

SERMON XX.

For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.—ROM. VI. 20.

IN this verse the apostle rendereth a reason why they should add to righteousness holiness, as they had before added iniquity unto iniquity; because righteousness had no whit of their service then, therefore sin should not have any jot of their service now they had devoted themselves to God. He layeth before them the wretchedness of their carnal estate in two notions—

First, They were slaves to sin.

Secondly, Strangers to righteousness. This latter he expresseth by this phrase, 'Free from righteousness.'

1. What it signifieth.

2. Why used here.

1. What it signifieth. A man may be said to be free from righteousness two ways—

[1.] *De jure*; so no man is or can be free from righteousness; for every creature is under a law and an obligation of duty to God. Saul proclaimed that whosoever would encounter Goliath, his house should be free in Israel, 1 Sam. xv. 25; meaning not a total exemption from obedience, but have certain regalities bestowed on his family. A subject, remaining a subject, cannot be altogether freed from duty to his prince. Now man, being God's creature, is also his subject; and therefore of right he neither is, nor can be, free from righteousness.

[2.] *De facto*; they carried themselves as if they were free, never busied themselves with thoughts of God, nor regarded to walk holily before him.

2. Why it is put here. To show we must not divide our service, but abstain as strictly from sin as we did before from all good; you must serve righteousness as before you served sin. When you were under sin's yoke, righteousness had no power over you; and now you are under Christ's yoke, the power of sin must at least be considerably weakened.

Doct. Those who become servants of God should be as free from sin as before they were from righteousness.

1. I suppose that there is a liberty which is a perfection of human nature, and a liberty which is a defection from God. That liberty which is a perfection is to be willing and ready to perform our duty to God: Ps. cxix. 45, 'I will walk at liberty, for I seek thy precepts.' That liberty which is a defection or a revolt from God is properly licentiousness rather than liberty, and that is a desire to live as we list, to be free from the bonds of duty: Ps. ii. 3, 'Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.'

2. They that most labour for this carnal liberty are the most wretched servants of sin, because they are overcome and led captive by it, and wholly give up themselves to obey sin. So 2 Peter ii. 19, 'Whilst they promise themselves liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption.' The flesh seeketh its peace and quietness,

which it cannot enjoy but by giving itself over to its lusts, and so they are pleased with this servile condition, and remain in this bondage, though it be the worst of all.

3. That the servants of sin, or those who are under the yoke of sin, carry it as if they were free from righteousness, that is to say, either by way of neglect, or by way of resistance.

[1.] By way of neglect. They made no conscience, did not so much as think what was holy and pleasing to God, as some go on carelessly, not considering what they do, nor whereunto it will tend. These are said to despise their ways: Prov. xix. 16, 'He that keepeth the commandment keepeth his own soul, but he that despiseth his ways shall die.' Some care not how they live, but are carried on by their own blind lusts. Righteousness, or a conscience of their duty, hath no power over them; they do not consider of their actions, much less take care to mend their course.

[2.] By way of opposition and resistance; for they are said to be free from righteousness that are opposite and averse from it; as 'the carnal mind is enmity to the law of God,' Rom. viii. 7. Some bewray an obstinate wilfulness, as others do a negligent carelessness; they beat down whatsoever standeth in the way of their sins; neither right, nor reason, nor shame, nor fear can restrain them; though a commandment standeth in their way, they break through. Nothing can stop the course of a sinner's violently pursuing his lusts; as Balaam went madly on against all the rebukes of God, either in his conscience or external providence.

4. Though all the unregenerate are void of righteousness, yet they are not all alike sinful. There is a difference between unrenewed men; some are more, some less gross in the outbreking of their sin; some are more filthy, but 'all are gone out of the way; there is none that doeth good, no not one,' Ps. xiv. 3. They all agree in this, that none of them doth, or can do, anything at all commanded by God, as commanded, from righteous principles and for right ends. Some may be free from outward vice, as Paul was, 'touching the righteousness of the law blameless,' Phil. iii. 6. Our Lord saith, Mat. v. 20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven;' though there is some external conformity to the law, outward austerity and strictness, yet no inward purity and holiness.

