

their children? yea, do not they and their children groan under the doleful effects of it to this day? If God undertakes, (as he always doth) the cause of his abused, meek, and peaceable people, he will be sure to avenge it seven-fold more than they could. His little finger will be heavier than their loins. You will get nothing by that.

Inf. 3. Lastly, *Let us all imitate our pattern Christ, and labour for meek forgiving spirits.* I shall only propose two inducements to it: the *honour of Christ*, and *your own peace*: two dear things indeed to a Christian. His glory is more than your life, and all that you enjoy in this world. O do not expose it to the scorn and derision of his enemies. Let them not say, How is Christ a lamb, when his followers are lions? how is the church a dove, that smites and scratches like a bird of prey? Consult also the quiet of your own spirits. What is life worth, without the comfort of life? what comfort can you have in all that you do possess in the world, as long as you have not the possession of your own souls? If your spirits be full of tumult and revenge, the spirit of Christ will grow a stranger to you: that dove delights in clean and quiet breasts. O then imitate Christ in this excellency also!

SERMON XXXI.

The second excellent Word of CHRIST upon the Cross,
illustrated.

JOHN XIX. 27.

Then saith he to his disciple, Behold thy mother.

WE now pass to the consideration of the second memorable and instructive word of our Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross, contained in this scripture. Wherein he hath left us an excellent pattern for the discharge of our relative duties. It may be well said, the gospel makes the best husbands and wives, the best parents and children, the best masters and servants in the world; seeing it furnishes them with the most excellent *precepts*, and proposes the best *patterns*. Here we have the pattern of Jesus Christ presented to all gracious children for their imitation, teaching them how to acquit themselves towards their parents, according to the laws of nature and grace. Christ was not only subject and obedient to his parents whilst he lived, but manifested his tender care even whilst he hanged in the torments of death upon the cross. “Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother.”

The words contain an affectionate recommendation of his distressed mother to the care of a dear disciple, a bosom friend ; wherein let us consider the design, manner, and season of this recommendation.

First, The design and end of it, which, doubtless, was to manifest his tender respect and care for his mother, who was now in a most distressed comfortless state. For now was Simeon's prophecy, Luke ii. 35. fulfilled, in the trouble and anguish that filled her soul, yea, a sword also shall pierce through thine own soul, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. Her soul was pierced for him, both as she was his mother, and as she was a mystical member of him, her head, her Lord : and therefore he commends her to the beloved disciple that lay in his bosom, saying, " Behold thy mother," *i. e.* let her be to thee as thine own mother. Let thy love to me be now manifested in thy tender care for her.

Secondly, The manner of his recommending her, is both affectionate and mutual. It was very affectionate and moving, *Behold thy mother*, q. d. John, I am now dying, leaving all human society and relations, and entering into a new state, where neither the duties of natural relations are exercised, nor the pleasures and comforts of them enjoyed. It is a state of dominion over angels and men, not of subjection and obedience ; this I now leave to thee. Upon thee do I devolve both the honour and duty of being in my stead and room to her, as to all dear and tender care over her.

John, " Behold thy mother ;" and as it is affectionate, so it is mutual, ver. 26. And to his mother he said, " Woman, behold thy son ;" not mother, but woman, intimating not only the change of state and conditions with him, but also the request he was making for her to the disciple with whom she was to live, as a mother with a son.

And all this he designs as a pattern to others.

Thirdly, The season or time when his care for his mother so eminently manifested itself, was when his departure was at hand, and he could no longer be a comfort to her, by his bodily presence ; yea, his love and care then manifested themselves, when he was full of anguish to the very brim, both in his soul and body ; yet all this makes him not in the least unmindful of so dear a relation. Hence the doctrinal note is,

Doct. That Christ's tender care of his mother, even in the time of his greatest distress ; is an excellent pattern for all gracious children to the end of the world.

“There are three great foundations*, or bonds of relations, on which all family government depends.” Husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and servants. The Lord hath planted in the souls of men, affections suitable to these relations, and to his people he hath given grace to regulate those affections, appointed duties to exercise those graces, and seasons to discharge those duties. So that, as in the motion of a wheel every spoke takes its turn, and bears its stress; in like manner, in the whole round of a Christian’s conversation, every affection, grace, and duty, at one season or other, comes to be exercised.

But yet grace hath not so far prevailed in the sanctification of any man’s affections, but that there will be excesses or defects in the exercise of them towards our relations; yea, and in this the most eminent saints have been eminently defective. But the pattern I set before you this day, is a perfect pattern. As the church finds him the best of husbands, so to his parents he was the best of sons; “and being the best, and most perfect, is therefore the “rule and measure of all others †.” Christ knew how those corruptions we draw from our parents are returned in their bitter fruits upon them again, to the wounding of their very hearts; and therefore it pleased him to commend obedience and love to parents, in his own example to us.

