

HOLINESS NECESSARY

FROM

THE COMMANDS OF GOD.

CHAP. III.

Necessity of holiness proved, from the commands of God in the law and the gospel.

WE have evinced the *necessity of holiness* from the *nature* and the *decrees* of God : our next argument shall be taken from his *word*, or *commands*, as the nature and order of these things do require. And in this case, it is needless to produce instances of God's commands, that we should be holy, it is the concurrent voice of the law and gospel. Our apostle sums up the whole matter, 1 Thess. iv. 1—3. 'We exhort you, that as you have received of us how you ought to walk, and please God, so you would abound more and more ; for you know what commandment we gave you, by the Lord Jesus ; for this is the will of God, even your sanctification,' or holiness ; whereunto he adds one especial instance. This is that which the commandments of Christ require, yea, this is the sum of the whole commanding will of God. The substance of the law is, 'Be ye holy, for I the Lord your God am holy ;' Lev. xi. 44. the same with what it is referred unto by our Saviour ; Matt. xxii. 37. 39. And, whereas holiness may be reduced unto two heads :

1. The *renovation* of the *image* of God in us ; 2. *Universal actual obedience* ; they are the sum of the preceptive part of the gospel ; Eph. iv. 22—24. Tit. ii. 11, 12. Hereof, therefore, there needeth no farther confirmation by especial testimonies.

Our inquiry must be, what *force* there is in this argument, or whence we do conclude unto a *necessity of holiness* from the *command* of God. To this end, the *nature* and proper *adjuncts* of these commands are to be considered ; that

is, we are to get our minds and consciences affected with them, so as to endeavour after holiness on their account, or with respect unto them. For whatever we may do, which seems to have the matter of holiness in it, if we do it not with respect unto God's command, it hath not the nature of holiness in it. For our holiness is our conformity and obedience to the will of God; and it is a respect unto a command which makes any thing to be obedience, or gives it the formal nature thereof. Wherefore, as God rejects that from any place in his fear, worship, or service, which is resolved only into the doctrines or precepts of men; Isa. xxix. 13. so for men to pretend unto I know not what freedom, light, and readiness unto all holiness, from a principle within, without respect unto the commands of God without, as given in his word, is to make themselves their own god, and to despise obedience unto him who is over all, God blessed for ever: then are we the servants of God, then are we the disciples of Christ, when we do what is commanded us, and because it is commanded us. And what we are not influenced unto by the authority of God in his commands, we are not principled for by the Spirit of God administered in the promises. Whatever good any man doth in any kind, if the reason why he doth it be not God's command, it belongs neither to holiness nor obedience. Our inquiry, therefore, is after those things in the commands of God, which put such an indispensable obligation upon us unto holiness, as that whatever we may be or we may have without it, will be of no use or advantage unto us, as unto eternal blessedness, or the enjoyment of him.

But to make our way more clear and safe, one thing must yet be premised unto these considerations. And this is, that *God's commands* for *holiness* may be considered two ways: 1. As they belong unto, and are parts of, the *covenant of works*; 2. As they belong and are inseparably annexed unto the *covenant of grace*. In both respects they are materially and formally the same; that is, the same things are required in them, and the same person requires them, and so their obligation is joint and equal. Not only the commands of the new covenant do oblige us unto holiness, but those of the old, also, as to the matter and substance of them: but there is a great difference in the manner and ends of these commands, as considered so distinctly.

For, 1. the *commands* of God as under the *old covenant*, do so require *universal holiness* of us, in all acts, duties, and degrees of them, that upon the least failure, in substance circumstance, or degree, they allow of nothing else we do, but determine us *transgressors of the whole law*. For with respect unto them, ‘whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, is guilty of all;’ James ii. 10. Now I acknowledge, that although there ariseth from hence an obligation unto holiness, to them who are under that covenant, and such a necessity of it, as that without it they must certainly perish; yet no argument of the nature with those which I insist upon, can hence be taken to press us unto it. For no arguments are forcible unto this purpose, but such as include encouragements in them unto what they urge. But that, this consideration of the command knoweth nothing of, seeing a compliance with it is in our lapsed condition absolutely impossible; and for the things that are so, we can have no endeavours. And hence it is, that no man influenced only by the commands of the law, or first covenant absolutely considered, whatever in particular he might be forced or compelled unto, did ever sincerely aim or endeavour after universal holiness.

