am the Lord your God, Levit. xix. A false Balance is an Abomination to the Lord, but a just Weight is his Delight, Prov. xi. 1. To do Justice and Judgment is more acceptable to the Lord than Sacrifice, Prov. iii. 15. Wo to him that buildeth his House by Unrighteousness, and his Chamber by Wrong, who useth his Neighbour's Service without Wages, and giveth him not for his Work, Jer. xxii. 13. Remove not the antient Land-Marks, nor enter into the Field of the Fatherless; for their Redeemer is Mighty, and he shall plead their Cause with thee, Prov. xxiii. 10, 11.*

If we review the *Records of the Jewish History*, we shall find the Cruel and the Covetous, the Tyrant and the Oppressor made terrible Examples of the Vengeance of God against Unrighteousness. Survey the *Plagues of Egypt*, and the dreadful Desolations of that fruitful Country, with the Destruction of the First-Born by the  
Midnight

Midnight Pestilence, and the Armies of *Pharaoh* drown'd in the *Red-Sea*, and you may read there the Wrath of God against the Unrighteousness of Men written in dreadful Characters. They treated the Race of *Israel* with Cruelty and sore Oppression; they destroyed their Male Children, and provoked God to bring swift Destruction upon themselves. Behold *Adonibezeck*, King of the *Canaanites*, with his Thumbs and his great Toes cut off by *Joshua*, and confessing the Justice of the great God. *Threescore and ten Kings*, said he, *with their great Toes and their Thumbs cut off, have gathered their Meat under my Table: As I have done so God hath requited me*, Judges i. 7. See the *Dogs* licking up the Blood of *Abab* in the Place where he slew *Naboth the Jezreelite*, in order to take unjust Possession of his Vineyard, 1 *Kings* xxi. 19. These things which were written of old Time remain upon Record for our Instruction in the Days of *Christianity*.

But let us take more special Notice what Influences may be derived from the *Gospel*, and from the Name of *Christ* to enforce the Practice of Justice among Men.

I. If we look to our *Lord Jesus* as a *Lawgiver*, how various and how plain are his solemn and repeated Commands, not only

only in his Sermon upon the Mount, but upon other Occasions too, that Justice be practised between Man and Man. He hath explained to us that glorious Rule of Equity on Purpose to make the Practice of Justice easy, plain and universal, *Love your Neighbour as your self*, that is, *Do to others as you would that others do to you*.

We cannot but think that the Holy Soul of our Lord *Jesus* was concerned to secure the practice of Justice and Righteousness among his Followers, when we read his terrible Rebuke to the *Pharisees* for the Neglect of it, and a Curse pronounced upon them, Matth. xxiii. 23. *Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, Hypocrites, for ye pay Tythe of Mint, and Anise, and Cummin, and have omitted the weightier Matters of the Law, Judgment, Mercy and Faith.* Judgment in that Place may signify *Commutative and Distributive Justice*; all manner of Exercise of Righteousness towards their fellow Creatures. Under a Pretence of serving God better than your Neighbours, and crowding his Temple with your Presents, and his Altar with Sacrifices and Gifts, ye abandon common Justice, ye neglect the Righteousness due to your fellow Creatures. There is a *Woe* denounced upon you, and my Father will inflict the Curse, for *he*  
*hates*

*bates Robbery for Burnt-Offering, Isa. lxi: 8.* Nor will the God of Heaven excuse you from paying your Dues to Men on Earth, under Pretence of paying Honours or Sacrifices to him.

There are many other Threatnings in the *New Testament* written against those that neglect Justice, and pronounced by the Apostles in the Name and Authority of *Christ* their exalted Lord. *The Covetous and Extortioners*, those that take away the Right of their fellow Creatures are shut out from the heavenly Blessedness, *1 Corinth. vi. 10.* *Know ye not,* says the Apostle, *that none of these shall inherit the Kingdom of God?* As much as to say, It is so very obvious a thing that an unjust Man can never enter into Heaven: (whatsoever Pretence he makes) that I may appeal to the meanest Capacity, *ye all know it.* God will repay Vengeance to them that do wrong to their Neighbours; whether they be great or mean, for there is no Respect of Persons with him, *Coloss. iii. 25.*

II. *Consider Christ as a Pattern of Justice and Righteousness.* Look to the Example of our Lord *Jesus*; you see him who was the sovereign Magistrate and Lord of all, who could distribute Crowns



and Kingdoms to Men, submitting himself to *Commutative Justice* among Creatures.

Behold the Son of God, who was *the Brightness of his Father's Glory*, and the Delight of his Soul before the Creation, behold him stooping down to our World, and taking Flesh and Blood upon him to become our *Brother*, that he might shew us how we ought to *love our Brethren*. 'Twas an unparalleled Instance of Divine Love that *Christ* has given us, when he came down from Heaven to become our *Neighbour*, and to dwell amongst us, that he might teach us to *love our Neighbours as our selves*.

Behold the glorious Son of God subjecting himself to his earthly Parents, to *Joseph* the Carpenter, and to *Mary* his Mother, that he might instruct us how to pay Obedience to our superior Relations. See how the King of Kings pays Tribute to *Cesar* when he was so poor that he was forced to send *Peter* a fishing to procure the Tribute Money by a Miracle. And tho' the Beasts of the Field were his, and he could have commanded the *Cattle upon a thousand Hills* to make Provision for his Followers, yet he would not dispossess the Owners of them, but created Food on Purpose to feed four and five thousand in the Wilderness.

III. If

III. If we consider Christ as a glorious Benefactor, who has taken Care to provide for us the Necessaries of this Life, and hath purchased for us at the Hands of God the eternal Treasures of Heaven and Glory; Has not this blessed Consideration Force enough to guard us against Temptations to Injustice? Shall a Christian break the Rules of Equity, and steal, or cheat, or plunder his Neighbour to gain Money or Merchandize, who has the Promises of God for his Support in a Way of Diligence and humble Faith? Shall we sully our Consciences and defile our Souls with Knavery and Injustice for a little of the Pelf of this World, when we have the *unsearchable Riches of Christ* made over to us in the Gospel, and the Inheritance of Heaven in Reversion?

IV. Let us consider the very Nature and Design of the Gospel of Christ, 'tis to make Sinners holy, to make the Unjust righteous: The new Man of Christianity must be created in Righteousness and true Holiness. Therefore are we purchased with the Blood of Christ, that we might be a peculiar People, zealous of good Works, Tit. ii. 14.

'Tis a Shame and Scandal to the Christian Name, when one who wears it is unrighteous or dishonest. An unjust Christian,

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*stian*, what a Contradiction is it in its self, and how it disgraces the Profession of the Gospel! Hear how the great Apostle treats his *Corinthian* Disciples when such sort of Sins were found amongst them, 1 Cor. vi. 7, 8. *Dare any of you, having a Matter against another, go to Law before the Unjust and the Infidel? Dare any of you injure your Neighbour, your fellow Christian? I speak this to your Shame. Brother goes to Law with Brother, and ye injure one another. Why don't you rather suffer Wrong? nay you do wrong and defraud, and that your own Brethren. But what is the Consequence? Such Wretches as these are shall never inherit the Kingdom of God.*

*The Grace of God that brings Salvation, Titus ii. 9, 10. teaches us to deny all Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and religiously in this present evil World. It teaches us Righteousness towards Men as well as Sobriety among our selves, and Godliness towards the King of Heaven. But how hath this Divine Religion been scandalized for want of Justice in the Professors of it! Scandalized among Heathen Kingdoms, among Turks and Unbelievers! And Christianity in our own Land, how hath it been dishonoured by the Practices of those that pretend to that holy Name! How hath*

hath

hath the Conversion of the wild *Heathens* in the *Indian* Nations been hinder'd by the Injustice and Fraud of *Christian* Merchants and Traders there, or by Merchants who call themselves *Christians*. I have heard it said by Persons whom I could fully credit, that a *Turk* when he is suspected of Fraud and Cheating, will reply, *What, do you think I am a Christian?* O! how hath the Gospel of the lovely *Jesus* been rendred odious by the abominable Practices of those that pretend to honour him! What Falshood, what Lying, what Perjury, and Cheating, and Deceit, and Violence have been practised by our Traders in foreign Lands! Thus there has been an ill Savour of our Holy Christianity carried beyond the Seas, by those perhaps who have pretended to convert the *Infidels*. And many in our own Nation, who have begun to set their Faces toward Heaven, have been sorely disgusted at the knavish Practices of Professors, and been tempted to think that all Religion is a Jest, and to abandon the Ordinances of the Gospel. But when Souls stumble, and fall, and perish by such Discouragements, Wo to him that gave the Offence, and laid this stumbling Block of Iniquity in their Way. How heavy must the Blood of Souls lie upon such Sinners!

Surely



Surely there has been enough said on this Head to discourage *Oppression, Deceit,* and *Injustice* in the Professors of Christianity, if Argument, and Shame, and Terror can have Power and Prevalence over Sin and Temptation. O may Almighty Grace attend this Discourse of *Justice*, and work the sacred Love of it in the Hearts of Men!

Now if ye are made willing to walk by the Rules of Equity and Justice, instead of proposing *particular Directions* for this End, I shall proceed

In *the fourth and last Place* to point out the *various Springs of Injustice*, that ye may avoid them.

The great and general Spring of Injustice to our Neighbour is a *criminal and excessive Love to our selves*. For since the comprehensive Notion of *Justice* lies in this, *To give to every one that which is due*, it follows that the general Notion of *Injustice* consists in *taking to our selves more than is due*, or in *giving less than is due to our Neighbour*.

There are a thousand Instances of this *Unrighteousness* among Men in reference to their Bodies, their Souls, their good Name, or their Possessions in the World. This general Term of *Injustice* is so extensive, that it includes a great part of the Sins forbidden in the second Table.

*Disobe-*

*Disobedience to Parents and Governors, Rebellion, Treason, Murder, Adultery, Theft, Violence and Plunder, Cheating, and Deceit, and Slander, with all sinful Desires to possess what belongs to our Neighbour,* may be justly ranked under the Head of *Unrighteousness*: And they spring from this one Fountain, namely, *An excessive Regard to Self*. 'Tis to this natural and exalted *Idol* that we sacrifice the Peace and the Property, the good Name, and even the Life of our fellow Creatures. Nor will any Method be effectual to secure us from the Practice of *Injustice*, till we learn to degrade *Self* a little in our own Esteem, and to judge of *our Neighbour*, and of the Things *that are his Due*, by the same Rule and Measure by which we take an Estimate of our *selves*, and of *what is due to us*. Let us put our *Neighbour* in the Place of *Self*, and judge how he ought to be treated.

But that we may more effectually guard our selves from the Temptations of *Injustice*, let us descend to Particulars, and we shall find that almost all the unrighteous Practices of Men spring from some of these six Principles, (*viz.*) *Covetousness, Pride, Luxury, Sloth, Malice against Men, or Distrust of God.*

I. *Covetousness is a great Spring of Injustice.* This consists in an *immoderate Desire of possessing*: And we are told by the Apostle, that the *Love of Money is the Root of all Evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have not only erred from the Faith, but they have ventured upon many Sins, as well as pierc'd themselves through with many Sorrows.* For *they that will be rich, fall into Temptation and a Snare, and into many foolish and hurtful Lusts which drown Men in Destruction and Perdition,* 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10. Solomon is of the same Mind, Prov. xxviii. 20, 22. *He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent, for he hath an evil Eye upon the Possessions of his Neighbour.*

'Tis from this cursed Root of Covetousness that a multitude of bitter Fruits proceed. 'Tis by this vicious Principle working within us that we are tempted to take what is not our Due, either *by Craft or by Violence.* Hence it is that Men cheat each other in their daily Commerce, they *defraud and over-reach* their Neighbour, if they can, in every Bargain they make, and try all the Arts of subtil Knavery in order to enrich themselves. They divest their Souls of Truth and Virtue, and put off Conscience and Shame to *load themselves with thick Clay.*

'Tis.

'Tis Covetousness that teaches the Sons of Men to practise upon their Dealers with a false Balance and a deceitful Beam. They shorten their Measures, and lessen their Weights by which they sell their Goods: But when the Case alters, and they buy any thing for themselves, they will, if possible, take another sort of Weight, or use a different Measure; all *which are an Abomination to the Lord.*

It is the same evil and unrighteous Principle that persuades the *Seller* to put off *corrupt and damag'd Wares* for good and sound, and to cozen his Neighbour with Merchandize that is by no means such as he reasonably expects. It is this Principle that persuades the *Buyer* also to cheat his Neighbour with *corrupt and false Money*, which he knows to be unlawful Coin. For corrupt Merchandize and corrupt Money, false Balances, light Weights, and scanty Measure, seem all to stand in the same Rank of Deceit: These are all Weapons of Craft and Knavery to give a secret Wound to their Neighbour's Estate, they all belong to the Armoury of Fraud, and the Magazine of Unrighteousness.

'Tis this covetous Humour that tempts the Tongues of Men to *speak flattering Falshoods* in their daily Dealings, and some of them make an hourly Sacrifice of Truth to the Gain of a Penny. 'Tis from this Principle



Principle that they *break their Promises of Payment*; they with-hold the Money that is due to their Neighbour beyond all reasonable Time, and that for no other Reason but to gain by the Loan of 'it: They *delay the Payment* of their poor Creditors for many Months, or perhaps for Years, and put the Advantage which they make of this Delay into their own Purse, This is a frequent but an unrighteous Practice in our Day: For the Profit that accrues by the detaining of Money that is due to another beyond the customary or contracted time of Payment, should doubtless be given to the Person to whom the principal Money was due; or at least he should have such a valuable Share of it as may compensate the Damage or Loss he sustains by the Delay.

'Tis a covetous Desire of Gain that tempts Men to *practise Extortion* and to *prey upon the Necessities* of those they deal with. When the Buyer wants any Conveniency of Life, they force him to give much more than it is worth, because he stands in the utmost Need of it: Or they constrain the Seller perhaps to part with some of his most valuable Possessions for a Trifle, because he is under special Necessity and present Distress. This was the Extortion which *Jacob* practised upon his Brother *Esau*, when he made him *sell his Birth-right for a Mess of Pottage*, while  
he

he was *faint with hunting*. And 'tis the same Iniquity when we *impose upon the Ignorance* or known Unskilfulness of the Persons we deal with ; and especially when we make our Advantage of Children or Servants, or of Persons who confess their own Ignorance, and leave the Choice of the Goods or the Determination of the Price to the Conscience of him that sells.

We may indeed set a just Value upon our own Goods ; but we must not set a Price upon any Man's pressing Necessity, nor raise a Tax upon his Ignorance. It can never be certainly determin'd how much it is lawful for a Trader to get by his Merchandize : Doubtless he may sometimes make a greater Gain of the same Things than at another : And this is often necessary in order to compensate the Losses, the Risks or Dangers that he passes thro'. He may lawfully make those Advantages which the Change of Things and the Divine Providence often puts into his Hands : Nor is it unlawful for him to take more of some Persons than he does of others for the same Merchandize ; for he may treat some of his Customers favourably, tho' he must deal righteously and justly with them all. But let him see to it that he use Ingenuity towards the Poor, the Necessitous and the Unskilful, as well as Moderation toward all Men.

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The Circumstances of Things are so various, that much of the Practice of Justice must be left to the Court of Equity in every Man's own Breast, under the sacred Influence of this Rule, *Do that to others which you think reasonable that others should do to you.* 'Tis best in all doubtful and difficult Cases to practise what is fair and honourable in the sight of Men, and what is safe and innocent in the sight of God; for *a good Conscience is better than the largest Gain*: But where the sacred Principles of Virtue are stretched at first to the lengths of moderate Iniquity, and Conscience is strained to the Indulgence of some smaller Unrighteousness, Virtue will dye by degrees, and Conscience will learn to allow bolder Injustice. And then tho' it may be stupify'd and senseless for a Season, yet let the Sinner know that it will have its Feeling return again, and the Guilt of Knavery and Falshood will torture the Soul with unknown Agonies here or hereafter.

But the wretched Influence of this *Vice of Covetousness* is not confin'd only to *Traffick* and *Merchandize*: It spreads its Unrighteousness much farther and wider: It tempts the Sons and Daughters of Men to withhold due Honour and necessary Supplies from their aged Parents, and exposes to great Hardships in the latter End of

Life

Life those to whom we owe our Life it self, and the Comforts of it in our younger Years. It with-holds Wages from the Servant, and Salary from him that has earned it. It forbids those who have received Benefits to make a grateful Return to their Benefactors. It will teach a Man to stop his Ears at the Cry of his Neighbour in Distress, lest it should cost some Money for his Relief. It refuses an Alms to the starving Poor, and finds an Excuse for the Churl, lest he stretch out his Hand of Bounty to a perishing Family. 'Tis so wrapt up in *self*, that it never considers what is *due to another*; and ventures to break all the Rules of Righteousness rather than diminish its own Estate, or part with any thing it can call MINE. It wou'd suffer a Church or a Kingdom to sink and perish, and let the publick Peace be broken, and the Nation dissolved, if it might but secure it self and its own Possessions in the midst of those Ruins. An accursed Vice! An Iniquity big with Misery and Desolation! yet it hides it self too often from Conviction and Reproof; it runs like a River under Ground, and attempts to conceal it self under the specious Disguises of *Frugality* and *Virtue*, while it practises all the Mischiefs we have been describing.



II. *Pride is another Spring of Injustice.* But having broken up the *Fountain of Covetousness* as of a great *Deep*, and traced it in its various *Streams*, the Labour of drying them up has employ'd so much **Time**, that the Pursuit of the *other Springs of Unrighteousness* must be delayed till a further Season.



S E R



## SERMON XII.

Christian Morality, viz. Justice, Purity, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

—*Whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure — think on these things.*

Ὅσα δίκαια, ὅσα ἀγαθὰ.



*Justice and Truth* are two of the chief Bands that preserve human Society. If *Truth* and *Justice* perish from the Earth, the Sons of Men would become like the Savages of the Wilderneys, where the strong or the crafty Animals prey upon the weak, the simple and the innocent. The Lord God, the Author of Nature, is a *God of Justice*, and he has written something

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thing of this Law in the Consciences of Men: But the God of Grace has given us much plainer Rules for the Practice of it, hath allur'd us to *Righteousness* by sweeter Motives, and hath guarded it with more awful and solemn Terrors. These things have been the Subject of the former Discourse; and that we may as far as possible assist toward the rooting out of Injustice from the Hearts and Lives of Christians, I have begun to point out some of the *chief Principles or Springs of it.*

The *first* which I mentioned is *Covetousness*, a vicious Weed that grows in corrupt Nature, and is fruitful of a thousand unrighteous Actions.

I proceed now to the *second*, that is *Pride*. When a Person sets too high a Value upon himself, and aggrandizes himself in his own Esteem, he is ready to imagine that all things are due to him, and there's very little left to become due to his Neighbour. The *proud* as well as the *covetous* Man is full of *Self*, and he forgets the Command of *Love to his Neighbour*: He treats him as if he was not made of the same Clay, and lives as tho' he were obliged to no Duty to his fellow Creatures. This is evident in a variety of Instances.

'Tis *Pride* that forbids us to give due *Respect* to those that are above us in the *Family*, in the *Church*, or in the *civil State*: And instead of paying the *Honours* that are due to *Superiors*, we are tempted to treat them with *Insolence* and *Scorn*. Many a *Father* in our degenerate Age has found this unhappy Effect of raising his *Children* too soon and too high: And the *Mother* has seen her Sin, and felt it in her *Punishment*, when she has cocker'd up her young *Offspring* in *Pride*, and thereby taught them to break the *Rules of Justice*, to slight all her *Authority*, and make a *Scoff* of that *Pre-eminence* which *God* and *Nature* have given her.

The *proud Man* is ready to say in his *Heart*, "All that are around me ought to pay me *Respect* and do me *Justice*," while he is regardless of the *Respect* due to others. "Let them carry it towards me as they ought, and I'll carry it towards them as I please."

'Tis *Pride* that inclines us to throw a *Blot* here and there upon the good *Name* of our *Neighbour*, and to blemish his *Reputation*, lest he should outshine us. When some honourable mention is made of another *Person* in our *Company*, especially if it be one of our own *Sex*, our own *Rank* or *Degree* in the *World*, do we not feel something rising within us to lessen their



Honour and to stain their Character? 'Tis thro' this Vanity and Ambition of Mind that we are tempted to defame and reproach our Neighbour, and to rob him of his just Honour among Men, and we endeavour to build our own Fame and Credit upon the Ruin of his. But 'tis a sandy, or rather an impious Foundation; and the Fame that is built upon such Ground will never stand. *Pride* inclines us to assume more *Respect* than is due to our selves, and to take it away from our *Neighbour*, even as *Covetousness* tempts us to take more *Money* to our selves than is due, and to deprive our *Neighbour* of it. Thus both of them are opposite to the *sacred Rule of Justice*; one to that Justice which we owe to our *Neighbour's Estate*, and the other to *his good Name*.

But the evil Influence of *Pride* spreads farther also; for it teaches us to *practise Unrighteousness in Matters of Property*: It *instructs us in the Methods of Oppression*, and inspires us with a wicked Courage to practise it. *Psal. lxxiii. 6, 7, 8.* When *Pride compasses Men about as a Chain*, and they wear it as a golden Ornament, then *Violence covers them as a Garment*; and tho' *their Eyes stand out with Fatness*, and *they have more than Heart could wish*, yet *they are corrupt and speak wickedly concerning Oppression*. They gripe those that are Poor, because  
they

they themselves are Mighty. They refuse to pay the just Demands of their Neighbour, *they speak loftily*, and stand it out with them against all Right and Justice, because they are great in the World. 'Tis the *Rule of Justice* to change Places with our humble Neighbour, and ask our selves, What we should think due to us if we were in his place? Or at least we should set our selves and our Neighbour upon the Level, and consider what is just and right on both sides. But the Heart of *Pride* cannot bear such a *Rule*, it exalts it self far above the Level of Mankind, and practises toward those that are around it with a superior Insolence and Injustice. Cursed *Pride*, the First-born of Hell! It seized our first Parents and tempted them to aim at Godhead, to practise Injury to God himself, and assume a Right to the Fruit of the forbidden Tree! Vile Iniquity that hath tainted all the Seed of *Adam*! 'Tis a haughty Poison that was infused into our Veins with the first Sin; and where shall we find the Son or Daughter of *Eve* that is not infected with it? Blessed be the Grace of God where-soever its Dominion is broken, so that it does not break out into all the Works of Unrighteousness!

The *third Spring of Injustice* among Men is *Profuseness and Luxury*. When

Persons affect to live in a manner above what their Circumstances will afford, they are tempted to intrench upon the Property of their Neighbour either by Cheating or by Violence.

'Tis the Language of Luxury, " I must  
 " indulge my Appetite, my Table must  
 " be furnished with a costly Variety, and  
 " I must eat and drink with Elegance  
 " (as is the modish Phrase.) I must treat  
 " my Friends when they visit me with  
 " fashionable Entertainments, I must keep  
 " fine Company and make a Figure in the  
 " World; I must appear in such an Equipage  
 " as my Neighbour allows himself,  
 " tho' he be ten times richer than I am.  
 " I must have many Changes of Raiment,  
 " for it is a mean and vulgar thing to appear  
 " too often in the same Dress: My  
 " House must be furnished after the Mode,  
 " and I must shine at home and abroad in  
 " Silks or in Silver; for I can't bear the  
 " Thought that such or such a one should  
 " outshine and overtop me." Then the  
 Patrimony is sold or mortgaged to raise present Supplies, and the rich Food and Clothing and luxurious Expences of a twelve Month devour and swallow up seven Years Income, or the Gain of half their Lives.