It was anciently a proverb among the heathen, *in sola Sparta, expedit senescere*. It is good to be an old man, or woman, only in Sparta. The ground of it was the strict laws that were among the Spartans, to punish the rebellions and disobedience of children to their aged parents. And shall it not be good to be an old father and mother in England, where the gospel of Christ is preached, and such an argument as this now set before you urged; an argument which the Heathen world was never acquainted with? Shall parents here be forced to complain with the eagle in the fable, that they are smitten to the heart, by an arrow winged with their own feathers? Or, as a tree cleft in pieces by the wedges that were made of its own body? God forbid.

To prevent such sad occasions of complaints as these, I desire all that sustain the relation of children, into whose hands providence shall cast this discourse, seriously to ponder this example of Christ, proposed for their imitation in this point. Wherein we shall first consider what duties belong to the relation of children: secondly, how Christ’s example enforces those duties, and then suitably apply it.

First, Let us examine what duties pertain to the relation of

* Τῶν τριῶν συγγενεῶν ἐστὶν ἡ ἀριστεία συνισταμένη. *Arist.*

† *Optimus in unoquoque genere est regula et mensura cæterorum.*

children, and they are as truly, as commonly branched out into the following particulars.

First, Fear and reverence are due from children to their parents, by the express command of God, Lev. xix. 3. Ye shall fear every man his mother and his father. The Holy Ghost purposely inverts the order, and puts the mother first, because she, by reason of her blandishments, and fond indulgence, is most subject to the irreverence and contempt of children. God hath clothed parents with his authority. They are intrusted by God with them, and are accountable to him for the souls and bodies of their children; and he expects that you reverence them, although, in respect of outward estate, or honour, you be never so much above them. Joseph, though Lord of Egypt, bowed down before his aged father, with his face to the earth, Gen. xlviii. 12. Solomon, the most magnificent and glorious king that ever swayed a sceptre, when his mother came to speak with him for Adonijah, he rose up to meet her, and bowed himself to her, and caused a seat to be set up for the king's mother, and set her upon his right hand, 2 Kings ii. 19.

Secondly, Dear and tender love is due from children to their parents: and to shew how strong and dear that love ought to be, it is joined with the love you have for your own lives; as it appears in that injunction, to deny both for Christ's sake, Mat. x. 37. The bonds of nature are strong and direct betwixt parents and children. What is the child but a piece of the parent wrapped up in another skin? O the care, the cost, the pity, the tenderness, the pains, the fears they have expressed for you. It is worse than Heathenish ingratitude, not to return love for love. This filial love is not only in itself a duty, but should be the root or spring of all your duties to them.

Thirdly, Obedience to their commands is due to them, by the Lord's strict and special command, Eph. vi. 1. "Children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right; honour thy father and thy mother, which is the first commandment with promise." Filial obedience is not only founded upon the positive law of God, but also upon the law of nature; for though the subjection of children to parents is due to them by natural right; therefore, saith the apostle, *this is right*, (i. e.) right both according to natural and positive law. However, this subjection and obedience is not absolute and universal. God has not divested himself of his own authority, to clothe a parent with it. Your obedience to them must be in the Lord," i. e. in such things as they require you to do in the Lord's authority. In things consonant to that divine and holy will, to which they, as well as you, must be subject: and therein

you must obey them. Yea, even the wickedness of a parent exempts not from obedience, where his command is not so. Nor, on the other side, must the holiness of a parent sway you, where his commands and God's are opposite. In the former case, the Canonists * have determined, "that the command must be distinguished from the person." In the latter, it is a good rule, "My parents must be loved, but my God must be preferred."

Yield yourselves, therefore, cheerfully to obey all that which they lawfully enjoin, and take heed of that black character fixed on the Heathens who know not God, be not found upon you, "disobedience to parents," Rom. i. 30. Remember, your disobedience to their just commands rises higher, much higher, than an affront to their personal authority; it is disobedience to God himself, whose commands second, and strengthen theirs upon you.

Fourthly, Submission to their discipline and rebukes, is also your duty, Heb. xii. 9. "We had fathers of our own flesh that corrected us, and we gave them reverence." Parents ought not to abuse their authority. "Cruelty † in them is a great sin, wrath "and rebellion in a child against his parents, is monstrous." It is storied of Elian, that having been abroad, at his return, his father asked him what he had learned since he went from him; he answered, you will know shortly; I have learned to bear your anger quietly, and submit to what you please to inflict. Two considerations should especially mould others into the like frame, especially to their godly parents. The *end* for which, and the *manner* in which they manifest their anger to their children. Their end is to save your souls from hell. They judge it better for you to hear the voice of their anger, than the terrible voice of the wrath of God: to feel their hand than his. They know, if you fall into the hands of the living God, you will be handled in another manner.

