

1. We must be able to understand it. Christ saith to the young man, 'Thou knowest the commandments;' he appealeth to him as to one that had some knowledge of the law. Those that live in the church should not be ignorant of the commandments or law of God, but well acquainted with them. God complaineth, Hosea viii. 12, 'I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing.' To be strangers to the word of God, little conversant in it, and to make little use of it, is a great affront done to God. We should acquaint ourselves not with the letter only, as little children learn it by rote, but with the sense and purpose of it.

2. Meditate often thereupon: Ps. i. 2, 'His delight is in the law of the Lord, and in his law doth he meditate day and night.' Deep and ponderous thoughts have most efficacy; without a study of the law men are without the law while they have it: Rom. vii. 9, 'I was alive without the law once.' Who more zealous for the law than Paul? Gal. i. 14, 'I profited in the Jew's religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers;' but while he did not ponder of it, he was without the law.

3. Judge yourselves by it. One great use for which the moral law serveth is to bring men to a sight and sense of their sins and imperfections, and humble them before God: Rom. vii. 7, 'I had not known sin but by the law, for I had not known lust except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;' and to undeceive them of conceits of their own goodness and righteousness. Look into thy bill, what owest thou?

4. Beg the light of the Spirit to show thee thy sin and misery: Rom. vii. 9, 'When the commandments came;' in the light and evidence of the Holy Spirit, 'sin revived and I died.' Men that have the letter of the law may be without the light and power of it. Without the Spirit we guess confusedly concerning things, as the man that saw men like trees walking, and have but general, cursory, confused thoughts.

SERMON IV.

And he answered, and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth.—MARK X. 20.

You have heard of a necessary question propounded by a noble young man to Christ, 'What shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' We have spoken to Christ's answer. Now in this verse we have the young man's reply, 'All these have I observed from my youth;' wherein there is expressed, or pretended at least—

1. An universality of respect to the will of God, 'All these have I observed.'

2. An early beginning to do so, 'From my youth.' He was still a

young man, but by these words, 'from my youth,' he means, ever since I had the use of reason, as soon as I began to distinguish between good and evil, straight and crooked. Certainly this answer were good if it were true. Some goodness there is in it, therefore we will observe something from it; for it is said in the next verse, when he had answered thus, 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

First, It is good in the first respect, as an universality of obedience is pretended; and I may drop this note—

Doct. They that would keep the commandments must observe not only one but all.

It is true of the law of God, as it belongeth to the covenant of works or to the covenant of grace.

1. As it belongeth to the covenant of works: Gal. iii. 10, 'Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.' Every sin, the least, is damnable by that covenant, and deserveth a curse; if he should omit anything required, or commit anything forbidden, the curse seizeth upon his throat. So James ii. 10, 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.' As one condition not observed forfeits the whole lease, therefore it concerns this legalist to make good his plea and conceit of perfection by the law, to say, 'All these things have I done.'

2. But is not the covenant of grace more favourable? No; it gives not allowance to the least failings, but binds us to make conscience of all, as well as of some.

[1.] Because the authority is the same: Exod. xx. 1, 'God spake,' not one or two, but all these words; they are all ratified by the great God and lawgiver; so that the same reason that moves us to one, moves us to another also, that we do it out of conscience to God: we must 'walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work,' Col. i. 10. That we should obey parents, keep the sabbath, not steal, be careful of his institutions, not worship him by an idol; this is pleasing to God, and so is that.

[2.] The heart can never be sincere when we can dispense with anything which God hath commanded; and you cannot have the testimony of a good conscience approving your sincerity when you allow yourselves in the least failing: Ps. cxix. 6, 'Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect to all thy commandments.' I confess it is chiefly meant of our final judgment; but in all conditions in the world, if we would be found faithful with God, and not left to shame, we must respect all his commandments: Luke i. 6, Zachary and Elizabeth 'were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless;' and, saith David, Ps. lxxvi. 18, 'If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.' If you would not break your confidence and freedom of heart when you come to God in prayer, but come with assurance of welcome and audience, not one sin must be regarded. When we set up a toleration in our own hearts, and dispense with any one duty, it is either some pleasure or profit or honour that maketh the duty contrary to us; but this will not stand with sincerity, that any petty interest or affection of ours should be preferred before the will of God; for these men do not serve God, but

their own lusts, when they will only obey God so far as pleasure, honour, or profit, or some lust, will permit them to yield obedience to him.