Men may be subdued by the power of the law, and compelled to habituate themselves unto a strict course of duty, and being advantaged therein, by a sedate natural constitution, desire of applause, self-righteousness, or superstition, may make a great appearance of holiness. But if the principle of what they do be only the commands of the law, they never tread one true step in the paths of it.

2. The *end*, why these commands require all the duties of *holiness* of us, is, that they may be our *righteousness before God*, or that we may be *justified* thereby. ‘For Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth those things shall live by them,’ Rom. x. 5. that is, it requires of us all duties of obedience unto this end, that we may have justification and eternal life by them. But neither on this account can any such argument be taken as those we inquire into. ‘For by the deeds of the law no man can be justified: if thou Lord shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord who shall stand?’ Psal. cxxx. 3. So prays David, ‘Enter not into judgment with thy servant, for in thy sight shall no

man living be justified ;' Psal. clxiii. 2. Rom. iii. 20. Gal. ii. 16. And if none can attain the end of the command, as in this sense they cannot, what argument can we take from thence to prevail with them unto obedience? Whoever, therefore, presseth men unto holiness, merely on the commands of the law, and for the ends of it, doth but put them upon tormenting disquietments, and deceive their souls. However men are indispensably obliged hereby, and must eternally perish for want of what the law so requires, who do not, or will not, by faith comply with the only remedy and provision that God hath made in this case. And for this reason we are necessitated to deny a possibility of salvation unto all to whom the gospel is not preached, as well as unto those by whom it is refused. For, they are left unto this law, whose precepts they cannot answer, and whose end they cannot attain.

It is otherwise on both these accounts with the *commands* of God, for holiness under the *new covenant*, or in the gospel. For,

1. Although God in them requireth *universal holiness* of us, yet he doth not do it in that strict and *rigorous* way as by the *law*, so as that if we fail in any thing either as to the *matter* or *manner* of its performance, in the substance of it, or as to the degrees of its perfection, that thereon both that and all we do besides should be rejected. But he doth it with a *contemperation* of *grace and mercy*, so as that if there be a universal *sincerity*, in a respect unto *all* his commands, he both pardoneth many sins, and accepts of what we do, though it come short of *legal perfection*; both on the account of the *mediation* of Christ. Yet this hindereth not, but that the law or command of the gospel doth still require universal holiness of us, and a perfection therein, which we are to do our utmost endeavour to comply withal, though we have a relief provided in sincerity on the one hand, and mercy on the other. For the commands of the gospel do still declare what God approves, and what he doth condemn, which is no less than all holiness on the one hand, and all sin on the other, as exactly and extensively as under the law. For this the very nature of God requireth, and the gospel is not the ministry of sin, so as to give an allowance or indulgence unto the least, although in it pardon be provided for a multitude

of sins by Jesus Christ. The obligation on us unto holiness is equal as unto what it was under the law, though a relief be provided where unavoidably we come short of it. There is, therefore, nothing more certain, than that there is no relaxation given us as unto any duty of holiness, by the gospel, nor any indulgence unto the least sin. But yet upon the supposition of the acceptance of sincerity, and a perfection of parts, instead of degrees, with the mercy provided for our failings and sins ; there is an argument to be taken from the command of it unto an indispensable necessity of holiness, including in it the highest encouragement to endeavour after it. For, together with the command, there is also grace administered, enabling us unto that obedience which God will accept. Nothing, therefore, can avoid or evacuate the power of this command and argument from it, but a stubborn contempt of God, arising from the love of sin.

2. The *commands* of the *gospel* do not require *holiness* and the duties of righteousness of us, to the *same end* as the *commands* of the *law* did, namely, that thereby we might be *justified in the sight of God*. For, whereas God now accepts from us a holiness short of that which the law required, if he did it still for the same end, it would reflect dishonour upon his own righteousness, and the holiness of the gospel.

