

SERMON V.

That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.—ROM. viii. 4.

HERE is the second end of our deliverance by Christ, that we might have grace to keep the law of God. The first was, that sin might be condemned in the flesh.

In the words we have :—

1. A benefit.

2. The persons that receive it.

First, The benefit. *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.* How is this to be understood? of justification, or sanctification?

They that expound it in the former way, make this the sense, that Christ's active obedience, or fulfilling the law, might be imputed, and reckoned to us, as if done by us; but I cannot like this interpretation. First, because it is contrary to the apostle's scope, who speaketh not of Christ's active obedience, but the fruits of his death, or his being made a sin-offering for us. Secondly, the words will not bear it, for the apostle doth not say that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled for us, but fulfilled in us. Thirdly, the doctrine itself is not sound, unless rightly interpreted; for though God, upon the account of Christ's passive obedience and satisfaction, doth forgive our sins, and his active obedience, as well as his passive, is the meritorious cause of our justification, as being a part of his humiliation, yet that cannot be said to be fulfilled in us, which was done by Christ; for God cannot be mistaken, and reckon us to fulfil the law, which we have not, and will not lie, and say we did it, when we did it not. It is enough to say, Christ obeyed, and suffered for our sakes, so as we might have the fruit and benefit of it. Fourthly, the consequent is pernicious, to say the law is fulfilled in us, as obeyed by Christ, for then we needed not to fulfil it ourselves; it is done to our hands already, and needeth only to be imputed to us by faith; but Christ, who suffered, that we might not suffer, yet did not obey, that we might not obey; but his obedience being part of his humiliation, is an ingredient into his satisfaction for our sins. Christ fulfilled all righteousness, and suffered, that our imperfection of obedience might not be our ruin.

2. It must be meant then of sanctification, that by the merit of Christ's death we are freed not only from the guilt, but tyranny of sin, that we might obtain grace to obey the law, or live holily; which will appear by the answering of two questions :—

[1.] What is meant by *δικαίωμα του νόμου*, or the righteousness of the law? I answer, the duty which the law requireth, or anything which God seeth fit to command his people. The law is holy, just, and good, and certainly was not given in vain, but to be a rule to believers in Christ.

[2.] How is it fulfilled in us? For there is the difficulty that pincheth. Can we fulfil the righteousness of the law? The law may be said to be fulfilled two ways :—

(1.) Legally, as a covenant of works.

(2.) Evangelically, as the rule of obedience.

(1.) Legally. No man that was once a sinner, and is still a sinner, can possibly fulfil the law; for he cannot be a sinner and no sinner at the same time, nor fulfil the law to a tittle. He that hath broken with God, cannot continue to be innocent; and he that hath flesh and spirit in him, cannot be absolutely perfect. That was determined before: ver. 3, 'what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh;' and this is directly opposed to that.

(2.) Evangelically. And so the law can, and may be kept, or fulfilled sincerely, though not perfectly. The prevalency of the better part constituteth our sincerity. Justified souls have flesh and spirit, but they walk after the spirit. The mixture of infirmities showeth it is not done perfectly; for the corrupt principle hath some influence; yet not a prevailing influence; and God counteth that as done, which is sincerely done: Rom. xiii. 8, 'He that loveth another, hath fulfilled the law:' and Gal. vi. 2, and so 'fulfilling the law of Christ;' and Gal. v. 14, 'For all the law is fulfilled in one word, thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' So the apostle supposeth the Gentiles might in a gospel manner fulfil the law: Rom. ii. 27, 'And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter, and circumcision, dost transgress the law?' So that in our measure, we do fulfil the law, by the grace of Christ; not perfectly, for he supposeth them to have flesh, or sin in them, but sincerely, as they obey the inclinations of the better part—'walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit.'

Doct. That Christ was made a sin-offering for us, that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us. I shall prove it by these considerations:—

1. That Christ came, not only to redeem us from wrath, but also to renew and heal our natures.

2. That our natures being renewed and healed, we are to walk in newness of life, according to the directions of the law of God.

