

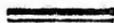
A
SERMON,

DIRECTING

WHAT WE ARE TO DO AFTER A STRICT INQUIRY,

WHETHER OR NO WE TRULY

LOVE GOD.



John 5. 42.

BUT I KNOW YOU, THAT YE HAVE NOT THE LOVE OF GOD IN YOU.

THE
EPISTLE.

YOU may remember what a solemn awe was upon our congregation, lately at the preaching of this ensuing sermon, and that not a few tears dropped at the hearing of it. This engaged some of us to entreat our reverend pastor, to give way, that by this publication it might be accommodated to your review. We know it is no more than one single thread that belongs to many other discourses upon the same subject, which have preceded, and to others which we hope will follow; but such as by your notes and memories may easily be wrought into the whole piece, It is but a thread, yet a golden one, and may contribute to the service of the tabernacle, as in Exod. 25. We know it is a great condescension in him to suffer such an imperfect piece to come abroad, but when the reverend dean of C. and other learned persons of the church of England, have denied themselves by suffering such small prints for the general good; we are persuaded, though he gave not a positive judgment for it, he will not dislike that which is for your service, and is intended to go no farther. Receive it therefore, read it over and over, and allot sometimes for the putting in practice the grand examination urged upon us, and do your utmost to persuade all under your roofs and commands to do the like; that which was preached, with so much holy fervour and affection, may beget in us and ours a bright flame of divine love to our good Lord, to whom we commend you, and are

Your affectionate brethren

and servants, &c.

SERMON,

John 5. 42.

But I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you.

YOU have heard several discourses from this Scripture, and from another in the same gospel, that we spake to alternately with this at several times; "Thou knowest all things Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," ch. 20. 17. And that which after doctrinal explication hath hitherto been insisted on, was an inquiry into the state of our own case in reference hereunto. Are we lovers of God in Christ, or are we not? There have been many things signified to you, by which this case might be discerned; and that which remains, and most naturally follows hereupon, is to direct you what you are to do, supposing your case upon inquiry, to be this or that. Why such an inquiry, if that hath been attended to at all amongst us; it must have signified somewhat, it must, one would think, have some or other result, and what should we suppose it to result into, but either this, I do not love God, or I do. These are most vastly different cases, it is a trial upon the most important point that could have been discussed among us; and supposing there should be two sorts among us, the effect of it is as if a parting line should be drawn through a congregation, severing the living from the dead; here are so many living, and so many dead souls. Indeed it is a very hard supposition, to suppose that there should be any one in all this assembly that doth not love God; a very hard supposition; I am extremely loth to make such a supposition; I would as much as in me is, not suppose it.

For truly it were a very sad case that we should agree so far as we do in many other things, and not agree in this; that is, that we should agree so many of us to come all and meet together here in one place, agree to worship God together, agree to sing his praises together, to seek his face together, to call upon his name together, to hear his word together, and not agree all to love God together: the God whom we worship, whom we invoke, whose name we bear, and unto whom we all of us pretend. For who is there among us will say, "I have no part in God?" And it were a most lovely thing, a most comely, desirable thing that all such worshipping assemblies, even this worshipping assembly, at this time, and all times, could still meet together under this one common notion, truly and justly assumed, as so many lovers of God. We are sure there will be an assembly, a general assembly, in which no one that is not a lover of God will be found; an assembly of glorious angels, and of the spirits of just men made perfect, a numerous, an innumerable assembly, in which not one will appear but a sincere lover of God. What a blessed thing were it, if our assemblies on earth were such! But we cannot speak more gently, than to say there is cause to fear they are not such; it hath been actually otherwise among a people professing the true religion; "They come before thee, and sit before thee as my people, and with their mouth shew much love: with their face or in external appearance and shew (*ore tenus*) they are lovers of God, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them, (Ezek. 31. 31.) If such a case hath been actually, it is still possible, and is still too much to be feared to be but too common a case.

But now supposing that there be different cases among us, in reference to these different cases, there must be very different departments, and a very different management of ourselves. This text more naturally leads me to direct what is to be done upon the supposition of the sadder case, most deplorably sadder, than one is no lover of God; though we must be led on thereto by some things common to both cases.

