

pardon, of strength to maintain grace received, and finally of eternal life; on the other side, threats to impenitent and sensual persons.

(5.) 'The helmet of salvation,' which is a well-grounded hope of eternal life: 1 Thes. v. 8, 'But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.' This maketh a christian hold up his head in the midst of all encounters and sore assaults. He that often looketh above the clouds, and expecteth within a little while to be with God in the midst of the glory of the world to come, why should he be daunted?

(6.) 'The sword of the Spirit.' This is a weapon both offensive and defensive; it wardeth off Satan's blows, and maketh him fly away wounded and ashamed. If Satan saith, Oh! it is too soon to mind religion! he hath the word ready, Ecces. xii. 1, 'Remember thy creator in the days of thy youth.' If that it is too late, then, John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' If that his sins are too great, or too many to be pardoned, then, Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' If Satan tempt him to live sensually, Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die.' If to defile himself with base lusts, 1 Thes. iv. 3, 4, 'This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that ye should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour.' If to a negligent careless profession, then, Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.' If to despondency and fainting, 2 Cor. xii. 9, 'My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness.'

SERMON XVI.

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.—ROM. VI. 15.

HERE the apostle preventeth an absurd conclusion, which might be inferred by people of a libertine spirit from what he had said in the former verse, either from the first or the last clause, the privilege or the reason. From either, carnal men might collect what might be matter of security to them in sin; either because of the privilege, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you;' therefore they might let loose the reins; sin should not reign, and consequently not damn; or else from the reason, 'Ye are not under the law, but under grace;' the negative part might seem to infer an exemption from the duty of the law; the positive, 'but under grace,' which provideth pardon for the lapsed, they might infer hence that therefore they might sin *impune*, without any fear of punishment. So that, in short, three doctrines of grace are apt to be abused.

1. The free pardon or exemption from condemnation which the new covenant hath provided for sinners; therefore they might sin securely, no harm would come of it.

2. The liberty and exemption from the rigour of the law, which requireth things impossible at our hands under the penalty of the curse; as if this had freed us from all manner of bonds and ties to obey God, 'They were not under the law.'

3. The doctrine of perseverance, as if they might do what they list; the covenant of grace would secure their interest, and whether they watched or strived, yea or nay, sin should not have dominion over them. All these are rejected as unreasonable conclusions. 'What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid.'

In the words we have—

First, An interrogation, to excite us to regard what conclusions we draw from christian privileges, 'What then?' that is, what do we conclude thence?

Secondly, A faulty inference or conclusion is mentioned, 'Shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?' Where—

1. The inference itself, 'Shall we sin?' that is, let us continue in sin, or serve sin, or not strive against sin.

2. The ground whence it is inferred—

[1.] From the evangelical state negatively proposed, 'Because we are not under the law,' as if we were exempted from the rule of the law because we are exempted from the rigour of it.

[2.] From the evangelical state positively proposed, 'But under grace.'

(1.) The grace of justification; we may indulge sin, since the gospel offereth a pardon or freedom from condemnation.

(2.) The grace of sanctification by the Spirit; God will maintain our right, though we mind it not, and so we turn the grace of God into looseness or laziness.

(3.) The brand upon this conclusion, or his abhorrence specified; it is not only unreasonable, but impious, *μη γένοιτο*; far be it from believers thus to conclude—

(1st.) Because the conclusion is unreasonable, being a distortion of true doctrine, or of the grace of the gospel.

(2d.) It is ungrateful. What! be more licentious for God's grace? It is the most abhorred use of God's mercy that is imaginable.

Doct. That it is a manifest abuse of the new covenant so much as to imagine that it countenanceth any licentiousness or liberty in sin.

I shall first prove it by two arguments—

1. From the design or end of God in setting up this new transaction with mankind.

2. From the tenor and constitution of it.

Secondly, Shall vindicate those doctrines of free grace, which may most seem to occasion such thoughts in the hearts of men.