[3.] God giveth grace to keep all. Wherever he renews and sanctifies, is throughout; he fills the soul with the seeds of all grace, so as to dispose and incline us to every duty, whether to God or man, the world or our fellow-saints: 2 Peter i. 7, 'Add to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness charity.' An infant as soon as born into the world, though it hath not the bulk, stature, and strength of a man, yet it hath all the essentials of a man, and is a perfect man. In the new birth the inward man is perfect in parts; all grace is given that is necessary for all conditions: 'Ye are enriched in all things in Christ;' there is a suitableness to the whole law of God: Rom. vii. 22, 'I delight in the law of God after the inward man.'

Use. To reprove those that would keep some commandments, but not all. Herod did something at the motion of John the Baptist, but he would not leave his incestuous marriage with his brother's wife. Some persons may be very forward in some good things, but they will not leave this or that sin, their swearing, or lying, or uncleanness, or vain company, or gaming, or idle fashions; they refrain some sins, but not all; some duties you shall have them very forward in, but not all; they are halving it with God. There is such an union betwixt all the parts of the law of God, that one cannot be violated without a breach of all the rest. As one leak in a ship, if let alone, may sink it, so one sin indulged and allowed may prove the bane of the soul; and therefore take heed of obeying God by halves, and think not to please him, or have any true comfort in thy conscience, by any such obedience. The young man so far spake well, if he had spoke truly, 'All these have I kept.'

Secondly, There is another thing that is good in the reply the young man maketh, that is his early beginning: I have kept all 'from my youth.' It is certainly a good thing to begin with God betimes, and to frame our hearts to the will of God as soon as we come to years of discretion, and that upon a threefold reason—

1. Because it will be a help to us all our lives afterwards, before affections are forestalled and pre-engaged, to begin with God, and to have the inclinations of youth set right by a good education, to be restrained from our own will, and be trained up in a way of abstinence from bodily pleasures. A sober education prevents much sin: Ps. cxix. 9, 'Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word.' Mark, it is not wherewith shall a young man guide or direct, but cleanse his way. When men are well principled and seasoned in youth, it sticketh by them; nay, the vessel is seasoned already. The word *cleansed* presupposeth some defilement. A child is not like a vessel which newly comes out of the potter's shop, indifferent for good or bad infusions. No; the vessel is fusty already, and hath a smatch of the old man: we come seasoned into the world, for we were born in sin and in iniquity: Ps. li. 5, 'Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' Well, then, to begin betimes, what good may we get by it! Our work is to stop the growth of sin, and that we do not settle in an evil course, and that will

be a great advantage to us all our life after. On the other side, the want of a good education is a great disadvantage to grace, a maim hardly cured; it leaves a scar, and makes a man limp as long as he lives, if he doth not begin with God betimes, though afterwards he be converted; for when a man is not framed betimes to God, he suffers the canker of self-will to fret so deep, that reason, law, and religion hath much ado to bring them to the denial of themselves. To give you an instance in Adonijah, 1 Kings i, 5, 6, 'Who exalted himself, saying, I will be king.' A rough self-willed young man; he would have sovereignty and a crown, and not stay for it till David was dead, or submit to the appointment of a successor: 'I will be king;' and why? It is said, 'His father had not displeased him at any time, in saying, Why hast thou done so?' He had too much of his will when he was a youth. As Plutarch noteth of Coriolanus, a noble Roman, that for want of a good and seasonable education, being left young under the tutelage of his mother, and she left him to his own will, was so impatient and wilful that no man could hardly converse with him. O christians! when religion begins late, and men have to do with corruptions habituated and confirmed by long time and loose education, it cannot show itself with such lustre and advantage. Therefore it is good to break the will of young ones, to train them up to bear the yoke from their youth; otherwise though they should be subdued by grace and in a great measure broken, yet this disadvantage remains with them to their dying day. Those that are seasoned well with sober education, either they are not so bad as others, or it worse becomes them to do evil, and they cannot sin without many checks of conscience which others have not. Therefore a good and sober education is a great advantage, to be trained up from our youth, though it be but to moral virtue.

