

SERMONS ON MICAH VI. 8.

SERMON I.

He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God ?—MICAH vi. 8.

IN the context you have—First, A question to which the text is an answer. The question is in vers. 6, 7. The sinners would know what would please God, vers. 6, 7. Their question teacheth us—

1. That ceremonial observances will not compensate a neglect of substantial duties.

2. That hypocrites will give anything rather than give up themselves to the Lord ; rivers of oil, thousands of rams, their own children, so they may not part with their own wills. *Quid querit a te nisi te ?*

3. That it is not the costliness of the sacrifice, but the godliness of the sacrifice which God looketh at.

Secondly, The answer is in the text, ‘He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and love mercy, and walk humbly with thy God ?’ The pertinency of this answer must be vindicated.

1. The question was not a scruple or case of conscience about the true satisfaction or way of appeasing God’s justice, but a contentious cavil of them that stood much upon their outward sacrifices, and were willing either to continue that way or to add more, if this would please God and they might thereby avoid his wrath. Now, these did in vain pretend ignorance when the rule of their duty was plain and easy.

2. The answer is suited so as best to convince hypocrites ; not to show the true means of atonement, but to defeat their false claim. Whatever atonement God would accept, yet without the performance of necessary duties it would be fruitless and ineffectual to them : ‘He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.’

Doct. That in revealing our duty to us, God exacteth nothing of man but what is good.

The observation yieldeth two points—

1. That God hath plainly revealed his mind concerning the duty of the creature.

2. That whatever God hath so revealed is good.

First, That God hath plainly revealed his mind concerning the duty of the creature : 'He hath showed thee, O man.' How hath he showed us? Partly by the light of nature, partly by the light of his word.

1. By the light of nature. The things here mentioned concern either the lower or upper hemisphere of our duty. To walk humbly with God importeth that we should carry ourselves with reverence and obedience to the divine majesty ; and to do justice and love mercy, that we should carry ourselves justly and charitably towards men. Both are revealed by the light of nature. Our duty to God : Rom. i. 19, 'That which may be known of God is manifest in them ; for God hath showed it them.' How showed it them? By graving it on their hearts. Our duty to man : Rom. ii. 15, 'Which show the work of the law written upon their hearts, their consciences also bearing them witness, and their thoughts accusing or excusing,' by turns.

2. By the light of his word, wherein our duty is more clear, full, and certain.

[1.] More clear : Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.' The use of a lamp is by night, and the light of the sun shineth by day. Whether it be day or night with us, we clearly understand our duty by the word of God. The night signifieth adversity, and the day prosperity in all conditions. Hence we may learn how to behave ourselves. Once more, the word *path* noteth our general choice and course of life ; the word *feet* our particular actions. Now, whether the matter wherein we would be informed concerneth our choice of the way that leadeth to true happiness, or else our dexterous prosecution, that we may not swerve from the right way in any action of ours, by doing anything impertinent or inconsistent with our choice, still the word will direct a humble and well-disposed mind ; so that here our duty is clearly stated, and if a man's heart stand in awe of the word, he cannot easily miscarry.

[2.] It is more full ; for the book of nature is blurred by man's apostasy from God and degeneration from his primitive excellency ; and our chief good and last end being altered by sin, we strangely mistake things ; and, weighing them in the balance of the flesh, which we seek to please, we put light for darkness and evil for good, Isa. v. 20, and so miserably grope in the dark, and cannot so clearly discern our way to true happiness. And besides, man's condition is such that he needeth a supernatural remedy—a redeemer ; which, depending upon the mere grace of God, cannot be found out by mere natural light, which can only judge of things necessary, and not of such things as depend upon the arbitrary will and love of God, John iii. 16. Besides, in the things evident by natural light, nature is dark. The great lines of our duty are fair and legible, *ἔργον νόμου*. The outward work is written in our hearts—abstinence from gross sins, performance of outward duties ; some notices are escaped out of the ruins of the fall, and to convince us of sin, and mind us of our duty ; but that full, entire spiritual obedience which is due to God is not known to nature. Therefore, besides the candle of the Lord within us, which is reason, God hath set up a lamp in the sanctuary, which is scripture, to direct us in the way to true happiness, and this is clear and full, and compriseth all

that is necessary. Therefore David saith, Ps. cxix. 96, 'Thy commandment is exceeding broad;' as containing all things necessary for our duty and happiness.

[3.] It is more certain, as having a greater stamp and impress of God upon it. Everything that hath passed through God's hand discovers its author. The light of nature showeth itself to be of God; but much more the light of scripture, wherein he hath discovered more of his wisdom, goodness, and power; it being such a revelation of the mind of God as is fit for God to give and us to receive; suited to the nature of God, to preserve a due honour, esteem, and reverence of his blessed majesty; and exactly calculated to our necessities, for recovery out of sin, and obtaining our true and proper happiness; and cometh to us attested with such evidence from heaven as we cannot rationally withstand: 2 Peter i. 19, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto we shall do well to take heed, as unto a light which shineth in a dark place.' It is surer than the light of nature, as not liable to such debate and uncertainty, which must be cleared before man's duty can be stated to him. More sure than miracles, oracles, visions, as being put into writing; and a faithful record, as the constant measure, standard, and rule of faith and manners for the use of the church in all ages.

Now it is good to see how David compareth these two revelations of the mind of God, where he first admireth the brightness of the sun, and then the purity of the law. The joining of both these meditations showeth—

(1.) That the world can be as ill without the word of God as without the light of the sun. What would this inferior world be without the light of the sun, but a great cave and obscure dungeon, where men would creep up and down like worms out of their holes? Now the light of the word is as necessary for the blessedness of our souls as the sun's light is comfortable to our bodies.

(2.) The comparing of both these showeth that there are two books wherein we shall do well to study, both made by God himself, and both manifesting and discovering God to the world—the book of nature, and the book of scripture. You cannot look upon the book of the creatures, but in every page and line of it you will find this truth presented to your eyes, that there is an infinite, eternal power, that made all things, and is to be owned, revered, worshipped, and obeyed by us. This is enough to leave the world without excuse. But in the book of the word you may see more of God and the way to enjoy him. This doth more powerfully convince man of his misery, and show him his remedy. The use which the psalmist maketh of these books is notable. Of the first, to admire the glory of God by the beauty of the heavens; of the second, to humble and awe man by the purity and strictness of the law; as all religion lieth in the knowledge of God and ourselves. Well, then, this is the double way of revelation—

The revelation of God's mind in the word consists of two parts—the moral part, and the evangelical.

