

(3.) When God's motions are more powerful, these God may suspend upon our disobedience: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' God at some times moveth the heart more strongly towards conversion than at other times. Now this time should not be lost, the day of patience, the day of offers, the day of motions. The day of patience is as long as life lasteth; the day of offers, while means and motions are continued. It is dangerous to slight either. Present time is best.

Use 2. Is to press you to redeem the time. All our time is due to God; and were it not for bodily necessities, it were to be spent in his immediate service. But this is the life of heaven, not of earth. A good proportion must be given to him; yea, in a sense our all. Common actions must be sacred in their intention and aim: Isa. xxiii. 18, 'And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord.' The particular time we are to spend in the immediate service of God is not expressly determined, because God trusts love, and expecteth much from a willing people, who are not wont to dispute away their duties, but practise them; and because he would leave something to the conduct of the Spirit, and a due latitude to men's several conditions and occasions. And though there be not express directions, yet injunctions are very large and comprehensive: 1 Thes. v. 17, 'Pray without ceasing.' We have worthy patterns: Ps. cxix. 147, 'I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried;' and ver. 164, 'Seven times a day do I praise thee.' Therefore you must do what will stand with love, with your manifold necessities, and spiritual welfare and advantage, and the special seasons God offereth in his providence. For means—

1. Be sure the body be not a clog to the soul: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be over-charged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and the cares of the world.' When you gratify the body, you make way for a gross neglect of the soul.

2. Love to God, that keepeth the heart liberal and open upon all occasions of duty.

3. The heavenly mind. Are you in good earnest? Would you go to heaven, and dwell with God for ever? The children of this world are wise in the course of their affairs, what time to redeem, and what advantages to take. If you were more heavenly-minded, you would be wiser in your affairs for a heavenly life.

SERMON XXI.

Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.—EPH. v. 17.

THESE words are an inference from the whole discourse, begun ver. 8; more especially from the two last exhortations, to 'walk circumspectly,' and 'redeem the time;' 'wherefore be ye not unwise,' &c. Observe here—

1. The note of inference, 'Wherefore.'

2. The duty inferred, which is propounded—(1.) Negatively, 'Be ye not unwise;' (2.) Positively, 'But understanding what the will of the Lord is.'

1. The note of inference, 'Wherefore,' that we may not be deceived as the ignorant, nor delay as the slothful; neither mistake our duty, nor fail in the readiness of our obedience, but observe what God requireth, that we may do it diligently and while there is time.

2. The duty inferred is propounded negatively, 'Be ye not unwise.' Be ye not *ἄφρονες*, foolish, simple, who are deceived with every fair appearance. Positively, 'But understanding what the will of the Lord is.' *Συνιέντες* is more than *γινώσκοντες*, for *συνιέναι* is 'attentively to weigh: Mat. xiii. 19, *καὶ μὴ συνιέντος*, 'and understandeth it not.' Beza, *Non advertit animum*; we must not barely understand our duty, but prudently and practically consider of what moment it is to our eternal woe or welfare, either to omit or perform it.

Doct. That wisdom and a good understanding of the will of God is necessary to accurate walking or ready obedience.

I. Before I give you the reasons, let me state the point as it lieth in the text.

1. That every man that hath a tender conscience would be accurate and exact in his obedience to God, not contenting himself with a slight tincture of christianity, but looking into every creek and turning of it, that he may in no point be lacking and defective in his duty. Now this cannot be without much wisdom and knowledge; therefore here, when the apostle presseth them to 'walk circumspectly,' he presently addeth, 'Not as fools, but as wise.' And again, 'Be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is.' So elsewhere: Col. i. 9, 10, 'That ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will, in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you might walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.' So Col. iv. 12, 'That ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God.' They are growing to a fuller maturity both in christian knowledge and practice.

2. We have no sure rule to walk by but the will of God. It is his favour we seek as our life, his displeasure which we fear as death to us; into his presence we hope at last to come, and his wrath we shun as our greatest misery; therefore it is his will we must obey, or we are not safe: 1 Peter iv. 2, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God;' Rom. xii. 2, 'And be not conformed to this world; but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Many walk according to the course of this world: Eph. ii. 2, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.' Others live by sense and passion and carnal reason, and enslave that wisdom that they have to their sensual passions and desires; but he that would approve himself to God must be careful that he liveth according to the will of God, for if he doth what God will have him to do, he is safe.