For, (1.) if God can accept of a righteousness unto justification inferior unto, or short of, what he required by the law, how great severity must it be thought in him, to bind his creatures unto such an exact obedience and righteousness at first, as he could and might have dispensed withal ? If he doth accept of sincere obedience now unto our justification, why did he not do so before, but obliged mankind unto absolute perfection according to the law, for coming short wherein they all perished ? Or shall we say, that God hath changed his mind in this matter, and that he doth not stand so much now on rigid and perfect obedience for our justification, as he did formerly ? Where then is the glory of his immutability, of his essential holiness, of the absolute rectitude of his nature and will ?

Besides, (2.) what shall become of the honour and holiness of the gospel on this supposition ? Must it not be looked on as a doctrine less holy than that of the law ? For, whereas the law required absolute, perfect, sinless holiness

unto our justification, the gospel admits of that to the same end, on this supposition, which is every way imperfect, and consistent with a multitude of sins and failings? What can be spoken more to the derogation of it? Nay, would not this indeed make 'Christ the minister of sin,' which our apostle rejects with so much detestation? Gal. ii. 17. For to say, that he hath merited that our imperfect obedience, attended with many and great sins ('for there is no man that liveth and sinneth not',) should be accepted unto our justification, instead of perfect and sinless obedience required under the law, is plainly to make him the minister of sin, or one that hath acquired some liberty for sin, beyond whatever the law allowed. And thus, upon the whole matter, both Christ and the gospel, in whom and whereby, God unquestionably designed to declare the holiness and righteousness of his own nature, much more gloriously than ever he had done any other way, should be the great means to darken and obscure them. For in and by them, on this supposition, God must be thought (and is declared) to accept of a righteousness unto our justification, unspeakably inferior unto what he required before.

It must be granted, therefore, that the end of gospel commands, requiring the obedience of holiness in us, is not, that thereby or thereon we should be justified. God hath therein provided another righteousness for that end, which fully, perfectly, absolutely, answers all that the law requires; and on some considerations is far more glorious than what the law either did or could require. And hereby hath he exalted more than ever the honour of his own holiness and righteousness, whereof the external instrument is the gospel, which is also, therefore, most holy: now this is no other but the righteousness of Christ imputed unto us; for he is the 'end of the law for righteousness unto them that do believe;' Rom. x. 4. But God hath now appointed other ends unto our holiness, and so unto his command of it, under the gospel, all of them consistent with the nature of that obedience which he will accept of us, and such as we may attain through the power of grace, and so all of them offering new encouragements as well as enforcements unto our endeavours after it. But because these ends will be the subject of most of our ensuing arguments, I shall not here insist upon them. I shall only add two things in general.

[1.] That God hath no design for his own glory, in us or by us, in this world or unto eternity, that there is no especial communion that we can have with him by Jesus Christ, nor any capacity for us to enjoy him, but holiness is necessary unto it, as a means unto its end. [2.] These present ends of it under the gospel are such, as that God doth no less indispensably require it of us now, than he did when our justification was proposed as the end of it. They are such, in brief, as God upon the account of them judgeth meet to command us to be holy in all manner of holiness, which what obligation and necessity it puts upon us so to be, we are now to inquire.

First, The first thing considerable in the *command* of God to this purpose, is the *authority* wherewith it is accompanied. It is indispensably necessary that we should be holy, on the account of the authority of God's command. Authority wherever it is just, and exerted in a due and equal manner, carrieth along with it an obligation unto obedience. Take this away, and you will fill the whole world with disorder. If the authority of parents, masters, and magistrates, did not oblige children, servants, and subjects, unto obedience, the world could not abide one moment out of hellish confusion. God himself maketh use of this argument in general, to convince men of the necessity of obedience. 'A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master; if I then be a father where is mine honour, and if I be a master where is my fear, saith the Lord of hosts unto you priests who despise my name;' Mal. i. 6. If in all particular relations, where there is any thing of superiority, which hath the least parcel of authority accompanying of it, obedience is expected and exacted; is it not due to me who have all authority, of all sovereign relations in me towards you? And there are two things that enforce the obligation from the command on this consideration, *jus imperandi*, and *vis exequendi*, both comprised in that of the apostle James, iv. 12. 'There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy.