5. That where men are changed by grace, certain it is they must away with their former sinful life; partly because the gospel rule requireth it: Mat. ix. 13, 'I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance;' and repentance is a turning of the soul from sin to God. God may be reconciled to our persons, never to our sins. Partly because this is the end of that grace that hath wrought the change in us: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we, being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our lives.' Partly because the nature of the thing showeth it. If there be any sound change, we have changed masters and work, way and end, business and hopes; and therefore our conversation will be quite otherwise than it was before, and the course of our endeavours will be turned into another

channel : Eph. v. 18, ' And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, but be ye filled with the Spirit.' We have other work to do, and other happiness to seek after : Phil. iii. 19, 20, ' Who mind earthly things, but our conversation is in heaven.'

6. When men shake off the yoke of sin for righteousness, they should be as free from sin as formerly they were from righteousness. Now here I will show—

1. How far this should be.

2. Why this should be.

First, To state it, how far this can or should be ? For the difficulty lieth here, how we can be as free from sin as formerly from righteousness, since after conversion there is a mixed principle in us. I answer—This is to be considered two ways—*quoad conatum, et quoad eventum.*

1. *Quoad conatum*, as to endeavour, which is to get rid of all sin. A sincere christian doth so give up himself to a holy life, as to watch and pray and strive against all sin ; this is his endeavour, and if it were possible, he would root out all ; this is his aim, business, and constant care ; but because he obtaineth not his end, he is troubled : Rom. vii. 24, ' O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ? ' In the meantime he hath the settled bent of his will and conscience to satisfy him : Heb. xiii. 18, ' Pray for us, for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.' His soul is bent, and his endeavours are accordingly.

2. *Quoad eventum.* He is so far free from sin, as carrieth a good proportion with his freedom from righteousness in his carnal estate. His freedom from righteousness was consistent with urgings of conscience, which pleaded God's right with great earnestness. God doth not so far forsake mankind as to leave them without all convictions of their duty, or some inclinations to it, but it is weak and ineffectual. So now, his freedom from sin is not altogether to be free from the urgings of sin ; for the carnal principle is still within him, and a warring working principle it is, and doth not lie idle in the soul. But as then men were free from righteousness by their carelessness of it, or averseness from it, so now they that have changed masters and estates are to be so far free from sin as not to sin wilfully, and by way of opposition to grace any more, nor yet negligently and carelessly to go on with their former course ; for if there be any known sin which they do not hate, but had rather keep than leave it, and do not pray and strive and watch against it, they are not sanctified. For the sanctified ' hate every false way,' Ps. cxix. 104 ; they pray against it, ver. 133, ' Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me ; ' they watch and strive against it to some degree of prevalency : Ps. xviii. 23, ' I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from my iniquity.' They cannot bear with sin ; they have a nature which beareth an enmity and repugnancy to it ; as the carnal mind doth to the law of God, so doth this new nature to sin : 1 John iii. 9, ' Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him, and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.'

Secondly, Why this should be so.

1. Let us consider the equity as to matter of right ; it should be so.

2. The necessity as to matter of evidence ; it must be so.

3. The conveniency as to matter of benefit.

1. The equity as to matter of right. All rules of equity will oblige you to this, whether you consider the master, the work, or the reward.

[1.] The master, if you consider how great and how good a master you now serve. If you consider him as great, you can never do too much for him ; or as good, not so much as he deserveth of you.

(1.) As a great God he cannot be too much loved, nor obeyed too exactly, nor served too diligently ; all is short of the greatness of his majesty. We have mean thoughts of his glorious excellency if we think that anything will serve the turn, or that such a God will be put off with anything ; though we have formerly consumed our strength in the service of sin, yet a little slight obedience will be enough for God, we need not be so strict and exact ; this is as bringing the sickly lamb instead of the male of the flock. And therefore God pleadeth his majesty : Mal. iii. 14, ' I am a great king, saith the Lord of hosts.' Therefore, if you have a greater master than you had before, you should do as much or more work than you did before : Col. i. 10, ' That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all well-pleasing ;' 1 Thes. i. 12, ' That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.'