2. While parents and governors are careful to season those tender vessels, the Lord is pleased many times to replenish them with grace from above, and to give in his blessing upon their education, and many have been converted that way. We read of Obadiah, 1 Kings xviii. 12, 'But I thy servant fear the Lord from my youth.' Josiah, 2 Chron. xiv. 3, 'In the eighth year of his reign, while he was yet young, he began to seek after the God of David his father.' So Timothy, 2 Tim. i. 5, 'When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice, and I am persuaded that in thee also.' His mother and grandmother were full of faith and sobriety, and they were seasoning of him, and training him up from his youth to be acquainted with the will of God; and what a notable instance of abstinence and sobriety did he prove: 2 Tim. iii. 15, 'And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation.' Certainly it is much to have youth brought up in knowledge and in the power of godliness. Families are societies to be sanctified to God as well as churches, and governors of families have a charge of souls as well as pastors of churches, and therefore they should be careful of them, and may wait for God's blessing upon the education of youth. There be many offer their children to God in baptism (and they do well in so doing), but educate and train them up for the world and the flesh

which they renounce in baptism. You will bewail any natural defect of your children, and seek to cure it while they are young, if they have a stammering tongue, a deaf ear, or a lame leg; certainly you ought much more to bewail the want of grace. We murmur at outward defects, which is a taxing of providence, it being a fruit of the Lord's dominion; but these belong to our care: 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,' Prov. xxii. 6. Dye the cloth in the wool, and not in the web, and the colour is more durable. God works strangely in children, and many notable things have been found in them beyond expectation.

[3.] It prevents many sins which afterwards would be a trouble to us when we are old. Oh! many think that the tricks of youth are long since forgotten and forgiven; but alas! the guilt of them may fly in our faces afterward; nay, though they be pardoned, and the persons reconciled to God. The sins of youth trouble many a tender conscience in age; witness David, Ps. xxv. 7, 'Remember not the sins of my youth.' And Job, chap. xiii. 26, 'Thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth.' A good man may remember old sins with new fears that they are not pardoned. While it is easy to sin, it is easy to believe the pardon of sin (marvel not at the expression); while we are young, and sin freely, we think God will forgive those sins, and they will soon be forgotten; but as a man grows up into more tenderness of conscience, and into a greater awe, and sense, and esteem of God's holiness, what a holy God he serves, he finds it the more difficult to believe the pardon of sin. Good men have with much bitterness of soul called to mind the sins of their youth, when they see the sins of their younger days are so many, and the breaches of God's law so innumerable, whereby they have offended God, that either through ignorance or inconsideration they have so sinned against God that they have much ado to believe the pardon of the multitude of their youthful sins. New afflictions may awaken the sense of old sins, as old bruises may trouble us long after upon every change of weather. There are some that feel the sins of their youth in their bodies, when the pains and aches of their miserable age are the fruits of their youthful vanities and intemperance; as it is said, Job xx. 11, 'His bones are full of the sins of his youth, which shall lie down with him in the dust.' They carry the marks of their youthful sins; their bones feel them till they lie down in the dust. Nay, God's children, that have repented, and God hath been reconciled to them through Christ, they have many a bitter remembrance of their youthful follies and vanities, that make their hearts ache at the thoughts of them: Jer. xxxi. 19, 'Surely after that I was turned I repented, and after I was instructed I smote upon my thigh, I was ashamed, yea, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.' Therefore upon these considerations certainly it is very good to begin with God betimes, that it may not be a disadvantage to us after God shall call us to grace; for though the Lord may bless the education of youth with supernatural grace, yet youthful vanities may prove very bitter in the remembrance of them when we grow old.