(1st.) The moral part doth mostly contain our first holiness, and the primitive duty which we owed to God as a creator before the fall

or our defection from him, that we should serve and obey him as our rightful Lord, and love him as our chief good and happiness. The moral part is that which is mentioned in the text, and still belongeth to us; for every creature ought to be in subjection, and is under a debt of duty to his creator. And Christ Jesus, when he came to redeem us, did not dissolve this bond; for he 'redeemed us unto God,' Rev. v. 9. He never intended to rob God of a creature when he made any man a christian. This were to make us rebels against God, and not subjects to him. This was far from Christ's intent; for he came to fit us for that holiness and righteousness which was due to God by virtue of our creation; to fit us for it by his renewing and reconciling grace. He encourageth us by his reconciling grace: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That we should serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness, all the days of our lives.' He inclineth us to it by his renewing grace: Eph. iv. 24, 'The new man is created after God, in righteousness and true holiness.' Therefore the law of grace is subordinate to the law of nature, and was introduced that we might return to the obedience due to God. And in this respect it may be said, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good;' for Rom. vii. 12, 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good;' that is, the law in general, and this command in particular, that which had wrought such gracious effects in his heart. The law is holy, fit for God to give and us to receive; and just, hugely conducive to the good of human society; good, very profitable to those that observe them.

(2d.) The evangelical part of the word, which revealeth pardon of sins and salvation by Christ to all those that will accept it with a believing and thankful mind, and are willing to return to their obedience to God, 1 Tim. i. 15, John iii. 16, Heb. v. 11, and in many other places. Now here is the greatest, fullest, and truest prospect of his goodness to mankind, Titus iii. 4, in that, when God was displeased for the breach of the first covenant, and man hereby had fallen irreparably from his primitive holiness, and brought himself under guilt and a curse, he took occasion by this misery to open a door of hope to us by Christ, and hath set up a new court of righteousness and life, where sinners may appear; and grace taketh the throne, and the judge is Christ, and the rule is the gospel; and upon repentance, faith, and sincere obedience, we may be accepted with him; and the Lord standeth with open arms to receive all those that run for refuge to this court, and take sanctuary at this grace, devoting themselves to his fear and service. Here we may say indeed, 'He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.' The gospel part is called 'the good word:' Heb. vi. 5, 'Having tasted the good word;' and the great privileges offered to us are called 'glad tidings of good things,' Rom. x. 15, quoted out of Isa. lii. 7; the best things that ever were brought to man's ear. Therefore chiefly I shall consider these words with respect to the gospel revelation.

Secondly, Whatever God hath so revealed is good.

1. To clear this to you, I shall premise some distinctions of goodness.

[1.] There is a moral and beneficial goodness. That which is good

morally is that which is our duty, just and equal; as Deut. xxx. 15, 'I have set before you life and good, death and evil.' Holiness is called good, and sin evil. That is good which is right in the sight of the Lord. The good of profit and utility is also spoken of, Deut. vi. 24, 'The Lord commanded us to fear the Lord our God, for our good always;' so Deut. x. 13, 'Statutes which I command thee this day for thy good.'

[2.] Moral good is either *bonum per se*, good in itself, because of its suitability to the nature of God; or merely upon God's institution. This distinction is intimated, Rom. xiv. 17, 18, 'For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost; for he that in these things serveth Christ, is acceptable to God and approved of men;' that is, these things are pleasing to God, as suitable to his nature, and as agreeable to the reasonable nature in us; whereas things that merely depend upon positive institution are indifferent without God's command, and, in comparison and competition with these unquestionable duties, may be said not to be good: Ezek. xx. 25, 'I gave them statutes that were not good;' it is not simply denied, but comparatively.

[3.] Beneficial goodness is twofold—either concerning the body and the soul, or this life and a better. Godliness conduceth to both: 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable for all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Yet the good of the soul must be first regarded, and other things are superadded, Mat. vi. 33. And God dispenseth the good things of this life with respect to a better; when we want them, the want turneth to good: Rom. viii. 28, 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God.'

2. Now let me show you that, in the revelation of our duty, God exacteth nothing of us but what is good. I prove it thus—(1.) By the design of the christian religion; (2.) The structure and frame of it.

[1.] The design of the christian religion is to make man good, and to cure him of all evil. I prove it, because it requireth man not only to do good, but to be good. It is the perfection of our nature; it forbiddeth sin, that it may allow us no liberty to sin, to be bad and miserable. So far as a man doth not comply with these precepts, so far he is an enemy to himself. Surely our perfection is a great part of our duty. Our religion calleth us to the highest degree of goodness, to be full of goodness; not to take up with any lower degree of holiness. It doth not account him to be good that would not be better. And whatever degrees of grace we have, we are obliged to ask more and we are to endeavour after more; and this with conformity to the highest pattern: Gen. xvii. 1, 'Walk before me, and be thou perfect;' and Mat. v. 48, 'Be ye therefore perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect;' 1 Peter i. 15, 16, 'He saith, Be holy, as I am holy. Wherefore, as he that hath called you is holy, so be holy in all manner of conversation and godliness;' 2 Peter iii. 11, 'What manner of persons should we be, in all holy conversation and godliness?' From all these places we conclude, that we should still be aspiring after a further degree of holiness, goodness, and perfection in

conformity to God; that man by his duty may be prepared for his blessedness; and that, whilst he groweth more like God, he might be more fitted for the vision and fruition of God. We are called to perfection, and though we cannot fully attain to it in this life, we must come nearer and nearer: 'He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' 1 John iii. 2, 3. No less pattern than God is set before us. Thus does the true religion design to make man good.

[2.] The structure and frame of it. How doth it promote this design? Four ways—(1.) By the blessedness and reward which it offereth; (2.) By the duties it requireth towards God and men; (3.) By the means which it useth to enforce these things; (4.) The course it taketh to fortify us against temptations to the contrary.

(1.) The blessedness and reward which it offereth. We are often inquiring, 'Who will show us any good?' Ps. iv. 6. Now, in the scripture, God has showed man what is his chief good and proper happiness. There is the greatest good that can be attained or imagined, for beyond God there is nothing. And the happiness which the word offereth is God reconciled, God finally and fully enjoyed. Our happiness, by the way, consisteth in reconciliation with God; at the end, in the vision and fruition of God. This is happiness indeed.