(2.) As good ; he hath deserved at our hands more than ever we can repay him. By experience we have felt the evil of sin, and why should we indulge it any longer ? We have also ' tasted that the Lord is gracious,' 1 Peter ii. 3. And why should we not prize and love him, and value his service ? The Lord our God is the best master, and therefore we should serve him cheerfully. He is not true to God, and hath not a due sense of his mercy, that is indifferent and cold in his service. We are bound ' to serve God with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things,' Deut. xxviii. 47 ; that is, because of our obligations from common providence ; but how should we serve him for his mercies in Christ, wherein he is infinitely good to us ? Rom. xii. 1, ' I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, that is your reasonable service ;' 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, ' For the love of Christ constraineth us ; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead ; and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.' There the obligation is much greater. Nature will teach us to love those that love us ; and who loves us better than God, who hath provided pardon and life for us ? Shall we go about his work with backwardness and weariness ? You should serve him after another manner, with more zeal, diligence, and exactness.

[2.] The work, which on the one hand is sin, and on the other, righteousness. To be hot and earnest in sin, and cold and negligent in our duty, when God hath set thee in a better work, how can this be justified, not only before the bar of God, but of any sound reason ? Surely the best work requireth the best strength. Now which is better, to be rebelling against our creator, and violating the rectitude and harmony of our own nature, or to be serving our creator, and regulating

our faculties in their due order and proportion to the great ends and uses for which we were made? There is a great deal of difference between the way we have left and the way we are put into by grace; the one is our distemper, the other is proper work for a man, that our endeavours should show how much we prefer the one before the other; for surely it is better for us to live as a man than to live as a beast: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.'

[3.] The wages, which is eternal life. Now the question is, whether you will seek heaven as fervently and diligently as before you sought the world, and the fleshly pleasures thereof. Will you now be contented with a sluggish wish, and lazy, dull endeavours, whereas before you thought you could never do enough in the pursuit of your lusts? Will you not bid as much for a jewel as you would for a bead or a piece of glass? In all reason more. If you laid out your strength before for nought, for that which satisfieth not, will you now stand hucking when a blessed inheritance is offered to you? Who can excuse you from folly? We are bidden to seek after these things in the first place: Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof;' 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'To abound in the work of the Lord;' Phil. ii. 12, 'To work out our salvation with fear and trembling.' We are, on the other side, bidden 'to use the world as if we used it not,' 1 Cor. vii. 31. Now, then, what will you do?

2. The necessity in point of evidence; hereby we show that we have utterly shaken off the yoke of sin; otherwise it will remain as a nice debate whether your change be sincere or no. It is certain you did much for sin; conscience is sensible of that. The only sensible evidence of your change is when the vigour and fervency of your spirits is turned into another channel, and you are as earnest to please God as ever you were to serve your lusts; otherwise you never sensibly and plainly distinguish yourselves as renewed from yourselves as carnal. There is no question then but that there is a thorough change wrought in you. Therefore, that your sincerity may not be a doubtful thing, and hard to interpret, you should be as free from sin as formerly from righteousness. When men are unlike themselves, there is no doubt: 1 Cor. vi. 11, 'Such were some of you; but you are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God;' Philem. 11, 'Which in time past was to thee unprofitable, but now profitable to thee and to me.' This is no small or obscure change, but such as may be felt of ourselves and discerned by others. Paul a persecutor and Paul a preacher showeth the same fervour, but his earnestness was employed about other matters, therefore plainly different from himself.