Use. This is spoken to reprove us, because we always think it too soon to begin with God. Where is this timely care and forwardness? Alas!

we cannot say, 'All these have we kept from our youth;' but when we come to look to the commands of God, we may say, 'All these have we broken from our youth.' While they are young, most men live profane, and without all fear of God. Certainly there was some goodness in this man's speech, and that occasioned me to observe it, for 'Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

But was it true? 'All these have I kept from my youth.' In a sense it was true, in regard of outward conformity, but not true in regard of that perfect obedience which was required.

1. It was true in regard of outward conformity. Externally he had kept them all, though not in the just extent of the law, yet he was as to men unreprouable, being no adulterer, no murderer, no extortioner, no thief; he did not lie certainly in this profession he made, he spoke as he thought, and out of simplicity and error rather than deceit; the man lived blamelessly, and did nobody harm, and therefore saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Outward obedience and conformity to the law is a good and commendable thing in itself, yea, necessary, and required of us, but we are not to rest in it; but to escape the vices and pollutions of the world is so far praiseworthy. There are many that are openly profane and wicked in life, swearers, drunkards, sabbath-breakers; these come short of this young man, who yet came short of the kingdom of heaven. What will these say for themselves? Will they pretend that their heart is good? Can a pure fountain send forth impure streams? If the heart were good, would the life be so naught? If there be light in the lantern, will it not shine forth? If there be grace in the heart it will appear.

2. It was not true in regard of that perfect obedience which the law requireth, and so he ignorantly and falsely supposed that he had kept the law well enough, and done all those things from his youth. The falsity and presumption of this answer will appear by considering—

[1.] What the scripture saith of the state of man by nature: Gen. viii. 21, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.' And he saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Oh! how much do they forget themselves that boast of their own perfection!

[2.] The falsity of it appears by the sense of the commandment produced, 'Thou knowest the commandment,' saith Christ, 'Do not commit adultery,' &c., which will reach the most perfect man upon earth. It was a command of the second table, which wrought such tragical effects, and that stirred up those stings of conscience, and agonies of heart in Paul: Rom. vii. 7, 'I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet;' and thereupon he groundeth that general, ver. 14, 'The law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.'

[3.] The falsity will appear by comparing him with other holy men of God; how differently do they express themselves from this man, that was so full of confidence! Compare him first with Josiah, who, when he heard the law read, 'he rent his clothes,' 2 Kings xxii. 11; and here Christ recites the law, 'Thou knowest the commandment;' and this young man saith, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Oh! what a difference is there between a tender self-judging heart and a conceited justiciary! A tender conscience is all in an agony when it hears the law, and will smite for the least failing, as David's heart

smote him for cutting off the lap of Saul's garment. Again, compare him with the man that brought his son that was possessed with a dumb devil; he brought him to Christ to be cured, and Christ asked him, Dost thou believe I can do it? and he cried out with tears, 'Lord, I believe; help thou my unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. That was a humble spirit indeed; there is a work of faith, 'Lord, I believe;' but he acknowledgeth mixtures of weakness, 'Help thou my unbelief.' But here is no lamenting of defects, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' Good souls, in the best actions they perform, will bewail the mixtures of sin; when they own anything of grace, they are still acknowledging their weakness and many infirmities. We may, and we must, acknowledge the good that is wrought in us, but still we may and we must be sensible of the mixtures of infirmity in our best actions. Again, compare him with Paul; he was one that had cause to stand upon his privileges as much as any; he had all those things which the finer sort of hypocrites can plead and rely upon before they come to Christ. Before he became a christian, he was 'as touching the righteousness which is by the law blameless,' Phil. iii. 6. He had a life free from all scandal and any outward vice; yet when he comes to look upon this, he says, 'I count all but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,' ver. 8. Paul was broken-hearted, touched with a sight of sin and deserved wrath; but this man, what an utter stranger was he to this blessed work of brokenness of heart! 'All these have I kept from my youth.'

In short (that I may gather up the discourse), here was wanting Josiah's tenderness, who rent his clothes, and the other man's humility, and Paul's self-denial; therefore certainly his answer shows that he was not truly acquainted either with the law or with himself. So that the note which I shall prosecute will be this—

Doct. That men are too apt to think well of themselves, or of their own goodness and righteousness before God.