First. That Christ came not only to redeem us from wrath, but to renew and sanctify us. I prove it—

1. From the constant drift and tenor of the scriptures. From his nature and office: Mat. i. 21, 'He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.' *Denominatio est a potioribus*—from his chief work, which is to save his people from the guilt and power of sin. Guilt inferreth damnation, which is the evil after sin: but he hath his name from saving us from the evil of sin itself; for the great promise made to Abraham was in that: Gen. xii. 3, 'In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed;' that is, in Christ; but how blessed? That is expounded: Acts iii. 25, 26, 'Ye are children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed. Unto you first, God having raised up his Son Jesus Christ, hath sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' Observe there, what is the mediator's blessing; to turn away his people from sin. Man fallen was both unholy and guilty, liable to the wrath of God, and dead in trespasses and sins; and Christ came to free us from both. We cannot be sufficiently thankful for our freedom from

wrath, but we must first mind our freedom from sin. So when Christ is promised to the Jews: Rom. xi. 26, 'There shall come out of Sion the deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob,' there is his principal work. So from the end, why he actually came, and was exhibited to the world: Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted to give repentance and remission of sins.' Repentance is nothing but a serious purpose of returning to God, and to that obedience we owe to God: 1 John iii. 5, 'And we know he was manifested to take away our sins, and in him is no sin;' to conform us to the law of God, by his own blessed pattern and example. Again: Titus ii. 14, 'Who hath redeemed us from all iniquity;' and this was the intent of his death: Eph. v. 26. It were endless to bring all that might be said upon this argument.

2. I prove it by reasons taken from the scripture. It must needs be so—

[1.] Because the plaster else would not be as broad as the sore; nor our reparation by Christ be correspondent to our loss by Adam. We lost not only the favour of God, but the image of God: and therefore till the image of God be restored in us we do not return to our first estate, nor are we fully recovered. The evil nature propagated from him is the cause of the misery and disorder of mankind. Guilt is but the consequent of sin. Now is he a good physician that only taketh away the pain and leaveth the great disease uncured? Certainly we cannot recover God's favour till we recover his image. A sinful creature, till he be changed, cannot be acceptable to God, neither live in communion with him for the present, nor enjoy him hereafter. We cannot enjoy communion with him now: 1 John i. 5, 6, 7, 'If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' Will the Lord take us into his bosom while we are in our sins? The new nature giveth us some knowledge of the nature of God. Can a new creature delight in the wicked? 2 Peter ii. 8, 'Lot's righteous soul was vexed from day to day.' You cannot imagine so, without a reproach to the divine nature; nor can we be admitted into his blessed presence hereafter: Heb. xii. 14, 'Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.' The ungodly, and the unsanctified, are banished out of his presence. Christ came not to make a change in God; to make him less holy, or represent him as less hating of sin. Otherwise,

[2.] Christ's undertaking would not answer the trouble of a true penitent, nor remove our sorest burthen. A sensible and compunctionate sinner is troubled not only with the guilt of sin, but the power of sin. There is the root and bottom of his trouble; his language is, Hosea xiv. 2, 'Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously.' Pharaoh could say, Take away this plague; but an awakened, penitent, broken-hearted sinner will say, Take away this naughty heart. Therefore the promises are suited to this double distress: 1 John i. 9, 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins;' Micah vii. 18, 19, 'Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? He will return again, and have compassion upon us: he will subdue our iniquities, and thou wilt cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.' They do not

only desire pardon and release from punishment, but grace to break the power of sin ; as a man that hath his leg broken desireth not only ease of the pain, but to have it well set again. Therefore to them that are pricked at heart there is offered the promise of the Spirit : Acts ii. 37, 38. A malefactor condemned to die, and sick of a mortal disease, needeth and desireth not only the pardon of the judge but the cure of the physician.

[3.] To make way for the work of the Spirit. For the divine persons work into each other's hands ; as the election of the Father maketh way for the redemption of Christ, so the redemption of Christ maketh way for the sanctification of the Spirit. All the divine persons are glorified in the reduction of a sinner ; and they take their turn. The application of the merit of Christ, and the grace of the Spirit, are inseparable : Titus iii. 5, and 1 Cor. vi. 11. These individual companions, sanctification and justification, must not be disjoined. Under the law the ablutions and oblations still went together ; the leaven and the altar, the washings and the sacrifices.

[4.] Christ's undertaking was not only for the benefit of man, but for the glory of God, to redeem us to God : Rev. v. 9 ; and therefore in the work of redemption, our happiness is not only to be considered, but God's honour and interest. Impunity, and taking away the guilt of sin, doth more directly respect our good ; but sanctifying, and fitting us for obedience and subjection to God, doth more immediately respect his glory and honour. That he may be glorified again in mankind, who are fallen from him ; it was for that man was made at first, and for that are we restored and made again. I proceed to the second consideration propounded.