What remains then when their own Substance is not sufficient to supply their  
 Vanity,

Vanity, but that they make an Inroad upon the Property of their Neighbour? They run deep into Debt with the Artificer and Trader, and they never concern themselves how to make Payment. The Workman has built them Palaces instead of such common Dwellings as their Character requires, and the Artificers of various kinds have furnish'd out their Bravery of Apparel or Equipage: But the unhappy Creditors are ready to starve in tattered Raiment, thro' the Oppression and Injustice of their luxurious Neighbour. And when they make a modest Demand of what is due to them, they meet with nothing but a Frown or a Jest, and the reproachful Names of *saucy* and *impertinent*. But *Wo to him that covets an evil Covetousness to his House, that he may set his Nest on high; for the Stone shall cry out of the Wall against the Oppressor: The Beam out of the Timber shall answer it, and shall bear Witness against Unrighteousness. Hab. ii. 9.*

This is the crying Guilt of many, and very commonly practis'd in this City in greater or in less Degrees; but perhaps the profuse Wretch pursues a bolder Course of Injustice, and betakes himself to *Robbery* and *Plunder*: He lies at Watch on the Highways, he seizes and assaults the innocent Traveller, and deprives him of his



Wealth and every thing valuable in order to support his own wild and extravagant Expences. *Luxury* must be fed tho' *Justice* be starved, and *Luxury* must be clothed tho' *Justice* go naked.

My Hearers perhaps will think themselves unconcern'd in all this Story, and take no Share of the Conviction to themselves, nor do I know any of them to whom half this Charge belongs. But let it be consider'd that Men don't usually rise to this Degree of Madness all at once. *Unrighteousness* has several Steps and Stages in its Race; if we indulge our Appetites, and spread our Tables, or form our Apparel or our Furniture but a little beyond our Income, if we once begin to admit such a manner of Life and Expence as exceeds our Estate, in order to please our own sensual or vain Inclinations, or to vie with our Neighbours, we expose ourselves to most evident Temptations of Injustice, and lead our Souls into sinful Snares. "We can't live frugal as our Fathers did: The Fashion is alter'd, and we must follow it, whether the Purse can bear it or no.

Hence arise the *impetuous Desires of hasty and extravagant Gains by Gaming*, in order to recover what is lost by *Luxury*. Men venture largely upon the *Turn of a Dye*, and defraud their honest Creditors of their  
Bread

Bread and Life to pay (what they call in their *Cant*) the *Debts of Honour*. A wanton sort of Justice and illegal Equity!

'Tis this luxurious Fashion of Life that hath filled our Land with the *Itch of Gaming*; and if the *Turn of a Wheel* can intitle them to Thousands, they despise the slow and tedious Ways of supplying their Wants by Labour, Business, or Traffick. Thus honest Industry is discouraged, and *Trade*, which is the political Life of our Nation, lies groaning and expiring.

Hence proceeds the wicked Custom of breaking Promises to those whom we deal with, and long Delays of Payment till we imagine the Debt is cancelled by being almost forgotten. A vain and criminal Imagination! As tho' the daily Increase of *Interest* and the Patience of the Creditor could make the *Principal* cease to be due! As tho' *Time* and *unjust Delay* could pay Debts without Money.

Hence flows the *unrighteous Practice of borrowing without any Design to pay*, which is gross and shameful Iniquity: I would hope none of the Professors of Religion have so far abandon'd all Sense of Righteousness. Yet there are too many, who, when once they have borrow'd, grow so careless and negligent of Payment, that it brings a Disgrace upon their Profession,

and a Blot upon their Character. Profuse and thoughtless Sinners, who run in Debt to every one that will trust them for the daily Conveniences of Life! Tho' they have no reasonable Prospect of paying, yet they ask their Neighbour to lend, with a free and couragious Countenance, and put a bold Face upon their venturous Iniquity, being too proud to let their Poverty be known. But the God of Justice beholds the Crime, and writes their Names down in his Book among the *Unrighteous*. Psal. xxxvii. 21. *The Wicked borroweth, and payeth not again.*

Hence it comes to pass that there are so many *Bankrupts* in our Days, even among the Professors of strict Religion. A shameful and an ungodly Practice, if it arise from Luxury and Profuseness, or from a careless Neglect of their proper Affairs! It was thought sufficient in the Days of our Fathers to deserve an Expulsion from the Church of *Christ*, unless they could evidently make it appear that it was meerly by the unforeseen and frowning Providences of God they were reduced to this Extremity. There is many a Man hath groan'd away his latter Years in Poverty, and perhaps in a cold Prison, and in most forlorn Circumstances of Life by means of the Profuseness of his Youth: And he hath been taught to read the *Guilt of his Luxury*

*Luxury and Injustice* in a long and painful Lesson.

But a *profuse and sensual Humour* is not only the Spring of Unrighteousness among *Persons of better Rank and Circumstance* in the World, but it tempts *Servants* also to *be unjust to their Masters*: They will now and then provide a Treat for themselves and their Friends, they must eat nicely and drink to Excess, and thus they waste their Master's Substance. They must keep good Company in the World, and now and then spend a licentious Hour or two, while their just and reasonable Service at Home is neglected, and perhaps the Purse of the Master must pay for all.

Under the same Head I may bring a Charge of *Injustice* against the *careless and wasteful Servant*, who persuades himself that his Master is rich enough, and therefore he is not solicitous to buy or sell, or manage any Affairs for him to the best Advantage. He permits the Goods of his Master to be wasted or embezzled, he grows liberal and generous at his Master's Cost, and has no Thought of the golden Rule of our Saviour, to manage his Master's Concerns with the same Frugality and Conduct as he would expect a Servant should do for him. But 'tis Time I proceed to the next Particular.



The *fourth* Occasion of Injustice is *Sloth and Idleness*. For the *slothful Man* is a Brother to him that is a great *Waster*. Prov. xviii. 9.

Whosoever wants the *Necessaries* or the *Conveniences* of Life is bound to obtain them by *Labour* and *Diligence* if he is not possessed of them by any other *Methods* of favourable *Providence*. *In the Sweat of thy Brows shalt thou eat thy Bread*, was the *Command* given to *Adam* when he was turned out of *Paradise*, and forfeited his *Property* in the *Fruits* of *Eden*. But when once a *Person* gets an *Aversion* to *Business*, when he finds a *Pleasure* in *Santering* and *Trifles*, and indulges *Idleness* and a *lazy Life*, then he is tempted to seek the *Supports* and *Comforts* of *Nature* by some *Practices* of *Unrighteousness*. *The slothful Man will be clothed with Rags*, unless he procure better *Clothing* by *Fraud* or *Violence*. Prov. xxiii. 21.

Hence it is that *Persons* learn the *Art of Stealing*, and possess themselves of the *Goods* or the *Money* of their *Neighbour* by *Thievery*. They mark out the *Houses* in the *Day*, and break them up at *Midnight* for *Plunder*. *They remove the ancient Landmarks* to enlarge their own *Borders*, *They violently take away Flocks* and *feed upon them*. *They go forth to their unrighteous Work* in the *Morning*, and rise  
betimes

*betimes for a Prey. They reap down the Corn in their Neighbour's Field, and the Wicked gather the Vintage. They cause the Naked to lodge without Clothing, and take away the Sheaf from the Hungry. These are they that rebel against the Light, they abide not in the Paths thereof. Tho' God does not lay Folly to them, nor punish their Crimes by his immediate Judgments, yet his Eyes are upon their Ways. Job. xxiv. 2, — 23.* And many times his Providence brings their Crimes to light, and they are punish'd for their Iniquity by the Sentence of the Judge. O what a Shame and Scandal is it that in a Nation professing *Christianity* there should be such Multitudes train'd up to the pilfering Trade, and educated for Infamy, for Transportation and the Gibbet!

There are others whose Hands refuse to labour, and whose Temper of Mind delights in Idleness, but they venture not upon these bolder Crimes; they learn other *unrighteous Arts of Cheating and Falshood*, and fall into the same evil Practices which I have just before described under the Head of *Luxury*. But when *Luxury, Pride and Sloth* join their Forces together, the Temptation to *Injustice* becomes exceeding strong, and there are few who have Power to resist it.

Such was the *unjust Steward*, whom our blessed Saviour represents in a *Parable* procuring himself a Way of living by cheating his Lord. *Luke xvi. 1, 2, 3, 4.* He had *wasted his Master's Goods*, and he was to be cashier'd from his Service. *What shall I do*, said he, I have not been used to work, *I cannot dig*; there's the Sloth of the Man: He had liv'd well in his Stewardship, and was grown proud, *To beg I am ashamed*. Well, I can purloin no more of my Lord's Estate for my self, but I can do it for his Debtors; I will cheat him in his Accounts, and make all his Debtors my Friends, by cancelling a good part of their Obligations, and then I shall get a Livelihood amongst them. O that all such Practices had been found no where but in *Parables*!

Some that have been reduced to Poverty by Idleness, and have borrow'd boldly what they could never pay, yet wipe their Mouths and think themselves innocent and righteous, because they have not a Sufficiency to make Payment: Whereas in truth 'tis their own *Sloth* that makes them poor, and keeps them so. Some of these idle Creatures waste their Days in Drowziness and Inactivity. *A little more Sleep, a little more Slumber*; so Poverty comes upon them like an armed Man without Resistance. Others are a little more  
sprightly,



sprightly, and they spend their Hours in an inquisitive Impertinence, in publick News and private Slander, in searching and tattling of the Affairs of other Persons and their Families, while they eat and drink and live upon the Labour of the Diligent, and unjustly serve themselves out of the Industry of their Neighbour. So the worthless *Drone* wastes the Summer's Day in buzzing and trifling, he gads abroad and wanders with idle Flight, then he returns and feeds upon the Honey that the *Bee* has gathered, and abuses the Industry of a better Animal.

St. *Paul* takes notice of this sort of People at *Theffalonica* who call'd themselves *Christians*, and reproves them with just Severity; *We hear there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busy Bodies. Now them that are such, we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with Quietness they work and eat their own Bread: For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat, 2 Thess. iii. 10, &c.* And in his Letter to the *Ephesians* he exhorts the Thief to Diligence. *Let him that stole steal no more, but rather let him labour, working with his Hands the thing which is good, and that not only for his own Support, but that he may have to give*



*to him that needeth,* Ephes. iv. 28. How little do those *Christians* read their Bibles! Or how little do they mind what the great Apostle tells them! They profess they were never brought up to work, and give that Answer roundly as a sufficient Excuse for *Idleness*: And therefore when they become poor and necessitous, they think it the Duty of others to maintain them, without stretching out their own Hand for any thing but to beg and receive. They will apply themselves to no Employment, tho' they are told their Duty continually: Their *Pride, Indolence* and *Sloth* withhold them from Labour, tho' they are called to it daily in the loudest Language in which God now-a-days speaks to his Creatures, and that is the Voice of *Reason, of Scripture, and of Providence.*

But there is another sort of *Sloth* and *Idleness* that leads on to the Practice of Injustice too, and that is when Men are busy in their Trades and the Affairs of Life, but *seldom look into their Accounts, or perhaps keep none at all*: And thus they live upon the spend, and are utterly ignorant whether their Income will support it. They eat and drink with daily Cheerfulness, and sleep sound upon their Pillow, while they know not whether their Food and Raiment, and even the Bed they rest on, be their own or no. Perhaps they  
have

have let their Accounts run long behind, they are a little jealous of their Circumstances, and then it is an unpleasant and tedious Task to take a thorough Review of them. By this means they run on venturing and heedless, till Justice overtakes them, and Ruin seizes them at once. Then they see what a shameful and cruel Inroad they have made upon their Neighbour's Property: They find then that they have fed and clothed themselves and their Household out of their Neighbour's Estate. What shall I say to Persons of this Character? Their Souls are generally harden'd on all sides against Conviction, and it is with much Difficulty they are ever brought to confess their own Folly, their Sloth and Unrighteousness. Ask thy self, O Man, O Woman, ask thy self this short and solemn Question, *Am I willing my Neighbour should deal thus with me and spend my Substance for his daily Support?*

Here let it be observ'd that I would always except from this Accusation such as are *meer Children* and cannot work, or such as are *aged* and past all Ability of Labour, such as are *weak and sick*, and rendred thereby utterly incapable of working, and such as *seek Work with honest Diligence*, and wou'd be glad to be employ'd in any thing they can do, if they could find others to employ them. Some of these

these Indigents and necessitous Persons are in every City, and they seem to be marked out by Providence as the proper Objects of *Compassion* and *Bounty*, and are not to be blended with the *slothful* and *idle* Creatures in the general Charge of *Unrighteousness*.

*Fifthly*, The next Spring of Injustice is *Malice and Envy*. This is the vilest of all, and the most like the Devil; for it contrives Mischief, and brings Injury upon *others* without seeking Gain and Advantage to *self*. This is a vile Iniquity, and has a great deal of the Spirit of Cruelty and of Hell in it, where Ill-nature and Spite reign and triumph.

Tho' *Envy* and *Malice* awaken and excite the Sinner to Acts of Unrighteousness and Violence, and tempt us to rob our Neighbour of *what is his due*; yet these vicious Principles aim more frequently to disturb the *Peace*, or *Health* and *good Name* of our Neighbour, than to injure his *Estate*. It is *Wrath* and *Hatred* that boils up the Blood into *Fury* and *Revenge*, and moves us to *smite our Neighbour with the Fist of Wickedness*; nor is the guilty Passion allay'd till it has practis'd Mischief to his *Body*, or his *Reputation*, or his *Family*, or to something that belongs to him. Hence proceed *Murders* and *Deaths*, and all the Train of Evils and Injuries of the cruel and bloody kind. It was from  
this



this Principle that *Cain* slew *Abel* his Brother, that the Sons of *Jacob* sold *Joseph* into Slavery : It was from this Principle that *Sanballat* and *Tobiah* joyn'd their Rage and their Counsels against the *Jews*, that they might hinder the rebuilding of *Jerusalem*, and endeavour'd to destroy the Builders, and throw down the Work, *Nehem.* ii. 10.

I hope there are no Examples of this flagrant *Injustice* to be found among us who profess *Piety*. But are there none of us guilty of some lesser Injuries rising from the same Principle? Are there none of us that indulge our Tongues to backbite and slander, to make our Neighbours look odious, or to make our selves easy or merry? This is to play the *Mad-man*, who casts abroad *Fire-brands, Arrows and Death*, and says, *Am I not in sport?* *Prov.* xxvi. 18. Are there none of us that delight to teize, and vex, and torture our Neighbour by disagreeable Speeches and sly Reproach? Do we never *envy* nor *provoke one another* contrary to the Apostle's express Prohibition? *Gal.* v. 26. Do we not take Pleasure to repeat the Things that make each other uneasy, in order to vent the Gall within us, and scatter the Venom upon our Neighbour's good Name? This is *Malice* and *Unrighteousness* together ; a complicated Crime, which



which one would think should be abhorred by every Christian, if one did not frequently see and feel the Practice of it among the Professors of the Name of *Christ*. I might well compare such Creatures to a *Wasp* or a *Hornet*, who first teize and disquiet us with their endless Humming, and e're we can get rid of them, they fix their painful Sting in our Flesh ; tho' neither the Pain nor the teizing Vexation they give us can procure any Conveniency to those peevish Insects, those noisy Animals of a little angry Soul.

If we are *Poor*, this evil Humour tempts us to envy the Riches of our Neighbour, and we magnify and exalt them beyond the Truth, that we may give some Colour to our splenetick and uneasy Carriage. If we are afflicted or *in Pain*, we envy the Welfare and the Ease of others, we enlarge our Paraphrases upon their Blessings, and blacken their Character that they may appear unworthy of such Favours, and worthy of our Indignation and Envy. “ When shall the Time come,  
 “ O Lord *Jesus*, thou *King of Righteous-*  
 “ *ness* and *King of Peace*, when shall that  
 “ Day appear that *Ephraim* shall not envy  
 “ *Judah*, nor *Judah* molest *Ephraim* ?  
 “ When shall it be that no *ravenous Beast*  
 “ shall come a-near *Zion*, and there shall  
 “ be

“ *be nothing to hurt or destroy in all thy*  
 “ *holy Mountain?* ”

The *last Spring of Injustice* that I shall mention, is *Unbelief, and Distrust of the Providence of God.* When Persons are in low Circumstances they are sometimes hurried by the Power of this Temptation to use sinful Means in order to obtain what they want, or at least what they fancy they want for the comfortable Support of Life. The Word of God has many engaging Promises in it to those who are diligent in their Duty; tho’ *the Soul of the Sluggard desireth and hath nothing, yet the Soul of the Diligent shall be made fat,* Prov. xiii. 4. It is *the Hand of a diligent Man that maketh rich,* for it has the Blessing of the Lord upon it. God can encrease the *handful of Meal in the Barrel,* and lengthen out the *Stream of Oil from the little Cruise,* that the Debts of the Widow may be paid thereby, and her Family find Provision, *1 Kings xvii.* And even since the Days of Miracles have ceas’d, there are many *Christians* who have liv’d by Faith, and have found Wonders of Support not much inferior to this antient Miracle.

But those who know not the way of *living by Faith,* are too ready to indulge themselves in some little pilfering or cheating Methods to procure a Subsistence. Thus *Unbelief* has a plain Tendency to  
*Unrighte-*

*Unrighteousness, but he that believeth shall not make haste, Isa. xxviii. 16.* He that believes the Care of God toward his own People, and puts his Trust in his Redeemer, who is Lord of all Things, he that lives upon the Covenant of God daily, *he shall not make haste* to make himself rich, or to possess himself of the Comforts of Life by any Methods of Injustice; his Faith and Diligence shall be rewarded at least with daily Bread.

And now having finished this Subject, I must beg Pardon of my Reader for insisting so largely on those two Virtues *Justice and Truth* in my Text. But they are of so Divine a Necessity to make up the Character of a Christian, they are of so valuable Importance to the Glory of the Gospel, and so shameful an Inroad has been made upon them in various Instances in our degenerate Age, that I was willing to attempt something to retrieve this part of Godliness; and O may the convincing and sanctifying Spirit of God attend it with his sacred Influences, that those who are call'd by the sacred Name of *Christian*, may never bring a Blemish upon it by deserving the Characters of *False and Unjust!*



*The Second Part of the XII<sup>th</sup>  
Sermon.*

THE next Virtue mentioned in my Text is *Purity*, *Whatsoever Things are pure, think on these Things.*

The Sense of this Word *ἀγνά* in the Greek is extended so far by some Criticks as to include *Temperance in eating and drinking*, as well as *Chastity and Modesty in all our Words and Behaviour*; and thus it signifies almost the same with *Sobriety*, and implies a *Restraint upon all the excessive and irregular Appetites that human Nature is subject to.*

Under these two Heads I shall treat of *Purity* briefly, and shew under each of them how the *Light of Nature*, and how the *Gospel of Christ* requires the Practice of it.

I. *Temperance in eating and drinking* may be included in this Command of *Purity*, for we can hardly suppose the Apostle omitted so necessary a Virtue, and it is not directly mentioned at all if it be not implied here. 'Tis not beneath the Doctrin

trine



trine of *Christianity* to condescend to give Rules about the most common Affairs of human Life, even *Food* and Raiment. It's a piece of *Impurity* to imitate the *Swine*, and to gorge our selves beyond Measure; to give up our selves to fulfil every luscious Appetite, and every luxurious Inclination of the *Taste*.

An Indulgence of this sort of Vice, what infinite Disorders doth it bring upon Mankind? If a Man would read the Character of a *Drunkard* painted in very bright and proper Colours, and receive the foulest Ideas of it in the fairest Oratory, he cannot find a better Description than *Prov. xxiii. 29, &c. Who hath Wo? Who hath Sorrow? Who hath Contentions? Who hath Babbling? Who hath Wounds without Cause? Who hath redness of Eyes? They that tarry long at the Wine, they that go to seek mixt Wine. Look not therefore upon the Wine when it is red, when it giveth its Colour in the Cup, when it moveth it self aright. Some Men in our Age well understand what Solomon here means. But at the last it biteth like a Serpent, and stingeth like an Adder. The Pleasure will be attended with intolerable Pain and mortal Injury, when the Excess of Liquor shall work like so much Venom poured into the Veins, and cast thee into Diseases as incurable as the biting of any Serpent; it*

†

will

will do thee more Mischief than an Adder with all his Poison. There are many that have felt the Words of *Solomon* true when their voluptuous Sins have been dreadfully recompensed with Ruin to their Soul and Body.

But the inspired Writer dwells upon the loathsome Subject, and bids us mark the particular Effects of it. *Thine Eyes shall behold strange Women, and thine Heart shall utter perverse Things*; that is, says \* a learned Paraphrast upon the Text, “Thy Thoughts will not only grow confused, and all Things appear to thee otherwise than they are; but lustful and adulterous Desires will be stirred up, which thou canst not rule; and thy Mouth being without a Bridle will break forth into unseemly, nay filthy, scurrilous, or, perhaps, blasphemous Language, without Respect to God or Man.” *Yea, thou shalt be, saith the wise Man, as he that lieth down in the midst of the Sea, or as he that lieth upon the Top of a Mast*; i. e. “Thou wilt foolishly run thy self into the extreamest Hazards, without any Apprehensions of Danger, being no more able to direct thy Course than a Pilot

\* *Bishop Patrick.*

“ who snores when a Ship is tossed in  
 “ the midst of the Sea, no more able to  
 “ take Notice of the Peril thou art in  
 “ than he that falls asleep on the Top of  
 “ a Mast, where he was set to keep the  
 “ Watch.” *They have stricken me, shalt  
 thou say, and I was not sick ; they have  
 beaten me, and I felt it not. When I shall  
 awake I will seek it yet again.* ’Tis as if  
 the wise Man had said, “ That to com-  
 “ pleat thy Misery, thou shalt not only  
 “ be mocked, and abused, and beaten,  
 “ but thou shalt be as senseless as if no  
 “ Harm had befallen thee : And no  
 “ sooner wilt thou open thine Eyes, but  
 “ thou wilt stupidly seek an Occasion to  
 “ be drunk and be beaten again.

My Friends, have ye never seen a  
*Drunkard* make that odious Figure in  
 which *Solomon* represents him? You find  
 Human Nature is constant to it self: It  
 appears now in *Britain* just as it is descri-  
 bed in the Days of old at *Jerusalem* in all  
 its vicious Excesses. There’s a great De-  
 gree of Likeness between our Forefathers  
 in Intemperance and their Children of  
 late Posterity. One would think one  
 such a Spectacle as this, or the meer Re-  
 port of it, with an Assurance of the Truth,  
 should be enough to forbid our Lips the  
 Excess of Liquor, and to set a Guard up-  
 on our selves in the Hour of Temptation.

Not

Not only those who overwhelm themselves with strong Drink, and forget *Reason and themselves*, but those that are *mighty to drink Wine*, have a severe Censure cast upon them, and a Curse in the Book of God. *Isa. v. 22.* not only *Wo to them* in *v. 17.* that rise up early in the Morning that they may find strong Drink, and continue till Night, 'till Wine inflame them; but *wo to them that are mighty to drink Wine*, even tho' they are not utterly overcome by it to the Disorder and Disgrace of their Understandings. The Reason is, because Nature will not bear such a Quantity of Wine or strong Liquors at first; and 'tis presum'd they have forced Nature beyond its original Capacity, and thus have grown up by Degrees of Sin to such a Strength in drinking. *These are they that call Evil Good, and Good Evil, and that glory in their Shame.*

Hearken to thy Father's Advice, O Youth, and despise not thy Mother's Counsel; *Hear thou, my Son, and be wise, and guide thine Heart in the way of Temperance. Be not amongst Wine-Bibbers, amongst riotous Eaters of Flesh, v. 19.* Youth is greedy of Pleasure, and in Danger of being corrupted by it; therefore avoid the Society of *Drunkards and Gluttons.* You see they are join'd together in the Prohibition and Threatning of the Word



of God, for *the Glutton and the Drunkard shall both come to Poverty*. A wanton Indulgence of the Taste will tempt Men to Revelling and Riot, thence follows a Neglect of all Business; and many a Prodigal who had a fair Estate, is by this Means become a Beggar or a Prisoner. Let us be watchful therefore when we sit down at a plentiful Table, and *put a Knife* as it were *to our Throat*, if we feel the Danger of a sharp and wanton Appetite; let the Guard of our Virtue be as sharp and active as our Thirst or Hunger. Let us *not be desirous of feasting our selves with Dainties, for they too often prove deceitful Meat*: And tho' they are never so tempting to the Palate, yet they may disturb the Health of the Body, or indispose the Mind for the Service of Virtue. But this leads me to the next general Head, and that is,

To consider *how the Light of Nature condemns this Vice, this sort of Impurity*.