3. This will is revealed to us in his word. There our duty and our happiness is clearly stated : Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path.' The light of nature discovereth somewhat of our duty, but very imperfectly with respect to the light of christianity, which discovereth our lost estate by nature, the way of deliverance by a redeemer, that obedience in its full extent whereby we express our gratitude or thankfulness to God. There is a great deal of wisdom in the law part of the word : Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep therefore and do them, for this is your wisdom, and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' Much more in the gospel part : Eph. i. 8, 'Wherein he hath abounded to us in all wisdom and prudence.'

4. This word we need thoroughly to understand, otherwise how shall we know our duty ? Prov. xix. 2, 'Also that the soul be without knowledge, it is not good ; and he that hasteth with his feet sinneth.' That proverb discovereth the two great causes of men's miscarriage, ignorance and precipitancy ; either they understand not their rule, or else mind it not, but run on as they are led by their headlong passions ; therefore we have two opposite precepts : Prov. iv. 25, 26, 'Let thine eyes look right on, and let thine eyelids look straight before thee ;' 'Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established.' They that would walk circumspectly had need have their eyes in their head, and to mind their business, if they would not slip, or stumble, and dash their foot against a stone. Still examine your actions by the word of God.

5. This understanding must not be idle, but reduced to use and practice. The scripture sheweth that this should be our end in seeking knowledge : Isa. ii. 3, 'And he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths ;' Ps. cxix. 34, 'Give me understanding, and I will keep thy law ; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.' Knowledge without practice layeth us open to the greater judgment : Luke xii. 47, 48, 'And that servant which knew his Lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.' Both are beaten ; but according to the degree of knowledge, our crimes receive an aggravation of sin and punishment ; and the more light and grace God bestoweth upon any, the greater duty he requireth from them. Again, John vii. 17, 'If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine whether it be of God.' A readiness to serve God in God's way bringeth us soonest to a knowledge of God's will. Therefore our aim in getting understanding of God's word is not that we may jangle about questions, but direct and order our conversations. The word was not given us to try the acuteness of our wits in disputing, but the readiness of our obedience in practising.

6. This reducing what we know to practice is our wisdom. Knowledge is never right but when wisdom goeth along with it : Prov. viii. 12, 'I wisdom dwell with prudence.' Besides a knowledge of divine mysteries, there must be wisdom and prudence to rule and order our

actions and practices, and to guide us in our respective duties to God and man. The two great diseases of our understandings are ignorance and folly; ignorance, because we know not our proper remedy; and folly, because we know not how to apply it.

[1.] There is a cold and naked knowledge of divine things, called by the apostle, 'A form of knowledge,' Rom. ii. 20; which is threefold—

(1.) A grammatical and memorative knowledge, such as children have, that are taught to speak of divine mysteries by rote, such as God, Christ, heaven, hell, sin, righteousness. These rather rehearse the words than they can be said to know and believe the things spoken by them; they say after others, but do not believe or mind the things wherein they are instructed: Luke i. 4, 'That thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed.'

(2.) Another degree above this is dogmatical and opinionative knowledge, when men's memories are not only planted with the seeds of knowledge, but they exercise a kind of conscience and judgment about these things, so far as to form their opinions to the orthodoxy of the times they live in; but yet 'wisdom entereth not into the heart,' Prov. ii. 10. This maketh men disputers of this world, rather than serious practisers of godliness. They have a religion to talk of, but not to live by. It may be they can more accurately discourse of divine things than a serious christian; as a vintner may have his cellar better stored than a nobleman, but he hath it for sale, not for use.

(3.) There is yet a further degree of speculative knowledge; that is, when men have some kind of touch upon the heart, but it is too slender and insufficient to settle the power of religion in their hearts, or to maintain it against the opposition of lusts within or temptations without. So some are enlightened, and taste the good word: Heb. vi. 4, 5, 'For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and are made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.' And they may escape the pollutions of the world 'through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' 2 Peter ii. 20. It is hard to conceive how such practical and important truths should be understood or considered without some touch upon the heart, which may affect men in part, and produce some partial reformation.

[2.] There is a practical and saving knowledge, when we know God so as to love, serve, and obey him. This is not only knowledge, but wisdom, such a knowledge as is 'able to make us wise to salvation,' 2 Tim. iii. 15; such a knowledge as ordereth means to their proper end, which is the glory of God and the salvation of our souls. This knowledge which teacheth us to walk circumspectly, and that reneweth the heart, is our wisdom: Col. iii. 10, 'And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge, after the image of him that created him;' Jer. xxii. 16, 'He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me, saith the Lord?' All other knowledge to this is but learned folly rather than true wisdom.