Secondly. That our natures being renewed and healed, we are to walk in newness of life, according to the directions of the law of God ; for principles are given for operation, and habits for acts, and a new heart for newness of life ; and therefore regeneration first maketh us good, that afterwards we may do good. But that which I am to prove, is that this righteousness is to be carried on according to the law ; for God having made a law, is very tender of it. I shall prove it by four reasons :

1. Christ came not to dissolve our obligation to God, but to promote it rather. Certainly not to dissolve it to free us from obedience to the law ; for that is impossible that a creature should be *sui juris*, or without law ; for that were to make it supreme, and independent, and so to establish our rebellion, rather than to suppress it. No, he came upon no such design, to leave us to our own will, to live as we list, without law and rule. He came to restore us to obedience, to bring us back again in heart and life to God : Luke i. 75, 'He hath delivered us from the hands of our enemies, that we might serve him in holiness and righteousness all the days of our lives.' To this end tended his doctrine : 'I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfil it : ' Mat. v. 17. His example ; He came to do what God had commanded, and to teach us to do the same : Mat. iii. 15, 'For thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness : ' and Heb. v. 8, 9, 'Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him.'

2. Christ dispenseth by virtue of his merit, regeneration. or the spirit

of holiness, that all new creatures might voluntarily keep this law, though not in absolute perfection, yet by sincere obedience. This grace is dispensed to put us into a capacity of loving, pleasing, and obeying God; this is that he promiseth in the new covenant: Ezek. xxxvi. 27, 'And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.' So Jer. xxxi. 33, 'I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts.' He doth not say, I will prepare them another law, as if the old law of God were to be abandoned and abolished, and some other precepts substituted in their room; no, but to make them conformable to it in heart and life, the new man is created after God for this end and purpose: Eph. iv. 24, fitted to obey the law; so that the great blessing of the gospel is grace to keep the law.

3. None enter into the gospel state but those that entirely and readily give up themselves to do the will of God; and therefore none can have benefit by the sin-offering and satisfaction of Christ but those that consent to return to the duty of the law and live in obedience to God. Surely God never pardoneth any while they are in rebellion, and live under the full power and dominion of sin; no, they must consent to forsake and return to the allegiance due to their proper Lord. This is evident; for the way of entering into the new covenant is by faith and repentance, is nothing else but a sincere purpose of new obedience, or living according to the will and law of God. It is defined to be a 'breaking off of sin:' Dan. iv. 27; and therefore the scripture runs in this strain: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return to me, saith the Lord, and I will abundantly pardon:' and Isa. i. 16, 'Wash you, make you clean,' and then 'though your sins were as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow.' The least that can be gathered from these places, is, that a serious vow and thorough resolution of new obedience, are necessary to begin our interest in the grace of the new covenant.

4. The more we fulfil our covenant, vow, and resolution, by obeying the law, our right is the more clear, and evident, and more confirmed to us; our participation of the blessings of the gospel is more full, and our comfort more strong: Ps. cxix. 165, 'Great peace have they that love thy law, and nothing shall offend them;' and Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them.' God loveth us the more, the more we obey his law. It is holiness maketh us more amiable in his eyes, and the objects of his delight. God loveth us as sanctified rather than pardoned; we love him as pardoning and forgiving so great a debt to us; but he delights in holiness or the impress of his own image upon us: Prov. xi. 20, 'The upright in the way are his delight.' When the Spirit hath renewed us according to the image of God, we are made objects of his complacency. Now we know God's love by the effects; and therefore the more we act and draw forth this grace, the more God rewardeth our obedience with the sense of his love, and the comforts of his Spirit. The sum of all religion is to love God, and to be beloved of him; to love him and obey him is our work; and to be beloved of him is our reward and happiness. Now the one followeth the other: John xiv. 22, 23, 'Lord! how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself to us, and not

unto the world? Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' As we increase in holiness and obedience, we increase in the favour of God.

Use 1 is Information. It informeth us of several important truths:—

1. That the law is a law of perfect purity and holiness, for he speaketh here of the righteousness of the law, *δικαίωμα νόμου*. So David: Ps. cxix. 140, 'Thy law is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it;' and Ps. xix. 8, 'The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes.' It must needs be so, if we consider the author of it, God himself; and every thing that hath passed his hand hath his character and impress upon it; it is a law not only fit for us to receive but for God to give; it is the copy of his holiness. It is all one with the image of God which man had in innocency. Now the image of God consisted in righteousness and true holiness. Adam's principle of obedience was also his law and rule; he had that written upon his heart which was afterwards written upon tables of stone; and therefore if a man would cleanse his heart and way, he must study the word of God: Ps. cxix. 9, 'By what means may a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereunto according to thy word.' It is not guide his way, but cleanse his way; for even the youngest are defiled. Man's heart naturally is a sink of sin, and there is no way to make his heart clean, and his way clean, but by taking God's counsel in his word. A young man that is in the heat and strength of his lusts, may learn there how to be purified and cleansed.