If it were my Business to make a Flourish with learned Citations, it were an easy Matter to bring the *Greeks and Romans* hither to pass Sentence upon the *Glutton and the Drunkard*, and all the Luxury of the Taste; for 'tis too mean an Indulgence either for a Man or a Christian. It does not become Human Nature to endanger the Welfare of all its Powers, and enslave them all to the *single Sense of Tasting*.

“ I am greater, says *Seneca*, and born to  
 “ greater Things than to be a Slave to  
 “ this Body, or to live meerly to become  
 “ a Strainer of Meats and Drinks.” The  
 wisest of Men, and the best Writers of  
 all Ages, even in the *Heathen Nations*,  
 have past their heavy Centures on these  
 impure and brutal Follies, whereby we  
 are reduc’d to the Rank of Beasts that  
 perish, or perhaps sunk below them by the  
 Practices of *Intemperance*; for there are  
 but few of that lower Rank of Creatures  
 who swill themselves beyond the De-  
 mands of Nature, or, at least, beyond  
 what Nature is able to bear.

Let us argue a little upon this Head  
 from the *Principles of Reason*, and consi-  
 der that the chief Designs of Food are  
 these two, *The Support of our Nature*,  
 and the *Refreshment of our Spirits*. There-  
 fore give Food to him that is hungry,  
 that Life may be maintain’d : Give Drink  
 to him that is thirsty, to assist the Support  
 of Life, and to refresh it. Give strong  
 Drink to him that is ready to faint, that  
 his Spirits may be recruited, and Wine to  
 him that is heavy of Heart, that he may  
 forget his Sorrows. ’Tis evident that  
 every thing which goes beyond the  
 meer *Necessity of Nature* for its Sup-  
 port, does not presently become sinful;  
 because the *Refreshment of Nature* is also.

one End and Design of our Food. Remember that the *Supports of Nature* are designed by the God of Nature to make us fit for all the Services and Duties of Life, and the *Refreshments of it* are ordain'd by the same Author of Nature to render us cheerful in the Discharge of those Duties. The one is necessary to give us a Capacity to perform, and the other proper to render the Performance cheerful and delightful to us, and to intermingle our Labour with such innocent Delights as may awaken our Thankfulness to the Bounty of our Creator.

Thence it will follow that the *Rich* are allowed to furnish their Tables with a variety of pleasing and grateful Food; and that Feasts designed for a cheerful Enjoyment of our Friends, are by no means forbidden by the Light of Reason, or of Scripture: For we gain Vigour for Action by having the Spirits rais'd and exhilarated. But it will follow also, that when we have our Choice of what we shall eat or drink, we ought to determine not meerly by Pleasure and Appetite, nor feed till we are unfit for Service. If we know or have a good guess before-hand, that this Cup or this Dish will render us unfit for the proper Business of the Day, or incapable of the several Duties we are called to; yet if for the sake of meer Sen-  
suality

quality we venture upon it, God will number it among our *Sins against the Light of Nature*. Those Ends therefore for which God hath ordain'd our various Food both in his Creation and in his Providence, namely, the *Support of Nature*, and its *Refreshment*; let these be our Designs in eating, and give Rules for our Determination what Food we should partake of.

It must be granted indeed, that a *sickly Person* may be indulged in more *Solicitude about Food*, and may make it a Matter of more distinguishing Choice than Persons vigorous and healthy. But then the *great End* must still be kept in the Eye, that is, the *Recovery of Strength* for future Service, where they are much cut off from present Work: For neither the Sick nor the Healthy should *live for the sake of eating*, but both should *eat for the sake of living and working*.

Now if the *Light of Nature* requires such *Purity and Temperance*, how much more doth the *Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ* oblige us to it.

I. 'Tis the Command of our Redeemer that we *take heed of Surfeiting and Drunkenness, lest our Hearts at any time be over-charged with them*, Luke xxi. 34. And what Caution doth the Holy Apostle give, Ephes. v. 18. *Be not drunken with Wine, wherein is Excess, but*



*be ye filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in Psalms, and Hymns, and spiritual Songs. Don't be so indulgent to your Palate and your Glais, as to let Excess of Wine overtake you, lest you Christians should do as Heathens have done, and break out into irregular Songs, and licentious or profane Mirth : but seek rather the largest Influences of the Blessed Spirit, and give a sacred Loose to a devout Frame : Break out into Divine Psalms or Songs : Comfort your selves and edify your Neighbours thereby. In Rom. iii. 13. St. Paul advises us how we should behave our selves in this Point ; Let us walk honestly as in the Day, not in Rioting and Drunkenness, but put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not Provision for the Flesh to fulfil it in the Lusts thereof. Put on the Spirit of the Gospel, and the Ornaments of Christianity, and then you cannot for Shame seek the Pleasures of the Brute, nor sink down into the base Impurities of animal Nature : If you have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and are his Disciples indeed, then look like Christians ; let the very Life of Christ be manifest in your Lives : Live above these animal Desires, these lower Designs of the Flesh, which is not the chief Nature of the Man, much less should it be the chief End of Christians to gratify it.*

II. Let Christians consider that *the original Ruin of their Natures, Soul and Body, arose from the Indulgence of a foolish Appetite.* When our Mother *Eve* saw the *Fruit* of the forbidden Tree, she thought it was *pleasant to the Eye, and good for Food*: She tasted it her self, and tempted *Adam* to the Sin that ruin'd him and all his Offspring. When therefore a Temptation to this sort of Guilt appears, let us think of all the Miseries of our fallen State, and not dare to repeat that Crime which had such dismal Consequences. It brought Iniquity, Pain and Death into human Nature, and begun all that Dishonour to God, and all that Mischief among Men that ever was found in this lower World.

III. Every Saint ought to have a mortal Quarrel with the *Flesh*, because he carries about the *Seeds of Iniquity* in it, and the Springs of perverse Appetites, which ought always to be kept under, lest our very Spirits become carnal, and we lose our heavenly Crown. Therefore saith the Apostle, 1 Cor. ix. 27. *I keep under my Body and bring it into Subjection, and endeavour to be temperate in all things, that running in the Christian Race I may obtain the Prize.* It is the Business of a Christian to eat and drink in due Season for Strength and Refreshment, not for Luxury and Drunkenness, which Solomon forbids

to Princes, *Eccles. x. 17.* It was an excellent Saying of that holy Man Mr. *Joseph Allein*, “ I sit down to my Table  
 “ not to please my Appetite, or to pam-  
 “ per my Flesh, but to maintain a Ser-  
 “ vant of *Jesus Christ*, that he may be fit  
 “ for the Lord’s Work.

IV. The Saints should be pure and holy, even in the Affairs of the natural Life; for *they have Meat to eat that the World knows not of; they drink of the Pleasures that flow from God, and from his Covenant*, and therefore should not be over solicitous about pleasing their meaner Appetites. Those that indulge themselves in carnal Delicacies, and make Enquiry for the Pleasures of the *Flesh* as the main Business of Life, *What shall I eat, and what shall I drink*: Those that live in a Round of Sensuality, they debase their Souls, make themselves unfit for the Duties and the Pleasures of a Christian, unfit for divine Communications, for Holy Fellowship, heavenly Meditation; and lively Exercises of Faith upon unscen things; they damp their Zeal for God, blunt their Relish of religious Delights, and are perpetually defiling their own Consciences. These are they that *make their God their Belly*, while they profess to be *Christians*. But the Apostle in *Philip. iii. 18, 19.* tells us, whatsoever they profess, they are *Ene-*  
*mies*

SER. XII. *Justice, Temperance, &c.* 347

*mies of the Cross of Christ, and I cannot speak of it, says he, without weeping.*

Now if there be any such Sinners amongst us, such *Slaves to a paulty Appetite*, that make it a Business of too solemn and solicitous Enquiry, *How we shall regale the Palate and gratify the Taste?* If there are any of us that know not how to forbid our selves a savoury or a luscious Dish, even tho' we know or expect 'twill discompose the Flesh or the Mind: If we have not Temperance enough to deny the superfluous or excessive Glass when it comes to our Turn, nor Virtue and Courage enough to refuse it, let us take our Share in the Reproofs of this Discourse; and let us remember that we have had fair Warning this Day from the Word of God, that we may not drown our Souls in sensual Indulgences, and make our selves unfit for the Duties of Life, or for the Business or the Joy of Heaven.







## S E R M O N XIII.

Christian Morality, *viz.* Cha-  
stity, &c.

P H I L I P. iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are Pure, —  
think of these things.*

*Ὅσα ἀγαθὰ, &c.*



**P**URITY of Heart and Life, in the perfect Beauty of it, belongs to no Man since our original Apostacy. That foul and shameful Departure from God has render'd us all *unholy* and *unclean*. But we are recall'd to seek our antient Glory, by the Messengers of Heaven and the Ministry of the Gospel. The Apostle ex-  
horts

horts us to it in the Text. If the word *Pure* be taken in its largest Extent, it may include in it *Temperance* in Meats and Drinks as well as *Chastity* in Behaviour. You have heard already a Discourse of *Temperance*, with so hateful an Account of the Crimes of *Gluttony* and *Drunkenness*, that I hope my Hearers have conceived a sacred Aversion to such Sensualities.

Let us now proceed to the *second* Sense implied in the Word, and that is *Modesty and Chastity of Speech and Behaviour*. This is a most eminent and most undeniable part of that *Purity* which *St. Paul* here requires, and this in many of his Epistles he insists upon as necessary, in order to make up the Character of a *Christian*, and render it honourable; and *St. Peter* recommends it to the pious Women in his Day, as a means of the Conversion of their Husbands, who were *Gentiles*: *that they who obeyed not the Word of the Gospel, might be won to a good Esteem of Christianity, while they beheld the chaste Conversation of their Wives*, 1 Pet. iii. 1, 2.

This *Virtue* stands in Opposition to those several *Vices* which are distinguished by different Names in Scripture, such as, *Adultery, Fornication, Lasciviousness*. (1.) *Adultery*, when one of the Persons who are guilty of impure Embraces is under the sacred Bonds of Marriage. By the

the Commission of this Sin there is Injury done to another Family, and thus it is not only an Offence against the Laws of *Purity*, but a Violation of the Laws of *Justice*. (2.) *Fornication*, when both the guilty Persons are free and unmarried. It has been sufficiently proved by many Writers, that this is utterly unlawful, however some have attempted to varnish the Guilt and excuse the Crime. (3.) *Lasciviousness*, which consists in giving a Loose to those impure Thoughts, Words and Actions which have an apparent Tendency toward the Sins before-mentioned. Besides these, there are other Names and Instances of unclean Abominations, which I wish could be utterly rooted out from human Nature, by burying them in everlasting Silence.

If I were to fetch *Arguments from Reason* and the *Light of Nature*, I might make it appear that these things are criminal, and contrary to those *Rules of Morality* which were written in the Heart of Man. And perhaps they would have appear'd in the same guilty Colours to all Men, if the *Light of Nature* were not obscur'd by corrupt Passions and licentious Appetite. The Practice of these impure Vices is inconsistent with the great Ends for which God has formed our Natures, has rais'd us above the Beasts that perish, and has inclin'd

inclin'd Mankind to form themselves into Societies for mutual Benefit. The Brutes, who have no Nature superior to the Animal, are not govern'd by the same Laws: But the God of Nature, who has made us *Compound Beings*, and (shall I say?) hath joyn'd an *Animal* and an *Angel* together to make up a Man, expects that the *Angel* should govern the *Animal* in all its natural Propensities, and confine it within the Rules of Religion and the social Life.

These Vices are also contrary to the *solemn Ordinance of Marriage*, which the blessed God instituted in Paradise in a State of Innocency, and design'd to continue thro' all Generations. If these Impurities of Conversation were publickly permitted, all the tender and most engaging Names of Relation and Kindred, such as *Father*, *Sister*, and *Brother* would be confounded, and almost abolish'd among Mankind; and what dismal Consequences would hence ensue? In what helpless Circumstances would Children be then brought into this World? And many of the Ends of Human Society would become frustrate and vain.

I confess indeed, that several of these *Vices* were practis'd in the *Heathen World* without any inward Remorse of the Mind, without private Reproof or publick Shame. Some of these *Impurities* were allowed by  
the



the Laws of their Country; some were indulged at Festivals, and sometimes they were mingled with their religious Ceremonies, and made part of the Worship of their Gods: Idol Gods! Abominable Religions! Base and shameful Worshippers! For *it is a Shame*, saith the Apostle, *even to speak of those things that are done in secret, those unfruitful Works of Darkness*, Ephes v. 11, 12. Yet there have been several of the grave, the sober and the wisest among the *Gentiles*, who being constrain'd by the meer Force of Reason, have spoke against these corrupt Practices, and have adorn'd the Virtue of *Chastity* with many honourable Encomiums.

But how doubtful soever this Duty hath been reckoned among the *Heathen Nations*, yet it is made necessary by the Principles of the *Christian Religion*, and a strong and severe Guard of *Prohibitions* and *Threatnings* is set all around to secure the Practice of it. Now that I may speak of this Subject as becomes me, and recommend it in Language pure and undefiled, I shall set before you some of those Scriptures that bear Witness against all the Violations of it, under the following Heads.

I. *The express Precepts of the Law of God* demand the first Place in this Catalogue of Divine Testimonies against *Impurity*,

*purity*, for they were delivered at Mount *Sinai* to many hundred Thousands at once; they were ushered in with Lightning and pronounced with Thunder, *Exod. xx. 14. Thou shalt not commit Adultery.* This is the seventh Command: And that there may not be the least Tendency toward this Sin, the tenth Command is set as a Preservative and Defense, *Thou shalt not so much as covet thy Neighbour's Wife, v. 17<sup>th</sup>.* In this Epitome and Sum of the Laws of God, whereby he rules his Creatures, which is called the *Decalogue* or *Ten Commandments*, you find this *Vice of Impurity* is twice forbidden; once in the perfect Act, and again in the criminal Wish and Intention. Observe here, that tho' the Words of these Commands directly point to *Adultery*, yet it appears by the very Reason of Things, as well as from other Passages of Scripture, that *all unchaste Thoughts, Words and Actions* are here forbidden, as our younger Years have been taught in the Catechism.

Nor is this a Law that belonged only to the *Jews*, for the *New Testament* mentions and enjoyns this Command with the rest which are of equal Force under the Gospel. The *Law forbids all manner of Lust*, and saith, *Thou shalt not covet, Rom. vii. 7.* The great Apostle puts the *Thessalonians* in Mind of what he had taught them as the *Law of Christ.* 1 *Thess. iv.*

2, 3, 4, 5. For ye know what Commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus. For this is the Will of God, even your Sanctification, that you should abstain from Fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his Vessel in Sanctification and Honour; not in the Lust of Concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God. 'Tis as much as if he had said, it is a Dishonour to Christianity, and a Step of Return toward Heathenism to give a Loose to impure Lusts. He repeats the same thing, Ephes. iv. 17. *This I say then, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the Vanity of their Minds, having the Understanding darkened, being alienated from the Life of God thro' the Ignorance that is in them; who being past feeling, have given themselves over to Lasciviousness, to work Uncleaness with Greediness: But ye have not so learned Christ, if so be ye have been led by him and taught the Truth as it is in Jesus. In vain ye profess to have learnt the Truth as it is in Jesus, or to have put on Christ, while you practise the same Abominations as ye did before, while ye walk and live as the vile Heathen World.*

II. *The hateful Description of these Sins which are given us by the Holy Writers, should print the same odious Image of them*



them upon our Minds, and for ever forbid the Practice. *Solomon*, a great King, and a Man of excellent Wisdom, had well known the Mischief and Madness of this sort of Vice; he gives his Son the most solemn Charge against it in various Parts of the *Book of Proverbs*, more especially in the v<sup>th</sup> and vii<sup>th</sup> Chapters, which he spends entirely upon this Theme, and in the ii<sup>d</sup>, the vi<sup>th</sup>, and the ix<sup>th</sup> Chapters, where he applies near half of them to the same Design; wherein, after he has shewn the insinuating Flatteries of the wanton Woman, he never fails to give Notice of some of the terrible Attendants of those that follow her. *For her House inclines to Death, and her Paths unto the Dead; none that go to her return again, neither take they hold of the Paths of Life.* There is scarce any Iniquity that does so effectually harden the Heart and prevent all Repentance. *Let not thine Heart therefore decline to her Ways, go not astray in her Paths: For she has cast down many wounded, yea, many strong Men have been slain by her: Her House is the Way to Hell, going down to the Chambers of Death. This leads me to the next Particular.*

III. If we consider *the dismal Effects of these impure Practices as they are recorded in sacred History*, they should keep our Souls awake, and keep us always to the  
 Watch



Watch lest we be insnared. Behold *Sampson* the strongest of Men, who was a holy *Nazarite*, and devoted to God; how was he brought down shamefully from the Height of his Glory to Prison and Slavery, to Blindness and Death by the Love of strange Women! Behold the *Jewish Hero* lying like a thoughtless Fool upon the Lap of his *Delilah*, while the *seven* sacred *Locks of his Head were shaven*, and his *Divine Strength went from him*, for the *Lord departed*. Behold the wretched Captive with his *Eyes bor'd out by the Philistines*, bound with *Fetters of Brass*, and grinding in the *Prison House*. Behold the Man who was once their Terror, now become their Sport, their Mockery, and their Laughing-stock in the House of *Dagon* their God. See him there crush'd to pieces, and expiring under the Weight of his own *Revenge* upon his *Philistine* Enemies; and all this for the Love of a Harlot. Mark the Mischiefs, the Calamities and the Blood-shed that pursued the House of *David*, when *Adultery* and *Guilt* in the Matter of *Uriah* had provoked his God: See how *Sin* and *Death* made wide Inroads into his Household: See there his Son *Amnon* slain by his Brother *Absalom* for the Folly he had wrought in *Israel*, and the Incest with his Sister *Tamar*. Think of *Solomon*, the wisest of Men, whose

whose Heart was enticed away by strange Women from the God and Religion of his Fathers, when he paid such profane and criminal Regard to the Idols of his Mistresses, as to build Temples for them near the Temple of *Jehovah*; and *the Lord was angry with Solomon*, when *his Wives turned away his Heart after other Gods*, and he *rent the Kingdom from him* in the Days of his Son *Rehoboam*, and made a long and fatal Separation between the Tribes of *Israel* for many Generations. And to name no more, turn your Eyes to *Sodom* and *Gomorrab*, and the Cities of the Plain, *giving themselves over to Fornication, and going after strange Flesh*; mark how *the Lord rained Fire and Brimstone out of Heaven upon them*, and they are set forth for an Example, suffering the Vengeance of Eternal Fire. *Jude 7.*

IV. Think of the dreadful Threatnings that are denounc'd against impure Sinners in the Word of God, and you will find these are flaming Witnesses against their Practice. *The Lord hath a Controversy with the Inhabitants of the Land, because of killing, stealing and Adultery; therefore shall the Land mourn.* And God seems to forbid the Prophets to give them Reproof, as tho' he resolved to destroy them. *Hosea iv. 1,—5.*  
*Let no Man strive and reprove another.*  
 His

His Mercy and Forgiveness seem to be put to a stand; *How shall I pardon thee for this? saith the Lord; thy Children have forsaken me, when I fed them to the full they then committed Adultery, and assembled themselves by Troops in the Harlots Houses. Shall I not visit them for these things? saith the Lord, and shall not my Soul be avenged on such a Nation as this? Jer. v. 7, 9.* When the Apostle Paul had represented this Sort of Vice in 1 Cor. iii. as a *Defilement of the Body, which is the Temple of God, and the Habitation of the Holy Spirit;* he adds this Word of Terror, *If any Man defile the Temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the Temple of God is and ought to be Holy, and not kept as a Nest for unclean Vermin. Be not deceived; neither Fornicators, nor Idolaters, nor Adulterers, nor those who indulge vile impurities, shall inherit the Kingdom of God. 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10.* Such were some of you indeed, says St. Paul to his Converts, *but ye are washed and sanctified from these Pollutions, or you could never have been saved.* Therefore, saith the same Holy Writer, *Let neither Fornication, nor any unclean Practices be so much as once named amongst you, as becometh Saints; that is, let them never be named without Abhorrence. For this ye know, that no Whoremonger, nor any unclean Person, nor covetous Man who is an*

3 Idolater,



*Idolater, hath any Inheritance in the Kingdom of Christ and God. Let no Man deceive you with vain Words; for because of these things cometh the Wrath of God upon the Children of Disobedience. Ephes. v. 3, — 6. The Visions of St. John in the Book of the Revelations pronounce the Doom of Whoremongers with the rest of notorious Sinners, and give them their Part in the Lake which burneth with Fire and Brimstone, which is the second Death. Rev. xxi. 28. How impiously bold are those Sinners who dare venture thro' all these Terrors, to gratify a sensual Appetite! Who can rush upon the Point of the avenging Sword of God, and plunge themselves into everlasting Burnings to taste the deceitful Baits of impure and forbidden Pleasure.*

Before I conclude this Head I would just hint a few Directions to those who would preserve their Modesty and Virtue, and prevail against all Temptations to Impurity.

1. *Set a severe Watch upon your Eyes and your Heart. Keep all the Powers of Nature under a proper Discipline, and guard all the Avenues of the Soul. Secure your Senses without and your Fancy within, as much as possible, from all Allurements of this kind. Let us remember that Sin often begins in the Imagination, and therefore we must establish*



establish a strict Guard upon our roving Thoughts, and reduce them when they first begin to go astray. We must lay a strong Chain of Restraint upon those endless Wanderers; for our Saviour himself tells us; *out of the Heart proceed Adulteries and Fornications, which defile the Man.* Mat. xv. 19.

We must *make a self-denying Covenant with our Eyes, that we mayn't look upon Temptation, lest we be led astray from the Paths of Purity.* Our blessed Lord himself gives us a sufficient Caution, when he explains the seventh Commandment: *Mat. v. 28. I say unto you, that whosoever looketh on a Woman to lust after her hath committed Adultery with her already in his Heart.* When our Saviour forbids a *wanton Look*, he requires that we put a Vail upon our Eyes, lest like wandering Stars or foolish Fires they betray us into foul and miry Pits of Pollution, or lead us to deep and dangerous Precipices.

*Avoid all impure Representations, Pictures and Images: Turn your Eyes from immodest Sights, and your Ears from polluted Language, whether it be in Discourse, or Writing, a lewd Jest, or a wanton Song.* Let them not entertain you tho' they may be attended and adorned with never so many Colours of Wit, and Charms of Musick. *Romances, and Novels*

*vels*, and invented *Stories of forbidden Love* have painted over these Impurities with shining Eloquence, and awakened the same foolish Passions in the Reader. O how unhappily has the *Art of Verse*, which was first consecrated to the Service of the Temple, been prostituted to the vilest Purposes, to give gay Colours to Temptation, and gild over the foulest Images of Iniquity! And what a Multitude of Souls may date the Commencement of their Guilt and Ruin from the Time when they began to frequent the poisonous Entertainments of the Stage! Their Ears which were shockt at first with some of the coarse and foul Expressions of modern *Comedy*, by degrees are hardened to bear the most offensive Language: Their Modesty and Blushing dies and vanishes by Degrees, till at last they learn to relish the grossest Pollutions of the Theatre, and perhaps put the Fable into Practice.