1. From the design of God in setting up this new covenant, which was to recover lapsed man from the devil and the world unto himself, that he might not wholly lose the glory of his creation; which ap-

peareth by manifold expressions in scripture: Luke xix. 10, 'The Son of man is come to seek and save that which was lost.' Now we were lost first to God; as Luke xv., the lost groat was lost to the possessor, the lost sheep was lost to the owner, the lost son lost to the father: these two last parables show that they were also lost to themselves; but that is but a consequent; the primary sense is, they were lost to God, and therefore Christ came to recover them to his obedience. But to leave parables, it is said expressly, Rev. v. 9, 'Thou hast redeemed us to God by thy blood,' that we might not only be admitted into his friendship and favour, but fitted for his service, and that he might 'bring us to God,' 1 Peter iii. 18; by which is meant not only to reconcile us unto God, but bring us into a state of subjection and obedience to him. Christ is set up as a mediator and lord of the new creation, to the glory of God the Father: Phil. ii. 11, 'That every tongue might confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father;' that his interest in his creatures might be secured. And the kingdom of the mediator is subordinate to the kingdom of God; all the authority and power which Christ hath as mediator, to enact laws and make a new covenant, is to bring men back again to the obedience of God upon more comfortable terms. Our subjection to him is not vacated or made void, or only reserved, but established on more comfortable terms, as we have grace given us for the pardon of failings, and the effectual help of his Spirit to incline us to obedience.

2. From the tenor and constitution of it. As to the precepts, it begins with faith and repentance, and is carried on in the way of new obedience or holiness. None are admitted to the first privileges but those that repent. Upon Mary's repentance Christ said, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her,' Luke vii. 47; 'Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a saviour, to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins,' Acts v. 31. Now repentance is a serious fixed purpose of returning to the obedience we owe to God. And the last privilege, eternal glory, we have it not without holiness: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God;' Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' All the intermediate privileges do expressly require or imply holiness: Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'For the Lord God is a sun and a shield; the Lord will give grace and glory, and no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' So that from first to last it is a holy covenant, as it is called Luke i. 72. Yea, it is holy, not only with respect to what it requireth, but with respect to what it promiseth. It promiseth the Holy Spirit to sanctify us: Acts ii. 38, 'Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost;' Ezek. xxxvi. 25, 'Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and you shall be clean, and from all your idols will I cleanse you;' 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'Such were some of you, but ye are washed, but ye are justified, but ye are sanctified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.' And the heaven of heavens is perfection of holiness: 1 John iii. 2, 3, 'Beloved, now are we the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall

appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is; and he that hath this hope purifieth himself as he is pure;’ Eph. v. 27, ‘That he might present it (the church) to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.’ Once more, the aim of it is to promote holiness: 2 Peter i. 4, ‘Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature;’ 2 Cor. vii. 1, ‘Having these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God;’ Luke i. 75, ‘That we might serve him *ἀφοβῶς*, without fear’ (that is the great privilege of the new covenant), ‘in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.’ In short, the covenant dealeth only with a holy people, and excludeth the profane and unclean: the holy covenant must have a holy people suitable to it, or else it speaketh no good to them. If you be not holy, you have no part in Christ, nor interest in his covenant: Acts xx. 32, ‘And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among them that are sanctified;’ Acts xxvi. 18, ‘To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that we may receive forgiveness of sins, and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.’ Well, you see the whole scope and great drift of the covenant is to promote holiness.

It remains, secondly, to vindicate those doctrines of grace that may seem to occasion these imaginations.

1. God’s freeness and readiness to pardon. The law threateneth punishment, but grace offereth pardon and impunity; therefore men let loose the reins; they think mercy will pardon all and discharge all. But this is a wretched abuse.

[1.] Though pardon be offered to penitent sinners, yet it is on purpose that they may forsake their sins, and timely return to the obedience of God: Ps. cxxx. 4, ‘There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;’ that they may not stand aloof from God as a condemning God, but return to his fear and service. It is offered to prevent despair, not to encourage us in sin; so that you quite pervert the end of the offer.