Here is a young man drunk with a foolish confidence, and therefore boasteth that he had ever performed his duty. And to be sure he hath more fellows in the world, some that are as confident as he, but upon far less grounds. It is said of the scribe that came to Christ, Luke x. 29, 'But he willing to justify himself;' that is the temper and disposition of man. So Rom. x. 3, 'For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves to the righteousness of God.' So Rev. iii. 17, 'Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and stand in need of nothing, and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.' Oh! how apt are many to conceit of themselves beyond what they ought!

Object. But what is the cause that men are so apt to overrate their own righteousness and goodness before God? I answer—Ignorance, error, self-love, negligence, and security.

First, Ignorance; they are ignorant of the law, and of the gospel.

1. Ignorant of the law, of the spiritual meaning of the law. 'They think they are well enough if they refrain from outward gross sins, and so say, 'All these have I kept,' because they keep it in an outward way;

as that pharisee, Luke xviii. 11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican.' Men please themselves in this, as if open and gross sinners were only liable to the wrath of God. Oh! how natural is it to us to cut short the sense of the law, that which may suit it to our own practice and our own course of duty! Ignorant persons think that no man is an idolater, or guilty of the breach of the first commandment, but he that doth grossly and openly worship stocks and stones, and beasts and serpents; and none a murderer but he that hath killed a man; none an adulterer but he that hath defiled his neighbour's bed; none a thief but he that robs by the highway side, or that pilfers another's goods. They look to the gross and outward sense of the law, and not to the inward spiritual meaning thereof. The Lord Christ rebukes this ignorance, Mat. v. 22, and shows that rash anger and contumelious words are sins; and he is a murderer not only that doth kill another, but he that breaks out into passion, that calls his 'brother, fool, he is in danger of hell-fire;' that lustful glances are adultery; that the law requires, not only an external conformity in manners and actions, but purity and righteousness in all our thoughts, internal motions, and the affections of the heart. Therefore the poor ignorant, self-deceiving man, that triumphs over sin as if it were wholly dead in him, because it breaks not out into open wickedness and enormous offences, is wholly mistaken; as Paul was alive without the law. Oh! this man is foully mistaken, for he knows not the law aright; for it doth not only command some external duties, and forbid some of the grosser sins, but reacheth the heart; it condemneth lust, evil concupiscence, and inordinate motions and stirrings. A man that keeps the law only outwardly can no more be said to keep the law than he that hath undertaken to carry a tree, and only takes up a little piece of the bark.

2. They are ignorant of gospel righteousness, which consists in the remission of sins and imputation of Christ's righteousness applied by true faith. What is the reason men are so apt to overrate their own righteousness? 'They are ignorant of the righteousness of God,' Rom. x. 3. They do not know the true plea in the gospel court, which is not innocency, but a broken-hearted confession of sin. That perfection of personal obedience which the legal covenant requireth they acknowledge not; and being ignorant of the second, they patch up a piece as well as they can of the duties of the law ill understood, that the ell may be no broader than the cloth. Ignorance then is one great cause of this disposition in men to justify themselves, ignorance of the legal and gospel covenant; they are ignorant of the nature, merit, and influence of sin, and of the severity of God's justice.

Secondly, Another cause is error. They are leavened with sottish principles, and that disposeth them to a conceit of their own righteousness. I shall name several of them.

1. That they live in good order, and are of a civil harmless life, and are better than others, or better than themselves have been heretofore, and therefore are in good condition before God; and yet a man may be carnal for all this. I will take this principle asunder. Take the positive part: A man may live in good order, be of a civil and harmless life, and yet be destitute of grace and of the life of faith.