As *Faith* and Salvation come by hearing, so Iniquity and everlasting Death come sometimes by hearing too. And what we would not hear, surely we should not speak. Let us then set a Guard upon our Tongues, lest they border upon forbidden Language. *No Filthiness, no foolish Talking, no corrupt Communication must proceed out of our Mouths*, Ephes. iv. 29, and v. 4.

We should not affect those Speeches of a

*double meaning* which lead the Thoughts away to lewd and wanton Conceits, and make foul Impressions upon the Mind. Let our Ears hate to be treated with such Indecencies, nor let our Lips dare to treat others so.

2. *Do not make too rich Provisions for the Feeding of the Flesh; indulge not your selves in the Delicacies of the Taste, nor in the Luxury of excessive Sleep: Both of these may incline animal Nature to licentious Desires: Stand afar off from Gluttony and Excess of Wine, nor pamper the Body beyond the just Support, and due Refreshment of Nature. The Holy Apostle in his Prohibitions couples Chambering and Wantonness with a rioting and drunken Practice, Rom. xiii. 13. and calls them all Works of Darknes. 'Tis a good Remark of Kempis, a devout Papist in former Days, Bridle the Appetites of the Palate, get a Sovereignty over them, and you will be better able to master every other Appetite.*

3. *Always employ your selves in something innocent and useful that may engage the Powers of the Body or the Mind, or both, that so Temptation may never find you idle. The Springs of the Sin of Sodom were Fulness of Bread, and Abundance of Idleness, therefore they grew haughty, and committed Abomination before the Lord. Ezek. xvi. 49, 50. This is an Advice of Jerom, one of*

of the Christian Fathers, *Be still doing some Work, that the Devil, when he comes to tempt, may always find thee busie.* Where you are in Danger of these Sins, put your selves upon a Necessity of Diligence all the Day, that you may have no Time nor Room for wild Imaginations nor impure Indulgences.

4. *Avoid the Seasons, the Places and the Objects of Temptation,* as far as is consistent with the necessary Duties of Life: For he that hath no Caution about him, and is not afraid of being tempted, he is not acquainted with human Weakness, nor is he so much afraid of Sin as he ought to be.

5. *Maintain an everlasting and awful Sense of the Presence of God thy Maker, thy Governor and thy Judge.* Remember the Lord beholds the secret Workings of the Heart, and the foul Practices of Darkness and Midnight. There is not a Place where the Eye of God cannot come. What an honourable Character hath young *Joseph* acquired in the Word of God, and his Name stands recorded with Renown in divine History thro' all Ages, for his Flight from the Allurements of an immodest Woman: The Guard which he continually placed upon his Vertue was the all-seeing Eye of Heaven. *How can I do this great Wickedness, and sin against God?* Gen. xxxix. 9.



6. *Get those Scriptures written in your Hearts, and ready at all Times in your Memories, which may be the most effectual Antidotes and Preservatives against all forbidden Pleasure.* This was the antient Practice of the Saints. Psal. cxix. 11. *Thy Word have I hid in my Heart that I might not sin against thee. The Word of God is the Sword of the Spirit, to put to Flight, and to slay whole Armies of Iniquity.*

7. *Fly daily to the Mercy Seat for divine Aid: Commit thy Soul and Body to the Keeping of Christ; he is exalted and authorized to take Care of Sinners, who make him their Refuge; he is also compassionate and ready to succour the tempted. There is a cleansing Vertue in the Blood of Christ to wash away the foulest Guilt, and to sprinkle the Conscience of the humble Penitent with Peace and Pardon: And there is all-sufficient Power and Grace with him to subdue the most raging Vices. Make Haste to him by humble Faith, and most importunate Prayer: Continue instant at the Throne: Never rest till he hath by his Providence and his Grace delivered you from the dangerous Temptation, or made you Conqueror over the Sin that easily besets you. There are a thousand Souls in Heaven, who were once conflicting here with the same impure Temptations, but they gained the*  
Victory

Victory by the Blood and Spirit of *Christ*, and are made more than Conquerors thro' him who hath loved them.

I fear I have trespassed upon my Hearers in dwelling thus long on this dangerous Theme. 'Tis time to retire and end my Discourse. Those who have a Mind to be better furnished with Weapons and divine Armour against these Enemies of *Purity* and *Vertue*, I would recommend to them three Books, where they may find abundant Provision: And these are Mr. *Ostervald's* Treatise of *Uncleanness*, Mr. *Henry's* four Discourses against *Immorality*, and Mr. *Baxter's* *Christian Directory*, *Tom. 1. Chap 8. Part 5.* And may the holy and pure Spirit, who attended at the Baptism of our Saviour in the Form of a *Dove*, which is an Emblem of *Chastity*, may he give these Waters of the Sanctuary a divine Efficacy to purify the Souls of polluted Sinners, and to guard the innocent and the tempted from these dangerous Pollutions!





## SERMON XIV.

*Christian Morality, viz. A  
Lovely Carriage, &c.*

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are Lovely, —  
think on these things.*

*Ὅσα μεροφιλή, &c.*



AN was a lovely Creature in his first Formation and Innocence, however he has been debased and dishonoured by the Fall. Now there is nothing in all the Religion of *Christ* but what tends to restore Man to the Excellencies of his original Estate, or to exalt him above them, and to render him

him all over amiable. To this End *Truth* and *Sincerity* are recommended to him in the Gospel, with a *venerable Decency* in all his Conduct. To this End he is required to practise *Justice* to his Neighbour, and to keep himself *pure* and *chast* from all the Vices of Sensuality. Thus far we have proceeded in improving the Text. And the Man who has attained thus far, has many *lovely* Qualities belonging to him, such as lay a Foundation for a *good Report*, and deserve our Praises.

Yet there are many things in human Conversation, which do not directly fall under the Commands of *Truth* and *Gravity*, *Justice* and *Purity*: These the Apostle recommends to the *Philippians* under the following Characters, *viz.* Things that are *lovely*, that are *of good Report*, *Deeds of Vertue* and *worthy of Praise*.

The things that are *lovely* are such as look well among Men, and have a good Appearance in the Eyes of the World: Those things that *gain the Love of our Fellow Creatures*: Not meerly such religious Practices, as make us beloved by Fellow-Christians, but such a Temper and Conduct as commands the Esteem and Respect even of the ungodly, and those that profess not strict Religion. This ought to be the Carriage of the Saints of the Most High, they should practise those things



that are grateful and pleasing to human Nature, so far as Innocence allows; those things that may recommend our Conversation to our Neighbours, and procure the Love of all Men.

Is it not a very desirable thing to have it said of any particular Christian, *All that know him love him; he hath no Enemies but those that are unacquainted with him,* unless it be such as hate him upon the same Ground as the Devil doth, and that is because of his Piety and Goodness?

But to explain this more fully, and impress it with more Power upon every one of our Consciences, I will descend to particular Instances of a *Lovely Carriage*. And here I shall mention but these few, *viz. Prudence, Moderation, Humility, Meekness, Patience and Love.*

I. *Prudence is a lovely Quality.* This teaches us to speak every Word, and perform every Action of Life at a proper Time, in the proper Place, and toward the proper Person. 'Tis *Prudence* that distinguishes our various Behaviour toward our Fellow-creatures according to their different Ranks and Degrees among Mankind, or the different Relations in which we stand to them. 'Tis a very desirable Excellency to know when 'tis proper

per to speak, and when 'tis best to keep Silence; at what Seasons and in what Company we should awaken our Zeal, and exert our active Powers; or when we should hide our selves or put a Bridle upon our Lips, and sit still, and hear.

Prudence is of infinite Use in all the Affairs of Life and Religion: Nor is there any Hour of the Day, nor any Place wherein we spend that Hour, whether alone or in publick, but gives Occasion for some Exercise of this Vertue. It does not belong to human Nature to possess this in Perfection: *Perfect Prudence dwells with God alone*, God the most lovely of Beings: He that comes nearest to it is the wisest of Men, and he gains the Love and high Esteem of all that are near him; for his Conduct in Life is of singular Advantage to those that converse with him as well as to himself. This Man is consulted by his Friends as an earthly Oracle, and by his Advice he saves many from Ruin. Thus he wins and wears their Honour and their Love.

There are *many good Qualities* both of the *natural* and *moral* kind that must meet together to make up a prudent Man. He must be furnisht with *a Memory of things past*, and with *just and proper Observations* made upon them, that he may know how to improve every Opportunity and Occurrence

rence of Life to the best Purposes, when the same Occasions return. There is no Prudence without some Degrees of *Experience*. But *Experience* alone is not sufficient; he should have also a *wide Extent of Soul*, and be able to take a large and comprehensive Survey of the concurrent Circumstances of things present: And he must be blest with a *solid Judgment* that by putting many things at once into the Balance he may find which outweighs the rest, and determine his present Conduct thereby. He must have a *Degree of Sagacity* to foresee future Events, according to the usual Consequences of things in this mortal State. *The prudent Man foresees the Evil, and hideth himself, but the simple pass on, and are punished*, Prov. xxii. 3. That is, they suffer for their Want of Prudence and Foresight. And besides all these, he should be a Man of *firm and steady Resolution* to go thro' Difficulties, and to put in Practice what his Judgment has determined.

*Rashness and ungoverned Passion* are great Enemies of this Vertue. Both these push a Man onward to a hasty and irregular Conduct. His Lips multiply Folly, and his Hands practise it thro' the Impatience of his Spirit. His unguarded Talk and precipitant Actions plunge himself into Snares, and sometimes involve his Acquaintance in the same Mischief. There

There are other Characters also inconsistent with *Prudence*, such as an *unthinking* and an *unsteady* Temper. The *thoughtless Person* lives at a venture, walks always at random, and seems to aim at nothing. He enjoys the present Hour indeed, talking and acting according to the mere Appearances of things. He is content with a slight sudden View of any thing without Recollection or Forethought; and in a most literal Sense *takes no Thought for the morrow*. The *fickle and unconstant Man*, he may aim at something indeed, and have honest Designs in his Head, but is ever changing the means to attain them, and pursues nothing with that Steadiness that *Prudence* requires, or that the Necessity of human Affairs demands of every Man that would be *wise and happy*. Such Men may be pitied as *weak and silly*, but they are seldom esteemed or much beloved in the World, while *Prudence* is so much wanting.

There's no Necessity that I should cite special Parts of the Word of God, to encourage us to seek this most amiable Quality, since the Recommendations of *true Wisdom* both *human* and *divine* are scattered up and down thro' all the sacred Writings: And the Spirit of God has given us one or two Books on purpose to teach us *Prudence*; these are the *Ecclesiastes* and



the *Proverbs of Solomon*. Nor can I propose any better Direction to gain universal Wisdom, than to read the Book of *Proverbs* often with Diligence and humble Prayer.

II. *Moderation is another lovely Quality*. It teaches us to maintain a *Medium* between those wild Extreams into which human Nature is ready to run upon every Occasion.

When a warm and imprudent Talker adorns some common Character with excessive Praises, and carries it up to the Stars; the *moderate Man* puts in a cautious Word, and thinks 'tis sufficient to raise it half so high. Or when he hears a vast and unreasonable Load of Accusation and Infamy thrown upon some lesser Mistakes in Life, the *moderate Man* puts in a soft Word of Excuse, lightens the Burthen of Reproach, and relieves the good Name of the Sufferer from being prest to Death. When he sees *Oppression* and *Violence* practised amongst his Neighbours, the *Justice* of his Soul directs him to take the Part of the *injured Person*, and his own *Moderation and Goodness* inclines him to do it in such a Manner, as may calm and suppress the Resentment of the oppressed, and soften and melt the *Oppressor* into Compliance with the Rules of Justice. Thus  
he

he reconciles them both without giving Offence to either.

When any Sects of Christians seem to be carried away with the furious Torrent of some prevailing Notions, or some unnecessary Practices, some special Superstition, or a contentious Spirit, the *moderate Man* tries to shew how much of Truth and Goodness may be found amongst each Party, where all agree to hold *Christ Jesus* the Head; tho' he dares not renounce a Grain of *Truth* or *necessary Duty* for the sake of Peace, and he would *contend earnestly*, where Providence calls him *for the Essential Articles of Faith which were once delivered to the Saints*; for he knows the *Wisdom that is from above is first pure and then peaceable*, Jam. iii. 17. Yet he takes this Occasion to prove that some Truths or some Practices are Articles of less Importance to the Christian Life; that they are not worthy of such *Unchristian Quarrels*; and thus he attempts, as far as possible, to reconcile the angry Disputers. Sometimes he has the Happiness to shew them both that they fight in the Dark; he explains their Opinions and their Contests, and puts the best Sense upon both of them: and when he has brought them into the Light he makes it appear that they are *Friends and Brethren*; and that Religion and the Gospel are safe on both Sides,

Sides, if they would but dwell together without fighting, but that 'tis sorely endangered by their Battels. So *St. Paul* dealt with the *Jewish* and *Gentile Christians*, and assured them that they both belonged to the Kingdom of God, and the Church of *Christ*, tho' they quarrelled about *Flesh* and *Herbs* and *Holy-days*. How lovely, how glorious, how desirable is such a Character as this!

I confess when a *Party-spirit* runs high among the different Sects of Religion, or the different Divisions of Mankind, this most amiable Vertue is miscalled by the scandalous Names of *Indifferency*, and *Luke-warmness* and *Trimming*; and it sustains a World of Reproaches from both the quarrelling Parties. *Moderation*, tho' it is the blessed Principle, which awakens and assists Men to become *Peace-makers*, yet at the same time when it enters into the Battle to divide the Contenders, it receives an unkind Stroke from either Side. This the Reconciler expects, and he bears it for the sake of Union and Love.

The *moderate Man* in Cases of private Property or Interest does not insist upon the utmost of his own Right with a stiff and unyielding Obstinacy, but abates of his just Pretensions for the sake of Peace; and what he practises himself, he persuades others to practise in the like Contests. This is that  
*Mode-*

*Moderation and Gentleness* which the great Apostle recommends a few Verses before my Text. Phil. iv. 5. *Let your Moderation be known to all Men.* And our blessed Lord himself gives the *moderate Man* this illustrious Encomium, *Blessed are the meek, who submit rather than Quarrel, for they shall inherit the Earth. Blessed are the Peace Makers, for they shall be called the Sons of God.* Matth. v. 5, 9. Happy Souls, whom the God of Truth and the God of Peace acknowledges for his Children, and to whom he promises a large Inheritance!

And let it be observed also, that whatsoever hard Usage the Sons of Peace may meet with, while the Ferment of Parties is hottest and the Storm is high, yet when the Clamour and Rage are sunk and calm, when the Party-fury hath spent it self and is grown cool enough to suffer Men to bethink themselves, and to see all things in their true Colours, then the *Man of Moderation* stands approved of Men as well as of God; the divine Vertue appears in its own lovely Form, and receives a becoming Share of Honour.

III. *Humility is a lovely Vertue.* 'Tis beautiful and becoming for a Man to divest himself of all affected Grandeur, and not to exalt his Head above his Neighbour.  
O that



O that we were all *clothed with Humility!* 'Tis an Ornament that becomes Sinners well. Let us put it on with our daily Raiment, and strive to vie with each other which shall practise this Grace in the greatest Perfection.

How unlovely a Carriage is it to boast our selves of any superior Quality we possess, or to assume lofty Airs because *we have more Money* than our Neighbour! to aggrandize our selves in our own Esteem, in our Language, in our Behaviour, because we fancy our selves to be *better drest* or *better fed* than our Fellow Creatures! And if we have a little Honour put upon us by the Providence of God, 'tis a criminal Vanity for us to grow haughty and insolent upon that Account. I'm in pain whensoever I hear a Man treat his *Servant* as he does his *Dog*; as tho' a poor Man were not made of the same Clay, nor born of the same ancient Race as his Master: As tho' *Adam* (whose Name is *Dust*) was not our common Father, or a Lord had not the same Original as other Men.

Nay, the nobler Possessions of the Mind, Ingenuity and Learning, and even *Grace* it self are no sufficient Ground for Pride. 'Tis a comely thing to see a Man exalted by many divine Gifts, and yet abasing himself. 'Tis a lovely Sight to behold a Person well adorned with Vertue and  
 Merit,

Merit, and glorified in the Mouths of all Men, and yet concealing himself: To see a Man of shining Worth drawing as it were a Curtain before himself, that the World might not see him, while the World do what they can to do him Justice, and draw aside the Veil to make his Merit visible. Not that a Man of Worth is always bound to practise Concealment; this would be to rob Mankind of the Blessing God has designed for them, and to *wrap up his Talents in the unprofitable Napkin*. But there are Occasions wherein a worthy and illustrious Person may be equally useful to the World, and yet withdraw himself from publick Applause. This is the Hour to make his Humility appear.

How graceful and engaging is it in *Persons of Title and Quality to stoop to those that are of mean Degree*, to converse freely at proper Seasons with those that are poor and despicable in the World, to give them leave to offer their humble Requests, or sometimes to debate a Point of Importance with them? Not all the Dignity of their Raiment can render them half so honourable as this Condescension does; for nothing makes them so much like God. *The High and Holy One, who inhabits Eternity*, stoops down from Heaven to visit the afflicted, and to dwell with  
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the poor. And surely when we set our selves before the divine Majesty, we are meaner and more contemptible in his Eyes, than 'tis possible for any Fellow Creature to be in ours; *he bumbles himself to behold Princes.*

It must be allow'd indeed, that where God and the World have placed any Person in a superior Station, and given him a sensible Advancement above his Fellow Creatures, he is not bound to renounce the Honours that are his due, nor to act beneath the Dignity of his Character and State. This would be to confound all the beautiful Order of Things in the natural, civil and religious Life. But there are Cases and Seasons that often occur, when *great Degrees of Humility* may be practised without Danger of sinking ones own Character, or doing a Dishonour to our Station in the World. There is an *Art of maintaining State with an Air of Modesty*, nor is there any need to put on haughty and scornful Airs in Order to secure the Honours of a Tribunal, or the highest Offices of Magistracy. I have known a Man who acted in an exalted Station with so much Condescension and Candor, that all Men agreed to love and honour him so far, that 'twas hard to say, whether he was most honoured or most beloved.

How

How amiable a Behaviour is it in *younger Persons* when *Respect is paid to Age*, and the Honour is given to the hoary Head that Nature and Scripture join to require! Lev. xix. 32. *Thou shalt rise up before the hoary Head, and honour the Face of the old Man, and fear thy God: I am the Lord.* Tho' the Character of the aged Person in respect of *Riches, Quality and Learning* may be much inferior, yet the *Wisdom* that is naturally supposed to be derived from long *Experience* lays a Foundation for this superior *Honour*. And I look upon it as part of the Shame and just *Reproach* of our Day that there is such a licentious *Insolence* assum'd by Youth to treat their Elders with *Contempt*. But so much the more lovely is the *Carriage* of those who in spite of evil Custom treat old Age with *Reverence*, and abhor the *pert and petulant Indignities* that some of their Companions cast upon the Writings and Counsels of their Ancestors.

And here I beg leave also humbly to *admonish my Fathers* that they practise the lovely *Grace of Condescension* when they converse with those that are young. I entreat them to permit a Youth of an *inquisitive Genius* to propose an Argument for some farther Improvement of Knowledge, or to raise an *Objection* against an established *Doctrine*, and not to answer him



him with an imperious Frown, or with the Reproaches of *Heresy* or *Impertinence*. I beseech them to indulge the rising Generation in some Degrees of Freedom of Sentiment, and to offer some Demonstration for their own Opinions besides their Authority and the Multitude of their Years.

The Apostle *Peter's* Advice may be address'd to Persons of all Ages and Characters. 1 Pet. v. 5. *Ye younger, submit yourselves to the elder: Yea, all of you be subject to one another, and be clothed with Humility; for God resisteth the Proud, and giveth Grace to the Humble.*

If we have *more Knowledge* than others, how *lovely* is our Conduct, when we teach and instruct them, not like *Sovereigns of their Faith*, and *Dictators to their Understanding*, but in a Way of friendly Conversation and mutual Improvement? If any thing occurs to be debated, it is a Sign of Modesty to yield to the Force of Argument, and not resolve beforehand to be *infallible* and *obstinate*, as tho' we were exempted from the common Frailty of human Nature, and free from all Possibility of Mistake.

While we are arguing with others in order to convince them, how graceful a thing is it, when we have the Power of the Argument on our own Side, to keep  
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our selves from *Insult* and *Triumph*! How engaging a Behaviour toward our Opponent, when we seem to part as tho' we were equal in the Debate, while its evident to all the Company that the Truth lies wholly on our Side!

Yet I will own there are Seasons when the *obstinate* and the *assuming Disputant* should be made to feel the Force of an Argument, by displaying it in its victorious and triumphant Colours: But this is seldom to be practised so as to insult the opposite Party, except in Cases where they have shewn a haughty and insufferable Insolence. Some Persons perhaps can hardly be taught Humility without being severely humbled; and yet where there is need of this Chastisement, I had rather any other Hand should be employed in it.

IV. *Meekness* is another of the lovely Graces. This is contrary to *Wrath* and *Malice*, and all the angry Passions, as *Humility* stands in Opposition to *Pride*. As there are generally some secret Workings of *Pride* in the Heart, when a Man gives Indulgence to his *wrathful Passions*; so where a Person has thoroughly learnt the Practice of *Humility*, the Grace of *Meekness* is easily attain'd, and indeed it seems to be a necessary Consequent of it.

How

How lovely is the Character of a Man, who can hear himself censured and reviled without reviling again! who can sustain repeated Affronts without kindling into Flame and Fury! who has learnt to bear Injuries from his Fellow Creatures, and yet withhold himself from meditating Revenge! He can sit and hear a strong Opposition made to his Sentiments without conceiving an Affront: He can bear to be contradicted without resenting: And as he never loves to *give Offence* to any Man, so neither is he *presently offended*. 'Tis only the more peevish and feeble Pieces of human Nature that are ready to take Offence at Trifles, and many times they make their own *foolish Jealousies* a sufficient Ground for their Indignation.

We cannot expect to pass thro' the World, and find every thing peaceful and pleasant in it. All Men won't be of our Mind, nor agree to promote our Interest. There are Savages in this Wilderness, which lies in our Way to the heavenly *Canaan*; and we must sometimes hear them roar against us. *Divine Courage* will enable us to walk onward without Fear, and *Meekness* will teach us to pass by without resenting. We should learn to feel many a Spark of angry Fire falling upon us from the Tongues of others, and yet our Hearts should not be like Tinder ready to catch

the Flame, and to return the Blaze. The meek Christian at such a Season possesses his Soul in Patience, as good *David* did when *Shimei* sent his Malice and his Curses after him: The Saint at that time was in an humble Temper, and said, *Let Shimei curse.* We should not *render Evil for Evil*, but according to the sacred Direction of Scripture endeavour to *overcome Evil with Good.* Rom. xii. 21.

*Anger* is not utterly forbidden to the Christian; yet happy is he that has the least Occasion for it. In *Ephes.* iv. 26. the Apostle gives us this Rule, *Be ye angry and sin not.* As if he would have said, when the Affairs of Life seem to require a just Resentment and Anger, look upon it as a dangerous Moment, and watch against a sinful Excess. Let us never give a wild Loose to our Wrath, but always hold the Reins of Government with a strong Hand, lest it break out into forbidden Mischief. When we give our selves leave to be offended, let the Anger appear to be directed against the Sin of the Offender, if possible, more than against his Person.

Let our *Anger* be *well-timed*, both as to the Season and the Length of it. The Seasons of it should be very uncommon; a Christian should seldom awaken his Anger, and the Continuance of it must be very short.



short. *Let not the Sun go down upon your Wrath, nor give place to the Devil.* The long sullen Resentment which is practised by some Persons, carried on from Day to Day with a gloomy Silence, and now and then venting it self in a spiteful Word or a fly Reproach, is by no means becoming the Name and Spirit of a Christian. This is *giving place to the Devil*, and making room for him to lodge in our Hearts. This is as much contrary to *Meekness* as a *short and sudden Fury* is, and perhaps carries in it a Guilt more aggravated in the Sight of God.