[2.] This pardon belongeth only to the penitent. The offer is made to all, but none have an actual right to it till they repent: Isa. lv. 7, ‘Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon;’ and Prov. xxviii. 13, ‘He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.’ All sinners are to be told that God is ready to pardon; but all sinners are not to believe that their sins are pardoned, for this is an act that belongeth to God as a governor and judge. Some things God doth as a free Lord, and there ‘it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy,’ Rom. ix. 16. Other things God doth as a righteous judge and governor, according to the law of commerce between him and his creatures; there it is, ‘So run that ye may

obtain,' 1 Cor. ix. 24. To apply this to the case in hand. Pardon of sins is an act of judicature, dispensed upon certain terms; gracious and free they are indeed, but terms and conditions they are still, without which we have no right to pardon, or are not qualified to receive it. All the privileges of the gospel are a benefit, but a benefit dispensed on certain terms, such as our sovereign Lord was pleased to prescribe.

[3.] They are expressly excluded that securely go on in sin: Ps. lxxviii. 21, 'But he will wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.' That exceptive participle *but* relateth to what was said of God before. Now, twice before God is called a God of salvation: ver. 19, 'Blessed be the Lord, who daily loadeth us with benefits, even the God of our salvation, Selah;' and ver. 20, 'He that is our God is the God of salvation; but he will wound,' &c. A man that goeth on still in his sins is reckoned an enemy to Christ, whatever he be by outward profession, and as an enemy he shall be dealt with. The God of salvation, or the merciful Saviour, will not save him, notwithstanding all that lenity and goodness which he showeth to them that are sincere. The God of salvation will strike home upon their hairy scalp, that is, utterly destroy them. Therefore, when men go on in a state of impenitency, either ignorantly, or against conviction of conscience, upon a presumption that God's mercy shall bear them out, they make the God of all grace their enemy; his justice is against you, and his mercy will not help you. By the law is the knowledge of sin, and by the gospel you are excluded from pardon, till you break off your sins by repentance; and the more sin you commit, the further off you are from salvation, every sin is a step further: Ps. cxix. 155, 'Salvation is far from the wicked, for they seek not thy statutes;' *à pari*, salvation is near to the righteous: Rom. xiii. 11, 'Now is your salvation nearer than when ye first believed.' Every man, every day, is a step nearer to heaven or hell.

2. The second doctrine abused is exemption from the rigour and curse of the law, 'Ye are not under the law, but under grace.' Therefore men take a liberty to sin; they are not under the law. But we must distinguish how we are, and how we are not, under the law.

[1.] We are still under the law as a rule of obedience; so the apostle saith, 1 Cor. ix. 21, 'Not being without law to God, but under the law to Christ.' The apostle still ruled his actions by law, both the law of God and the law of christian charity. To be in this sense without law, is either to make us gods or devils. If you plead it *de jure*, of right, it is to make the creature a god; for it is impossible any created thing can be without law; that were to make it supreme and independent, as if its own will were its rule, without liableness to be called to an account by another. Saul proclaimed, 1 Sam. xvii. 25, 'That whosoever would encounter the Philistine, his house should be free in Israel;' but it is as impossible to free the creature from subjection to God, as it is from dependence upon him. If you plead it *de facto*, this were to make us devils, to live in direct opposition to God, and rebellion against him, or exempt us from his authority: Ps. xii. 4, 'Who have said, With our tongues will we prevail: our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' Thus every creature must be under a law.

[2.] There is a good sense in which we are said not to be under the law; as here in the text, and Gal. v. 18, 'If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law;' that is, not under the condemning power of it, spoken of Rom. viii. 1, 'There is therefore no condemnation to them that are in Christ;' or the irritating power of it, spoken of Rom. vii. 5, 'While we were in the flesh, the motions of sin, which were by the law, did work in our members, to bring forth fruit unto death;' namely, as it did rigidly exact duty from us, and gave no strength to perform it. Well, then, we may from hence see what liberty we have by grace. There is a twofold liberty—a holy and blessed liberty, and a wicked and carnal liberty.