I. Therefore that I may proceed by steps, this is requisite in the first place, that is, that we make one judgment of our case or another, that is, that we bring the matter some way to a judgment, nor let so great a thing as this, hang always in suspense. It is very plain (a little to press this) that

First. While the case hangs thus in suspense it suspends the proper subsequent duty too that should follow hereupon. What canst thou do that is certainly fit and proper for thy own soul, when thou dost not understand the state of its case? How canst thou guide thy course, or tell which way to apply or turn thyself? And

Secondly. To press it further, consider that the not bringing, or omitting to bring, this matter to a judgment, if it proceed from indifferency and neglect speaks the greatest contempt than can be both of God and thine own soul, the greatest that can be; that is, now supposing the question be asked, Dost thou love God? or dost thou not? And thou unconcernedly answerest, I cannot tell, I do not know; why, what to be carelessly ignorant whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not, there could not be a more concluding medium against thee, that thou dost not love him. It speaks thee at once to despise both God and thyself; what to have this matter hang in indifferency through neglect, whether thou lovest God, or lovest him not? It shews that neither regard to God, nor a just value of thyself makes thee care whether thou art a holy man or a devil. For know, that the loving God, or not loving him, does more distinguish a saint from a devil, than wearing a body, or not wearing it can do. A devil if he did love God, were a saint; a man that doth not love God, he is no other, though he wear a body, than an incarnate devil: it is the want of love to God that makes the devil a devil, makes him what he is.

II. For further direction, take heed of passing a false judgment in this case, a judgment contrary to the truth. For

First, That is to no purpose, it will avail thee nothing, you cannot be advantaged by it, for yours is not the supreme judgment. There will be another and superior judgment to yours, that will controul and reverse your false judgment, and make it signify nothing, it is therefore to no purpose. And,

Secondly, It is a great piece of insolency, for it will be to oppose your judgment, to his certain and most authorized; who, if this be your case hath already judged it, and tells you "I know you, that you have not the love of God in you." It belongs to him by office to judge, "The Father hath committed all judgment to the Son," as a little above in this chapter; from what will you depose him? dethrone him? disannul his judgment? condemn him? that you may be righteous? (to borrow that, Job 40. 8.)

Thirdly, It is most absurd, supposing such characters as you have heard do conclude a man in this case, yet to judge him-himself a lover of God. If against the evidence of such characters a man should pronounce the wrong judgment it would be the most unreasonable and absurd thing imaginable; for then let us but suppose, how that wronged judgment must lie related to those fore-mentioned characters, that have been given you. Let me remind you of some of them,—he that never put forth the act of love to God, cannot say he hath the principle,—he that is not inclined to do good to others, for the sake of

God, 1 John 3. 17.—he that indulges himself in the inconsistent love of this world, 1 John 2. 15.—he that lives not in obedience to his known laws, John 14. 14. 1 John 5. 3. (with many more.) Now if you will pass a judgment of your case, against the evidence of such characters, come forth then, let the matter be brought into clear sight, put your sense into plain words and this it will be. “I am a lover of God, or I have the love of God in me, though I cannot tell that ever I put forth one act of love towards him in all my life; I have the love of God in me, though I never knew what it meant to do good to any for his sake, against the express words of Scripture: How dwelleth the love of God in such a man? I have the love of God in me though I have constantly indulged myself in that which he maketh an inconsistent love, Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world: if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. I have the love of God in me though I would never allow him to rule me, though I never kept his commandments with a design to please him, and comply with his will. I have the love of God in me, though I never valued his love. I have the love of God in me, though I never cared for his image, for his presence, for his converse, for his interest and honour.” I beseech you consider how all this will sound! Can any thing be more absurdly spoken? and shall it be upon such improbabilities, or impossibilities as these, that any man will think it fit to venture his soul! “I will pawn my soul upon it, I will run the hazard of my soul upon it, I am a lover of God for all this?” Would you venture any thing else so besides your soul? Would you venture a finger so, an eye so? It is to place the name, where there is nothing of the thing; it is to place the name of the thing upon its contrary. The soul of man cannot be in an indifferency towards God, but if there be not love and propension; there is aversion, and that is hatred. And what! is hatred to be called love? If you bear that habitual disposition of soul towards God, to go all the day long with no inclination towards him; no thought of him; no design to please him, to serve him, to glorify him; if this be your habitual temper, and usual course will you call this love? Shall this contrariety to the love of God be called love to him? You may as well call water fire, or fire water, as so grossly misname things here; and therefore again,

III. That we may advance somewhat; plainly and positively pass the true judgment. If the characters that you have heard do carry the matter so, come at last plainly and positively to pass the true judgment of your own case, though it be a sad one; and tell your own souls, “Oh! my soul though I must *sadly* say it, I must say it, all things conclude and make against thee: the Love of God is not in thee.” Why is it not as good this should

be the present issue at your own bar, and at the tribunal of your own conscience, as before God's judgment seat? Why should you not concur and fall in with Christ the authorized Judge, whose judgment is according to truth? Why this is a thing that must be done, the case requires it, and God's express word requires it. 1. Cor. 11. 31. Other previous and preparatory duty plainly enjoined, doth by consequence enjoin it, and requires that it follow, 2. Cor. 13. 5. What is examination for, but in order to judgment? It must therefore be done, and I shall shew how it must be done, and proceed to some further directions.