Yet neither should our Anger indulge it self in *loud and noisy Practices*, nor fill the House with a *brawling Sound*. 'Tis better to dwell in a Corner of the House-top than to cohabit in a Palace with such a *brawling Companion of Life*. *Prov. xxi. 9.* And the wise Man has repeated it again in the 25<sup>th</sup> Chapter as a Matter worthy of double Notice. *St. Paul* forbids this Practice to the *Ephesians*; *Let all Bitterness, and Wrath, and Anger, and Clamour and evil speaking be put away from you with all Malice.* *Ephes. iv. 31.*

Nor should our Resentments carry us to any *cruel Practices*. The Word of God spends its Curses upon such sort of Anger, *Gen. xlix. 7.* *Cursed be the Wrath of Simeon, for it was fierce; and the Anger of Levi,*

*for it was cruel.* You know what Mischiefs it hurried them into, even to foul Treachery and Murther, and the Destruction of a whole Country. The Grace of *Meekness* is an Enemy to all these Practices, and a happy Preservative from them.

*V. Patience is a lovely Virtue.* I am not now speaking of that religious Exercise of it, which consists in an humble Submission to the Providences of God, without repining at his Hand, or sending up our Murmurs against Heaven; but a *patient Conduct to our Fellow Creatures* is the thing, which I chiefly design here to recommend.

When some Persons stand in need of any of the Necessaries or Conveniences of Life, they must be supply'd first, they can brook no delay; let all the World stand by waiting till they are served; and their Anger is quickly kindled if their Affairs are not dispatch'd in a Moment. They make no Allowances for the Necessities or Conveniences of others, nor for the various Accidents that attend human Life, which may stop the Speed of the most diligent Servant, and constrain him unwillingly to delay his Message or his Work. But the *patient Christian* considers all things, desires but his Share of the Attendance of his Fellow Creatures, and waits

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without Clamour till the proper Season. He makes wise and kind Allowances for every Incident of Life that may give just Occasion to a Delay, and gains the Love of all that are about him by this most engaging Carriage.

How lovely is it to see a *Teacher waiting upon those that are slow of Understanding*, and taking due Time and Pains to make the Learner conceive what he means, without upbraiding him with his Weakness, or reproaching him with the Names of *Stupid* and *Senseless*? This is to imitate God, the God of Long-suffering and Patience, *who giveth Wisdom to all that ask, and upbraideth not.* James i. 5. The patient Man attends and waits upon those that are slow of Speech, and hears an Argument fully proposed before he makes his Reply. This is an honourable and lovely Character; *but he that answereth a Matter before he heareth it, it is Folly and Shame unto him.* Prov. xviii. 13. Perhaps he is utterly mistaken in the Objection which his Friend was going to make, then he is justly put to the Blush for his Folly and Impatience.

The Vertue of *Patience* teaches us to be calm and easy toward our Fellow Creatures while we sustain sharp and continued Afflictions from the Hand of God. 'Tis the unhappy Conduct of some Christians, that

that when the great God puts them under any sore Trial or Chastisement, they are angry with all their Friends around them, and scatter abroad their Discontents in the Family, and many times make them fall heaviest upon their most intimate Friends. If one were to search this Matter to the Bottom, we should find the Spring of it is an *Impatience at the sovereign Hand of God*; but because their Christianity forbids them to vent their Uneasiness at Heaven, they divert the Stream of their Resentment, and make their Fellow Creatures feel it: So a piece of unripe Fruit prest with a heavy Weight from above scatters its sour Juice on every thing that stands near it, and gives a just Emblem of the *impatient Christian*.

But what a lovely Sight is it to behold a Person burthened with many Sorrows, and perhaps his *Flesh upon him has Pain and Anguish*, while *his Soul mourns within him*; yet his Passions are calm, he possesses his Spirit in Patience, he takes kindly all the Relief that his Friends attempt to afford him, nor does he give them any Grief or Uneasiness but what they feel thro' the Force of mere Sympathy and Compassion? Thus even in the midst of Calamities he knits the Hearts of his Friends faster to himself, and lays greater Obligations upon their Love by so lovely



and divine a Conduct under the Weight of his heavy Sorrows.

VI. *Love to Mankind in the various Branches of it is a most lovely Quality, and well becomes a Christian.*

Should I speak of *Love in the Heart*, which ever thinks the best concerning others, and wishes and seeks their Welfare and Happiness? Should I speak of it *as it works on the Tongue*, and appears in all friendly Language, whether the Object be present or afar off? Should I describe it as it discovers it self *in the Hand of Assistance and Bounty*, to relieve the Poor and the Helpless? Each of these would yield sufficient Matter for a whole Discourse, and this Grace would appear lovely in all its Forms. It is a Pain to my Thoughts to omit it here: Methinks I can hardly tell how to let it go without large Encomiums: Nor could I prevail with my self to pass it over now with so brief a Mention, if I did not design to employ an Hour or two on this Subject hereafter.





*The Second Part of the Fourteenth*  
SERMON.

**I** Proceed to shew how the *very Light of Nature recommends every agreeable and obliging Character, every lovely Quality that is found among Mankind, and Reason exhorts us to the Acquirement and Practise of it.*

I. *Our own Interest directs us to it. 'Tis a natural good Quality and a most useful thing to desire the Love of others, to seek the Favour of our Fellow Creatures. 'Tis a very lawful Ambition to covet the Good-will of those with whom we converse, and to pursue such Practices as may procure us a Place in their good Opinion and Friendship. We who are born for Society must naturally desire to stand well with Mankind, and that our Neighbours should wish our Welfare, should treat us with Decency, and Civility, and Love, should assist our Interest, and do us Good when we stand in Need of them: And if so, then the Rule of Justice obliges us to practise the same towards them which we desire they should*

should practise towards us. The more we exercise of *Humility, Meekness, Patience, Charity* and *Good-will* towards our Neighbours, the more Reason have we to expect the same Returns of a *lovely Carriage* from them. And 'tis no small Advantage in Life for a Person to be much beloved. When he falls under sudden Distresses, every Man is ready to relieve him; when he meets with perplexing Difficulties, he has the ready Assistance of Multitudes at his Command, because he hath many Lovers.

II. It is a *most generous Character, and the Sign of a great and good Soul to delight to please those with whom we converse.* 'Tis a lovely Sight to behold a Person solicitous to make all round about him easy and happy. Such amiable Souls as these, 'tis a frequent Practice, and a Pleasure to them to contradict their own natural Inclinations, in order to serve the Desires or the Interests of their Friends. A happy Temper! that finds so much Satisfaction in this *Self-denial*, that the very Virtue loses its Name, and it becomes but another sort of *Self-pleasing*. Such Persons are in Pain when they find their Friends hard to be pleased, and they suffer sometimes too much Uneasiness in themselves, because of the perverse Hu-  
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mours of those they converse with. This Uneasiness indeed may arise to a Criminal Excess, but the Spring of it has something amiable.

I could wish every Soul of us would learn a *lovely Carriage*. For

III<sup>dly</sup>, *It makes us resemble God himself*. And yet there are some that will be *selfish* and *churlish*, that will practise the *furious* or the *peevish* Passions, thro' some reigning Principle of *Pride*, or *Covetousness*, *Impatience*, or *Envy*. There are some that delight in vexing their Fellow Creatures, and in giving them Torment and Pain.

Part of these Qualities make us akin to *Brutes of the worse kind*, when we take Care of none but *self*, and are regardless of our Neighbour's Welfare. "If *self* be healthy and rich, easy and honoured, 'tis no matter tho' the rest of the World sustain Sickness, and Poverty, and Scandal." Others of these unlovely Characters approach nearer to the Spirit of the *Devil*, who takes Delight in torturing his Fellow Creatures, and doing what Mischief he can amongst Men.

But 'tis a *God-like Temper* to take a sweet Satisfaction in diffusing our Goodness, and in pleasing and serving all that are near us. *Let us then be Followers of God as dear Children*. He is the original Beau-



ty, he is the loveliest and the best of Beings. *To be good, and to do good* is a divine Perfection, and let us remember 'tis a Perfection that may be imitated too. *He causes his Sun to rise, and his Rain to fall on the just and the unjust, and fills the Hearts even of the Evil as well as the Good with Food and Gladness* when he gives them fruitful Seasons. Let us not dare then to be rough, and quarrelsome, and sullen, and ill-natured while we profess to be his Offspring. Let there be something lovely in our whole Temper and Conduct, while we pretend to be Imitators of the God of Love.

And does the *Light of Nature* furnish us with all these Motives for a lovely Carriage? then surely the *Light of Scripture* enforces them all. The Gospel obliges Christians to this Practice by much stronger Arguments, and it lays on us more substantial Obligations.

I. *The blessed and ever glorious Trinity, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, give us in the Gospel a divine Example of this Practice.*

Has God, the great and glorious God, manifested a lovely Conduct in his Works of Creation, and his Ways of Providence; how much more glorious a Pattern has he set us in the Transactions of his redeeming

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ing Love! what Condescension hath he here shewn! what Gentleness! what Patience and Forbearance! what Forgiveness! what infinite and endless Discoveries of Grace has he made in his Gospel!

*God the Father reconciling the World to himself by Jesus Christ* has a peculiar Sweetness of Aspect, and most amiable Appearance. Here every Christian beholds him such as he reveal'd himself to *Moses* when he caused his *Glory to pass before him*, *Exod. xxxiv. 6.* *The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in Goodness and Truth, &c.* *The Son of God* stooping down to take *Flesh and Blood* upon him, made the most amiable Figure in the Universe. Even in his glorious and triumphant State in Heaven, he is represented by *a Lamb that was slain*, an Emblem of Meekness and Innocence. And if ever the *blessed Spirit* appeared in the Shape of any living Creature, 'twas in the *Form of a Dove*, a lovely and gentle Animal. Thus the *blessed Trinity* conspire to teach us this amiable and divine Carriage.

II. *The Son of God incarnate* has brought a lovely Pattern of this Practice nearer to us in his whole Department on Earth. I cannot part with the most graceful Exam-

ple of our Lord *Jesus Christ* with a slight Notice. He came into this World partly with a Design to become our Pattern in every Vertue, and in every Grace. Let us turn our Eyes towards him in all the Circumstances and Behaviours of Life, and he will ever appear as he is in himself, *the chiefest of ten thousands, and altogether lovely.* Let us take a Survey of him under those several Particulars in which an amiable Carriage has been described.

*Is Prudence a lovely Virtue?* How perfectly *wise* was the Conduct of our Lord! how carefully did he attend to the Circumstances of Time and Place while he dwelt amongst Mankind! how happily did he suit his Conversation to his Company! how wisely did he derive his divine Discourses from the daily Occurrences of Life! How admirably did he distribute his Benefits according to the various Necessities of Men! So that the unprejudiced World pronounced concerning him, *He has done all things well.* Shall we be rash and foolish, fickle and imprudent, and live at random in our Words and our Works, when we have so divine a Pattern of Prudence before us in the History of the Gospel?

*Is Moderation another lovely Character, and a Peace Maker an amiable Title?* such was our blessed Lord, and such should his Followers

Followers be. How glorious a Sight is it to behold the *Son of God* coming down from Heaven to be a Mediator betwixt his offended Father, and his offending Creatures! to reconcile Heaven and Earth together, and rather than fail in this Attempt, he gladly exposed himself to Shame and Death, and made a Cement of everlasting Friendship betwixt God and Man with his own Blood. Shall we who are reconciled by such amazing Transactions quarrel with each other for Trifles, and form our selves into Parties for Rage, and Strife, and Hatred, and yet profess the Name of the great Reconciler! Are we not commanded to *follow Peace with all Men, as far as possible*, with the Security of our Holiness and Peace with God? and how can we otherwise hope to be the Subjects and Favourites of the *Prince of Peace*?

Is *Humility another Part of an amiable Character*? who was ever humble as the Son of God? *The Brightness of his Father's Glory, and the express Image of his Person, who emptied himself, and took upon him the Form of a Servant, and was made in the Likeness of Men, and humbled himself yet lower, even to the Death of the Cross, and to the Dust of the Grave. Therefore the Father loved him, and the Father exalted him.* This is the Man, the God-Man, who calls us to the Practice of



this Vertue; *Learn of me*, says he, *for I am meek and lowly, and ye shall find Rest for your Souls*, Matth. xi. 29. What Folly and Madnes is it for Dust and Ashes to be proud, when God's own Son was humble? And he gives us a noble Instance, to assure us that *Humility* is a lovely Quality; when the rich young Man in the Gospel came, and kneeled before him to ask his Advice, *Jesus looked upon him, and loved him*; and would have it left upon Record in his Word, that there was something *lovely* in a modest and humble Carriage, even where the saving Grace of God was wanting. *Mark. x. 21.*

*Meekness and Patience* are the next things I mentioned that go to make up the Character of a *lovely* Person. But who was *meek* as the Son of God is? What Affronts did he endure even while he was inviting Sinners in the most affecting Language to their own eternal Happiness? What shameful Mockery did he sustain? What Loads of malicious and infamous Blasphemy? but *when he was reviled, he reviled not again; as a Sheep before the Shearer is dumb, so opened he not his Mouth.* O when shall we learn to imitate our blessed Lord, and forbear, and forgive as he did!

How

How was his *Patience* tried to the utmost! and that not only in the fruitless and thankless Labours of his Life among a cruel and insolent Race of Men, but in the Approaches of his bloody Death. When the blessed Redeemer lay agonizing in the Garden, or hung bleeding on the Cross, to see him oppressed with the Weight of the Wrath of God due to our Sins, conflicting with the Rage of Devils, forsaken by his Friends, and surrounded with the profane Insults of barbarous Men: What a mournful and moving Spectacle! and yet there is something divinely amiable in it, to behold him all over calm and patient, and meditating immortal and forgiving Love. What unworthy Followers are we of the blessed *Jesus, the Lamb that was slain*, when upon every Occasion we take Fire, and break out into an impatient Fury?

But if I should enter upon the *last Instance of a lovely Character*, and begin the mention of *Love*, how far beyond all Example and beyond all Description is the Love of our Lord *Jesus*! how tender were the Compassions of his Heart! how extensive the Benevolence of his Soul! what melting Language of Love dropt from his Lips hourly! and how were his mortal and immortal Powers employed in procuring infinite Blessings for sinful Men, in distributing  
 them

them amongst the rebellious! O that we could learn to think, and speak, and act like our blessed Saviour, whose Life and whose Death was a rich and various Scene of divine and human Love!

III. I might draw farther Arguments from the *Examples and from the Writings of the Apostles and Holy Men in the primitive Days of Christianity*; when they were all of one Heart and one Soul, and did every thing to please and serve their Fellow Christians. I would mention the Epistles of St. *John*; what a divine Spirit of Love breaths in them! But next to our Lord *Jesus*, I should rather turn your Eyes and Thoughts to the Temper and Conduct of St. *Paul*, the greatest of the Apostles, and the nearest to *Christ*. How did he please all Men, not seeking his own Profit, but their Salvation, even as *Christ* pleased not himself? And he leaves us his own Example in Subordination to his Lord; *Be ye Followers of me, even as I also am of Christ, and give none Offence either to Jew or Gentile*, Rom. xv. 1, 2, 3. 1 Cor. x. 32, &c. Who is there sorrowful among you and I sympathize not? *Who is weak and I am not weak? who is offended and I don't share in the Pain? I bear and endure all things for the Elect's sake, that they may be saved*, 2 Cor. xi. 29. 2 Tim.

2 Tim. ii. 10. How lovely was his Behaviour in all Respects! His Epistles are full of it, it shines thro' every Page: His Character demand a Volume to describe it, all worthy of our Imitation and our Wonder.

But I must hasten to the *last Motive* derived from Christianity, and that is *the Nature and Design of the Gospel it self.* 'Tis the most lovely of all Religions. *Wisdom, Humility, Peace, Patience, Meekness, Moderation and Love* run thro' every Part of the Covenant of Grace, like so many bright and beautiful Colours join'd together in the Rainbow, that stretches its Glory round the lower Sky, and seals an antient and everlasting Peace between Earth and Heaven.

There is therefore the most sovereign and constraining Obligation laid upon us *Christians* to do all things that are *lovely*, that we make our holy Religion appear like it self, and cause Christianity to be beloved of Men. Every *Christian* is in some Degree intrusted with the *Honour of Christ*, and with the Credit and Renown of his Gospel. Let us be watchful then to take all Opportunities, and use all pious Methods to make our *Hope* appear glorious, to set the Name of *Christ* in its own amiable Light, and to *adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour.*

How



How dishonourable and shameful a thing is it for a Christian to have an unlovely Carriage, or to shew any thing in his Conduct that is rough and forbidding! What a Blemish does it cast upon the Gospel which he professes! Let us talk what we will of the sublimer Glories of *Christianity*, and profess an Acquaintance with the deepest Mysteries, yet with all our flaming Zeal for the Faith we may become Scandals to the Gospel if we abandon the Practices of Love. The World will judge of our Religion by our Temper and Carriage. We give Occasion therefore to the World to upbraid us; *What do you more than others?* if we who pretend to be *Christians*, who have professed the most lovely of all Religions, are guilty of Practices unworthy of that sacred Name: When they see our Carriage as bad as others, they will be ready to cry out, *what is your beloved more than another beloved?* What are your Doctrines better than others, if your Practice differs not from others! and are you willing it should be said of you, that you are the Occasions of Shame and scandal to the Name and Religion of *Christ*?

We should do all things that are amiable in the Sight of Men that the Gospel may have the Glory of it: Shall I say, *The Gospel of Christ deserves it at our Hands?*

*Hands?* If the Gospel brings so rich a Salvation to us, 'tis fitting we should bring a great deal of *Honour* to it. How honourable is it to the Gospel of *Christ*, when Persons of a rough, crabbed, sour Temper are converted by this Gospel, are become Christians indeed, and are made all over amiable, and soft, and obliging in their Deportments; when they carry it like new Creatures, like Persons that are changed indeed, that have much of the Spirit of Love in them, the Temper of the Gospel, the Temper of Heaven! 'Tis this Gospel, as I have said before, that turns Lions into Lambs, and Ravens into Doves, the most savage Creatures into mild and gentle.

While we are thus engaged in the *Practice of Love* we have no need to abandon our *Zeal for the Truth*; but we should separate our divine Zeal from all our own guilty Passions, lest instead of honouring God we should destroy his Children. The *Servant of the Lord may be bold and steadfast in the Defence of the Gospel*, but *he must be gentle towards all Men, ready to teach, and patient under Injuries. He must not strive like a Hero for Victory, but when any oppose themselves to the Truth, he must instruct them in Meekness, 2 Tim. ii. 24.* While we are *peaceful and harmless*, we may be at the same time *prudent and wise*;  
our

our Lord *Jesus* has joined these two Characters, *Matth. x. 16.* and it is a very lovely Inscription for a Disciple of *Christ* to wear in all his publick and private Conversation, *Wise as Serpents and harmless as Doves;* thus we may guard our selves from the Malice of the World, while we attempt to win them by all the sacred Methods of Humanity and divine Goodness.



S E R.



# SERMON XV.

Christian Morality, viz. Things  
of good Report, &c.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

*Whatsoever things are of good Re-  
port — think of these things.*

*Ὅσα εὐφημα, &c.*



HE Value of a good Name  
was so great under the Jewish  
Dispensation, that the Spirit  
of God does not think it be-  
neath his Care to recommend  
it to his own chosen People by the Mouth  
of Solomon, the wisest of Men. 'Tis better  
and more worth than precious Ointment.  
Eccl.



Eccl. vii. 1. 'Twas counted an Ornament and Entertainment at publick Feasts to have rich Oils poured upon the Head; the Price of some of them was exceeding great; they gave Refreshment to the natural Spirits, and spread a Perfume thro' all the Company. But a *Good Name* is of greater Price, 'tis a rich Ornament to the Character of him that possesses it, and has considerable Influence toward his Happiness; so that to use the Words of *Solomon* again, Prov. xxii. 1. *'Tis rather to be chosen than great Riches.*

The blessed Apostle of the *Gentiles* is of the same Mind, and he recommends to the *Christian* World the Practice of those *Things that are of good Report*, which is the Way, whereby a *good Name* is to be obtained. He had just before recommended to us the *things that are lovely* in the Eyes of Men, and such as will render us *well beloved* among our Neighbours. Now he invites us to the Practice of those *Things that are of good Report* in the World, such as will procure us Reputation and a good Name; where we may live, especially among the wise and sober Part of Mankind. This hath some Difference in it from the former, tho' it must be granted, that all things that are *lovely* have also a *Tendency to obtain a good Name.*

There.

There are many things in the Conduct of Life, which do not so directly offer themselves to us, as *Parts of necessary Justice, Piety, or Goodness*. But yet they are such as *bear a good Character* in the World, and they give to the Man that practises them a *good Reputation* among his Fellow-Creatures: On the contrary, there are several other Practices, which 'tis not easy to prove *directly sinful*, yet they are of *ill Report*, and they ought not to be indulged among Christians. Among these Practices of good Report, some are *changeable with the Times and Customs* of the Country, and they obtain a different Character and Esteem according to the Age and Place wherein we dwell; others *always and in all Places* among sober and wise Men obtain the same Character; they have been in all Ages and in all Nations esteemed things of good Report: The Nature of them seems to be *unchangeable*: And 'tis this Sort of Actions only that I shall take notice of. By various Particulars this Head will be better illustrated and improved than it can be by any general Descriptions.

It is a Matter of good Report *to mind our own Business*, yet *to be of a publick Spirit* to be *regular in our Conduct*, to *keep the best Company*, to *abstain from the utmost Bounds of things lawful*, and in  
*doubtful*

*doubtful Matters to follow the Practices of the wisest and the best. As I discourse upon each of these Particulars, I shall observe what are those opposite Practices of evil Report, which we ought to avoid.*

I. *It is a thing of good Report to mind our own Business.* The holy Apostle requires it. 1 Thess. iii. 11. *That ye study to be quiet and to do your own Business.* One would think there should be no need of *Study* and *Application* in order to be *quiet*; but some Persons are of so turbulent and restless a Temper, that they naturally intermeddle with every thing: They had need take Pains with themselves to keep themselves *quiet*, and busy only in their proper Work. The Word in the Greek φιλοτιμεῖσθαι signifies that we should be *ambitious of Quietness and Diligence in our Calling*, for it is a Matter of *Honour and Credit*. In whatsoever Station we are placed 'tis *Industry* must gain Reputation. There are other great and valuable Advantages of it, but I confine my self now to this one, that it is *a thing of good Report among Men.*

If Persons are called to *Magistracy*, let them attend to the Work of their superior Post. Let them *rule and govern with all Diligence*, and fulfil that Office well with which God has intrusted them. Let them imploy themselves much in  
their



their proper Sphere, and not wear the honourable Title in Idleness, or *bear the Sword in vain*, which hath been too frequent a Practice in this great City, and thereby *Vice* has grown rampant, and *Reformation of Manners* hath been shamefully discouraged.

Those who are made *Ministers of the Gospel*, let them make it their Business to win Souls to Salvation, to bring in Sinners to Faith and Holiness, and to edify the Saints by their Exhortations, by their Doctrine, by their Example. We should *be instant in Season, and out of Season, reprove, rebuke and exhort with all long-suffering and Doctrine.* Let him that ministers wait on his Ministry; he that teacheth, on teaching; he that exhorteth, on Exhortation, Rom. xii. 7. 2 Tim. iv. 2. Let us not waste our Time and our best Talents in the Pursuit of laborious Trifles, in intricate and perplexing Controversies, which are less necessary to the Life of Christianity, or on useless and angry Squabbles, which divide and tear the Church. Nor let us throw away those Thoughts and Hours, on pompous Ornaments of Learning, on critical or polite Studies, or curious and artificial Works, which should be devoted to Matters of more sacred Importance.