3. It is convenient it should be so, that we should do as much good, or far more good, than we have done hurt by our ill example; therefore the worse we were before our calling, the better we must be afterwards. This was that which made Paul go beyond the rest of the apostles in pains and zeal, because of the hurt he had done by the sins of his unregeneracy: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.' This made Mary Magdalene to exceed in love to Christ above others, because she had been so excessive before in the love of her unlawful pleasures: Luke vii. 47, 'Her sins, which are

many, are forgiven her, for she loved much ; but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.' Therefore it concerneth us to repair our errors, especially when they have been noxious to others, that by eminency of grace we may awaken those whom we have hardened by our sins, or joined with in their sinful courses. Dives would have his brethren and companions believe : surely this charity will possess the hearts of the converted.

Use 1. To press those that are, or would be, accounted renewed by grace, to free themselves from sin yet more and more. The chain is broken by grace, and you have had experience of both masters ; now show it, that you do heartily forsake the one, and cleave to the other.

1. Be more tender and fearful to offend. As long as you make little reckoning of sin, you are in danger of committing it. It is said : Prov. xiii. 13, ' Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth a commandment shall be rewarded.' Those are the two opposite parties, those that despise and those that fear a commandment ; there is not a worse or a better frame than the one or the other. They are properly free from righteousness that despise a commandment, and so in the high way to destruction. They say, Tush ! it is folly to stand so scrupulously and nicely upon our duty. But on the other side they are free from sin that fear a commandment, that dare not venture, when God hath hedged up their way. The one are profane, they will speak and do as they list, say God what he will to the contrary ; the other godly, and have a deep reverence of God, and so of his word upon their hearts : ' My heart standeth in awe of thy word,' saith David, Ps. cxix. 161. Many fear the punishment of man, or a judgment, when to visible appearance it is likely to tread upon the heels of sin ; and some may fear a threatening ; but a gracious heart feareth a commandment. If a commandment standeth in the way, it is reason enough to a gracious heart to forbear, more than if there were a lion in the way, or a band of armed enemies, or an angel with a drawn sword, such as stood in the way to stop Balaam. They have a deep reverence of God's authority, and it is no more than needeth ; for this direction is given to us, 1 Peter i. 17, ' Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,' to those that take themselves to be renewed ones.

2. Be more resolved against sin. We shake off the yoke by a solemn entering into covenant with God, wherein we renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and heartily dedicate ourselves to live unto God ; now the more resolved we are in either, the more sincere is our covenant. A wavering purpose maketh us neither wholly off from sin, nor wholly on upon God's service, but hangeth between both ; the heart is not biassed and engaged, and so there is a considerable and notable inconsistency in the life : James i. 8, ' A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' Therefore, till the purpose cometh to be full, we are not freed from the power of sin. Some kind of willingness and unsound consent there is in the half converted ; yet for want of this true resolution, ' their hearts are not right with God, neither are they steadfast in his covenant,' Ps. lxxviii. 37. It is long ere men will yield to live to God, and when they seem to yield,

are long wavering ere they fully resolve. They see all is not well with them, and that they are not in a safe condition to appear before God in the judgment, and they have many persuasions of the Spirit of God, and their own consciences reasoning the case with them; and under these persuasions the mind is under some purpose to take a new course. But these purposes are either for the time to come;—hereafter they will be more strict and holy, but still adjourn and put it off;—or else they are but half purposes, that reach not to a full resolution; and therefore, if they make some kind of change, it is by halves; they are not free from sin, which often returneth, and recovereth its former power and reign in their hearts. But when men are resolved past all contradiction that this shall be their work and scope, to please God, then they do more fully yield themselves to the renewing Spirit, to be sanctified and prepared for God's use. The scales are cast; righteousness gets the power that sin had before; the man is new armed with a resolution to cease from sin, and to betake himself to a holy life, whatever it cost him: 1 Peter iv. 1, 'Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind; for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.' He is resolved to deny the flesh, forsake the world, and 'to cast off the weight that hangeth on him, and the sin that doth so easily beset him, and to run with patience the race that is set before him,' Heb. xii. 1, 2. Good wishes and good purposes will not now serve the turn, but active and serious endeavours: the man hath another work to do, that he may actually forsake the sin which he hath renounced.