There were moralities among the heathens far more exact than are to be found among many christians. As dogs excel man in acuteness of smell and sense, it is their perfection, so do many heathens excel abundance that go for christians, in temperance, justice, meekness, and a command of their passions; they that were never acquainted with Christ and the Spirit were civil and harmless; therefore to be a mere moral man certainly is not enough. Paul saith of himself, before he was acquainted with Christ, that he was 'as touching the righteousness which is of the law blameless,' Phil. iii. 6; and the apostle hath taught us to live 'godly,' as well as 'soberly and righteously in this present world,' Titus ii. 12. There is a living in communion with God, as well as being fair to men; and therefore a man may be civil and harmless, but such are not vicious, rather than virtuous and gracious; the mere rational life is one thing, and the spiritual life another thing. Then take the comparative part; they live better than others, so did the pharisee: Luke xviii. 11, 'God, I thank thee I am not as other men are;' yet Christ saith, Mat. v. 20, 'Except your righteousness exceed the righteousness of the scribes and pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven.' Among blind men the purblind is a kind of king, and guide of them all. A man may not be as bad as others, and yet not so good as God requires: Gal. vi. 4, 'Let every man prove his own work, and then he shall have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.' It is a miserable thing when a man hath no other ground of confidence but the sins of others; he is good because others are worse; he hath no rejoicing in himself, but only from the sinfulness of others. Or suppose that a man be better than himself was heretofore, there is a moral change as well as a supernatural, a reformation as well as a regeneration. As a wanton young man that came in to Xenocrates' lecture half drunk, with his head crowned with rosebuds, and when he heard a discourse of temperance, he was converted by his lecture, and betook himself to a sober course, so a man may cast off his youthful vanities, and may be changed from being riotous to be more sober, and yet be far from grace. A sow washed is a sow still. What is short of regeneration is short of salvation. Therefore do not think because of a civil orderly life you do enough; this is a sottish principle, and keeps us from the righteousness of God.

2. Here is another of their errors; they are born and bred up in the bosom of the church and true religion, and because they are baptized, and profess the faith of Christ, therefore they think they ever had faith and a good heart towards God, and do not see why or from what they should be converted. It was a wonderful thing to Nicodemus to hear that a man should be born again, as strange as if a man should 'enter again into his mother's womb,' John iii. 4. They are wholly ignorant of any change of soul or state, and mind it not. So the Jews, when Christ told them of being made free from the bondage of sin, John viii. 33, 'We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man, how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free?' Alas! men neglect their inward spiritual estate, and are not sensible of setting their souls free from the fetters of lusts and carnal affections, that they may pursue their chiefest good. Nothing so hard and heavy as spiritual bondage, and yet is little known and little discerned in the world. They live in

the bondage of sin with as much delight as fishes in their own element, and all this while they are puffed up with carnal dreams of their own privileges and worth. These are the men that are said 'to need no repentance,' Luke xv. 7, that is, in their own conceit, those that do not see why, or from what they should be converted.

3. They own no difference between a state of nature and a state of grace; they know no such thing as passing from death to life, and therefore are never troubled about it: 'All the Lord's people are holy,' Num. xvi. 3, and it is factious to make such distinctions: 'They have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the clean and unclean,' Ezek. xxii. 26. As if all were of one lump, and all should fare alike, and therefore think themselves as good as the best.

4. That those that are blameless before men and well spoken of in the world need not doubt of their acceptance with God. Oh no! God's trial is one thing, and men's another. Men see no further than the outside, but God regards the frame of the heart: 1 Sam. xvi. 7, 'Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart.' Therefore though a man cannot be justly taxed before men, yet this is nothing before the all-seeing God: Ps. cxliii. 2, 'Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.' *Non dicit, cum hostibus tuis, sed cum servo tuo.* David doth not say, Lord, enter not into judgment with thine enemies, but with thy servant.

5. Another sottish maxim is, that petty sins are not to be stood upon. They shall do well enough if they never sin more nor worse; as the omission of good duties in their closets or families, lesser oaths, vain speeches, idle sport; whereas Christ saith, 'By thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned,' Mat. xii. 37. Light things may weigh heavy in God's balance. Well, then, until the soul be dispossessed of these sottish conceits, it cannot be but they must overween their own righteousness, and think too well of themselves and of their estate before God.