7. This wisdom is sometimes spoken of as a gift, and sometimes as a duty; it is both.

[1.] This wisdom is spoken of as a gift : Jer. xxiv. 7, 'I will give them a heart to know me, that I am the Lord, and they shall be my people, and I will be their God; for they shall return unto me with their whole heart.' It is God's resolved gift to the elect: Isa. xxxii. 4, 'The heart also of the rash shall understand knowledge.' It is God alone that can make such as were heady and inconsiderate to be better advised, and to understand his will. This is spoken of as a gift of God.

[2.] In many other places it is spoken of as a duty : Prov. iv. 7, 'Wisdom is the principal thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.' With respect to this double notion we are sometimes bidden to pray, and 'cry and lift up our voice for understanding,' Prov. ii. 3; and again, ver. 4, 'To seek for her as for silver, and search for her as for hid treasures.' This must be our constant and earnest request to God. And then we must use all holy means, and take all occasions of getting and increasing this wisdom. God giveth it, and we must labour for it; for God will never give it to the lazy soul. And we must labour for it as men that dig in the mines for treasure; it lieth not on the surface, nor is it a few general and obvious truths, which will give us this holy wisdom and understanding. It doth not belong to preachers only to dig in the mines of knowledge, but all christians; they should not content themselves to see with other men's eyes, but judge for themselves. It is a matter of much skill to be a thorough christian.

II. The reasons why much wisdom and a good understanding is required of christians.

1. That they may resemble God, and discover his perfections to the world. The notions which we have of God are, that he is wise, powerful, and good. Now all these christians are to express, for they are 'to show forth his virtues,' 1 Peter ii. 9; and among others, that he is wise, by whose counsel we are guided in our circumspect walking. The honour of God lieth at stake; if we behave ourselves foolishly, we dishonour him in the world. If wisdom be a part of God's image, the new creature must represent it to the world as well as other things. And therefore we should not be fools, but wise, and show ourselves to be light in the Lord.

2. That there may be a due impression of his word upon us, which is all wisdom; and if we understand it and improve it, it must needs make us wise also; for the impression is according to the nature of the seal; and so the new creature must needs be the wisest creature on this side heaven; for—

[1.] He fixeth his right end, which is the glorifying and enjoying of God, whilst others disquiet themselves about a vain show: Ps. xxxix. 6, 'Surely every man walketh in a vain show; surely they are disquieted in vain.' Whilst they labour, cark, and turmoil themselves to get together a few poor transitory enjoyments, in which there is neither durable possession nor solid satisfaction. The spiritually wise man is seeking after God and eternal life, beyond which he cannot aspire.

[2.] He chooseth apt and proper means, which is the way God hath prescribed him to walk in: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep therefore, and do

them, for this is your wisdom and understanding in the sight of the nations which shall hear these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'

[3.] He doth not dally with religion, but thoroughly sets himself to observe and obey the dictates and directions of it: Mat. vii. 24, 'I will liken him to a wise builder.' Well, then, the impression must needs be according to the seal and stamp. Where there is a saving knowledge of divine mysteries, and diligence to order our actions accordingly, there must needs be true wisdom and prudence. Some excel in it more than others, but all are wise to salvation.

3. To make us thorough christians, or for our own direction, that we may keep to our rule in all things: Ps. cxix. 33, 'Teach me, O Lord, the way of thy statutes, and I shall keep it unto the end.' The narrow way of obedience is hardly found, and hardly kept, and easily mistaken, especially when prejudices, lusts, and interests are apt to pervert and blind us. Therefore this knowledge and wisdom doth caution us against sins and snares, that we be not corrupted and ensnared by them: Ps. cxix. 11, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against thee.' Knowledge doth not only discover sin, but fortify our resolutions against it: 1 John ii. 14, 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' As it discovereth sin, it is good to have something in our hearts to check it: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; and he cannot sin because he is born of God.' Truths in the word rise up in dislike. As it fortifieth our resolutions: I am in God's way; I look for all my acceptance and reward from him: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' This lifeth us above fears and flatteries, that we are neither discouraged nor enticed. So for duties; it urgeth us to perform them: Prov. vi. 22, 'When thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.' It is good to have a bosom monitor, and something that may plead God's interest in our own hearts. In all cases it instructeth us, and mindeth us of all particular duties, to avoid snares and temptations.