If we are engaged in *Trades, Manufactures* or *Merchandize in the World*, let us shew all Industry, and honest Labour and Care, and thus walk with God, *every Man in his Calling wherein he is called*, till the Providence of God evidently lead him to other Work. 1 Cor. vii. 24. And thus we may refute the Calumnies of those who would seek all Occasions to reflect upon us for our stricter Profession of Religion. There are many encouraging Promises given to *Diligence* in the Word of God. I shall mention but one at present that agrees with my present Subject. Prov. xxii. 29. *Seest thou a Man diligent in his Business, he shall stand before Kings, he shall not stand before mean Men.* That is, “His good Report and his Reputation shall grow and encrease, that he shall be brought into more honourable Company, and to a more exalted Station.”

If we are *Servants*, let us devote our Time and Thoughts to the Business which our Superiors have intrusted us with, and seek their Interest with an honest Soul. If we are *Children and Scholars under Instruction*, let us apply our Minds to learn the things we are taught, and attend to the Instructions of those who teach us. Every one of us have our proper Work, which demands our Application to it.

There

There are many *Enemies to this Virtue*, many Practices inconsistent with the Character of *Diligence*, as 'tis celebrated and recommended in the Word of God.

First. *Sloth or Laziness* stands foremost in this Rank. Surely the Powers of our Mind and Body were never made to be useless. *Go to the Ant, thou Sluggard*, and learn Industry of that little Animal. Can we think we were born to be Cumberers of the Ground, and meer Burdens of the Earth we dwell on? Let us shake off this stupid and infamous Humour, let us rise to an active Life, and answer the Ends of our Creation. And for the same Reason it is, that there ought to be a Restraint put upon an *Excess of Sleep and Slumber*. You know the Character of the *drowsy Wretch*, that turns from Side to Side upon his Bed, as a heavy Door upon its Hinges, and the *Sluggard*, who with folded Hands sits still and lets the Weeds grow over his Corn; but these Men shall be clothed with Rags. Prov. xxvi. 14.

Secondly. *Luxury and an intemperate Love of Pleasure* is another *Enemy to Diligence* in our Callings. 'Tis an odious Character that is given to the Inhabitants of *Crete* by one of their own Poets, and the Spirit of God confirms the Truth of it, *Titus i. 12.* *The Cretians are evil Beasts, slow Bellies*; so shamefully engaged

in Gluttony and the Luxury of the Pálate, that they render themselves heavy, stupid, and unfit for Business; a lazy Generation of Men, that have much more Inclination to eat and drink and live like Brutes, than to imploy themselves in any honest Labour, that is worthy of human Nature, or becomes a Man.

Under the same Reproof I may justly bring an *excessive Indulgence of Sports or Recreations*, beyond what is necessary for the Refreshment of Nature, and the Recruit of our Spirits, in order to fulfil Duty with more Diligence: This was intimated in a former Discourse. 'Tis but a Character of *ill Report*, when a Man is too often found in the Place of Sports and unnecessary Diversions, while he ought to be in his Shop, or in other proper Business of his Life. *Prov. xxi. 27. He that loveth Pleasure shall be a poor Man, and he that loves Wine and Oil, Feastings and Entertainments, he shall not be rich.*

*Thirdly.* A *Tattling Humour, excessive Talking*, and an *idle inquisitive Impertinence*, are great Enemies also to that *Industry* that is now recommended to us. *Solomon* assures us, that tho' there is *Profit in all Labour*, yet the *Talk of the Lips tendeth only to Penury*, *Prov. xiv. 23.* And he redoubles it upon our Ears, that

*a prating Fool shall fall,* Prov. x. 8, 10. There are some Persons that love to talk of any thing, or every thing, besides their own Business; like foolish Children that turn over every Page of their Books, and flutter a little about every Part of them, besides where their Lesson is. Every moving Feather is ready to seize the Fancy of these Triflers, this fickle and talkative Race of Men; they are but taller Children. Every little Story entertains their idle Inclination, and gives them fresh Employment to tell it over again. They had rather do any thing than the Duty of the present Hour; they spend their Time like the *Inhabitants of Athens, in little else but hearing or telling some new thing.*

Some of these Persons are ready to intermingle themselves with every Man's Concernments, uncalled and undesired: They search into the Secrets of Families, in order to gratify a wicked Humour, to spread abroad and publish some private Scandal. *They creep into Houses, to make Mischief there, and by tattling and repeating Matters of Contest, they separate very Friends,* and raise angry Quarrels in peaceful Families. *Prov. xvii. 9.* Such Persons seem to deserve the publick Censure of the Magistrate in the Opinion of the Apostle Peter. *1 Pet. iv. 15.* *But let none of you, that are Christians, suffer as*



*an Evil Doer, or as a Busy-Body in other Men's Matters.* He himself once fell under the Censure of *Christ* our Lord for this inquisitive and needless Curiosity. *John* xxi. 21, 22. When *St. Peter* had received a Prophecy from his Master concerning his own Martyrdom, he had also an express Notice what his own Business was, (*viz.*) to follow his Master. But *Peter* had a mind to know what should become of *John* too; Lord, says he, *and what shall this Man do or suffer? What if I will,* says our Blessed Lord, *that he tarry 'till I come again? What is that to thee? Is that thy Business, Peter, to know what shall befall John? Mind thy own Duty, and follow thou me.* A wise and divine Rebuke from our risen Saviour! After this *St. Peter* well knew how to censure such Impertinence, and to reprove *Busy-bodies*.

Of the same Mind is the Apostle *Paul*, He advises *Women* how to behave themselves, that they mayn't fall under this Charge. Let them *guide the House*, says he, and imploy themselves in domestick Affairs; for if they neglect this Work, *they learn to be idle, wandering about from House to House; and not only idle, but Tattlers also, and Busy-bodies, speaking things which they ought not; gathering up Matter for Slander of their Neighbours at their next Visit, where everyone is ashamed to be*

be silent, and therefore each is ready to furnish the Company with their Share. But this Practice, in the Opinion of the Sacred Writer, furnishes the Adversary with daily Occasion to slander Christianity, and *to speak reproachfully* of the Gospel, and 'tis a thing of *very ill Fame*.  
1 Tim. v. 13, 14.

II. *A publick Spirit is another Thing of good Report.* Tho' Christians must be diligent in their Business, yet they should not confine all their Cares within the narrow Circle of *Self*, but have a hearty Solicitude for the Welfare of the *Nation* in which they dwell, for the *Neighbours* among whom they inhabit, for the *Church of Christ* in the World, and extend their Concern to the *Happiness of Mankind*. The Apostle directs *Timothy* to *make Supplications, Prayers and Intercessions for all Men*, and to take such a Satisfaction in the Mercies they receive, as to *give Thanks to God upon their Account*, 1 Tim. ii. 1. He exhorts the *Ephesians* to *Prayer and Supplication for all the Saints*, Ephes. vi. 18. And what he taught he also practised in an eminent and glorious manner; *the Care of all the Churches came daily upon him*, and you find him in the Beginning of his Epistles lifting up his Petitions and his Praises to Heaven

continually for the Churches to whom he writes.

*We should rejoyce with them that rejoyce, and weep with them that weep, and share with our fellow Christians in their Joys and their Sorrows, that we may thereby double their Joys, and lighten the Weight of their Sorrows by a blessed Sympathy. We should bear one another's Burdens, and so fulfil the Law of Christ, Rom. xii. 15. Gal. vi. 2. And in 1 Cor. x. 24. he saith, Let no Man seek his own, but every Man another's Wealth, or Welfare; that is, "Let no Man be so wholly swallowed up in his own Profit and Peace, as "utterly to neglect the Peace and Profit "of his Neighbour." But tho' this be so honourable and becoming a Practice, yet it has ever been too much neglected, even among the Professors of the Gospel; for St. Paul tells the Philippians, that Timothy was a singular Instance of this good Quality. Philip. ii. 20, 21. I have no Man like minded, who will naturally care for your State; for all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.*

Some may be ready to raise an Objection here, and say, *How is this consistent with the former Character and Practice which I recommended, namely, That every Man mind his own Business?*

I grant

I grant that this ought generally to be our first Care, that we fulfil the Duties of our own particular Station well, and see to it that our selves and our Household be supported : This is usually the loudest Call of Providence, for *he that provides not for those of his own House*, when it is in his Power, does not answer the Demands of Christianity, but is worse than an *Infidel*, or one that *has denied the Faith*, 1 Tim. v. 8. But there are many sacred and civil Services may be done for the Neighbourhood, the Church and the Nation, without any culpable Hindrance to our own Affairs. So much Time may be easily redeemed from Sloth and Slumber, from useles and impertinent Conversation, as the Publick may call for at our Hands. And when there is a Day of Distress or Trouble come upon our Friends, upon the Land wherein we dwell, or the Churches of Christ in the World, when Vertue and Religion are in sinking Circumstances, we are called sometimes to lay out a larger Part of our Time and Strength, our Interest and our Substance, for the Welfare of the Publick, which otherwise perhaps might be due to our selves, and our own Family. In such Cases as these, *Christian Prudence* must direct us how to distinguish wisely, and determine how far this *Self-denial* is to be exercised, in order



to promote the Happiness of Mankind, and the publick Honour of *Christ*. This is a *thing of good Report* in the Church and in the World, and it will turn to our own Honour in the Day of the Lord.

But let no Man deceive himself, and vainly imagine that he may lay Claim to the Honour of a *publick Spirit*, because he spends half his Days in Places of publick Resort, and in fruitless Inquiries and Chatterings about the Affairs of Government, and the Business of the State; perhaps he extends his Cares also to *Muscovy* and *Persia*, as well as *Great-Britain*, while the Care of his Shop is a little thing with him, the Business of his Study or Counting-house is forgotten, and his Family complains of woful Neglect: Nor are Publick Affairs mended by all his Impertinence.

III. *Regularity in the Conduct of our Affairs is a becoming Character, and will gain us a good Name amongst Men.* As there are many and various Duties that belong to the natural, the civil, and the religious Life; 'tis a piece of eminent Wisdom to appoint proper Seasons and Rules for the Performance of them; nor should we think it beneath us, as far as possible, to govern our selves by those Rules, and keep to our own appointed Seasons; otherwise

wise

wife all our Affairs will be ready to run into Confusion ; one Duty will be apt to intrench upon another, and some of the Duties of Life or Godliness will be neglected or quite forsaken, under a pretence of *want of Time*.

One thing that intrenches upon the regular Hours and Orders of Life, is a *Trifling and Dilatory Temper*, putting off necessary *Business* (whether it be Work or Devotion) 'till the last Moment ; and then, if the least Accident intervenes, we have not left our selves sufficient Time to perform it. These are the Persons who are frequently found in a *Hurry and Confusion*, because they have neglected to do the proper Work in the proper Season. Their Business is always done in haste, and often unfinished. These are they who keep no Appointments, who are seldom true to their Hour, who make their Friends wait for them upon all Occasions, who often create Uneasiness to all the Company, and put a whole Family out of Order. What an unbecoming Behaviour is this ! What an ill Aspect it bears ! especially if these *Delayers* are in any degree inferior or the younger Parts of a House. And yet it might easily be prevented, by taking the first Opportunity for every Business. O 'tis an excellent, a golden Rule, *Never leave that 'till To-morrow which may be*

T 5 done

*done to Day, nor trust the Business of this Hour to the Care of the next, for the next Hour is not thine.*

When *Servants* are of this dilatory and trifling Humour, they waste their Master's Time perpetually, and put their Superiors to many Inconveniencies. They prevent one another's Business, as well as neglect their own. You would wonder how they could spend three or four Hours in a common Errand, and make a Family wait half a Day for a Message, that might be dispatched in half an Hour. They cannot keep their Eyes or their Ears from attending to every Object they meet; their endless Curiosity of Inquiry, and their irresistible Inclination to talk of every thing that does not concern them, is an everlasting Hindrance to their proper Work. This *active sort of Idleness* is much harder to be cured than that of the *slow and stupid Kind*; and you see it belongs to the Poor as well as the Rich; tho' it is a Matter of *Disreputation* and *Infamy* to both.

Persons of this unhappy Conduct, whether of high or low Degree, are in great Danger of trifling in the most Sacred and Divine Concernments, as well as in common Life. They sometimes manage their *spiritual and immortal Affairs* in the same dilatory Manner, but with more dreadful and fatal Consequence. They put off *Re-*  
*pentance*

*penitance* from Day to Day, and delay their solemn Transactions with God, 'till Sickness seizes them, or 'till Death approaches: Then what Hurry of Spirit! What dreadful Confusion of Soul! What Tumults and Terrors overwhelm them! And it is well if the Matters of their Salvation be not unfinished at the last Hour, and themselves made miserable to all *Eternity*, because they trifled away *Life* and *Time*.

A *Second Enemy* to this regular Conduct of *Life*, and which indeed is derived from the former, is this, *An Inversion of the Order of Nature, and a Change of the Seasons which God hath appointed for Business and Rest.*

I confess this is not now a-days a Matter of *ill Report* in it self, however contrary it be to the *Laws of Nature and the Creation*: But 'tis attended with many *Irregularities*, and sometimes with *infamous Practices* too: And therefore I would spend one Page to give it an ill Name, and to bring it into just Discredit.

God has made every thing beautiful in its Season, Eccles. iii. 11. *The Sun ariseth, and Man goeth forth to his Work until the Evening*, Psal. civ. 22, 23. 'Tis more natural and healthful to pursue the Concerns of Life, as much as possible, by Day-light. *Midnight Studies* are prejudicial to Nature: A painful Experience calls



me to repent of the Faults of my younger Years, and there are many before me have had the same Call to Repentance. Wearing out the lightsome Hours in Sleep, is an unnatural Waste of Sun Beams. There is no Light so friendly to animal Nature as that of the Sun. *Midnight Assemblies, Festivals and Entertainments* exhaust the Spirits, and make a needless Profusion of the Necessaries of Life: They carry a very ill Appearance with them, even where no Wickedness is indulged, they are Practices of *evil Report*, and deserve Censure and Shame.

It is no Honour to our whole Nation that we have learnt the Fashion of doing nothing in the Morning; among *Persons of Mode* the Day often begins at Noon: The Hours of Business are grown much later among us than our Forefathers could bear. They knew the Worth of Daylight.

In some things indeed we are bound to comply with Custom, or we must forsake the World; for a few can never stem the general Tide, or reform a degenerate Age: And there are some few Trades and Employments which demand Labour at Night. But in our general Conduct we should endeavour to act more agreeably to the Laws of Creation and Nature, and to reduce Families to a little better Order, where-  
soever

soever we have Power and Influence. Surely it can be no great Hardship for any Persons in Health to begin their Day with the rising Sun, for almost half the Year. We should not think it sufficient to get up a little before Noon, nor should we turn the Morning of God and Nature into Midnight, nor make the Decline of the Sun serve for our Morning Work.

I would not be thought in this Page to reflect upon the *Weak, the Sickly, and the Aged Parts of Mankind*, whose Nature may require longer Sleep, and a larger Degree of Rest to recruit their Spirits: Nor do I accuse those unhealthy Persons, who can get no Slumber 'till the Night is half spent, and are thereby constrained, meerly for the sake of Health, to let their Bed intrench upon so many Hours of Day-light: yet I persuade my self that if these last would but bear the Inconveniences they complain of for a Week or two, if they would break off their Morning-Slumbers early, and early betake themselves to rest, Nature would quickly learn a better Habit, the Reformation would soon grow easie: And perhaps this might advance their Health in a sensible Manner, beyond all their old Indulgences, or their present Expectations.

*An excessive Love of Company, an Affectation of going abroad, a Delight in Wine*  
 † *and*

and strong Drink, are the third Sort of Enemies to that Regularity and Order which I am now recommending. Such Practices are censured in the Word of God; I have called the Prophet *Isaiab*, in a former Discourse, to witness against the Drunkard, but I must ask leave to cite the same Text again, against the Wasters of Time in Taverns, or meaner Drinking-Houses. *Wo to them that go to their Cups in a Morning*: This throws all the Business of the Day out of Order; and sometimes they are tempted to *continue until Night*, or at least they return thither again and stay 'till Wine inflame them; then all the Follies of Life play their Parts; but they forget Religion, and regard not the Work, nor Worship, of the Lord, Isa. v. 11, 12. How often has it been found, that the Religion of the Closet, as well as that of the Family, hath been shorten'd and omitted, and by Degrees thrust out of Doors, and forgotten, for want of shaking off every Impediment, and confining our selves to proper Seasons. We intend to fulfil our Duties, but we intend it at random, without keeping any Time for it: And thus some Households, that would be called *Christians*; live without God in the World. They that tarry long at Wine, or in any needless Company, and lengthen out the Hours of their needless Absence from Home,

Home, may count themselves guilty of the several Disorders that are committed in the Family; which would be rectified, or intirely prevented by the Presence of the Master.

I confess sometimes *necessary Business* detains a Person beyond his usual and appointed Hour: There must also be some Allowances made for the unhappy Engagements which may attend *some particular Callings* in the World. Our own Consciences must be the final Judges in this Case: But let us be faithful and honest, and frequently make an Inquiry, whether our Conduct be *regular*, or no; and whether it be the *Necessity of Affairs* that intrenches upon the Seasons of Duty, or whether it be a *careless Indifference of Spirit*. Good Orders in a Household, and regular Hours for all the Duties and Enjoyments of Life, give Beauty and Ornament to Life it self: Like a Musical Instrument, where every String is wound up to strike its proper Note, and the skilful Musician keeps his Time, how does it entertain the Ear with innocent Pleasure, and refreshes the Heart, when practised at proper Seasons? Such a Family appears like a *Bethel*, a House of God, and the Lord himself delights to dwell in it. O may it be my Lot and Portion always to inhabit in such a Tabernacle, 'till I lay down this Body

†

in



in the Dust, and my Soul arises to the well ordered Family of Heaven!

IV. *Sorting our selves with the best Company is another Beautiful Part of Christian Conduct, and procures a good Report.* By the *best of Company*, I don't intend the *Greatest* or the *Richest*, nor the most *Ingenious* and *Witty*, for there are some of these that are vain and vile enough; but *the best* in my Esteem are those who are most *Virtuous*, most *Pious*, most *Knowing* and *Wise*, or those that are *seeking after Virtue, Piety, and Wisdom.* Thus by Conversation with the *one*, we may be always *doing Good*, and with the other we may be always *receiving some Good.* *He that walketh with wise Men, shall grow yet wiser, but the Companion of Fools shall be destroyed.* Prov. xiii. 20. *Be not deceived, God is not mocked, evil Communications corrupt good Manners.* A Heathenish Poet and an inspired *Apostle* agree in these Words, 1 Cor. xv. 33. If we are engaged much in *Converse* with those that are light, and frothy, and vain, we shall gain the same *Levity of Temper.* If we talk much with the *Prophane*, we shall be tempted now and then to a *prophane Expression* too. *Can a Man touch Pitch, and not be defiled? Can a Man pass through the Flames and his Clothes not be singed?* Neither

Neither can those that walk frequently and delightfully amongst light, vain, intemperate Persons, escape being defiled by them.

'Tis true, the Apostle tells us, if we would utterly seclude our selves from all manner of Converse with Persons of ill Character, we must abandon Society, and almost *go out of the World*, 1 Cor. v. 10. But the meaning of the Apostle, when he bids us avoid evil Companions, is, as much as possible, to shun their Company; see therefore that 'tis a necessary Call of Providence leads you amongst them; otherwise abstain. Those who give themselves up to be entertain'd by every one that will entertain them, those who will walk with every Companion, and will herd with every Drove, they are in danger of being corrupted with any Vice, and of learning every ill Principle.

But if thro' the Grace of God we should escape the Infection of Error or Sin, yet we shall lose our good Name by keeping ill Company. A Delight in base and worthless Companions, will make the World judge that we are like them: Whereas we shall gain Part of the good Character of our Associates and Acquaintance, and derive Honour from them, if we are so happy as to have Friendship and Intimacy with Persons of Piety, Learning,

ing,

ing, and Virtue. May these be the Friends of my Choice, and my Companions for ever!

V. *Abstinence from the utmost Bounds of things lawful* is another Practice of good Report amongst Men, and especially amongst Christians. 'Tis but a narrow Line in many Cases, that divides between a *lawful* and a *sinful* Practice; and if we will venture, as near as possible, to the very Borders of what we think lawful, we shew too great an Inclination to the bordering Iniquity, and we shall often be in Danger of treading on forbidden Ground. If we indulge the Love of Pleasure, or give an unguarded Loose to any lawful Passion, we shall find it difficult to withhold the Violence of corrupt Nature from transgressing the lawful Bounds. If a wild Horse be indulg'd in his Career, 'tis well if he does not break the Reins, and fling the Rider. 'Tis a foolish Fancy to walk upon the Edge of a Precipice, unless we could infallibly secure our Head from Giddiness, or our Feet from stumbling. 'Tis much safer therefore to keep a proper Distance from fatal Danger. The World will give us but an ill Character, and say very justly concerning us, that *we are not much afraid of Vice, if we dare rashly venture into Temptation.*

'Tis

'Tis the Advice of the Holy Spirit, and St. Paul to the Christian Converts, *Abstain from all Appearance of Evil,* 1 Thes. v. 22. And the Apostle Jude requires us to *hate even the Garments that are spotted by the Flesh,* Jude v. 23. Every thing that looks like Guilt should forbid our Approach; we should choose to stand afar off, and withhold our Desires, lest we defile our Consciences, and bring a Blemish upon our Christian Character. What an Honour is it to any Man, when it is said concerning him, “He has a tender Soul, and a Conscience that will not stretch to the Length of the loose Customs and Fashions of the Times; he dares not allow himself all the Liberties which are innocent and lawful, lest he should wound his own Spirit, and his good Name, by venturing too near to the Borders of Iniquity.” Let such a Temper be our constant Guard and Ornament.

VI. *Following the common Practices of the Saints in doubtful Matters,* is another thing of good Report, and ought to be so among those that profess the Name of Christ: Whether it be in our Trade and Business, in our Apparel, or our Visits, in our Forms of Address to our Superiors, or common Methods of Conversation and Civility,



Civility, of Recreation or Entertainment, let the general Customs of the Saints of the purest Ages, or the Customs of the purest Churches and the best Christians in our own Age, be a Direction to our Practice. *Ask for the good old Way*, says the Prophet *Jeremy*; and if we know not what Path to choose, let us *go by the Footsteps of the Flock of Christ*. Enquire what the Followers of our Lord have done in past Ages, and what the wisest and best of them do in our own Age, and this will give us a considerable Assistance, to determine what ought to be our Practice.

In the *1 Cor. xi. 16.* the Apostle *Paul* seems to refer to this *general Rule*, for our Determination in doubtful Matters: When he had been proposing the Law of Nature, or the Order of Creation, to direct the Man and the Woman what sort of Coverings they ought to wear, (*viz.*) *That a Woman ought not to be uncovered, and that a Man should not wear long Hair, (i. e. should not nourish his Hair to make it grow long as Women, nor manage it with a nice and effeminate Curiosity)* he concludes with this Sentence, *If any Man seem to be contentious*, that is, if any Man be not contented with the Arguments I have brought, but will carry on Contention and Dispute, let him remember this decisive Argument, that *we have no such Custom,*

*Custom, nor the Churches of God; we the Preachers of the Gospel, and the Apostles of Christ, have neither found nor approved such sort of Customs among the Christians where we have lived, nor are they practised in any of the Churches of God, which we have heard of.*

I will readily allow, that the strict Professors of Religion, in some particular Ages of the Church, may have generally indulged either some unreasonable Scruples, or some unreasonable Liberties. There are some Practices of evident and undoubted *Lawfulness*, which have been forbidden in severe and dreadful Language by some or other of our religious Ancestors; such as *Wearing borrow'd Hair, or suffering our own to reach the Shoulders; Using any thing that borders upon Lot or Chance, except in Matters of sacred or solemn Concernment; Wishing a Friend's Health when we drink; Practising any Part of our civil Calling, after Sun-set on Saturday, or even Calling the Months or the Days of the Week by Names borrowed from the Heathens, such as Monday or Tuesday, January or February;* yet in such Cases as these, had I lived amongst them I would have conformed to their Customs, and have given no Offence: But I would have taken every proper Occasion to shew that these were unnecessary Scruples.