Thirdly, Self-love is the reason of it: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' A man is very blind and partial in his own cause, and will not own any opinion and conceit against himself. There is an emphasis in that, 'his own eyes.' Surely man would favour himself, and be friendly to himself; we have a double instance of this in scripture. Judah was severe against Tamar, when he thought her to be with child by another man: Gen. xxxviii. 24, 'Bring her forth, and let her be burnt.' But when she showed him the tokens, the ring, the staff, and bracelets, and that he was the man, then he becomes gentle enough. So David, when his own story was represented to him in the case of a third person, that took away the ewe lamb from the poor man, he says in a heat, 'As the Lord liveth, the man that hath done this thing shall surely die,' 2 Sam. xii. 5; but when the prophet closeth with him, and told him, 'Thou art the man,' all this is spoken to thee, he was more calm. All this is spoken to show how favourable a judgment it must needs be that we pass upon ourselves: Ps. xxxvi. 2, 'He flatters himself in his own eyes until his iniquity be found to be hateful;' a man is well pleased with his own doings. That self-love is a cause, appears by

this, a man will not see sin, no, not when any man that looks upon his way may see it, till it break forth in shame, and makes him to be hateful; the mistake vanisheth not till all the town crieth shame upon him. While a man crieth out against sensuality, drunkenness, gluttony, he is so full of self-love, that he is loath to pass a sentence against his own soul.

Fourthly, Negligence, and want of searching, and taking the course whereby we may be undeceived. He that thinks better of himself than there is ground and reason for, the only way to bring him to himself is to put him upon often trial. So saith the apostle, Gal. vi. 3, 'If a man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.' But alas! this is a common case, and what more ordinary than for a man to conceit too highly of himself, and flatter himself with those excellences he hath not, and cry Peace, peace, when the wrath of God and sudden destruction is upon him? But how shall a man do to come out of this fool's paradise, that he may deceive himself; see the next verse, 'But let every man prove his own work;' try their work and carriage by the rule of God's word, what he doth, and upon what motives, and for what ends; let him prove so as to approve himself to God: 2 Cor. xiii. 5, 'Examine yourselves, whether you be in the faith; prove yourselves, know ye not your own selves how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?' Oh! search and see what is the frame of your hearts, what true grounds of confidence you have towards God. Now, when men will not so much as put it to the question, whether it be well or ill, no wonder they slightly return an *Omnia bene*, 'All these have I kept from my youth.' A natural man is under this dilemma, If I should not search, I should not know myself, if I should search I should not like myself; and therefore out of laziness and self-love he chooseth the latter. Plutarch saith, Evil men turn from their own lives as the worst spectacle that can be presented to them. We could not be so grossly deceived by Satan as we are, if we did not turn our eyes away from our own hearts and ways, but did oftener call ourselves to an account.

Fifthly, Security. As they will not search, so they will not know themselves when they are searched, and cannot endure thoroughly to be discovered to themselves. There is a voluntary examination of conscience, and an involuntary impression, by which conscience is awakened against our wills, either by the preaching of the word, or by afflictions sent from God. In both these cases men discover this self-conceit, in that they do defeat those methods which God useth when they are searched by God.

1. They cannot endure to be searched by the word: John iii. 20, 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh he to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd.' Men will stand out as long as they can, in defence of their own righteousness, and are loath to be convinced and discovered to themselves, and to be seen what indeed they are, and that is the reason they cannot endure a reprov'g light, a searching ministry. But the word doth seize upon them by chance, as sometimes it will. Thus Felix, when Paul rubs his privy sore, discoursing of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, it sets him all in an agony: 'Felix trembled,' Acts xxiv. 25. What then? He puts it off to a more convenient season. When God ransacks the

conscience by his word, they are not pleased with this, but seek diversions. Lusts quench and drown their convictions. The apostle James compares a careless hearer, chap. i. 23, 24, to 'a man beholding his natural face in a glass; for he beholdeth himself, and goeth away, and straightway forgetteth what manner of person he was.' Men content themselves with a slight transient glance, and are troubled for the present; they have but a weak impression wrought upon them, which is soon worn out. Or—