(1st.) Our reconciliation with God through Christ, if we will enter into his peace. This is that which we only are capable of here, and the good we are now admitted into: Rom. v. 1, 'Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through Jesus Christ our Lord.' As soon as ever we turn to him by faith and repentance, he giveth us the pardon of all our sins, and accepteth us in the Beloved, to the praise of his grace; and thereby the sentence of death is reversed; we are delivered from wrath to come, 1 Thes. i. 10, 'and not only so, but being justified by faith,' we are 'made heirs according to the hope of eternal life,' Titus iii. 7. We have a right, though not the possession. And there is a long train of blessings which we enjoy for the present by virtue of this right; only we have them not but as we verify and make good the reality of our first faith and repentance by a constant holy walking and obedience; as audience of our prayers: 1 John iii. 22, 'Whatsoever we ask we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do the things which please him.' The presence of the Spirit, assuring us of the love of God, John xiv. 21, 23. Peace in our own souls. What pleasure like the testimony of a good conscience! as no torment like that of an evil one: heaven is begun in the one, and hell in the other: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'This is our rejoicing.' Having this, you may look God in the face in duties, 1 John iii. 21; in death, Isa. xxxviii. 3. This peace of a good conscience supposeth a walking according to God's counsel and direction in a course of holiness: for it is an approbation of the discharge in our duty. There is some trouble while good acts are a-doing, as there is a slight pleasure while sin is committed; but as soon as the mists and clouds of passion are over, conscience will accuse or excuse. Besides, we are under the constant care and providence of God: Ps. xxxiv. 15, 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open to their cry: the face of the Lord is against them that do evil.' All necessities are vouchsafed, Mat. vi. 32, 33. Afflictions are moderated, 1 Cor. x. 13;

sanctified, Rom. viii. 28. Enemies are awed or bridled, 1 Peter iii. 13, Prov. xvi. 7. All these blessings are consequent upon the state of reconciliation, when our repentance is not a fancy, nor faith a naked opinion or cold assent, but such a lively sense of God's love and grace as maketh us faithfully return to a love of God, and a care of and delight in his ways.

(2*d.*) The vision and fruition of God in heavenly glory. That is the great good offered to us when our nature is perfected, and by its most perfect acts is employed about the most perfect object, and God is all in all, giving out the fullest communications of his grace to us, and that for ever, the soul being perfect, without spot or blemish, and this vile body like Christ's glorious body. And we shall ever remain in the sight and love of God; and what is sweeter than his presence? Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand pleasures for evermore.' And this without fear of change, 1 Thes. ii. 17. If anything be good, this is good, to live for ever in the sight of God, and to love him and be beloved of him.

(2.) The duties it requireth of us both to God and man.

(1*st.*) As to God, the great duty of love, that we should love God in Christ, with all our souls, and with all our hearts, and with all our strength: Dent. x. 12, 'What doth the Lord require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, and to love him with all thy soul, and to walk in his ways, and serve him with all thy heart?' It obligeth us to seek after this happiness, the vision and fruition of God, with such affections as do become it; to begin our happiness in our duty, to train up ourselves in a way of loving God, and receiving the communications of his love to us, that the consummation of the spiritual life may be like the whole progress of it; and so in our very work we have a foretaste of our reward and end. Oh! then, what a good religion is this, where our principal work is love and delight in him whom we serve and worship! And is that any hard task? What is the object of love but good? And the acts of love are sweet and pleasant. And should we stick at this, to love a good God in the highest manner? Is not the object good? Is he not good to us? What floweth from him but goodness? And what do we expect from him but such good as our hearts cannot sufficiently conceive of? And since our whole religion is nothing else but an art of loving God and enjoying God, surely that which he hath showed us is good.

(2*d.*) As to men. To do good is the employment of our lives: Eph. ii. 10, 'Created in Christ to good works,' &c.; and this with a zeal, Titus ii. 14. Now that doctrine is good which only employeth men to do good. But to whom must we do good? To all: Gal. vi. 10, 'Do good to all, especially to the household of faith;' yea, enemies not excepted: Mat. v. 44, 'Do good to them that hate you;' Rom. xii. 21, 'Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.' And this doing good God expecteth from us in every capacity and relation. Magistrates, Rom. xiii. 4, are 'the ministers of God to them for good,' deputy gods. So ministers: Acts xi. 24, 'Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost.' A man of a selfish temper and spirit hath not that zeal for God, that compassion for souls. So private christians to one another: 'I am persuaded that ye are full

of goodness,' Rom. xv. 14. Very kind these were ; it makes us most compassionate to the bodies and souls of one another. So people in an inferior quality—servants, when they are good: Eph. vi. 8, 'Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, bond or free.' If they make conscience of doing good in their callings, and go about their duties as service to God and out of compassion to men, God will take notice of it in the poor bond-servant. A principle of love and good-will in the heart doth make any service more acceptable and valuable than any outward pomp in what we do. A sincere honest heart is beyond all external advantages.

(3.) The means it useth to enforce these ; that is, what are the encouragements and helps ?

(1st.) The love of God in Christ is the great engine of the gospel, and the motive and encouragement which should persuade us to our duty, 2 Cor. v. 14, and Rom. xii. 1, Titus ii. 11, 12. God would be obeyed by his people, not as slaves, but as children ; and would have the great spring and rise of man's obedience to be love and gratitude ; and therefore doth he oblige us at so high a rate, and carry on the covenant of grace in such an astonishing way of mercy, that none of his commandments might be grievous to us, because sweetened by his love, 1 John v. 3. God will be served, not as an imperious sovereign, but as the God of love; not with a grudging mind, but with delight and readiness ; not as dragged and forced, but as excited and influenced by that deep sense that we have of God's goodness.

(2d.) We are inclined and enabled by the sanctifying Spirit. In the christian religion, not only the precepts are good ; but there goeth along with them the power of God to make us good : Ps. cxliii. 10, 'Teach me to do thy will, for thou art my God ; thy Spirit is good.' The Spirit's direction hath strength joined with it. And he is a good Spirit, as he doth incline us to good. The Spirit is the only fountain of all goodness and holiness : Neh. ix. 10, 'Thou gavest also thy good Spirit to instruct them.' Why is he so often called the good Spirit, but that all his operations tend to make men good and holy ? Eph. v. 9, The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth.' The phrase noteth both our thankfulness to God and beneficence to men.