4. Not only to direct us in the general duty of christians, but to make us useful in our particular relations. We are all bound to get knowledge. There are public and private relations; public, as that of magistrates: Ps. ii. 10, 'Be wise now therefore, O ye kings; be instructed, ye judges of the earth.' It is a critical thing many times to understand Christ's interest, and make their own veil to it; so that a king needeth much wisdom. When Solomon asked wisdom, 'the thing pleased the Lord,' 1 Kings iii. 10. Ministers and guides of the church: Mal. ii. 7, 'For the priest's lips should keep knowledge.' These are the church's storehouse, therefore they need to be well furnished with all kind of knowledge, speculative and experimental, that they may draw it forth upon all occasions. Private, as husbands, that they may carry on the duties of the family: 1 Peter iii. 7, 'Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge;' that is, they are to labour for much prudence and wisdom, that they may be able to know their own duty and instruct others: 1 Cor. xiv. 35, 'And if

they will learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home ;' and that they may not govern things in their houses according to passion and will, but God's word. Parents, that they may instruct their children ; for they are 'to bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord,' Eph. vi. 4. Private christians, that they may comfort and build up each other in their most holy faith : Rom. xv. 14, 'And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another ;' that we may not be ciphers in converse, and our coming together may not be like a dumb show, without speaking any savoury or comfortable and edifying word to one another. Therefore be not unwise.

5. The great danger of ignorance, or the evils that come from the want of spiritual wisdom.

[1.] To ourselves. Our worship is but a fond superstition, a blind devotion to an unknown god, a mere guess directed by custom and some devout aims : John iv. 22, 'Ye worship ye know not what ; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.' Our zeal is but a wild fury : Rom. x. 2, 'For I bear them record, that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.' A dead fire, *fervidus, non lucidus* ; like a blind horse full of mettle, but ever and anon stumbling.

[2.] To others. There is no preventing trouble in the church or scandals to the world if we have not spiritual wisdom and understanding. Whom doth Satan make use of as his instruments but those in whom there is weakness of mind and strength of passions ? these are unstable : Eph. iv. 14, 'That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness ; whereby they lie in wait to deceive.' These through pride and unskilfulness breed divisions : 1 Tim. iii. 6, 'Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride, he fall into the condemnation of the devil.'

6. The incredible delight and peace it begets in our souls.

[1.] The bare knowledge of God's will is very delightful, and yieldeth much more pleasure to the mind than an epicure can find in his most exquisite sensual enjoyments. It is incredible what contentment an anxious soul hath in the finding out of any truth whereof he was doubtful before, and it cannot be conceived till we feel it : Prov. xxiv. 13, 14, 'My son, eat thou honey, because it is good ; and the honeycomb, which is sweet to thy taste. So shall the knowledge of wisdom be unto thy soul ; when thou hast found it, then there shall be a reward.' There is a comparison between the oblectation of the mind and the pleasure of bodily taste. Nothing can be so sweet to the palate as understanding is to the soul, especially when we ourselves have searched it and found it out, when we see a truth with our own eyes. He doth not speak there of that sweetness which the conscience hath in the feeling of God's love, nor of the delight of the heart when it findeth liberty in the ways of God, but of the satisfaction and oblectation of the mind and understanding when truth is so fully cleared up that there remaineth no doubt or scruple about it.

[2.] The peace which accompanieth it. Many times there is little account made of God's will in the world, and it falleth out so that he

that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow: Eccles. i. 18, 'For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow;' and when he is forced for conscience' sake to differ from others, he meeteth with much trouble, for ignorance is furious. Yet this is a satisfaction to him, that he knoweth this is pleasing to God, and so hath more comfort in the knowledge of a hated truth than worldly men in all the advantages which a false way giveth them: Prov. iii. 31, 32, 'Envy not the oppressor, and choose none of his ways: for the froward is abomination to the Lord; but his secret is with the righteous.' That is rendered as a reason why they should not envy wicked men; they know they are in a way pleasing to God, and this supporteth them in all their troubles. Now this satisfaction we cannot have, unless we have the thorough knowledge of the truth we profess, or the holy ways of God we are engaged in. Therefore we need to get a distinct clear knowledge of the whole will of God revealed in his word.