And for the manner in which they rebuke and chasten, it is with grief in their hearts, and tears in their eyes. Alas! it is no delight to them to cross, vex, or afflict you. Were it not mere conscience of their duty to God, and tender love to your souls, they would neither chide nor smite: and when they do, how do they afflict themselves in afflicting you! When their faces are full of anger, their bowels are full of compassion for you; and you have no more reason to blame them for what they do, than if they cry out and violently snatch at you, when they see you ready to fall from the top of a rock.

Fifthly, Faithfulness to all their interests is due to them, by the natural and positive law of God. What in you lies, you are bound

* *Officium a persona discernendum. Amantulus genitor, sed præponendus Creator.*

† *Severitia patris in filios grave peccatum, sed ira filii in patrem, grave crimen.*

to promote, not to waste and scatter their substance: to *assist*, not to *defraud* them. Whoso robbeth his father or mother, and saith, it is no transgression, the same is a companion of a destroyer, Prov. xxviii. 24. This, saith one, as far excels your wronging another, as parricide is a greater crime than man-slaughter, or as Reuben's incest was beyond common fornication. God never meant you should grow up about your parents, as suckers about a tree, to impoverish the root*. But for a child, out of covetousness after what his parents have, secretly to wish their death, is a sin so monstrous, as should not be once named, much less found among persons professing Christianity. To desire their death, from whom you had your life, is unnatural wickedness: to dispose of their goods, much more of yourselves, without their consent, is (ordinarily) the greatest injustice to them. Children are obliged to defend the estate and persons of their parents, with the hazard of their own. As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man, so are children of the youth. Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemy in the gates. Psal. cxxvii. 5.

Sixthly, And more especially, *requital* of all that love, care, and pains they have been at for you, is your duty so far as God enables you, and those things are requitable, 1 Tim. v. 4. "Let them learn to shew piety at home, and requite their parents." The word is *αντιπελαργειν*, and signifies to play the stork, to imitate that creature of whom it is said, that the young do tenderly feed the old ones, when they are no longer able to fly abroad and provide for themselves. Hence those that want bowels of natural affection to their relations, are said to be *αεοργοι*, Rom. i. 30. worse than storks. Oh, it is a shame that birds and beasts should shew more tenderness to their dams, than children to their parents.

It is a saying frequent among the Jews †, "A child should rather labour at the mill than suffer his parents to want ‡." And to the same sense is that other saying, "Your parents must be supplied by you if you have it; if not, you ought to beg for them, rather than see them perish." It was both the comfort and honour of Joseph, that God made him an instrument of so much succour and comfort to his aged father and distressed family, Gen. xlvii. 13. And you are also to know, that what you do for them, is not in the way of an alms, or common charity. For the apostle saith, it is but your requiting them, and that is justice, not charity. And it can never be a full requital. Indeed the apostle tells us,

* *Filius ante diem patrios inquiri in annos.* Ovid. Metam. lib. 1.

The son impatient enquires into his father's years.

† *Vel in pistrino laborare filium debere, ut parentibus subveniat.*

‡ *Honorandi parentes si habes; si non habes, potius mendicandum.*

2 Cor. xii. 14. That parents lay up for their children, and not children for their parents, and so they ought; but, sure, if providence blast them, and bless you, an honourable maintenance is their due. Even Christ himself took care for his mother.

Secondly, You have had a brief account of the duties of this relation; next, let us consider how Christ's example, who was so subject to them in his life, Luke ii. 51. and so careful to provide at his death, enforces all those duties upon children, especially upon gracious children. And this it doth two ways, both as it hath the obliging power of a law; and as he himself will one day sit in judgment to take an account how we have imitated him in these things.

First, Christ's example in this hath the force and power of a law, yea, a law of love, or a law lovingly constraining you to an imitation of him. If Christ himself will be your pattern, if God will be pleased to take relations like yours, and go before you in the discharge of relative duties; Oh, how much are you obliged to imitate him, and tread in all his footsteps! This was by him intended as a precedent, or pattern, to facilitate and direct your duties.

Secondly, He will come to take an account how you have answered the pattern of obedience, and tender care he set before you in the days of his flesh. What will the disobedient plead in that day? He that heard the groans of an afflicted father or mother, will now come to reckon with the disobedient child for them; and, the glorious example of Christ's own obedience to, and tenderness of his relations, will, in that day, condemn and aggravate, silence and shame such wretched children as shall stand guilty before his bar.