(4.) How doth it fortify us against all temptations to the contrary, but by the proposal of good to us. So it keepeth us from the evil of sin. The great art which religion teacheth us is but the preferring of the greater good before a lesser. Do that, and you are safe ; for all the world miscarrieth by preferring a worse thing before a better. Three things religion mainly persuadeth us unto to keep us safe—(1.) To prefer God before the world ; (2.) The soul before the body ; (3.) Eternity, or a long life before a short one.

(1st.) God before the world. Its great business is to get us to love God above all, that comparatively we may little esteem reputation, wealth, pre-eminence, grandeur, pleasure, in comparison of the favour of God and the fruition of God. Usually these are the things which all that perish prefer before God and immortality. Now, if you could have an higher esteem of God, and say truly, with David, Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom

have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee;’ you have plucked up all temptations by the roots. See John v. 44, and John xii. 42, 1 John ii. 15, 2 Tim. iii. 4. So that here is the great miscarriage of men, they have not digested this point of religion. They love the world more than God, the praise of men more than the praise of God, pleasures more than God. Is God that man’s chiefest good who preferreth his lust, his wealth, or honour, or any base thing in the world before him? A little fleshly delight or fear of man shall make him break with his God.

(2d.) The soul before the body. In all reason the better part should have most respect and care. The good of the body is fluid, and vanishes; the soul is immortal. Now, shall we pamper the body and neglect the soul? What a fool is he that hath cared for all things more than what should be most cared for, his precious and immortal soul! Luke xii. 20, ‘Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee; then whose shall those things be which thou hast provided?’ Luke x. 42, ‘Mary hath chosen that good part which shall not be taken from her.’ Surely we have better souls than a dog or a swine—souls which are capable of better things than the pleasures of this life; the knowledge of God, and the love of God. If you would seek good, seek the good of your souls in the first place.

(3d.) That a long life should be preferred before a short one, eternity before time. All that are convinced of a life to come should therefore lay out more care upon things eternal than temporal. What wise man would be careful to furnish his inn, where he tarrieth for a night, and be content that his house be naked and destitute, where his constant abode is? Do thus, and temptations will little sway with you, 2 Cor. iv. 18. What is a little affliction here, or happiness here? Rom. ii. 7, ‘To them that, by patience in well-doing, seek for glory and immortality, eternal life.’ Every one would do well, have good; then seek everlasting good; this your religion directeth you unto.

Use 1. Information or instruction how false the prejudices of the world are, as if the ways of God were rigid, severe, and unprofitable. No; ‘He hath showed thee, O man, what is good.’ He requireth nothing that is hard, unjust; nothing that is noxious and harmful, or for our real loss and damage; nothing which a man well in his wits would refuse, if left to his own option and choice. What notion have you of good? that which is amiable, pleasant, profitable, honourable?

1. That which is amiable or draweth affection: *καλὸν ἐστὶ οὐ πάντα*, &c. What is more amiable than holiness? It is the beauty of the soul. It is nothing else but putting the soul in a decent posture of subordination to God, or a regular decency in our thoughts, affections, words, and actions. The beauty of the body, which consists in good colour or good proportion, is a mean thing to this. As it consists in good colour, it is but skin deep, and soon blasted and withered by age and sickness, or as lovely proportion that may be in an horse or any other creature. But this of the soul, *si oculis cerneretur*, if it could be seen by the eyes of the body, how would it ravish us, and stir up a wonderful love in the hearts of men to itself! By this we are made amiable to God, in whose sight it is a great price, 1 Peter iv. 3, to Christ, to the holy angels, to good men. It is a pleasant sight to see it in a

thorough good man, who seeketh to do good to all, to hurt none, lusteth not to honour and greatness, but giveth place to all, giveth due respect to all, and, how great soever, condescendeth to the meanest; wrongeth none, is angry with none, railleth at none, revengeth himself upon none, but is courteous to all, beneficial to all: to God; is careful to keep up a due remembrance of God by daily invocation and worship; always rejoiceth in Christ, and liveth in obedience to the sanctifying motions of his Holy Spirit; so that his life is not tainted with the blot of any heinous sin; is still encouraging himself by the promises of another world, and levelling and directing all his actions thither. Thus is the good man described in scripture; and can there be a more delightful spectacle, unless it be to a man blinded with prejudice and the love of vice, than to see such a man?

2. Pleasant. Surely the truest delight is found in the exercise of godliness: Prov. iii. 17, 'All her ways are ways of pleasantness, and her paths are peace.' None have such a sweet life as they that live holily and suitably to God's commands, moral and evangelical. Sensualists are sots and fools, that run to carnal delights; they never come away from their sports with such a merry heart as the christian cometh away from the throne of grace. The conscience is the most sensible faculty, and the pleasures are more intimate and deep than those that only tickle the sense, as all carnal delights can do no more. The saddest duties have their pleasure annexed; no man ever repented his repentance, 2 Cor. vii. 18. But those duties that concern communion with God, as prayer, though it seem a dull unpleasing task to the carnal, it is a sweet reviving to the gracious: 1 Sam. i. 18, Hannah, having poured out her prayer to God, 'was no more sad.' So conformity to God; as in justice: Prov. xxi. 15, 'It is a joy to the just to do judgment.' So mercy is a blessed god-like thing, Acts xx. 38. These are chaste delights, never soured with any sting or remorse.

3. Profitable. Men stand upon advantage. What profit? is the usual question: Deut. v. 29, 'Oh! that there were such an heart in them that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever.' No advantage or disadvantage cometh to God; he is above the reach of our injuries or benefits. What hath God lost by the fall of the angels? They have lost, but he hath not lost. Even in this life we have more than all the wages of sin cometh to: 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'For bodily exercise profiteth little, but godliness is profitable unto all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;' and Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.' No man is a loser by God. Here we have peace of conscience, Ps. cxix. 165, but chiefly in the other world. When a man gaineth most by the devil's service, he is the greatest loser; when he loseth most by God's service, he is the greatest gainer, 1 Cor. xv. 58, Rom. vi. 22.