2. That this law standeth in force. We are freed from the condemning, but not from the directing power thereof; but it always remaineth as a rule of our new obedience. Surely it is in force now; for there is no liberty given to men to live in sin; God will not spare his people when they transgress it by scandalous or heinous sin: Prov. i. 31, 'Therefore they shall eat of the fruit of their own way, and be filled with their own devices.' Though they be the dearly beloved of his soul, the eternal punishment shall not be inflicted upon them, yet they shall smart for the breaches of his law. On the other side they find much encouragement, comfort, and peace when they set themselves exactly to keep it, they can from experience speak much of the gracious reward of obedience: Ps. cxix. 56, 'This I had because I kept thy precepts.' Yea, in the state of heavenly glory, the law as purely moral is still in force; for we are everlastingly bound to love God and one another.

3. That the righteousness of the law may be fulfilled in us. I prove it by this argument. One of these three things we must say, either (1.) that no obedience is now necessary to salvation, or (2.) that the perfect obedience is still necessary, or (3.) some measure of obedience to the law by the ordinary aids of grace, vouchsafed to us in the new covenant, is possible and sufficient. The first we cannot say; for then there would be no necessity of new obedience or holiness. But the scripture condemneth that every where, showing us that we are 'God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works,' Eph. ii. 10; and 'purified to be a peculiar people, zealous of good works,' Tit. ii. 14. The second we cannot say that a whole perpetual, perfect, personal

obedience to the law is still necessary; for then there would be no hope for them that cannot perfectly fulfil the law, which no man living can do: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' Therefore the third thing we must say, that there is such a measure of obedience necessary, as is sufficient to salvation, and possible by grace, and they that attain to it, the scripture pronounceth them blessed: Luke xi. 28, 'Blessed are they that hear the word of God and keep it;' and John xiii. 17, 'If ye know these things, happy are you if you do them.'

4. That the righteousness of the law not only can, but must be fulfilled in us, or else we are yet in our sins, and have no portion and interest in Christ: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'Whosoever is in Christ is a new creature.' And a new creature must have a new conversation, for 'all old things are passed away, and all things are become new.' They are enabled in some measure to fulfil the law of God. Christ being the lawgiver of the Church, or renewed state of mankind, hath set down the terms of life and death; to his terms we must stand or fall: now, 'He is the author of eternal salvation to them that obey him,' Heb. v. 9. Therefore every one that would be delivered from wrath to come, must look after holiness, and obey God according to his will declared in his law. Certainly Christ died not to purchase an indulgence for us to live in sin; the law hath not its right, it looketh like a law given in vain, if it be not obeyed.

5. This fulfilling of the righteousness of the law is wrought in us by the Spirit, as the fruit of Christ's purchase; this real, solid righteousness is wrought in our hearts by the operation of the Spirit; for those that have it are described to be, 'those that walk after the Spirit, and not after the flesh.' Therefore do not resist his work, nor grieve the Spirit of Christ, nor quench his motions when he cometh to work it in you, but submit to all his healing methods. And this Spirit we have from Christ as the fruit of his sin-offering: Titus iii. 5, 6, 'Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.' He obtained that grace whereby we may keep the law; having satisfied for us as a Mediator, he becometh an author and fountain of life. Upon him you must depend, and to him must you look for it.

Use 2 is Reproof to two sorts of people:—

1. To the carnal world, who think that the children of God are too strict and precise, and make more ado about salvation than needs. Certainly if we consider the tenor of God's law, and the exactness of divine justice, what rule and law we must live by, and to whom we must give an account, the best of God's children do no more than needeth; as the wise virgins could not spare one jot of their oil, Mat. xxv. 9, 'Not so, lest there be not enough for us and you.' David admireth the brightness of the sun first, and then the purity of the law; and how doth he close up that meditation? See Ps. xix. 12, 'Who can understand his errors? cleanse thou me from secret sins.'