First. You must do it solemnly. Take yourselves aside at some fit season or another, inspect your own souls, review your life, consider what your wonted frame, and your ordinary course has been. And if you find, by such characters as heretofore were given, this is the truth of your case; then let judgment pass upon deliberation: Oh my soul! Thou hast not the love of God in thee, whatsoever thine appearances hitherto have been; and whatsoever thy peace and quiet hath been, thou hast not the love of God in thee: let it be done with solemnity.

Secondly. Do it in the sight of God as before him, as under his eye, as under the eye of Christ. That eye that is as a flame of fire, that searches hearts, and tries reins; arraign thyself before him. "Lord I have here brought before thee a guilty soul, a delinquent soul, wretched and horrid delinquent, a soul that was breathed into me by thee, an intelligent, understanding soul, a soul that hath love in its nature, but a soul that never loved thee."

Thirdly. Judge thyself before him, as to the *fact*, and as to the *fault*. As to the *fact*: "I have never yet loved thee O God I own it to thee; Lord I accuse, I charge my soul with this before thee, this is the truth of the fact, I have not the love of God in me." And charge thyself with the *fault*. "Oh horrid creature that I am! I was made by thee, and don't love thee; thou didst breathe into me this reasonable immortal spirit, and it doth not love thee; it is thy own offspring, and does not love thee. It can never be blessed in any thing but thee, and it does not love thee." And then hereupon,

Fourthly. Join to this *self-judging* and *self-loathing*. That we are to *judge ourselves* is a law laid upon us by the supreme Law-giver, the one Law-giver, that hath power to save, and to destroy. And his word that enjoins it as plainly tells us what must go with it, that this self-judging must be accompanied with *self-loathing*, Ezek. 6. 9. ch. 20. 43. and 36. 31. Do God that right upon thyself, that thou mayest tell him, blessed God! I do even hate myself, because I find I have not loved thee; and I cannot but hate myself and I never will be

reconciled to myself, till I find I am reconciled to thee. This is doing justice, doth not the Scripture usually, and familiarly so represent to us the great turn of the soul to God; when poor sinners become penitents and return that they are brought to hate themselves, and loathe themselves in their own eyes? And is there any thing that can make a soul so loathsome *in itself* or ought to make it so loathsome *to itself*, as not to love God, to be destitute of the love of God? And then

Fifthly. Hereupon too, *pity* thyself, *pity* thy own soul. There is cause to *hate* it? to *loathe* it, and is there no cause to *pity* it? to lament it? Doth not this look like a lamentable case "Oh! what a soul have I that can love any thing else, that can love trifles, that can love impurities, that can love sin; and cannot love God, Christ, the most desirable good of souls. What a soul have I? What a monster in the creation of God, is this soul of mine!" Methinks you should set yourselves, if any of you can find this to be the case, to weep over your own souls. Some may see cause to say, "Oh my Soul, thou hast in thee other valuable things, thou hast understanding in thee, judgment in thee, wit in thee; perhaps learning, considerable acquired endowments in thee; but thou hast not the love of God in thee. I can do many other commendable or useful things, I can discourse plausibly, argue subtilly, I can manage affairs dextreously but I cannot love God. Oh my soul, how great an essential dost thou want to all religion, to all duty, to all felicity! The one thing necessary thou wantest, thou hast every thing but what thou needest more than any thing, more than all things; and oh my soul, what is like at this rate to become of thee? where art thou to have thy eternal abode! to what regions of horror, and darkness, and woe art thou going? what society can be fit for thee? No lover of God! No lover of God! what, but of infernal accursed spirits, that are at utmost distance from him, and to whom no beam of holy vital light shall ever shine to all eternity! Thou, Oh my soul, art self-abandoned to the blackness of darkness for ever. Thy doom is in thy breast, thy own bosom, thy no love to God is thy own doom, thy eternal doom; creates thee a present hell and shews whither thou belongest."