4. Honourable. If we consider it aright, service is an honour and duty a privilege; God is so great a master, and his work is such noble work. He requireth nothing but what is the perfection of our being, that it puts an excellency upon a man to yield to this service: Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' Carnal men, though loath to submit to God's precepts themselves, yet see an

excellency in those that practise them. God himself is glorious in holiness, *Exod. xv. 11.* So that to be holy is to put on the royal robe of the king of all the earth. Surely the more a man partaketh of the image of God, and the nature of God, and the holiness of God, the more excellent, far above those who have no higher trade than to please the flesh.

Use 2. What reason we have to acquiesce in and bless God for the good religion what he hath taught us : we had lost the knowledge of God, and the world to come, and the way that leadeth to it. Now, that we have such a sure revelation, that teaches us to know God ; it is our glory, *Jer. ix. 29* ; to know Christ it is our life, *John xvii. 3* ; to know the world to come, *2 Tim. i. 10*, the way thither by Christ's doctrine : *Ps. xvi. 11*, 'Thou wilt show me the path of life.' By Christ's example, *1 Peter ii. 21*, which was necessary, we being bound to imitation, and very engaging. We live by the same laws God himself lived by when he was in the flesh. In short, the moral part of the word is good, but the evangelical part glorious, *1 Tim. i. 1, 9, 11.* Oh ! let us prize this discovery of the will of God.

Use 3. It informeth us what a good people we should be, for the impress should be according to the seal. What do bad people do with a good religion ? In our religion all is good. There is a good God whom we should imitate : *Ps. cxix. 68*, 'Thou art good, and doest good ; teach me thy statutes ;' and *Acts xiv. 17*, 'Nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good,' &c. And from whom it came ; a good Christ : *Acts x. 36*, 'God anointed Jesus of Nazareth, who went about doing good ;' that is, to the bodies and souls of men—giving sight to the blind, limbs to the lame, and health to the sick, life to the dead, naturally, spiritually. There is a good Spirit, so called because he maketh us good. Barnabas was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost, *Acts xi. 24.* There is a good word. Now what remaineth but that we be also a good people ?

1. Good to man. Goodness should be the constitution of our souls, and doing good the business of our lives. It is mighty taking, more than rigid innocency : *Rom. v. 7*, 'For a good man one would even dare to die.'

2. Good to God. Many place religion in an easy temper, which is often difficult to God ; wax to other things, but as a stone to God ; easy to temptations, hard to be instructed to godliness. But, *Luke vi. 45*, he is a good man that out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things ; ready to honour and glorify God on all occasions, ever liveth in constant obedience to him.

SERMON II.

And to walk humbly with thy God.—MICAH vi. 8.

THIS relateth to the duties of God's worship, which, indeed, 'are the chief and principal. All our justice and mercy must come from love

and obedience to God, or else they are destitute of their true and proper principle. We are under a law, subjects to the heavenly sovereign, to whom we must give an account; and in all that we do, either to God or man, obedience must sway the conscience and incline the heart. Faith presents encouragements, and then what we do is no more morality, but religion. In this clause two things are observable—

1. The matter. To walk with God is to live an holy life, Gen. v. 22.

2. The *modus* or manner—humbly; or, as the word may be translated, ‘Humble thyself to walk with God;’ *i.e.*, with that submission and reverence which will become such a God. Humility is a voluntary debasement of soul before God, arising from a sense of his greatness and our vileness.

Doct. Walking humbly with God is our great duty, which distinguisheth the sincere from the hypocrites.

I shall show you—

1. What it is.

2. What reasons may enforce it.

First, What it is, or what it containeth.

1. A ready submitting or subjection of ourselves to all God’s commands. Sin biddeth a defiance to God and disowneth his authority; therefore, Ps. cxix. 21, the proud are described to be those ‘that err from God’s commandments.’ Wicked men shake off the yoke of God, and will not be subject to their maker: Exod. v. 2, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice?’ This is the language of men’s actions, if it be not of their tongues. Every wilful sin hath a great deal of pride in it, for it is a lifting up our will against the will of our creator, and so a depreciation or contempt of God’s majesty and sovereign authority, and disowning his interest in us: 2 Sam. xii. 9, ‘Wherefore hast thou despised the commandment of the Lord, to do that which is evil in his sight?’ So Ps. xii. 4, ‘With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?’ So it is charged, Neh. ix. 16, ‘Our fathers dealt proudly, and hardened their necks, and hearkened not to God’s commandments.’ Sin is a pride against God himself. When the prophet inviteth them to repentance, he saith, Jer. xiii. 15, ‘Hear ye, and give ear; be not proud;’ that is, break off your obstinacy and contempt of God. We humble ourselves then to walk with God when we lie at God’s feet, desiring to know his pleasure, claiming no power over ourselves, or anything that we have, but entirely submit ourselves to be commanded and governed by him. There are two branches of this ready obedience—(1.) A fear to offend; (2.) A care to please.

[1.] A fear to offend so great and glorious a majesty, Heb. xi. 28, 29. The more holy any is, the more humble in this sense; that is, more tender of doing anything that is displeasing to God: as it is said of Michael, the archangel, *οὐκ ἐτόλμησε*, Jude 9, ‘He durst not bring against him a railing accusation,’ &c. So Prov. xiii. 13, ‘Whoso despiseth the word shall be destroyed; but whoso feareth the commandment shall be rewarded.’ There is nothing of less account with the carnal-minded than a commandment; but there is an holy awe upon the gracious; they dare not proceed if a commandment stop their way.

The authority of God is more than if an angel should stand in the way to hinder them with a drawn sword. They dare not go over the belly of a commandment to enjoy the things they most affect. This is the first branch, a reverence of God's authority.

[2.] The other is a care to please, or an holy solicitude to approve themselves and their lives to God: Col. i. 10, 'Walk worthy of God, unto all pleasing.' He is a God too great to be slighted or negligently served, or put off with a little superficial religiousness done by the by. No; the whole drift and bent of their lives and their chief endeavour is to be well-pleasing unto God: 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Therefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' And they are still improving themselves herein, and striving to come out of their first weakness; they cannot satisfy themselves with what they have done: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'As you have received how to walk, and how to please God, so you would abound therein more and more.' They daily grow better, and mend upon the hand. Surely this is not service becoming the great God. They are troubled that they know him so little, love him no more, serve him no better; and therefore still are exciting themselves to more growth and progress in godliness. This is the first and great thing which is included in humbling ourselves to walk with God.