2. When God searcheth them by affliction; when they do not judge themselves, they are judged by the Lord. As Joseph's brethren, their consciences had slept many years securely in their sins, but God casts them down, and revives their thoughts; they have many tremblings and workings of soul: Gen. xlii. 21, 'They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us and we would not hear him, therefore is this evil come upon us.' Now how few are there that will hear the rod, or, if they be a little affected when the smart is upon them, they go away as heart-whole as ever, and when they are well, are as vain as ever, and do not profit by their troubles. Therefore, since there is so much ignorance of the legal and gospel covenant, so many sottish errors wherewith men are prepossessed, so much self-love, negligence, and loathsomeness to search, so much security, and not improving conditions when God searcheth, no wonder a man is so conceited of himself.

Use. Let us take heed of self-conceit and self-righteousness. Especially this concerns you that have a civil and sober education, and are as to externals blameless. As you love your own souls, take heed of a self-righteousness. Though you do not run into the same excess of riot which others do, and are free from outward vice, yet God hath enough against you to condemn you for ever. Therefore study the covenants; lay aside gross conceits of God and holiness; take heed of being blinded with self-love; search often and see what claim you have to heaven; observe ordinances and providences, and improve your convictions, that you may turn to the Lord; else you may have a flattering hope, but can have no solid peace in your consciences, till with brokenness of heart you quit your own righteousness, and fly to Christ alone.

And that you may not be besotted with a dream of your own righteousness, consider—

1. How light every one of us shall be found when we are put in the balance of the sanctuary: 'All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes, but the Lord weigheth the spirits,' Prov. xvi. 2. Mark what is weighed, not *opus*, the matter of the action, but our work, with the motives, the principles, the ends of it, and the state of your hearts; and it is weighed, it is put into the balance. God knows all things by number and weight.

2. Consider how different the judgment of God and men will be: Luke xvi. 15, 'Ye are they which justify yourselves before men, but God knows the heart; for that which is highly esteemed amongst men is abomination in the sight of God.' Mark, God may loathe it in the same degree that men respect it; for these are the terms propounded, 'highly esteemed among men,' and 'abomination in the sight of God.'

Our rose may prove a nettle with him, our gold mere brass, and our spices very dung when God looks upon us.

3. Consider that self is an incompetent judge in its own case; and therefore you, that are to endure God's judgment, should not stand merely to the judgment of self. If your own heart acquit you, you cannot rest upon that; you can find no evil in the action, but God can: 1 Cor. iv. 4, 'For I know nothing by myself, yet am I not hereby justified; but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' Alas! though your heart cannot charge you with anything, yet God can; and if your hearts condemn you, God may much more, for he knows us better than ourselves: 1 John iii. 20, 'For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things.'

SERMON V.

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest; go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow me.—MARK X. 21.

IN this verse is contained the fourth and last part of the conference between our Saviour and this young man. Observe here—

1. The gesture and carriage of our Lord Christ towards him, 'Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.'

2. The answer he gives him; in which there is—

[1.] An admonition of his defect, 'One thing thou lackest.'

[2.] A precept and injunction, which is twofold—particular and general.

(1.) Particular, for the trial of this young man, where is the duty, 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor.' And the motive or promise, 'And thou shalt have treasure in heaven.' The precept is particular, but backed with a general promise.

(2.) General, 'Come, take up the cross, and follow me.' These are the parts; let us insist upon them as they offer themselves.

Then Jesus, beholding him, loved him.—This clause hath troubled many interpreters, how Jesus could love this young man, who seemed to be so full of pride, and self-conceit, and whose heart was so addicted to worldly riches, that when he knew Christ's mind, he went away from him sad: but there need not so great ado about the matter. To open it, two things will be necessary to show you the cause of this love, and the kind of it, why, and how he loved him.

1. Why he loved him. Surely it was not for his outward feature, or external compliment. Christ's love was never set upon these things; but his goodness of disposition, moral integrity, and ingenuity, that was the reason why he loved him.

2. Now for the kind of this love. Christ, you know, had two natures in him, and accordingly we may distinguish of his love and affection;