2. Professing Christians are also to be reprov'd for that lazy and cowardly spirit that is in them; and because they are so impotent, and feeble, and backward to their duty. By their backwardness they

wrong the law, for they do not give it its due. Christ hath, indeed, freed us from the curse of the law, but not from the obedience of it. And by this feeble and dastardly spirit they wrong the grace of the Redeemer, and the new covenant. Obedience to the law is most strongly enforced out of the grace of the gospel; for thereby we are enabled to perform it. Christ did not only fulfil the law for us, but doth also fulfil it in us by his Spirit; and shall we after such provision, sit down lazily, and be discouraged with every difficulty, and have our resolutions broken with every assault of temptation? Men spare their pains, and do not improve the grace offered, and then cry out they are weak and unable. This is like lazy beggars, that personate and act diseases, because they would not work. Set your hearts thoroughly to obey God, and see what he will do for you.

Use 3. If this were the end of Christ's coming, and dying, then let us be exhorted to seek after sanctification by the Spirit of Christ.

1. This is one part of our salvation, as well as remission of sins. We often consider Christ as dying for our pardon; we should as much consider him as dying to renew and heal our natures, that we may be recovered to our obedience to God, to crucify the old man, to give us the spirit of holiness. Surely he is made sanctification to us, as well as righteousness; 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' If Christ should abolish wrath, and let alone sin, it were to take away the lesser evil, that the greater may remain.

2. It is not only part of our deliverance, but the better part. Pardon giveth us an exemption from punishment, but sanctification giveth us freedom from a corrupt heart. Surely sin is worse than pain, a moral evil is worse than a natural evil, vice than misery. Once more. By holiness, we more resemble God; for holiness and goodness is his very nature: 1 Pet. i. 4, 'He hath given us precious promises, whereby we are made partakers of the divine nature.'

3. Holiness is a means to the rest: pardon and life are the great blessings of the covenant. Now there is no obtaining pardon till regeneration and conversion; for God doth not pardon while we are in our sins; and life and heaven we cannot have till sin be quite done away, for we are not introduced into the presence of God, till we be complete in holiness: Eph. v. 27, 'That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy, and without blemish:' Col. i. 22, 'To present you holy, and unblameable, and unreprouvable in his sight:' Jude 24, 'And to present you faultless before the presence of his glory.' During life, obedience is but imperfectly begun; but when it is completed and finished we do not stay out of heaven one moment; then are we fully made free from sin.

Use 4 is to put us upon trial and self-reflection. Is the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us?

1. We begin to fulfil it when we set ourselves to obey the will of God, taking his law for our rule and his promises for our encouragement. This resolution is the fruit of regenerating grace if it be sincere; and it argueth a renewed heart and conscience: Heb. xiii. 18, 'Pray

for us, for we trust we have a good conscience;’ and hath in it perfection of parts, though not of degrees.

2. This must be seconded with answerable endeavours. *ἵνα πληρωθῆ* noteth a continued act; to have the righteousness of the law fulfilled in us is not the work of one day, but implieth a constant walk and obedience to motions after the Spirit.

3. We must endeavour to be more complete every day: Luke i. 6, ‘They were righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;’ and Col. iv. 12, ‘Labouring for you, that you may stand complete in all the will of God.’ So we read of some that were ‘full of all goodness:’ Rom. xv. 14, and ‘full of good works:’ Acts ix. 36, as we find in Dorcas. It is the fault of most Christians, that they beat down the price of religion as low as they can, and so make a hard shift to go to heaven.

4. Our begun-sanctification shall be perfected before Christ hath done with us: Col. i. 28, ‘That we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.’ Here we are very imperfect, but it shall be perfectly fulfilled.

SERMON VI.

They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; and they that are after the spirit, the things of the spirit.—ROM. viii. 5.

This scripture containeth a notable character of those that are interested in the privileges of the gospel, and will help you in your assuring work, or making out your claim and title. In the words you have:—

1. An intimation of two sorts of persons; they that are after the flesh and they that are after the spirit.

2. Their different disposition and practice are compared and set forth:—

[1.] By the act: they both mind their several affairs.

[2.] By the object: things of the flesh from things of the spirit. Different persons, different objects, and different affections.

Thus you may in one view and prospect discern the scope and intent of the place. I shall lay it before you in several propositions, and then apply all together.

1. There are two sorts of men in the world—some after the flesh and some after the spirit.

2. That these two sorts of men have two different objects—the things of the spirit and the things of the flesh.

3. That men discover their temper and constitution of soul by their favour or affection to either of these objects.

Doct. 1. There are two sorts of men in the world—some after the flesh and some after the spirit. So it must be. There is a twofold original; which produceth a twofold principle, which is acted by a twofold assisting power; and this bringeth them under a twofold covenant, which maketh way for a twofold final estate, into which all the world issueth itself.