This

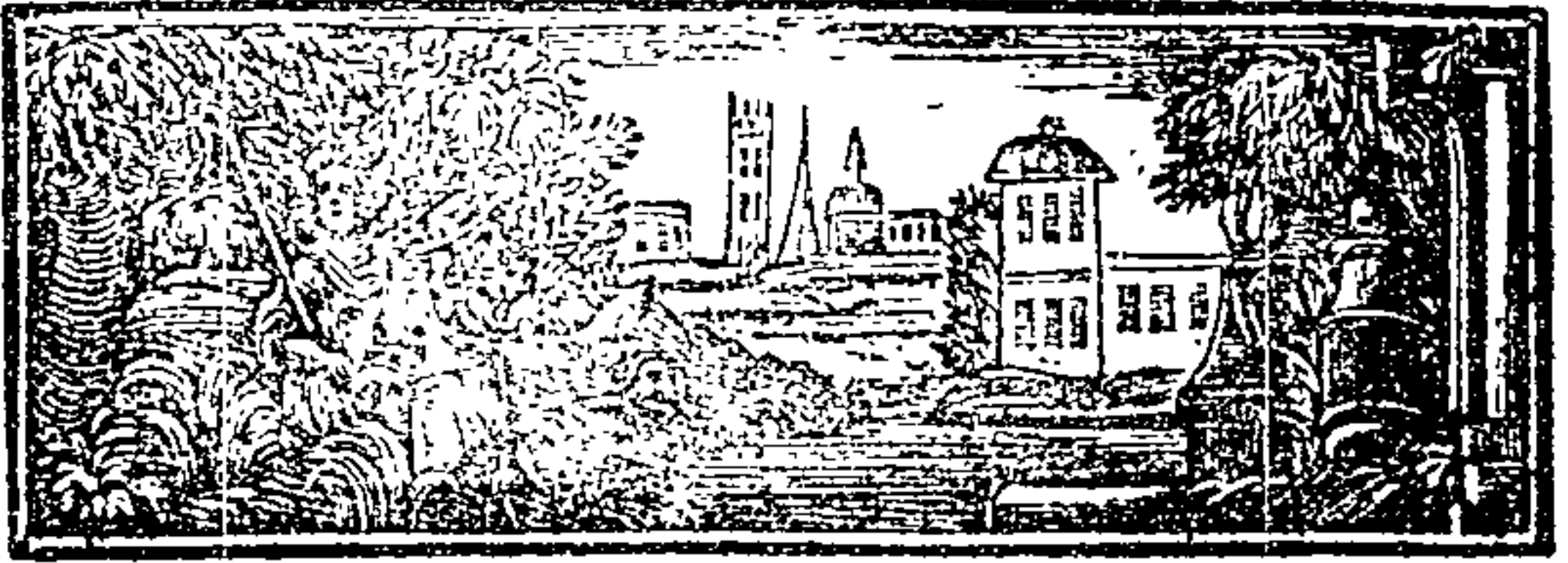
This was the Conduct of *St. Paul*, in the Controversy about eating Meats offered to Idols. *1 Cor. viii. 8. Meat commendeth us not to God, neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worse.* There he declares how needless these Scruples were; and *1 Cor. x. 25.* to shew their Christian Liberty, where no scrupulous Person was present and opposed it, he bids them *eat whatsoever is sold in the Shambles, asking no Questions for Conscience sake*: But in both these Places he cautions them against offending the weaker Brethren, and shews also how afraid he was of giving Offence, or acting in their Presence contrary to their Practices, even tho' they were built on needless Scruples. *1 Cor. x. 13. I will eat no Flesh while the World stands, if it make my Brother to offend, i. e. if it tempt him to grow bold, and venture upon the same Food against his Conscience.* And the Apostle practis'd this Self-Denial, lest he should *sin against his weak Brother*, lest he should *grieve him* by this *uncharitable Licence*, as *Rom. xiv. 15.* This holy Caution and Tenderneſs of offending the Weak was the constant Practice of that blessed Saint, who had more Knowledge than all of us, but he had more Condescension and Self-denial too. O that we might all make him our Pattern, and  
 practise

practise the Charity that we preach so loudly, and profess with such a modern Assurance!

There are other Practices which might be comprized under this general Character, and recommended as *Things of good Report.* But I must not draw such Discourses out to a tiresome Length, which perhaps may create but too much Pain and Uneasiness, by the very Sense and Subject of which they treat. Yet certainly 'tis a Part of our Duty and our Interest to know, and meditate, and practise those things that may gain us a good Name and Reputation in the World, and may brighten our Character among the Churches of *Christ*; and to avoid every thing that would blemish our Honour, or sink our Esteem among Wise and Good Men.

What Arguments may be drawn from the *Light of Nature* to inforce this Exhortation, or what more powerful Motives are deriv'd from the *Gospel*, to awaken and excite us to the Practice of all that is *honourable*, shall be consider'd in the next Discourse, when I treat of the Matters of *Virtue* and *Praise*, which are recommended in the last Words of my Text.





# SERMON XVI.

## Courage and Honour :

OR

## Vertue and Praise.

PHILIP. iv. 8.

— *If there be any Vertue, and if there be any Praise, think on these things.*

Εἴ τις ἀρετὴ καὶ εἴ τις ἔπαινος, &c.



**V**ERTUE is an honourable and extensive Name: 'Tis used by Moral Writers to include all the Duties we owe to our *selves*, or our *Fellow Creatures*, such as *Sobriety*, *Temperance*, *Faithfulness*, *Justice*, *Prudence*, *Good-*

*Goodness and Mercy*; and the Sense of it is sometimes stretcht so far, as to comprehend also the Duties of Religion which we owe to God. But let us take Notice that the first and original Signification of the Word both in the *Greek* and *Latin* Tongues is much more limited, and it means only *Power or Courage*.

The *Greek* Word ἀρετή used here by the Apostle is derived from Ἄρης, the Name of *Mars*, or the Heathen God of *War*: And doubtless the most ancient meaning of it amongst the *Greek Writers* was *Warlike Valour*, tho' in Time the *Philosophers* enlarged the Sense of it to include every *moral Excellency*.

The several Places in the *New Testament* where this Word is used, have chief Reference to some *Work of glorious Power* when it is applied to God, or *Courage* when it refers to *Men*. I wish I could stay here to explain them all, but I must mention one of them, (*viz.*) 2 *Pet.* i. 5. *Add to your Faith Vertue, to Vertue Knowledge, to Knowledge Temperance, &c.* *Vertue* is to be added to *Faith*, that is, next to your *Belief* of the Gospel get *Courage* to profess what you believe: 'Tis not to be supposed that in this Place *Vertue* can signify the whole of *Morality*, because the particular *Vertues* of *Temperance, Patience* and *Charity* are named also: And therefore this

must signify some Part of Morality distinct from the rest, (*viz.*) a *Strength or Fortitude of Soul*.

: And for the same Reason the Word *Vertue* in my Text cannot signify the *whole System of Moral Duties*, because St. Paul in the same Verse had been recommending *Truth, Justice and Purity, or Temperance*, which are so many Pieces of Morality; and 'tis not reasonable to imagine that he brings in a *general Name* that comprehends them all in the midst of so many *Particulars*, which is contrary to the Use of all Writers, and to his own Custom too. I confess if he had said, *If there be any other Vertue* (as he does in the like Case, *Rom. xiii. 9.* when he had omitted any particular) we might then have understood *Vertue* in the general Sense; but now it is evident, that He means a *particular Excellency*, distinct from those before mentioned; and the Word it self requires us to understand a *Brave, Bold and Generous Spirit and Practice*. He recommends to them a great and excellent Behaviour, wherein their *holy Courage* may appear, when the Call of Providence gives a just Occasion.

*Courage* is a *Vertue* which stands in Opposition both to *Fear* and *Shame*; and it guards the Mind of Man from the evil Influence of both those Passions. The *Man of Courage* has not such a feeling Fond-

Fondness for his *Flesh* nor his *Estate*, as to be afraid to profess his Sentiments, or to fulfil his Duty at every Call of Providence, tho' his Estate may suffer Damage by it, or his Flesh be exposed to Pain: Nor has he such a Tenderness for his *Honour* as to secure it with the Loss of his Innocence. He is not ashamed to appear for Vertue in an Age of Vice and Scandal: He stands up boldly for the Honour of his God, and ventures a thousand Perils rather than wound his Conscience, or betray his Trust: He dares profess and practise Temperance among an Herd of Drunkards, and Purity in the midst of the Lewd and Unclean: The *Man of Courage* can despise the Threatnings of the *Great*, and the Scoffs of the *Witty*, conscious of his own Integrity and Truth. He can face and oppose the World with all its Terrors, and travel onwards in the Paths of Piety without Fear. *The righteous Man is bold as a Lion,* Prov. xxviii. 1.

Now 'tis the Apostle's Advice to the *Philippian* Converts, that whensoever there is any just Occasion given to exert their *Fortitude* (whether it be in the Defence of the Rights of Mankind, and the Liberties of their Country, or in Vindication of the Cause of God or Vertue) let the *Christian* take those Opportunities to speak his Mind, and shew his Courage;



let him make it appear that the Meek of the Earth may sometimes resist the mighty Oppressors, that the *Followers of the Lamb* dare to oppose the *wild Beasts of the Age*, and are ready to sacrifice all that human Nature calls dear for the Service of God or the Welfare of their Fellow-Creatures.

The *Heathen* World may derive some Arguments from the Light of Reason, and some perhaps from more corrupt and selfish Principles, to awaken their *Valour*, and to raise *Heroes* amongst them: But there is nothing among all the Writings of the *Philosophers*, or the Examples of their Real or their fabled *Heroes*, that can raise and support so illustrious and divine a *Courage*, as the Principles and the Patterns with which the *Gospel of Christ* has furnished us; whether we look to *Jesus* the Founder of our Religion, the Son of God in our Nature, or to his Apostles, or to the Primitive Martyrs, among whom some of the weaker Sex and the weaker Age, have out-shone the Glory and darkened the Lustre of all the Great Men of *Heathenism*.

What blessed Views hath the Gospel given us of Heaven and future Happiness, to animate our Zeal and to engage us to the boldest Efforts of Goodness! What Promises of Almighty Power to assist us in our sacred Attempts, and to bear up our Spirits!

Spirits ! What rich and infallible Assurances have we in the Word of God to support our highest Expectations, that if *we are faithful to the Death, we shall receive a Crown of Life !* And Jesus our Forerunner hath already taken Possession of all these Prizes and Glories to reward the Conquerors.

Shall we sink and despond at any dark Appearances ? Shall our Spirits fail us in the midst of Duty, when we have so many divine Motives to *Valour* and *holy Fortitude* ? Methinks there should be nothing too hard for a *Christian* to undertake or suffer, when God and Providence call him to it. I confess that Flesh and Blood are frail and feeble ; Animal Nature overwhelms the Soul with its Shudderings, and forbids the Execution of the bravest Purposes. 'Tis only *Grace*, Divine *Grace*, that can strengthen the trembling Christian, and make him venture thro' Dangers and Death in the Way to the heavenly Crown. 'Tis this gives Power to the Promises, and makes the Saint believe the Performance. 'Tis this sets Heaven before his Eyes and gives it such an attractive Influence, such a Sovereign Conquest over all his Fears ; it even braces the Sinews of Nature, and exalts the Spirits to despise Danger and Pain. What Wonders of holy Fortitude might a Christian perform, if the Eye of his

his Faith were kept always open, and firmly fixed on those bright and everlasting Invisibles?

But I shall enlarge no further on this Argument of *Christian Courage*, and I am the more inclin'd to dismiss this Subject at present, having reserved some Discourses on it for another Season.

I proceed therefore to the last Exhortation in my Text, *if there be any Praise*, any Actions that deserve Honour amongst Men, *think on these things*, engage yourselves in the *Practice*, and obtain the *Honour*. The *Praise* which the Apostle here recommends, may be described as *Cicero* the famous *Roman* Orator describes *Glory*, 'tis *the concurrent and unanimous Commendation of good Men, or the general Voice of wise and uncorrupted Judges, concerning any eminent-Practice of Vertue*.

The Holy Apostle had just before recommended *Things of good Report*, and now he exhorts them to the *Practice of laudable Actions*, or things that merit *Praise*. The Difference between these two is this; *A good Report* signifies a clear and unblemish'd Character, fair Reputation among Men, a good Name among those with whom our daily Acquaintance lies, and our Civil Conversation and Business. But *Praise* implies a considerable Degree of *Applause or Honour*, obtain'd by some eminent



eminent Actions, or some extraordinary Instances of Wisdom, Courage, or Goodness. A Man that has never attain'd to any great *Degree of Excellence* above his Neighbours, may yet have a *fair Reputation* in the World: But the Word *Praise* seems to imply a *great and honourable Name* as well as a *good* one.

I shall mention but *two general Instances* wherein we may suppose the Apostle recommends to us the Practice of those things that are *laudable*; One is an *extraordinary Conduct in common Affairs*; the other is, an *Improvement of the Seasons, or Occasions of extraordinary Vertue.*

I. 'Tis a thing Praise-worthy to *labour after an extraordinary Conduct and uncommon Excellence in our common Affairs of Life*; to excel all others in the things that relate to our Station in the World. Let each of us search and inquire, what is it within our Reach that shines brightest among Men, and then pursue it with Vigour.

If a Person who professes Religion in the strictest Manner and in the purest Forms, be made a Magistrate or publick Officer, let him do something *extraordinary* for the Publick Welfare, if it be possible, and merit the Publick Thanks and Praise of the Community. So if a Man be called to the *Ministry of the Gospel*, let



him imitate the blessed Apostle in Zeal for *Christ*, as in 1 Cor. xv. 10. *I laboured more than they all.* Let there be no Bounds to our Desires of Excellence, and our Zeal for the Salvation of Men. *Covet earnestly the best Gifts*, says the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. ult. and animate them with the noblest Graces. There is a *holy Emulation* wherein we may vie with one another, and each of us get as near Perfection as possible. This is *Praise-worthy*. I told you before that Magistrates or Ministers must be diligent in their Work to gain a *good Report*, but they must double that Diligence to obtain *special Praise*.

So in the most common Employments of Life, and the Management of daily Affairs Abroad or at Home, we should aspire to be Patterns of every Thing that is good and laudable, that we may all be able to say as St. Paul, *Be ye Followers of me, even as I of Christ*, 1 Cor. xi. 1.

Am I a *Master*? Let me have a holy Ambition to be the best of Masters, and by an excellent Conduct constrain all my Servants to *praise* and love me; except such vulgar and brutal Souls that no Kindness can engage, no Merit can oblige, and no Vertue can influence. Am I a *Servant*? Let my Zeal for my Master's Interest exceed all my Fellows, and my Faithfulness and Diligence in every Duty extort Honour

Honour even from those who envy me, and deserve the Esteem and Love of those that are above me.

If I am an *Artificer*, and God hath given me any superior Talents or Capacities, I should not employ those superior Talents in Trifles, but use them to some most valuable Purposes, for the Benefit of Mankind, beyond what former Ages have known: I should promote useful Knowledge, if I am a *Philosopher*, and carry it on farther than my Fathers have done. These are some Instances wherein we may perform *Actions of Praise* that are becoming a Man or a Christian.

II. 'Tis a thing Praise-worthy to *improve all the Seasons and Occasions of extraordinary Vertue, to seize on those special Opportunities which Providence now and then may give us to exert uncommon Degrees of Wisdom or Mercy, Activity or Courage.*

We are always required to be *faithful to our Rulers, and kind to our Neighbours and Friends*: But when our King or our Country is in some imminent Danger, when some threatening Mischief hangs over a Family, or a City, when our Friend or Brother, or even a Stranger, is in immediate Peril of Life, there may be a glorious Occasion for some great and generous Exercise of Loyalty, Fortitude,

Compassion or Love, to save a Friend or a Stranger, a Prince or a Nation. All the World shall agree to: Praise the Man who performs that noble Service.

We are bound always *to be liberal and to give to the Poor*, but sometimes we have an Opportunity to exercise that Grace of *Liberality* in a more ample and generous Manner, so as to deserve and obtain an honourable Name: As when a great Number of distressed Wretches come to the City or Place where we dwell, or when some general Calamity involves all our poor Neighbours, and reduces them to great Straits, then we should exercise Bounty beyond the common Measure: Thus a *Christian* shall have the Honour of relieving the Poor more than *Heathens* do, or those who make no Profession of Godliness.

So in the Practice of *Charity and Forgiveness*, *Jesus* our Lord requires us to *forgive our Enemies*, and *to do good to those that hate, and abuse, and persecute us*: But when it lies in our Power to do a most considerable Service to a Person that has done us the highest Injury, then there is a special Providence calling us to perform a glorious *Action of Praise*. Such was the Character of that great and good Man Archbishop *Cranmer*, of whom it is said, if any Man had done him an Injury, he would ever afterward be his Friend. In



In short, Whensoever an Occasion arises to give an eminent and glorious Proof of *Generosity* or *Compassion*, of *Gratitude* or *Goodness*, of *Zeal for God*, or *Love to Men*, 'tis the Apostle's Advice that a *Christian* should seize the golden Hour, and not suffer a *Heathen* to prevent or exceed him. And among Christians, let those who profess the severest Vertue, and the purest Methods of *Christianity*, be the Persons who seize most of these Opportunities to perform Actions worthy of Praise. But when there is any thing *mean and base*, *scandalous and sordid* appears in the World, as it never should be said that a *Christian* has done it, so neither would I ever have such a Scandal fall upon any Person who professes the strictest Forms of Godliness.

I come in the next Place to consider, *What Arguments may be drawn from the Light of Reason, to excite us to Actions of good Report, and such as are worthy of special Praises*; for in the foregoing Discourse I told you, that I should join the *Arguments* or *Motives* together, which belong to both these Exhortations.

I. *If a Person practises things of good Report, and acquires to himself Reputation and Praise amongst Men, he does himself and his Family a considerable Kindness by it.* If a Man has not a good Name, he can



neither expect to be entertain'd in any Society with Pleasure, nor to receive any special Benefits from the World. A Person of *ill Report* is rather hated than beloved, he is shun'd and avoided rather than desir'd, and his Neighbours will treat him with Neglect rather than Assistance. His very Name is mention'd with Disgrace instead of Praise. Whereas on the other hand a Man whose excellent Character has deserv'd a *good Report* and *Honour* amongst his Fellow-Citizens, has every one ready to invite him to their Company, and willing to reach out to him their friendly Hand when he is fallen into Danger or Distress.

Besides such a Person lays up *Honour* for his Household, and provides the *Friendship of Mankind* for the Help of his Family in Generations yet to come. 'Tis confest indeed that the Spirit of the World has too much Baseness in it, and too great a Neglect of real Merit; yet when a Man has deserv'd exceeding well of his Country, and acquired any special Degrees of *Praise or-Renown* amongst them: The World is not yet quite so brutal and degenerate, but that it has given many Instances of Bounty and Goodness to the Posterity of a Man of Honour. *His Name shall be had in everlasting Remembrance, and the Generation of the upright shall be blessed*, Psal. cxii. 2, 6.

II. *A Man that has obtain'd a good Report and Honour in the World, by many reputable Actions, is capable of much greater Service both to God and his Fellow-Creatures.* If we have gain'd Esteem and Reputation among Men, they will be more ready to hearken to our Counsel, and comply with our Advice. We shall have more Influence on Mankind, both to promote the Honour of God and the Benefit of Men. A Word that we speak will make deeper Impression, and be attended with greater Success. A Word or a Look of *Cato* among the *Romans*, would do more to restrain Vice and to shame the Vicious than the Frown of an Emperor.

III. *There is so much real and inward Satisfaction arises from a good Character, obtain'd by a Life of Vertue and Piety, that a Man who knows the Pleasure of it, would not renounce the Practices which may attain it.* I confess 'tis a more important Matter to secure a good Conscience than a good Name, and to obtain Praise in the Sight of God, than in the Lips of Men: But where both these are join'd together by the Favour of divine Providence, our Vertue and Piety has a larger Reward, and our Natures are so fram'd and compos'd that we cannot help taking some Satisfaction

faction in it. *Prov. xv. 30. A good Report maketh the Bones fat; that is, as one expresses it, it revives the Heart to such a Degree as renders the Body more healthful and vigorous.*

Methinks those Persons have something very *degenerate* in them, and their Conduct is a little *unnatural*, who seem to have lost the very *Desire of a good Name or Reputation*. I cannot but wonder to hear a Person boast of his Scorn and Contempt of it in such Language as this, *I'll pursue my own Designs, I'll gratify and please my self, and I care not what the World says of me.* Surely if such Language did become a *Christian*, the Scripture would not be so solicitous to recommend *a good Name and things of good Report*.

This naturally leads me to consider, *What Influence Christianity has to excite us to the Practice of reputable Actions, and such as deserve Honour amongst Men.*

Here we may first take Notice how often the Scripture proposes Honour as a Reward of Goodness and Vertue. Our Saviour promises it to those that are humble and condescending; "If thou art ready at some  
 "Entertainment to seat thy self in a lower  
 "Place; *Luke xiv. 10. the Master of the Feast shall exalt thee, and thou shalt have Worship in the Presence of those that sit at Meat with thee; for he that humbleth him-*  
*self*



*self shall be exalted.* St. Paul tells the Christians, *Do that which is good and thou shalt have Praise from the ruling Power, for Magistrates are appointed for the Praise of them that do well,* 1 Pet. ii. 14. Solomon proposes the same Motive, *Prov. iv. 7, 8. Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get Wisdom; she shall bring thee to Honour when thou dost embrace her.* The Apostle recommends often to the Christians of his Day a good Name amongst Infidels and Heathens, a good Report of them which are without; and he mentions it as an eminent Character of a Companion of Titus, that *his Praise is in the Gospel throughout all the Churches,* 2 Cor. viii. 18. And 'tis recorded to the Honour of Demetrius by St. John, that he had a good Report of all Men, even of the Truth it self, John Ep. 3. Christians and Heathens speak well of him, and his good Character is just and true. Nor must it be forgotten that in this little Collection of Advices in my Text, the Apostle twice recommends such Practices as deserve Honour among Men, (*viz.*) *Things of good Report,* and things worthy of *Praise.*

Surely if we did but consider how much our Saviour and his Gospel gain by it in the World, we should ever be engag'd in *works of good Report,* and practising that which may redound to our *Praise;* for

†

hereby



hereby we spread a good *Savour of the Name of Christ* wide in the World, and our holy Religion reaps sensible Honour and Advantage by it. When the Name of any Person is celebrated amongst Men for something great and useful, when his Deeds are mentioned with publick *Praise*, 'tis quickly enquir'd, *What Religion is he of?* Is he a *Heathen*? Then the Glory will be ascribed to Idolaters, and the Honour perhaps be given to their Idols. Is he a *Christian*? Then the Name of *Christ* our Lord will gain Reputation by it, and Men will speak more favourably of that Doctrine which was adorned with such eminent Vertue and Piety. This did unknown Service to the Gospel in the first Propagation of it, when it appear'd in the World, that the Characters and the Lives of *Christians* were lovely, that their Works were all *Goodness*, that they were Persons of an excellent Spirit, and obtain'd a good Report among their Heathen Neighbours; they saw their good Works, and were thereby led, by degrees, to glorify their Heavenly Father and their Saviour.