2. It consisteth in a patient contentedness with every condition God bringeth us into; for as we are to subject ourselves to be governed by God's commanding will, so we are to submit ourselves to be ordered by his disposing will. Those that would walk with God must follow him wheresoever he leadeth them. They are called to his foot, Isa. xli. 2, to go to and fro at his command as he should appoint them, or submit to be disposed of according to his will. And herein consists true humility, meekly to submit to God's corrections, or to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, 1 Peter v. 8. Murmurings are the fruit of pride. The devil, the proudest creature in the world, is the most discontented with his condition. They whose souls are lifted up are opposed to the just who live by faith: Hab. ii. 11, 'Behold his soul, which is lifted up, is not upright in him; but the just shall live by his faith.' Afflictions are in themselves humbling occasions; but where they light upon hypocrites, it discovereth their pride and swelling against God's sovereignty that he should have the disposing of us at his pleasure; whereas the humble and upright soul submits to God, and waiteth for him in the hardest and straitest condition. Therefore, if we would humble ourselves to walk with God, we must be contented with his conduct, that he may lead us to heaven in a way best pleasing to himself, not thinking ourselves worthy of any better condition than he seeth fit to bring us into; nor murmuring against it if it be hard and pressing; yea, accepting the punishment of our iniquity, Lev. xxvi. 41; glad it is no worse with us; for then, and never till then, are our hearts humbled: Ezra ix. 13, 'Thou hast punished us less than we have deserved.' If we are in Babylon, remember we might have been in hell.

3. It implieth specially reverence in worship, and that we be deeply sensible of our unworthiness to approach his holy presence. Surely we have not a due sense of the excellency of God, unless we

debase ourselves before him. It is said, Lev. x. 3, 'That God will be sanctified in all that draw nigh unto him.' God is sanctified when we carry ourselves humbly, holily, and uprightly in his sight; when we set him apart from common things, going about his worship with another kind of heart than we do go about our ordinary business. So Ps. xc. 6, 'Oh! come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our maker.' Here we come in the lowliest manner, to express the sincere humility of our souls, as sensible of our great distance from God, and his superiority over us. God's love doth not abase his majesty: Ps. lxxxix. 7, 'God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and had in reverence of them that are round about him.' Our thoughts should be taken up with the greatness of his power, excellency, and majesty, that he may not only be loved, but feared by us, and our praise and humble adoration may be made up of both.

4. A constant dependence on him, and a looking for all from him that we stand in need of in the course of our obedience, that we may live in him, and live to him, and continually receive a supply of strength from him: Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I,' &c.; and Phil. ii. 12, 13. Spiritual life would be at a stand unless God did strengthen and enable. The humble soul is sensible of his utter insufficiency, 2 Cor. iii. 5, therefore liveth in and upon Christ, hath no life but from him, no access to God but by him; he is daily receiving from Christ, John xv. 5. They live in him as members in their head, as branches in their root; need him not only for a turn, but for their very subsistence. The stock is not in our hands, but in his.

5. A modest sense of their own vileness and nothingness. Humility, properly and strictly taken, is a mean esteem of ourselves. In their course of walking with God, they best see enough to humble them; it is because they are best acquainted with themselves, they think none so bad as themselves. Thus Paul, 1 Tim. i. 15, counts himself *πρῶτος ἁμαρτωλῶν*, 'the chiefest of sinners,' and 'less than the least of all saints,' *ἐλαχιστότερος*, Eph. iii. 8. So Agur: Prov. xxx. 2, 'I am more brutish than any man.' They have such dull thoughts of God, such an aversion from holy things, their meditations are so strange and backward as to the life to come, that they think there can hardly be such unthankful creatures in the world. A good christian hateth himself for the imperfectness of his obedience to God, more than hypocrites do for reigning sin. No question but 'the righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' But you will say, How then can he speak this in truth? I answer—They have more light and love, therefore none value themselves at a lower rate than they do; and they know more evil of themselves than possibly they can know by another; they have an intimate sight of their own sins, but a remote view of the sins of others. Guilt checketh a mistrust of others, but uprightness condemneth ourselves. A man grievously sick feeleth his own pain, and can but guess at the pain of another. The sincere heart is conscious to such defects in his love to God, such slightness in his service, such cold thoughts of happiness to come, such unreadiness in his duty, such non-proficiency under his advantages and the means he enjoyeth, and experienceth such

reluctances and oppositions of the carnal nature against anything that is good, that he thinketh none can be as bad as himself. As their spiritual life increaseth, so doth their sense of what is an annoyance to it; but the heartless hypocrite is vaunting and boasting: 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men,' Luke xviii. 11. Now, concerning this humility, I observe four things—

[1.] It is spoken of them that are supposed to do justice and love mercy, they walk humbly with God. Some are altogether destitute of goodness, have no real worth wherein to pride themselves. Humility doth not imply a want of grace, but an humble sense of the imperfections which are mingled with the grace that we have; and doth not only become the downright sinner, but the choicest servants of God: Luke xvii. 10, 'When you shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.' Many speak against resting in their own duties when they have done nothing for God therein. Humility is when we have done all. To use this plea, when done nothing, is to harden ourselves in the neglect of duty. They that have done nothing are cast out as unprofitable servants, Mat. xxv. But when done our utmost, then to humble ourselves is most proper and commendable, and tendeth most to the glory of God and our own self-abasement.

[2.] I observe, that walking humbly is here pressed; not hanging the head for a day like a bullrush as many will in a day of humiliation, but are proud at other times. *Walking* implieth more than one act, a continued course and tract of humility, or a life of lowliness, meekness, and patience. This grace is never out of use; our exercise of it continueth till we are perfected in heaven; still there is an abasing of themselves before God, Isa. vi. 2, 3. But here, in this life, God's children are still admiring the mercy of God in Jesus Christ, still kept sensible of daily weaknesses and failings, see a constant need of having their wants supplied, and receiving new comfort and grace out of Christ's fulness. And once more, it is a frame of heart, not a pang. Legal terrors are a judiciary impression, which lasteth but for a while; but this always continueth with us. A stormy conscience we must get rid of as soon as we can, but a tender conscience must be always cherished.