(1.) The holy liberty is to be freed from the power of sin and the curse of the law, that our enthralled spirits may be set free to love, serve, please, and delight in God; and so, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty,' 2 Cor. iii. 17. And for this end we are freed from the law as a covenant of works, which required what to us becomes impossible: Rom. viii. 2, 'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death;' and freed us also from the burdensome task of ceremonies, which God thought fit to impose in the church's nonage: Gal. v. 1, 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with a yoke of bondage.' These ceremonies did revive the sense of transgressions, and the curse due to them.

(2.) The sinful liberty is a freedom from righteousness, as the apostle calleth it, Rom. vi. 20, 'When ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness;' from a voluntary subjection to God and his holy laws, a desire to be free from that strict and holy manner of living which God commandeth, or to be at liberty to sin against God, or please the flesh and follow our own wills, to be merry, wanton, lustful, worldly, to eat and drink what we have a mind to, to game, and roar, and riot, and revel, and in the general to live as we list, without being curbed by so precise a law as God hath given us. Now I will show—(1.) That this is not liberty; (2.) That Christ never came to establish it; (3.) That the contrary is the true liberty.

(1st.) That this is not liberty. For *libertas non est potestas volendi et faciendi quod velis, sed volendi et faciendi ea quæ lex divina jubet*—it is not a liberty to live as we list, but to live as we ought: Ps. cxix. 45, 'And I will walk at liberty, for I keep thy precepts.' Man affects the false liberty, and is impatient of any restraints: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us cast away his bands and cords from us;' they would do what they please without check and control. But all this is but delusion and mistake. In reality they live the freest life that lie under the bonds of duty, that make conscience of praying to and praising God, and walking with him in the stricter course of holiness. Carnal liberty is but a thralldom of slavery; for these we are disabled from pursuing our great end, which is to be everlastingly happy in the enjoyment of God. They that indulge this liberty dare not call themselves to an account for the expense of their time and employments, which every wise man should do, nor think seriously of death, or judgment, or heaven, or hell, but presently they feel a horror and torment in their minds.

(2d.) Christ never came to establish this liberty; for he came to

bring us back again in heart and life to God, from whom we had fallen, to fit us to obey the law of God, by healing our natures : Heb. viii. 10, 'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts, and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.' The great blessing of the gospel is grace to keep the law, not liberty to break it ; and all new creatures are enabled to keep it, not in absolute perfection, yet with a sincere obedience : Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness ;' Luke i. 75, 'That we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.'

(3d.) The more we set ourselves to keep the law, the more we enjoy God and ourselves.

First, The more we enjoy God ; for the more obedient we are, the more pleasing we are to him and amiable in his sight : Prov. xi. 20, 'They that are of a froward heart are an abomination to the Lord ; but such as are upright in their way, are his delight ;' Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous God loveth righteousness, his countenance doth behold the upright.' God delighteth in us not so much as pardoned, but as sanctified. They have most communion with him : 1 John i. 7, 'If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another ;' they have most of the favour of God, and fellowship with him.

Secondly, The more also we enjoy ourselves. Sin is a wounding thing ; nature looketh upon it as a disorder, therefore where it is allowed it breedeth fear, which is a bondage the wicked are never freed from, though they do not always feel it : Heb. ii. 15, 'And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.' But now the more we set ourselves to keep the law of God, the more happiness and serenity in our own souls : Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them ;' partly from the consciousness of having done their duty, partly as their interest is more clear, and so their comfort more full and strong.

3. The doctrine of perseverance, 'Sin shall not have dominion over them,' whether they strive against it, yea or no ; and so, instead of a resolute resistance, they cherish presumptuous security. There is a holy confidence which the sincere cherish, not to slacken duty, but increase it ; such as that of Paul, 2 Tim. i. 12, 'For the which cause I also suffer these things, nevertheless I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day.' This is trusting ourselves in God's hands, and keeping his way. But there is a presumptuous security also, when men think they are past all danger, and so look upon cautious watchfulness as a needless thing, whereas the scripture presseth it everywhere. Now, to prevent this, consider—