1. He who *commands* us to be holy, is our *sovereign law-giver*; he that hath *absolute* power to prescribe unto us what *laws* he pleaseth. When commands come from them who have authority, and yet are themselves also under authority, there may be some secret abatement of the power of the

command. Men may think either to appeal from them, or one way or other subduct themselves from under their power. But when the power immediately commanding is sovereign and absolute, there is no room for tergiversation. The command of God proceeds from the absolute power of a sovereign legislator. And where it is not complied withal, the whole authority of God, and therein God himself, is despised. So God in many places calleth sinning against his commands, the ‘despising of him;’ Numb. xi. 20. 1 Sam. ii. 30. the ‘despising of his name;’ Mal. i. 6. the ‘despising of his commandment,’ and that in his saints themselves; 2 Sam. xii. 10.

Being then under the command of God to be holy, not to endeavour always and in all things so to be, is to despise God, to reject his sovereign authority over us, and to live in defiance of him. This state, I suppose, there are few who would be willing to be found in: to be constant despisers of God, and rebels against his authority, is a charge that men are not ready to own, and do suppose that those who are so indeed, are in a very ill condition. But this and no better is the state of every one who is not holy, who doth not follow after holiness. Yet so it is, propose unto men the true nature of evangelical holiness, press them to the duties wherein the exercise of it doth consist, convince them with evidence as clear as the light at noon-day, that such and such sins, such and such courses wherein they live and walk, are absolutely inconsistent with it, and irreconcilable unto it, yet for the most part it is but little they will heed you, and less they will do to answer your exhortations. Tell the same persons, that they are rebels against God, despisers of him, that they have utterly broken the yoke, and cast off his authority, and they will defy you, and perhaps revile you. But yet these things are inseparable; God having given his command unto men to be holy, declared his sovereign will and pleasure therein, if we are not so accordingly, we are not one jot better than the persons described. Here then, in the first place, we found the necessity of holiness on the command of God. The authority wherewith it is accompanied makes it necessary: yea, from hence if we endeavour not to thrive in it, if we watch not diligently against every thing that is contrary unto it, we are therein and so

far despisers of God, and his name, as in the places before cited.

This, therefore, evidenceth unto the consciences of men, that the obligation unto holiness is indispensable. And it would do well, if we always carried this formal consideration of the commandment in our minds ; nothing is more prevalent with us unto watchfulness in holiness, as nothing doth more effectually render what we do, to be obedience properly so called. Forgetfulness hereof, or not heeding it as we ought, is the great reason of our loose and careless walking, of our defect in making a progress in grace and holiness. No man is safe a moment, whose mind by any means is dispossessed of a sense of the sovereign authority of God in his commands ; nor can any thing secure such a soul from being pierced and entered into by various temptations. This, therefore, are we to carry about with us wherever we go, and whatever we do, to keep our souls and consciences under the power of it, in all opportunities of duties, and on all occasions of sin. Had men always, in their ways, trades, shops, affairs, families, studies, closets, this written on their hearts, they would have holiness to the Lord on their breasts and foreheads also.

2. The apostle tells us, that as God in his *commands* is a *sovereign lawgiver*, so he is *able to kill and keep alive*. That is, his commanding authority is accompanied with such a power, as that whereby he is able absolutely and eternally to reward the obedient, and to return unto the disobedient a meet recompense of punishment. For, although I would not exclude other considerations, yet I think this of eternal rewards and punishments to be principally here intended.