Inference 1. Hath Jesus Christ given such a famous pattern of obedience and tenderness to parents? *Then there can be nothing of Christ in stubborn, rebellious, and careless children, that regard not the good or comfort of their parents.* The children of disobedience cannot be the children of God. If providence directs this to the hands of any that are so, my heart's desire and prayer for them is, that the Lord would search their souls by it, and discover their evils to them, whilst they shall read the following queries.

First Query, Have you not been guilty of slighting your parents by irreverent words or carriages; the old man or woman? To such I commend the consideration of that scripture, Prov. xxx. 17. which, methinks, should be to them as the hand-writing that appeared upon the plaister of the wall to Belshazzar. "The eye that mocketh at his father, and despiseth to obey his mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it." That is, they shall be brought to an untimely

end, and the birds of the air shall eat that eye, that had never seen but for that parent that was despised by it.

It may be you are vigorous and young, they decayed and wrinkled with age: but, saith the Holy Ghost, "Despise not thy mother when she is old," Prov. xxiii. 22. Or when she is wrinkled, as the Hebrew signifies. It may be you are rich, they poor; own, and honour them in their poverty, and despise them not. God will requite it with his hand if you do.

Second Query, Have you not been disobedient to the commands of parents? a son of Belial is a son of wrath, if God give not repentance to life. Is not this the black brand set upon the Heathens, Rom. i. 30. Have not many repented this upon a ladder, with a halter about their necks? Wo to him that makes a father or mother complain, as the tree in the fable, that they are cleft asunder with the wedges that are cut out of their own bodies.

Third Query, Have you not risen up rebelliously against, and hated your parents for chastening your bodies, to save your souls from hell? Some children (saith one) will not take that from a parent, which beasts, yea, and savage beasts too, bears and lions, will take from their keepers. What is this but to resist an ordinance of God for your good? and, in rebelling against them, to rebel against the Lord? Well, if they do not, God will take the rod into his own hand, and him you shall not resist.

Fourth Query, Have you not been unjust to your parents, and defrauded them? first, help to make them poor, and then despise them because they are poor. O horrid wickedness! What a complicated evil is this! Thou art, in the language of the scripture, a companion with destroyers, Prov. xxviii. 24. This is the worst of theft, in God's account. You may think you make bold with them, but how bold do you make with conscience, and the command of God?

Fifth Query, Are you not, or have you not been ungrateful to parents? Leaving them to shift for themselves, in those straits you have helped to bring them into. O consider it, children, this is an evil which God will surely avenge, except ye repent. What! to be hardened against thine own flesh; to be cruel to thine own parents, that with so much tenderness fed thee, when else thou hadst perished! I remember Luther gives us a story of one, (and oh that it might be a warning to all that hear it), who had made over all that he had to his son, reserving only a maintenance for himself; at last his son despised him, and grudged him the very meat he eat; and one day the father coming in, when the son and his wife were at dinner upon a goose, they shuffled the meat under the table; but see the remarkable vengeance of God upon this ungracious, unnatural son: the goose was turned into a monstrous

toad, which seized upon this vile wretch, and killed him. If any one of you be guilty of these evils, to humble you for them, and reclaim you from them, I desire these six considerations may be laid to heart.

First, That the effects of your obedience, or disobedience will stick upon you and yours to many generations. If you be obedient children in the Lord, both you and yours may reap the fruits of that your obedience, in multitudes of sweet mercies, for many generations. So runs the promise, Eph. vi. 22. "Honour thy father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise, that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." You know what an eye of favour God cast upon the Recabites for this, Jer. xxxv. 8. from the 14th to the 20th verse: and as his blessings are, by promise, entailed on the obedient, so his curse upon the disobedient, Prov. xx. 20. "Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness;" i. e. the lamp of his life quenched by death, yea, say others, and his soul also by the blackness of darkness in hell.

Secondly, Though other sins do, this sin seldom escapes exemplary punishment, even in this world. Our English history tells us of a yeoman in Leicester-shire, who had made over all he had to his son, to prefer him in marriage, reserving only a bare maintenance at his son's table: afterward, upon some discontent, the son bid his father get out of his house. The next day Mr. Goodman, the minister of the parish, meeting the young man walking about his ground, asked him, How he did? He answered, Very well; but before the minister was gone far from him, his bowels fell out, which he carried in his hands, got to his house, sent for Mr. Goodman, bitterly bewailed his sin against his father, and so died. And Dr. Taylor, in his great exemplar, tells us of another, that, upon discontent with his father, wished the house might be on fire, if ever he came any more into his father's house: afterwards, coming in, it was fired indeed, and this wicked son only consumed. I could multiply instances of this nature, (for indeed the righteous judgment of God hath multiplied them,) but this only for a taste.