[1.] The union of ends and means. The sincere convert shall be kept blameless to God's heavenly kingdom, but he is kept in God's way. All God's purposes are executed by fit means. God had assured Paul, 'That there should be no loss of any man's life among them, but

only of the ship,' Acts xxvii. 22; yet afterwards he telleth them, 'Except these abide in the ship, ye cannot be saved,' ver. 31. How could that assurance given to Paul from God, and Paul's caution stand together? God, that decrees the end, hath appointed means whereby he will execute his decree. Well, then, God having showed us in his word what means are necessary to such an end, there is a necessity of duty lying upon man to use those means, and not to expect the end without them. God intended to save all in the ship, yet the mariners must abide in the ship; we must not pervert God's order. You shall not fall away and revert into your old slavery; but you must remember you have given up your bodies as instruments of righteousness unto God.

[2.] Among other the means required by God, there are these two things to be considered—fear of falling, and the danger of backsliding.

(1.) Fear of falling: Heb. iv. 1, 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should seem to come short of it;' 1 Peter i. 17, 'Pass the time of your sojourning here with fear;' Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.' Fear is careful and solicitous. What fear is this? A fear of caution: 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.' Of reverence: Jer. xxxii. 40, 'I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me.'

(2.) The danger of backsliding is often represented to believers to increase their caution; as Christ said to his own disciples, John xv. 6, 'If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered, and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned.' The danger of apostasy is represented to them to confirm their standing, or laid before them to make them afraid of defection. So Heb. x. 26, 27, 'If we sin wilfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment, and fiery indignation which shall devour the adversaries.'

(3.) The promise and exhortation go together, that we may carry an even hand between despair and presumption. Compare ver. 12, 'Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal bodies, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof,' with the text, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you.' We must not presume because of the filthiness of our hearts, and the number of the snares that are still before us; we must not despond because of the unchangeableness of God's covenant love. Let us improve the grace we have received, that we may continue in it. The act is ours, but the help is God's. To sin upon a confidence that we are sure to persevere is to cease persevering, and to fall away because we are sure not to fall away, which is a contradiction.

Use of information. It informeth us—

1. No doctrine is so sound but a corrupt heart will abuse it; therefore as much as in us lies we must prevent these misinterpretations.
2. How prone sinful men are to take all occasions to indulge liberty to sin; being naturally bent to licentiousness, they pervert Christ's holy doctrine to this end.
3. With what abhorrence we should entertain anything that lessens

the necessity of the creatures' subjection to God, or doth befriend sin, or enticeth you to make light of obedience; yea, though this should be done with the most glorious pretences of grace, it is but poison ministered by a perfume.

4. What caution and watchfulness we should use over our own thoughts and inferences. Every one draweth one conclusion or other from the gospel; what use do you make of it? Many that will not say so, that we should sin because we are not under the law, but under grace, are apt to think and do so. And since it is natural to us, we should be provided of a remedy.

[1.] Let every sacred truth be digested into holy love and practice. Love: 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, 'Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth. And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know.' Practice: 1 John ii. 4, 'He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.' When truth is turned into love, it is turned into a new nature, and deeds discover the reality of our opinions more than words.

[2.] Let no mystical truth be set up to avoid God's unquestionable natural right to govern his creature, or to infringe the rights of the godhead, as to set up Christ against the moral law, as if that were abrogated; and if no law, no transgression, no sin, no duty, no judgment, no punishment, no reward.

[3.] Do not set up Christ against Christ: Heb. v. 9, 'And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' Do not set up his merits against his law, he is Saviour but to those that obey him.

SERMON XVII.

Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?—ROM. VI. 16.

IN this verse the apostle proveth that it is unreasonable and absurd to conclude that we may sin because we are not under the law, but under grace. Why? Because it destroyeth the state to which we pretend, for men cannot be under grace that serve sin. He proveth it by a general maxim, evident by the common reason of mankind, 'Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are,' &c. So that in the words we may observe two things—

1. A general maxim evident by the light of nature.

2. The application of it to the matter in hand.

1. The general maxim, that whatsoever or whomsoever a man voluntarily obeyeth, he maketh it or him his proper lord and master. There take notice of—

[1.] The evidence of it, 'Know ye not,' *q.d.*, you may easily know this by the common course of affairs of the world. Here four things are evident—