7. The properties of this knowledge and wisdom show the necessity of it. All knowledge is to be prized, for it is man's excellency above the beasts; but especially divine knowledge, which far transcendeth all the wisdom of the world.

[1.] Because it is employed about the highest things, to know God's nature and will, what he is, and how he is to be enjoyed. Alas! what mean things do most of the world employ their time and wit about, in comparison of a poor christian! To know God, though not comprehensively, yet satisfyingly and savingly: Ps. cxxxix. 6, 'Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it;' 1 Tim. iii. 16, 'And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness.' What are all the profound speculations of the world to this? 1 Peter i. 12, 'Which things the angels desire to look into.' The angels, that much exceeded us in understanding, desire to pry into these things, a speculation that is fit for their best thoughts.

[2.] These things are most useful and profitable: John xvii. 3, 'And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent.' Curious knowledge bringeth more pain than pleasure, but profitable knowledge should be most prized by us; as to know how to be reconciled to God, what is pleasing to him, or to conquer sin, and escape damnation, and obtain eternal life; these are the matters about which we should most busy ourselves, and employ our understandings; for what doth more deeply concern us than these things?

Use 1. Is of reproof to divers sorts of persons who live in ignorance, or countenance ignorance upon several pretences.

1. That it belongeth not to them to dig in the mines of knowledge; they leave that to clerks and men of learning; as if it were not a common duty lying upon private christians, as well as those whose office doth particularly engage them to study the scriptures: Heb. viii. 11, 'They shall all know me, from the least to the greatest.' All need to learn how to be saved; and therefore, if you know not how to live unto God, how to conquer sin, and how to escape damnation, what will become of you? The apostle saith, 2 Cor. iv. 3, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost.' A man in ignorance is never like to

hit his way, nor can he know whether he be in or out, whether he has escaped his great danger, or shall be accepted in the judgment. While you are ignorant, the devil may cheat you, and do what he lists with you.

2. Others have a little general and traditional knowledge of the religion commonly professed among us, and talk of it by rote after others, but generally look no further than the outside of it; they neither know the reasons upon which the certainty of this religion is grounded, nor the tenor of it, what it doth require at their hands, especially as to the practical and vital truths, that do more nearly concern the vigour and power of godliness, as the work and power of the Holy Ghost in regenerating and converting men to God, or the life of faith, or the difference between the state of sin and grace. As Nicodemus: John iii. 4, 'How can a man be born again when he is old? Can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?' These scorn to be taxed of ignorance, though they know little but certain rituals and externals of the religion commonly practised among us. Therefore press them to more acquaintance with religion and the life of faith and holiness, they scorn you, and all that you can offer in that kind; for it is ever true, that carnal men savour not the things of the Spirit, but they are carnal under a christian or pagan profession.

3. Some confine their knowledge to a few obvious truths, and for other things they leave it to preachers more accurately to search after the mind of God, and content themselves to see with other men's eyes. But if knowledge be to be confined to a few truths, why hath God given men so copious and large a rule, and revealed so many things as helps to our faith and practice? It is a kind of censuring the scripture, as if the greatest part of these sacred writings were not necessary. Certainly it is a matter of great skill to be a thorough christian. Our knowledge should cost us pains, as well as our obedience. A little slight superficial knowledge will not fully subdue the heart to God. Though some truths are fundamental, yet every piece and parcel of truth hath its use and place; and the knowledge of it is not only for delight, but safety. Many say that fundamentals are but few; believe them, and live well, and you shall be saved. True, yet the accessory truths do much conduce, both to the belief of fundamentals, and to quicken our practice of necessary duties. He were a foolish builder that should only be careful to lay a good foundation, and never mind roof or windows, lights or doors; no, nor should be able to discern the coming of those that should untile the house, or let in such a continual dropping as would at length founder the building, and bring it to ruin. Besides, though it be not absolutely necessary to salvation that a christian should know every truth, yet he must never do anything against the truth, and he should not be willingly ignorant of any truth. To be willingly ignorant of lesser things may be damnable: 2 Peter iii. 5, 'For this they are willingly ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old.' Now men are willingly ignorant, not only when they refuse the truth when it is plainly cleared up to them, out of a wilful obstinacy, but also when they will not use the means out of laziness and sloth. *Crassa negligentia dolus est.*

Men will not search when they have a mind to hate and condemn anything which unquestionably concerns God's interest in the world.