Sixthly, Let a due *fear and solicitude* hereupon be set on work in thee. For consider thyself as one shortly to be arraigned before the supreme tribunal, and then here is the critical, vertical point upon which thy judgment turns, lovers of God; or no lovers of God. All are to be judged in reference to what they were, and did in the body whether good or evil. As in 2. Cor. ch. 5, ver. 10. What wast thou as to this point, while thou wast in the body? For the last judgment regards that former state, what thou didst, and what was thy wont as to this, whilst thou wast in the body. Therefore by the way no hope, after thou art gone out of the body: go out of the body, no lover

of God, the departing soul, no lover of God, and this will be found your state at the judgment day. You are not to expect after death, a gospel to be preached, that you may then be reconciled to God. No, but what did you do in the body? According to that you are to be judged. Did you love God in this body while here yea, or no! And this is a trial upon the most fundamental point, for as all the law is comprehended in love, as was formerly hinted, if you be found guilty in this point that you were no lover of God, totally destitute of the love of God; you were a perpetual underminer of his whole government of the whole frame of his law, a disloyal creature, rebellious and false to the God that made you, to Jesus Christ that redeemed you by his blood. All disobedience and rebellion, is summed up in this one word, *Having been no lover of God*; and won't it make any man's heart to meditate terror, to think of having such a charge as this likely to lie against him in the judgment of that day; that day, when the secrets of all hearts are to be laid open? Every work must then be brought into judgment, and every secret thing, whether it be good or evil, Eccl. 12. 14. And it will be to the confusion of many a one. It may be your no love of God was heretofore a great secret, you had a heart in which was no love of God, but it was a secret, you took not care to have it writ in your forehead; you conversed with men so plausibly, nobody took you to be no lover of God, to have a heart disaffected to God. But now, out comes the secret that which you kept for a great secret all your days, out comes the secret; and to have such a secret as this disclosed to that vast assembly, before angels and men! Here was a creature a reasonable creature, an intelligent soul, that lived upon the divine bounty and goodness so many years in the world below, and hid a false disloyal heart by a plausible shew, and external profession of great devotedness to God, all the time of his abode in that world: Oh! what a fearful thing would it be to have this secret so disclosed? And do you think that all the loyal creatures, that shall be spectators and auditors in the hearing of that great day, will not all conceive a just and a loyal indignation against such a one when convicted of not loving God; convicted of not loving him that gave him breath, him whose he was, and to whom he belonged, whose name he bore? What a fearful thing will it be to stand convicted so upon such a point as this! And sure in the mean time, there is great reason for continual fear, why a man's heart should *meditate terror*! One would even think that all the creation should be continually every moment in arms against him! One would be afraid that every wind that blows, should be a deadly blast to destroy me! that when the sun shines upon me, all its beams should be turned into vindictive flames to execute vengeance upon me! I would fear that even

the very stones in the streets should fly against me, and every thing that meets me be my death! For what! I have not the love of God in me! What, to go about the streets from day to day with a heart void of the love of God! What a heart have I! *Fear* ought to be exercised in this case, we are bid to fear if we do evil against a human ruler; if thou do that which is evil be afraid, for he beareth not the sword in vain, Rom. 13. 4. But if I be *such an evil doer*, against the supreme Ruler, the Lord of heaven and earth; have I not reason to be afraid? and to think sadly with myself what will the end of this be? but yet I will add,

Seventhly, Don't *despair* for all this; God is in Christ reconciling the world to himself, as in that, 2 Cor. ch. 5. ver. 19. that sin might not be imputed. He is in Christ to reconcile you, to win hearts, to captivate souls to the love of God; for what else is reconciliation on our part? He is in Christ to reconcile, to conquer enmity, to subdue disaffected hearts, to make such souls call and cry "My Lord, and my God! I have been a stranger to thee, I will through thy grace be so no longer." Therefore don't despair. Despair that ever you should do well without loving God, but don't despair you shall ever be brought to love him, by no means. You have to do with him, that is the Element of love, the God of love, the Fountain of love, the great Source of love, the Fountain at once both of loveliness and love, whose *nature* is love, and is with his *name* in his Son who was manifested in the flesh, full of grace and truth that is, sincerest love. He was incarnate love, love pointed at us, and is upon these terms able to transform all the world into love; the nature of God is all love 1 John 4. 16. and in Christ he is Immanuel God with us, so the divine love hath a direct aspect upon us. Why then apply yourselves to him, turn yourselves towards him, open your souls to him; say to him, "Lord, flow in with all the mighty powers of thine own love upon my soul, thou that canst of stones raise up children and make them the true genuine sons of Abraham; (and there can be no such children without love) Oh dissolve this stone, this stone in my breast, mollify this obdurate heart, turn it into love!" How soon may it be done upon due application. He can quickly do it, draw thee into a love union with himself, so as that thou shouldst come to dwell in love; and dwell in God who is love, and he in thee. Then the foundations are surely laid, for all thy future duty, and for all thy future felicity. Then how pleasantly wilt thou obey, and how blessedly wilt thou enjoy God for ever! But such application must be made through Christ, and for the Spirit; which spirit is the Spirit of love and of power, and of a sound mind; as you have it in that first of the second to Tim. 5. 7. But these things I cannot now further insist upon.