And where there is any Separation made from the publick Worship of a Nation, with a Profession to reform any Corruptions of Doctrine or Practice, how much Honour would be done to these reforming Principles, and how much Service to  
 this

this Interest, if every one that is engaged in it were always practising *things of good Report*, and aiming at some Eminency and uncommon Goodness in their various Stations of Life. If therefore we have any Love for *Christ* our Lord, if we have any Zeal for his Glory, if we have any Regard to the Honour of the Gospel, or if we would bring any Credit to the particular Profession we make, let us set a severe Watch upon our selves against every thing that would blemish our Character in the World, and let us aspire to all superiour Excellencies that are within our Reach, that we may be *to the Praise of the Glory of his Grace, who has made us acceptable in the Beloved.*

'Tis necessary here to remove *two or three Objections* out of the Way, that may seem to attend this Exhortation of the Apostle.

The *First* is this. If a good Name be so valuable a thing, why should there be such a *Wo* denounced by our Saviour against those that have the good Word of all Men? *Luke vi. 26. Wo unto you when all Men shall speak well of you, for so did their Fathers to the false Prophets?*

I. *Answer*, That the Design of our Saviour is to shew, that no Man in a degenerate and corrupt Age, can attain the high Esteem and hearty Good-Word of  
all

all Persons in the World, but those who are *Time-servers* and *Hypocrites*, who can suit themselves to every Company, and comply with every Change of the Times; who can profess to be Religious and yet indulge themselves or others in the Practice of their secret Iniquities; such were the *false Prophets* of old. Such a Person as this may for a short Season get all Men to speak well of him: The Drunkards will commend him, for he can be drunk as well as they; and the Swearer, for he can join with them in swearing; and the Men of Piety may be deceived in him, and give him a *good Report*; for his Tongue is tipt with religious Language, and he seems to be a Saint: But in reality he is an *universal Hypocrite*, and true to nothing. Our Lord *Jesus* hates and censures such a Character as this is, and this is the Design of his Reproof.

¶ *Again*, Let it be noted, that this sort of Sinners can hold the good Word of all Men but for a very short Time. The Drunkards, the Profane and the Lewd, may care for a Man for a Season who complies with their Vices; yet when they hear that he pretends to be religious among Persons of Piety, they will speak Evil of him in abundance, and brand him for a Hypocrite, which is a more loathsome Name; and his pious Acquaintance, when they



they shall find out his Practices of secret Wickedness, they will justly fix the same odious Character upon him; thus he who before had the good Word of all Men, shall then be loaded with publick Scandal and Infamy.

I add further, That *a good Report* signifies a good Character and honourable Reputation among all wise and good Men, upon the Account of valuable Qualities, and the Exercise of Vertue and Goodness; and where a Man manages his Affairs with an excellent Conduct in this respect, and keeps himself without a Blemish, he will command some degree of Esteem and Reverence from the viler part of the World: His good Name will be *general*, tho' perhaps not *universal*; and if the wicked World finds Occasion to speak Evil of him in any thing, 'tis only in *the Matters of his God*, and his exemplary Practice of Piety. This Thought introduces

The *Second Objection* (viz.) If a good Name amongst Men be so desirable, why does our Saviour say, *Matth. v. 11. Blessed are ye when Men shall revile you, and shall speak all Manner of Evil against you, for my sake; then rejoyce ye and be exceeding glad, for great is your Reward in Heaven, for so persecuted they the Prophets that were before you?*

*Answer.*



*Answer.* It is supposed that the *Evil* which Men speak of you is *false*, for so our Saviour expresseth it, *when they shall speak all manner of Evil against you falsely for my sake.* They shall scandalize you as being *ill Men* meerly because you are *Christians*; and throw upon you many *Odi-ums*, which your Practice has never deserv'd, on Purpose to expose the *Christian Religion.* The Apostle *Peter* agrees with our Lord *Jesus Christ* in the same Design, *i Pet. iii. 16, &c. Keep a good Conscience, that whereas they speak Evil of you as Evil Doers, they may be ashamed while they falsely accuse your good Conversation in Jesus Christ.*

Now when it appears to be pure Hatred of *God* and of *Goodness*, of *Christ* and his *Gospel*, for which you are reproached, then you have Cause to rejoyce because *Christ* is on your Side: So he was reproached in the Days of his *Flesh*, so the *Prophets* that went before him, and so the *Apostles* that succeeded him. *i Pet. iv. 15, 16. The Spirit of God and of Glory resteth upon you, for on their Part he is Evil spoken of, but on your Part he is glorified.* Happy are ye, for *Christ* and you are join'd together in the same Cause; and you who have glorified him on *Earth*, shall be glorified together with him in *Heaven.*

The *third Objection* is this, If Praise amongst Men be lawful to be sought, how comes

comes it to pass that there are so many Reproofs given to those who *seek the Praise of Men*? How can these Scriptures be reconciled with some others that are cited before to encourage *Actions worthy of Praise*? How often does our Saviour severely rebuke the *Pharisees* for this Practice, that *they do their good Works to be seen of Men*? Matth. vi. 2, 5, 16. John v. 44.

*Answer.* It is evident that these *Hypocrites* whom our Saviour reproveth, neglected all inward Piety before God, and practised the outward Forms of Godliness meerly to gain the Praise of Men, *they loved and valued it more than the Praise of God*, John xii. 43. *They received Honour of one another*, and had no Concern about that superior Blessing, that divine Esteem and Approbation which God only can bestow, and which only would stand them in stead hereafter. Where the *Praise of God* is inconsistent with the *Praise of Men*, there it is evident we must despise the Censures or the Praises of the World, and seek the divine Approbation only: But where these two Benefits may be happily conjoin'd, we are not bound to separate them. God never requires us *to seek Infamy and Reproach*, or to abandon that Honour that belongs to Truth and Goodness. ¶

But that I may more effectually guard every Christian against all the Dangers and Temptations that may attend a good Name, and Honour in the World, I would conclude the Discourse with these *four Advices*.

*I. Make not the Praise of Men your chief Aim or Design in any thing you do: But let it be your first and chiefest Care to approve your selves to God and your own Consciences. Do those Actions that are worthy of Praise, and whether the World acknowledge it or no, your Souls will find inward Peace, your Labour of Love shall not be forgotten of God, He is faithful who hath promised.*

*II. If you are so happy as to obtain the Esteem of Men, set a Guard upon your Soul, lest Pride and Vanity take Occasion to arise and shew themselves. Have a Care lest Satan the Tempter gain an Advantage against you by the Fruits of your Vertue and the Eminence of your Graces. Pride is such a cursed twining Weed it will sometimes root it self in Vertue and Honour, it will grow up to an equal Height, and make its Supporters wither and die.*

*III. Let all the Honour you acquire amongst Men be improved to the Honour of your God and Saviour. If you make your*

OWN



own Applause your great End, *Jesus* will say to you another Day as he did once to the *Pharisees*, *Verily I say unto you, ye have your Reward: The Praise of Men will be your whole Recompence; and there is nothing more remains for you.* Whenever therefore you receive Applause from the World, make the World know that it was not the *Man* but the *Christian* that practised the Vertue and gain'd the Praise. *Not I but the Grace of God which was with me.* If you so manage all your laudable Actions that *Jesus Christ* and his Name may gain some Honour by them, this shall turn to your Praise and Glory in the Day of *Christ*, as well as to the Praise of God your Saviour.

IV. *When the Providence of God and his Grace have favoured you so far as to gain a good Character in the World, have a Care of every thing that may impeach your Honour or sully your Reputation.* Remember the Lesson that *Solomon* teaches you from so contemptible a thing as a *dead Flie*; a few of them will cause the Ointment of the *Apothecary* to send forth a stinking Savour, so does a little Folly disgrace a Man who is in Reputation for *Wisdom and Honour*, Eccl. x. 1. The Blemish that arises from one base or foolish Action will darken a bright Character, and cancel the Honour that has cost the Labour of many Years to acquire:  
And



And the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ will suffer much by it also, if those Persons once descend to *Folly and Disgrace* who have risen high before in the Regions of *Wisdom* and *publick Esteem*.

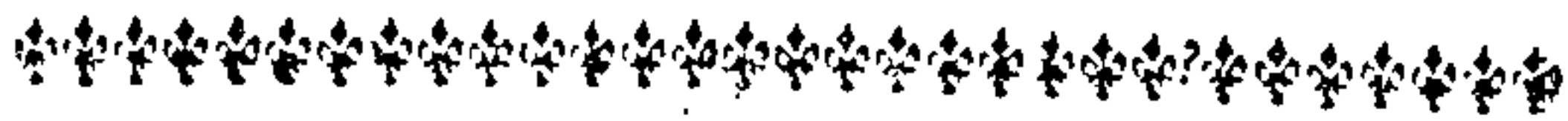
Happy those Christians who walk closely with God to the End of Life, and keep their Garments unspotted! When they die they leave a perfumed Name behind them to the Churches and to the Families to which they have belong'd, and perhaps they bequeath a lasting Honour to Religion as long as the World shall stand. Such has been the Character of some of the Saints in ancient Ages of the World, such in the elder and later Days of *Christianity*; the Brightness and Savour of their good Name abides to this Day amongst us, as an Ornament to Religion and a rich Perfume to the Gospel of our *Lord Jesus*. *To him be Glory and Dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*





# H Y M N S

*Composed on the various Subjects  
of the foregoing Sermons.*



## H Y M N I.

A Rational Defence of the Gospel.

I.

**S** *HALL* Atheists dare insult the  
Of our Redeemer-God? (Cross,  
Shall Infidels reproach his Laws,  
Or trample on his Blood?

2.

*What if he choose mysterious Ways  
To cleanse us from our Faults?  
May not the Works of Sovereign Grace  
Transcend our feeble Thoughts?*

3.

*What if his Gospel bids us fight  
With Flesh, and Self, and Sin?  
The Prize is most divinely bright,  
Which we are call'd to win.*

X

4. *What*

4.

*What if the Foolish and the Poor  
His glorious Grace partake?  
This but confirms his Truth the more,  
For so the Prophets spake.*

5.

*Do some that own his sacred Name,  
Indulge their Souls in Sin?  
Jesus should never bear the Blame,  
His Laws are pure and clean.*

6.

*Then let our Faith grow firm and strong,  
Our Lips profess his Word;  
Nor blush nor fear to walk among  
The Men that love the Lord.*



## HYMN II.

The Gospel the Power of God to Salvation.

1.



*W**HAT shall the dying Sinner do,  
That seeks Relief for all his Wo?  
Where shall the guilty Conscience find  
Ease for the Torment of the Mind?*

2.

*How shall we get our Crimes forgiven,  
Or form our Nature's fit for Heaven?  
Can Souls, all o'er defil'd with Sin,  
Make their own Powers and Passions clean?*

3. In

3.

*In vain we search, in vain we try,  
'Till Jesus brings his Gospel nigh:  
'Tis there such Power and Glory dwell,  
As saves rebellious Souls from Hell.*

4.

*This is the Pillar of our Hope,  
That bears our fainting Spirits up:  
We read the Grace, we trust the Word,  
And find Salvation in the Lord.*

5.

*Let Men or Angels dig the Mines,  
Where Nature's golden Treasure shines;  
Brought near the Doctrine of the Cross,  
All Nature's Gold appears but Dross.*

6.

*Should vile Blasphemers with Disdain  
Pronounce the Truths of Jesus vain,  
I'll meet the Scandal and the Shame,  
And sing and triumph in his Name.*



## HYMN III.

Faith the Way to Salvation.

I.



*Not by the Law of Innocence  
Can Adam's Sons arrive at Heaven:  
New Works can give us no Pretence  
To have our antient Sins forgiven.*

X 2

2. Not



2.

Not the best Deeds that we have done,  
 Can make a wounded Conscience whole:  
 Faith is the Grace, and Faith alone,  
 That flies to Christ and saves the Soul.

3.

Lord, I believe thy heavenly Word,  
 Fain would I have my Soul renew'd:  
 I mourn for Sin, and trust the Lord,  
 To have it pardon'd and subdu'd.

4.

O may thy Grace its Power display,  
 Let Guilt and Death no longer reign:  
 Save me in thine appointed Way,  
 Nor let my humble Faith be vain.



## HYMN IV.

None excluded from Hope.

1.



ESUS, thy Blessings are not few,  
 Nor is thy Gospel weak:  
 Thy Grace can melt the stubborn Jew,  
 And heal the dying Greek.

2.

Wide as the Reach of Satan's Rage,  
 Doth thy Salvation flow:  
 'Tis not confin'd to Sex or Age,  
 The Lofty or the Low.

2. While

3.

*While Grace is offer'd to the Prince,  
The Poor may take their Share:  
No Mortal has a just Pretence,  
To perish in Despair.*

4.

*Be wise, ye Men of Strength and Wit,  
Nor boast your native Powers;  
But to his sovereign Grace submit,  
And Glory shall be yours.*

5.

*Come, all ye vilest Sinners, come,  
He'll form your Souls anew:  
His Gospel and his Heart have Room  
For Rebels such as you.*

6.

*His Doctrine is Almighty Love,  
There's Vertue in his Name,  
To turn the Raven to a Dove,  
The Lyon to a Lamb.*

\*\*\*\*\*

## HYMN V.

Truth, Sincerity, &c.

1.



*ET those who bear the Christian  
Their holy Vows fulfil: (Name  
The Saints, the Followers of the  
Are Men of Honour still. (Lamb,*

X 3

2. True

2.

*True to the solemn Oaths they take,  
Tho' to their Hurt they swear :  
Constant and just to all they speak,  
For God and Angels hear.*

3.

*Still with their Lips their Hearts agree,  
Nor flattering Words devise :  
They know the God of Truth can see  
Thro' every false Disguise.*

4.

*They hate th' Appearance of a Lie,  
In all the Shapes it wears ;  
Firm to the Truth ; and when they dye,  
Eternal Life is theirs.*

5.

*Lo, from afar the Lord descends,  
And brings the Judgment down ;  
He bids his Saints, his faithful Friends,  
Rise and possess their Crown.*

6.

*While Satan trembles at the Sight,  
And Devils wish to die,  
Where will the faithless Hypocrite,  
And guilty Liar fly ?*

HYMN

## HYMN VI.

## Faithfulness.

I.



*HATH* God been faithful to his Word,  
 And sent to Men the promis'd Grace?  
 Shall I not imitate the Lord,  
 And practise what my Lips profess?

2.

*Hath* Christ fulfill'd his kind Design,  
 The dreadful Work he undertook,  
 And dy'd to make Salvation mine,  
 And well perform'd whate'er he spoke?

3.

Doth not his Faithfulness afford  
 A noble Theme to raise my Song?  
 And shall I dare deny my Lord,  
 Or utter Falshood with my Tongue?

4.

My King, my Saviour, and my God,  
 Let Grace my sinful Soul renew,  
 Wash my Offences with thy Blood,  
 And make my Heart sincere and true.





## HYMN VII.

Gravity, Decency, &amp;c.

I.



*ARE we not Sons and Heirs of God?  
Are we not bought with Jesus' Blood?  
Do we not hope for heavenly Joys,  
And shall we stoop to trifling Toys?*

2.

*CAN Laughter feed th' immortal Mind?  
Were Spirits of celestial Kind  
Made for a Jest, for Sport and Play,  
To wear out Time and waste the Day?*

3.

*DOth vain Discourse or empty Mirth  
Well suit the Honours of our Birth?  
Shall we be fond of gay Attire,  
Which Children love and Fools admire?*

4.

*WHAT if we wear the richest Vest,  
Peacocks, and Flies are better drest:  
This Flesh with all its gaudy Forms  
Must drop to Dust and feed the Worms.*

5.

*LORD, raise our Hearts and Passions higher;  
Touch our vain Souls with sacred Fire;  
Then with an elevated Eye  
We'll pass these glitt'ring Trifles by.*

6. We'll

6.

*We'll look on all the Toys below  
With such Disdain as Angels do,  
And wait the Call that bids us rise  
To promis'd Mansions in the Skies.*



## HYMN VIII.

Justice and Equity.

I.



*O ME, let us search our Ways, and  
Have they been just and right? (try,  
Is the great Rule of Equity  
Our Practice and Delight?*

2.

*What we would have our Neighbour do,  
Have we still done the same?  
And ne'er delay'd to pay his Due,  
Nor injur'd his good Name?*

3.

*Do we relieve the poor Distress?  
Nor give our Tongues a Loose,  
To make their Names our Scorn and Jest,  
Nor treat them with Abuse?*

4.

*Have we not found our Envy grow,  
To hear another's Praise?  
Nor robb'd him of his Honour due  
By sly malicious Ways.*

5. In

5.

*In all we sell, and all we buy,  
Is Justice our Design?  
Do we remember God is nigh,  
And fear the Wrath divine?*

6.

*In vain we talk of Jesus Blood,  
And boast his Name in vain,  
If we can slight the Laws of God,  
And prove unjust to Men.*



## HYMN IX.

Justice and Truth.

1.



*Great God, thy holy Law requires,  
To curb our covetous Desires,  
Forbids to plunder, steal or cheat,  
To practise Falshood or Deceit.*

2.

*Thy Son hath set a Pattern too,  
He paid to God and Men their Due;  
A dreadful Debt he paid to God,  
And bought our Pardon with his Blood.*

3.

*Amazing Justice! Boundless Love!  
Do we not feel our Passions move?  
Do we not grieve that we have been  
Faithless to God, or false to Men?*

4. Have

4.

Have we no righteous Debt deny'd,  
Thro' wanton Luxury or Pride?  
Nor vex the Poor with long Delay,  
And made them groan for want of Pay?

5.

Have we ne'er thrown a needless Shame,  
Or Scandal on our Neighbour's Name?  
O happy Men, whose Age and Youth  
Have ever dealt in Love and Truth!

6.

But if our Justice once be gone,  
And leave our Faith and Hope alone,  
If Honesty be banisht hence,  
Religion is a vain Pretence.



## HYMN X.

## Temperance.

1.



Is it a Man's divinest Good,  
To make his Soul a Slave to Food,  
Vile as the Beast, whose Spirit dies,  
And has no Hope above the Skies?

2.

Can Meats or choicest Wines procure  
Delights that ever shall endure?  
Was I not born above the Swine,  
And shall I make their Pleasures mine?

3. Am



3.

*Am I not made for nobler things?  
 Made to ascend on Angels wings?  
 Shall my best Powers be thus debas'd;  
 And part with Heaven to please my Taste?*

4.

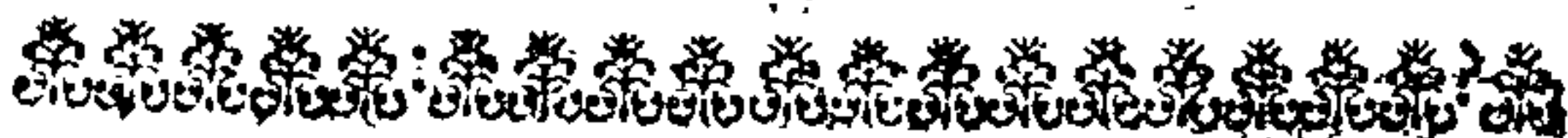
*Can I forget the fatal Deed,  
 How Eve brought Death on all her Seed?  
 She tasted the forbidden Tree,  
 Anger'd her God and ruin'd me.*

5.

*Was Life design'd alone to eat?  
 What is the Mouth, or what the Meat?  
 Both from the Ground derive their Birth,  
 And both shall mix with common Earth.*

6.

*Great God, new mould my sensual Mind,  
 And let my Joys be more refin'd;  
 Raise me to dwell among the Blest,  
 And fit me for thy heavenly Feast.*



## HYMN XI.

### Chastity.

1.



*HE Lord, how great his Majesty!  
 How pure are all his Ways!  
 Sinners unclean offend his Eye,  
 Nor stand before his Face.*

2. Thou

2.

*Thou hast ordain'd immortal Woes,  
And everlasting Fire,  
To be the just Reward of those  
Who follow loose Desire.*

3.

*I hear, I read the dreadful Doom  
Of Sodom in thy Word;  
And dares a feeble Worm presume  
Thus to provoke the Lord?*

4.

*Dear Saviour, guard me by thy Grace  
From Thoughts and Words unclean,  
Nor let Temptation gain Success,  
To draw my Soul to Sin.*

---

## H Y M N XII.

A Lovely Carriage.

1.



*'Tis a lovely thing to see  
A Man of prudent Heart,  
Whose Thoughts, and Lips, and  
To act a useful Part. (Life agree*

2.

*When Envy, Strife and Wars begin  
In little angry Souls,  
Mark how the Sons of Peace come in,  
And quench the kindling Coals.*

3. Their

3.

*Their Minds are humble, mild and meek,  
Nor let their Fury rise :  
Nor Passion moves their Lips to speak,  
Nor Pride exalts their Eyes.*

4.

*Their Frame is Prudence mixt with Love ;  
Good Works fulfil their Day ;  
They join the Serpent with the Dove,  
But cast the Sting away.*

5.

*Such was the Saviour of Mankind,  
Such Pleasures he pursu'd ;  
His Flesh and Blood were all refin'd,  
His Soul divinely good.*

6.

*Lord, can these Plants of Vertue grow,  
In such a Soul as mine ?  
Thy Grace can form my Nature so,  
And make my Heart like thine.*



## H Y M N XIII.

Things of good Report.

1.



*S it a Thing of good Report,  
To squander Life and Time away ?  
To cut the Hours of Duty short,  
While Toys and Follies waste the  
Day ?*

2. To

2.

*To ask and prattle all Affairs,  
And mind all Business but our own?  
To live at Random, void of Cares,  
While all things to Confusion run?*

3.

*Doth this become the Christian Name,  
To venture near the Tempter's Door?  
To sort with Men of evil Fame,  
And yet presume to stand secure?*

4.

*Am I my own sufficient Guard,  
While I expose my Soul to Shame?  
Can the short Joys of Sin reward  
The lasting Blemish of my Name?*

5.

*O may it be my constant Choice  
To walk with Men of Grace below,  
'Till I arrive where heavenly Joys,  
And never fading Honours grow!*



## HYMN XIV.

Courage and Honour.

I.



*O I believe what Jesus saith,  
And think his Gospel true?  
Lord, make me bold to own my Faith,  
And practise Vertue too.*

†

2. Suppress



2.

Suppress my Shame, subdue my Fear,  
 Arm me with heavenly Zeal,  
 That I may make thy Power appear,  
 And Works of Praise fulfil.

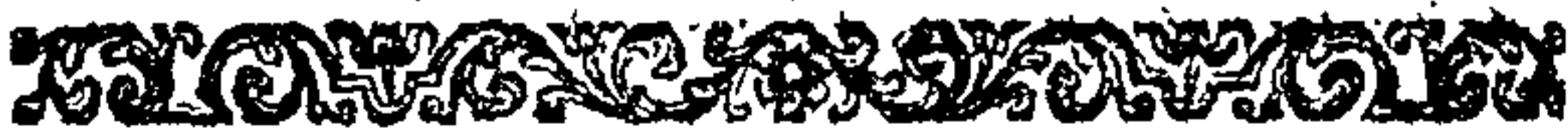
3.

If Men shall see my Vertue shine,  
 And spread my Name abroad,  
 Thine is the Power, the Praise is thine,  
 My Saviour and my God.

4.

Thus when the Saints in Glory meet,  
 Their Lips proclaim thy Grace,  
 They cast their Honours at thy Feet,  
 And own their borrow'd Rays.

THE END.



ERRATA.

**P**Age 9. *line 29.* for *hear* read *find.* P. 22. after *line 13.* add, As for those few Doctrines of Christianity which may at first appear less reasonable to Men, their abundant Attestation from Heaven demands our Belief. p. 35. l. 20. for *three* r. *four.* p. 136. l. 24. for *thee* r. *thy.* p. 333. l. 12. for *enraging* r. *engaging.*