4. Some think ignorance is the mother of devotion, and that men leave off to be good when they grow more knowing. Surely that is the fault of the men, not of the knowledge; for all divine truths befriend sanctification. Others say the world is too wise to be governed; and since every one came to know religion, and dispute of it, it breedeth factions. But this is unjust also; it were well if the world were too wise to be brought under a kingdom of darkness. If men will impose on the church of God things which they ought not, they have cause to impute the divisions to their own tyranny and usurpation, not to the scriptures or the study of the scriptures; as if this principle of an easy implicit faith, to believe as the church believeth, were more effectual to produce true piety and goodness than the knowledge of God's will. This is to set men above God, as if they by their testimony and impositions did more safely secure the interest of religion in the world than God hath done by a book indited by his own Spirit, or as if that were dangerous to be commonly read or meditated upon. In short, God's children are children of light, and the children of light must not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is. None will deprive others of this privilege but those that have no mind to it themselves.

Use 2. Is to press us to get this knowledge and understanding of God's will. The apostle speaketh to children of light; and none of us know so much but we may know more.

1. Labour to get a more full knowledge of heavenly mysteries, especially of those which are necessary to salvation, not excluding other truths which secure the necessary things; for we must not always be children, and keep to our milk: Heb. v. 12, 13, 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God, and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat. For every one that useth milk, is unskilful in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.' Besides, there are *maculae et vulnera intellectus*, the spots and the wounds of the understanding. Dangerous are the wounds, but errors as spots much hinder our edification and growth in grace; for all grace is either light or strength, and strength is increased by the increase of light: 2 Peter i. 2, 'Grace and peace be multiplied unto you, through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.'

2. Get a more clear knowledge. Fulness relateth to the object, or matters known; clearness to the subject or faculty knowing. A christian should see further into those truths which he doth already know: Hosea vi. 3, 'Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord.' Moses' first request was, 'Tell me thy name;' his second, 'Show me thy glory.' The godly are unsatisfied: Prov. xxx. 2, 3, 'Surely I am more brutish than any man, and have not the understanding of a man. I neither learned wisdom, nor have the knowledge of the holy.' To know a truth as we ought to know it: 1 Cor. viii. 2, 3, 'And if any man think that he knoweth anything, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know; but if any man love God, the same is known of him.' New light is not a finding out new truths, but a seeing further into the same truths. Our growth in knowledge

is rather intensive as to degrees than extensive as to objects ; not knowing new truths but when old principles are improved : Prov. iv. 18, ' But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day ; ' Ps. cxix. 18, ' Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law. ' David doth not pray that God would make another law, but that God would give him a clearer understanding of this.

3. Get a more certain knowledge, or more confirmed knowledge in the truth : Acts ii. 36, ' Let the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ ; ' John xvii. 8, ' For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have believed that thou didst send me. ' Not by hearsay and tradition, but solid evidence : John iv. 42, ' Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world. '

4. Get a more distinct knowledge. Truths are best known in their frame and dependence. A confused knowledge is always unsatisfactory, it is not *cognitio quietativa*, till we see how one truth agreeth with another, as the curtains of the tabernacle were fastened by loops ; till we are able to ' compare things spiritual with spiritual, ' 1 Cor. ii. 13, or know things according to the analogy of faith : Rom. xii. 3, ' For, I say, through the grace given unto me, to every man that is among you, not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think, but to think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith. ' Every truth must be known in its order and place, otherwise we have but a confused notion of things, as the blind man saw men walking like trees.

5. Get a more experimental knowledge. Most of christianity is not only to be believed, but felt : 1 John v. 10, ' He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself. ' We must have not only a sight, but a taste : 1 Peter ii. 2, 3, ' As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby ; if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious. ' And feeling : Phil. iii. 10, ' That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death. ' Otherwise it is but a form of knowledge. Experience is the inward seal and confirmation of truth : John xvii. 17, ' Sanctify them through the truth, thy word is truth ; ' John viii. 32, ' And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. '

6. Get a more practical knowledge. Knowledge is for use, not an idle speculation. As a gallant and a physician cometh into a garden, one looketh upon the colour and beauty, the other upon the virtue and use of herbs and flowers : 2 Peter i. 8, ' For if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ ; ' 1 John ii. 4, ' He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. ' A practical christian is more ready to serve and please God every day.