Thirdly, Heathens will rise up in judgment against you, and condemn you. They never had such precepts nor precedents as you, and yet some of the better natured Heathens would rather chosen death, than to do as you do. You remember the story of Cræsus' dumb son, whose dear affections could make him speak when he saw Cræsus in danger; though he never spake before, yet then he could cry out, "O do not kill my father!" But what speak I of Heathens! the stork in the heavens, yea, the beasts of the earth, will condemn the disobedience of children.

Fourthly, These are sins inconsistent with the true fear of God, in whomsoever they are found. That a man is indeed, which he is in his family, and among his relations. He that is a bad child can never be a good Christian. Either bring testimonies of your godliness from your relations, or it may be well suspected to be no better than counterfeit. Never talk of your obedience to God, whilst your disobedience to the just commands of your parents gives you the lie.

Fifthly, A parting time is coming when death will break up the family, and when that time comes, oh! how bitter will the remembrance of these things be! when you shall see a father or a mother lying by the wall, what a cut will it be to remember your miscarriages and evils! They are gone out of your reach, you cannot now, if you would, give them any satisfaction for what you have done against them; but, oh, how bitter will the remembrance of these things be at such a time! Surely, this will be more unsupportable to you than their death, if the Lord open your eyes, and give you repentance; and if not, then,

Sixthly, What a terrible thing will it be, to have a father or mother come in as witnesses against you at Christ's bar? As well as they loved you, and as dear as you were to them in this world, they must give evidence against you then. Now, what a fearful thing is it for you but to imagine your parents to come before the Lord, and say, Lord, I have given this child many hundred reproofs for sin; I have counselled, persuaded, and used all means to reclaim him, but in vain; he was a child of disobedience, nothing could work upon him: what think you of this?

Inf. 2. Have you such a pattern of obedience, and tender love to parents? Then, *Children, imitate your pattern, as it becomes Christians, and take Christ for your example.* Whatsoever your parents be, see that you carry it towards them becoming such as profess Christ.

First, If your parents be godly, O beware of grieving them by any unbecoming carriage. Art thou a Christian indeed? thou wilt then reckon thyself obliged in a double bond, both of grace and nature, to them: O what a mercy would some children esteem it, if they had parents fearing the Lord, as you have!

Secondly, If they be carnal, walk circumspectly, in the most precise and punctual discharge of your duties, for how knowest thou, O child, but hereby thou mayest win thy parents? Wouldst thou but humbly, and seriously intreat, and persuade them to mind the ways of holiness, speaking to them at fit seasons, with all imaginable humility and reverence, insinuating your advice to duties, or trouble for their evils, rather by relating some pertinent history, or proposing some excellent example, leaving their own

conscience to draw the conclusion, and make application, than to do it yourselves; it is possible they may ponder your words in their hearts, as Mary did Christ's, Luke ii. 49, 51. And would you but back all this with your earnest cries to heaven for them, and your own daily example, that they may have nothing from yourselves to retort upon you; and thus wait with patience for the desired effect: O what blessed instruments might you be of their everlasting good!

Inf. 3. To conclude, *Let those that have such children as fear the Lord, and endeavour to imitate Christ in those duties, account them a singular treasure and heritage from the Lord, and give them all due encouragement to their duties.*

How many have no children at all, but are as a dry tree! and how many have such as are worse than none? The very reproach and heart breaking of their parents, that bring down their hoary heads with sorrow to the grave.

If God have given you the blessing of godly children, you can never be sufficiently sensible of, or thankful for such a favour. O that ever God should honour you to bring forth children for heaven! what a comfort must this be to you, whatever other troubles you meet with abroad, when you come home among godly relations, that are careful to sweeten your own family to you by their obedience! especially, what a comfort is it, when you come to die, that you leave them within the covenant, entitled to Christ, and so need not be anxious how it shall be with them when you are gone? Take heed of discouraging or damping such children from whom so much glory is like to rise to God, and so much comfort to yourselves. Thus let Christ's pattern be improved, who went before you in such eminent holiness, in all his relations, and left you an example that you should follow his steps.



SERMON XXXII.

The third of CHRIST's last Words upon the Cross, illustrated.

LUKE xxiii. 43.

And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, to-day thou shalt be with me in paradise.

IN this scripture you have the third excellent saying of Christ upon the cross, expressing the riches of free grace to the penitent thief; a man that had spent his life in wickedness, and for