3. Do not make a light matter of sin, but hate and abhor it. The soul is never truly converted to God till holiness hath our delight and love, and sin our hatred and aversation. When it is hated it is mortified. While a man is a servant of sin, he loveth not God nor spiritual things, nor the holy ways of God; but rather there is an opposition to them, and enmity against them in the heart: but when we become the servants of God, the object both of our love and hatred is changed; we love God, and his people, and his ways; but then they hate sin sincerely, even 'the garment spotted with the flesh,' Jude 13; the very evil actions they do themselves they hate: Rom. vii. 15, 'The evil which I hate, that do I.' Sin may break out sometimes, but it is contrary to their liking; but generally this hatred prevents sin, and is a very great help to the forsaking of it; they are so fallen out with sin that they keep it under: Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' Their hearts are turned from it and against it. Whereas formerly they lived in fleshly pleasures, their delight is in pleasing God; the main bent of their heart and life is against sin, and their chief design and endeavour is to destroy it. Grace hath taught them that sin, Satan, and the flesh are their deadly enemies, that seek the damnation of their soul; and therefore they deal with them as enemies, and bid defiance to them. Alas! what ado have we with many to leave a base lust, because they never truly hated it. There is some dislike of their sins for a while; but when the fit is over, they relapse into them, because there is not an irreconcilable enmity and abhorrency: Isa. xxx. 22, 'Ye shall defile also the covering of thy graven images of silver, and

the ornaments of thy molten images of gold ; thou shalt cast them away as a menstruous cloth ; thou shalt say unto it, Get thee hence ; ‘ Hosea xiv. 8, ‘ Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols ? ’ Others stand dallying with sin, but cannot leave it.

4. If you would be free from sin, avoid the temptations that lead to it. If ravens or crows be driven away from the carrion, they love to abide within the scent. Those that will play about the cokatrice’s hole will surely be bitten ; therefore we ought to fly the occasions and appearances of evil : 1 Thes. v. 22, ‘ Abstain from all appearance of evil.’ If men would not be drowned, what do they so near the water’s side ? nor wounded, why venture they among enemies ? or meddle with the bait, if they would escape the hook ? Therefore caution is your preservative.

5. If you would be free from sin, live unto God. For vivification doth promote mortification, and the sensual life is best cured by the soul’s delight in God, and care to please him : Job i. 1, ‘ Job was perfect and upright, one that feared God, and eschewed evil.’ True grace is an effectual principle, both to produce its own operations and to restrain sin : Prov. xvi. 6, ‘ By mercy and truth iniquity is purged, and by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil.’ Iniquity is purged in a way of sanctification.

SERMON XXI.

What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death.—ROM. VI. 21.

THE apostle pursueth his argument, why they should be as free from sin as formerly they were from righteousness, by comparing the two services together, the service of sin and the service of righteousness. He speaketh in the next verse of the service of righteousness, in the text of the service of sin. As to the service of righteousness, it is matter of joy and pleasure while it is a-doing ; of comfort and confidence in the remembrance of it ; and for the future, life and eternal salvation. But, on the contrary, if we take a view of sin with respect to the three distinctions of time, past, present, and to come, we shall find it evil and very evil : ‘ What fruit had you of those things whereof ye are now ashamed ? for the end of those things is death.’

Sin may be considered three ways—either as to the time of committing it, or the time of remembering it, or the time of God’s rewarding and punishing of it ; and you find in all so many arguments against it.

1. As to the time of committing it ; so the apostle argueth *ab inutili*, ‘ There is no fruit ; ’ then, when you lived a carnal life, what fruit had you ?

2. As to the present remembrance, ‘ Ye are now ashamed.’ Now, that is—

[1.] *Now*, the commission is over. Or rather,

[2.] *Now*, after your conversion to God. Grace breedeth shame in us because of foregoing sins ; so that here the apostle argueth *à turpi*