[3.] I observe, this humble walking is consistent with an interest in God; nay, floweth from the sense and assurance of it—'Thy God.' There is no such humility required of us as to put ourselves out of Christ, or to think ourselves excluded utterly from the favour of God. That is not true humility, but sinful ingratitude, to deny his spiritual graces and favours vouchsafed to us. As, in a temporal case, to profess deep poverty when God has given us somewhat to live upon, is a lie and a deceit; so to deny grace received is *humilitatis causa mentiri*. God's children are sensible of their defects, none more; yet they do not deny their grace, Cant. i. 6, and v. 2, Mark iv. 24. Paul acknowledgeth a will when he could not own a thorough performance, Rom. vii. 18. When he in humility calleth himself less than the least of the saints, he acknowledgeth himself a saint in some degree, and owneth the work of grace, though in the lowest form and rank. Christ was angry with Peter's over-modesty, whether in defect

or excess, John xiii. 10. Remaining defects do not make void our interest in Christ, nor change our spiritual estate.

[4.] I observe, that it is no such humility as doth enfeeble our hands for duty; for it is, 'Walk humbly.' They bewail defects, but go on still. Some languish, and spend their religion in fruitless and idle complaints. Oh, no! humble yourselves, but yet walk with God. It is sinful and legal dejection which crippleth our endeavours. God's children press forward to mend what they complain of: Phil. iii. 13, 14, 'I have not attained, I am not perfect; but this one thing I do, I press forward towards the mark.' To lie down under heartless discouragement is not the fruit of true humility.

6. There is also included in it a giving God the glory of all that we have, are, and do; not boasting of ourselves, nor arrogating to ourselves that excellency which is due to God. Whatever we have, we have it from God, and we have it for God, 1 Cor. iv. 7; therefore the crown of excellency must be taken off from our own heads, and thrown at the Lamb's feet, Rev. iv. 10; unwilling to wear a crown in his presence. The saints have been very tender of robbing God of any part of his honour, or ascribing anything to their own merit or power, Gen. xxxii. 10; Luke xix. 16, 'Thy pound;' 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'Not I, but the grace of God which was with me;' Gal. ii. 20, 'I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me,' &c. They would disappear and be hidden in a throng, that God may have all the glory. They have all from him, therefore they cast the honour of all upon him.

7. Looking for our acceptance and reward from God's mere mercy; allowing no conceit of righteousness or merit in ourselves, but hoping humbly to find grace by a free covenant: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' That is the only claim the christian makes. 'Christ spake a parable against those that trusted in themselves that they were righteous,' Luke xviii. 9. A good christian, well acquainted with his great imperfections, unworthiness, blusheth at his own defects, dareth not challenge God as a debtor, but ascribes all to his mercy and benignity as a gracious benefactor.

Secondly, What reasons may enforce it, or why should we thus humble ourselves to walk with God.

1. It is God, the fountain of all being, from whom we and all that we have doth come, and on whom we do continually depend, and who is the sovereign Lord of the whole earth. To carry ourselves undutifully to him is as much as in us lieth to lessen his majesty, and to bring down the rate of his honour in the world. By slight and neglectful dealing his greatness is disparaged, Mal. i. 14. His greatness calleth for other manner of service than is usually given him in the world. Superficial dealing in his service floweth from mean thoughts of him; and we propagate this slightness to others so far as our actions are public. And besides, by such malignant sin his holiness is blotted: Ezek. xxxvi. 20, 'They profaned my holy name among the heathen.' But of that by and by. There is not a more powerful means in the world to keep men humble than a due apprehension of God: Isa. vi. 5, 'I am unclean, for I have seen the Lord of hosts;' Gen. xviii. 27, 'I have taken upon me to speak unto the

Lord, who am but dust and ashes.' The term *dust* refers to our original. When the soul was formed out of nothing, the body was made of the dust of the ground. *Ashes* refers to the curse or wrath of God that came upon them by the fall. So Job xli. 5, 'I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee; wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' By God's appearing in so great glory and majesty he had a deeper sense of his own vileness than ever before. If God were indeed seen and duly apprehended by the eye of faith, the most holy of all his saints would become loathsome and vile in their own eyes. When we compare ourselves with other creatures, we seem wise, good, powerful, as they are foolish, wicked, and bad. The stars differ from one another in brightness and glory in the night; but when the sun appeareth, all these differences are obscured and vanish out of sight. So where God is thought on and rightly apprehended, our wisdom is but folly, our power but weakness, our righteousness as filthy rags. He is all, we are nothing but what he maketh us to be. All the creatures are to him 'as nothing, less than nothing,' Isa. iv. 17; nothing in opposition to him, nothing in comparison with him, nothing in exclusion of him. Now the mind of man should be often seasoned with these thoughts.

2. 'Thy God;' which noteth our interest in him. He is our God, partly by his own condescension, and partly by our choice. The one noteth our ingratitude, the other our treachery and breach of covenant if we do not humble ourselves to walk with him.

[1.] His condescension. He hath crowned thee with his grace and favour. He must not be the lesser for that, but the greater in our esteem; because that through Christ in the covenant he becometh ours: Deut. xxviii. 58, 'Thou shalt do all the words in this law, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord thy God.' You above all others are most obliged to God, and singled out to hold forth the name of God with honour to the world, that by the impression upon your hearts and lives the world may know what a great and glorious being he is: 1 Peter ii. 9, 'A peculiar people, that show forth the praises of him,' &c.; τὰς ἀρετὰς, his properties and excellences to the world, that others might have a reverence of God. The world must know from you that God is wise, powerful, good, his counsel the wisest course you can take; his power in an holy awe, not daring to offend him. There are the greatest advantages on the one side, the greatest terrors on the other, discovered by the joy of your faith, readiness of your obedience, and patience under the sharpest afflictions.

[2.] Our choice. We have taken upon ourselves to serve and honour him, believing his excellences and waiting for his reward. Now, for us to be disobedient to God, or murmur against his providence, and to carry it high against him, it is to be rebels to God while we profess to be his people, and, in confidence of our privileges, to break his law, Luke vi. 46, and John vi. 67, 'Will ye also go away?' It goeth near his heart. So that our interest in him doth not make void our duty, but establish it rather. Who will reverence him if his people do not? those whom he hath known of all the families of the earth, who have devoted themselves to him, and chosen him for their God.

[3.] You are with him, always before him in his eye and presence: Luke. i. 75, 'In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.' To be proud and undutiful before God is to affront him to his face. Others sin behind God's back, you before his very face: 'Will he force the queen before my face?' Esther vii. 8.

[4.] In the word *walk* there is an argument which noteth a continual converse with God and communion with him. Can they be proud that have so often to do with an holy and glorious God? Surely every glimpse of his majesty should take down their self-exalting thoughts. For those who are strange to God, and have little business with him, to contemn and slight him, is not so great a wonder: but you have continually to do with that majesty that is so much to be revered and dreaded; this should move you; the bent of your hearts are towards him, your thoughts are on him, your work lieth with him, even with so holy and so great a God; therefore surely we should walk humbly. If you know the God whom you worship, if you be serious with him, as you are often with him, the very thoughts of God will teach you humility and reverence.

Use 1. If walking humbly with God distinguisheth the sincere from the hypocrites, let us see if we walk humbly with God.

1. If it be so, it is yourselves that you have most cause to complain of in your afflictions, more than the rigour of God or the injustice of men. The rigour of God: Lam. iii. 39, 'Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sin?' Is God severe, or have you been unthankful? Did I honour God with my prosperity, or did I not give him just cause to take away the fuel of my lusts by my ingratitude to him? Nor injustice of men, if slighted, disparaged, disesteemed, and reproached. Contempt from these is no great matter to him that hath a constant sense of the burden of remaining sin. Paul did not complain of afflictions, but of 'the body of death,' Rom. vii. 24; as if no hurt can be done to such a poor worm and such an unworthy sinner as himself. Reproaches might be an help against his sore burden, 2 Cor. xii. 10.

2. If it be so, if you are rightly humble, you will be more willing to be admonished than praised; for your design is humble walking with God, and no man that hath any sense of his duty but will soon see how much more he deserveth reproof than praises. The world seeth not the many secret sins you are conscious unto, and how much more you deserve reproof than commendation. It is the proud man despiseth reproof, but the humble prizeth it. Instances of the one is Amazias to the prophet: 2 Chron. xxv. 16, 'Art thou made of the king's counsel? forbear, why shouldst thou be smitten?' Zedekiah to Michaias: 2 Chron. xviii. 23, 'Which way went the spirit of the Lord from thee to me?' The pharisees to Christ: John ix. 39, 40, 'Are we blind also?' Humble men are of another temper. Job 'despised not the cause of his servants, when they contended with him,' Job xxx. 13, 14. David: Ps. cxli. 5, 'Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head.' Surely to a gracious heart reproofs are better than praises or flatteries.

3. You will not look upon your graces and privileges without looking

upon your infirmities. A christian's life is an intermixture of thankfulness and humility: 'I believe, help my belief,' Mark ix. 29. And when you do so, you will say you have more cause to blush than to be proud, 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'The world seeth the good, not the evil;' Luke xvi. 15, 'That which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God.' Self-love overlooketh our failings, Prov. xvi. 2, but our actions will we weighed in a more impartial balance.

4. When you reflect upon your enjoyments, you will consider your account, Luke xii. 43. How shall we do when we shall appear before God's tribunal to answer for his honour, estate, gifts, &c.? This reckoning doth quench all self-exalting thoughts.

5. You will not consider your afflictions, but the undeserved mercies yet remaining, and set the evil against the good, Job ii. 10.

6. You will not look upon your excellency, but remember the author, and the undeserved goodness of God, 2 Sam. vii. 18, 1 Cor. iv. 7. You have nothing but what was given you of grace, and may be taken away by justice.

Use 2. To persuade the most close walkers with God to be humble.

1. Pride came into the world with sin. Man was never more arrogant than since he was wretchedly miserable. It is not perfection, but imperfection is the cause of pride; not height, but defect of grace. To be proud and holy is to be sick and well. The sun at height casts least shadows. Laden branches do most bend the head. When holiness is at the highest, there is no pride; as in heaven, and in the person of Christ.

2. The humble have the advantage of others. Where there is an humble sense of wants and the burden of sin, they hear the word with more seriousness than others: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To him will I look that is poor in spirit, and trembleth at my word.' They have more life in their supplications than others have. The poor sendeth up supplications when others pray formally and heartlessly; they find the want of grace, and pray heartily as an hunger-starved child crieth for bread: Heb. iv. 16, 'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in a time of need.'

3. They have most respect with God: 1 Peter v. 5, 'Be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility, for God resisteth the proud,' &c.

4. Consider what need there is why close walkers should be humble.

[1.] The sin and misery they were once in. They were born fleshly, carnal, averse from God, Rom. iii. 6, liable to God's wrath, Eph. ii. 3. If escaped by Christ, the sentence was once passed upon you, the rope was about your necks; you were as bad as the worst. This must be remembered, though not to weaken your confidence, yet to humble your hearts. You were at the gates of hell, and might have entered in, but for the grace of your Redeemer.

[2.] There is much corruption of nature yet remaining, Gal. v. 17; and this often breaketh out into actual sin, which breedeth fear of the wrath of God, and should beget such a sense of it as promoteth humility, and should quicken your prayers for pardon.

[3.] Though it break not out into actual sin, yet there are such defects in our best duties as should humble us, such low apprehensions and dull conceptions of God, Christ, and heaven as neither excite reverence nor joy, at least not becoming such a God, such a Christ, such a glory, that a christian cannot satisfy himself in his imperfect endeavours. Ye cannot do the things that ye would: 'How to perform that which is good I find not.'

[4.] The remainder of sin would bring you to damnation if God should deal with you according to your deservings; and it is a wonder that a fire doth not come forth from his jealousy to consume you. If Christ, that died for your sins, did not now hide your nakedness, and by his intercession procure your daily pardon, you would every day be your own destroyers; nay, you would not be an hour longer out of hell, Heb. iii. 17, 18.

[5.] We have a great deal of work to do, and our strength is very small. The best may say, Lord, we have no might; our eyes are unto thee; Rom. vii. 18; 'How to perform that which is good I find not.'

[6.] Now you have a little grace, you cannot keep it of yourselves. Now you are made alive, you cannot keep yourselves alive, if not preserved by him that infused life into you at first, Jude 1, and kept by his power. If he be not the finisher who was the author of it, how speedily, how certainly would you undo all! You are carried in his arms. If left to yourselves in one temptation, it doth easily overcome you. None can preserve us but he that created us.