But, (1.) supposing it to have respect unto things *temporal* also, it carries along with it the greater *enforcement*. God commands us to be holy : things are in that state and condition in the world, as that if we endeavour to answer his will in a due manner, designing to ‘perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord,’ we shall meet with much opposition, many difficulties, and at length, perhaps, it may cost us our lives ; multitudes have made profession of it at no cheaper rate. But let us not mistake in this matter ; he who commands us to be holy is the only sovereign Lord of life and death, that hath alone the disposal of them both, and consequently of

all things that are subservient and conducing unto the one or the other. It is he alone who can kill in a way of punishment, and he alone can keep alive in a way of merciful preservation. This power of our lawgiver, the holy companions of Daniel committed themselves unto, and preserved themselves by the consideration of, when with the terror of death they were commanded to forsake the way of holiness; Dan. iii. 17, 18. And with respect unto it, our Lord Jesus Christ tells us, that he who 'would save his life,' namely, by a sinful neglect of the command, 'shall lose it.' This, therefore, is also to be considered; the power of him who commands us to be holy is such, as that he is able to carry us through all difficulties and dangers which we may incur upon the account of our being so. Now whereas the fear of man is one principal cause or means of our failing in holiness and obedience, either by sudden surprisals, or violent temptations, and the next hereunto, is the consideration of other things, esteemed good or evil in this world; the faith and sense hereof will bear us up above them, deliver us from them, and carry us through them.

Be of good courage all ye that trust in the Lord; you may, you ought, without fear or dauntedness of spirit, to engage into the pursuit of universal holiness: he who hath commanded it, who hath required it of you, will bear you out in it; nothing that is truly evil or finally disadvantageous shall befall you on that account. For (let the world rage whilst it pleaseth, and threaten to fill all things with blood and confusion) 'to God the Lord belong the issues from death,' he alone can 'kill' and 'make alive.' There is, therefore, no small enforcement unto holiness, from the consideration of the command, with respect unto the power of the commander, relating unto things in this world.

But, (2.) I suppose it is a *power of eternal rewards and punishments*, that is principally here intended. The killing here, is that mentioned by our Saviour, and opposed to all temporal evil, and death itself; Matt. x. 28. 'Fear not them who can kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.' And this 'keeping alive,' is a deliverance from the wrath to come in everlasting life. And this is that which gives an unavoidable efficacy to the command. Every com-

mand of a superior, doth tacitly include a reward and punishment to be intended. For a declaration is made of what is pleasing and what is displeasing unto him that gives the command; and therein is there a virtual promise and threatening. But unto all solemn laws, rewards and punishments are expressly annexed.

But there are two reasons why, for the most part, they do but little *influence* the minds of men who are inclined unto their *transgression*. [1.] The first is, that the *rewards* and *punishments* declared, are such as men think they do justly prefer their own *satisfaction*, in the transgression of the laws, before them. It is so with all good men, with respect unto laws made contrary to the laws of God; and wise men also may do so with respect unto useless laws, with trifling penalties; and evil men will do so, with respect unto the highest temporal punishments, when they are greedily set on the satisfaction of their lusts. Hence I say it is, in the first place, that the minds of men are so little influenced with those rewards and punishments, that are annexed unto human laws. And, [2.] a *secret apprehension* that the *commanders* or makers of the laws, neither will, nor are able, to *execute* those *penalties* in case of their transgression, evacuates all the *force* of them. Much they ascribe to their negligence, that they will not take care to see the sanction of their laws executed; more to their ignorance, that they shall not be able to find out their transgressions; and somewhat in sundry cases to their power, that they cannot punish nor reward, though they would. And for these reasons, are the minds of men little influenced by human laws beyond their own honest inclinations and interest. But things are quite otherwise with respect unto the law and commands of God that we should be holy. The rewards and punishments, called by the apostle ‘killing’ and ‘keeping alive,’ being eternal, in the highest capacities of blessedness or misery, cannot be balanced by any consideration of this present world, without the highest folly and villany unto ourselves. Nor can there be any reserve on the account of mutability, indifferency, ignorance, impotency, or any other pretence, that they shall not be executed. Wherefore, the commands of God, which we are in the consideration of, are accompanied with promises and threatenings, of eternal blessedness on the one hand, or of misery on

the other. And these will certainly befall us, according as we shall be found holy or unholy. All the properties of the nature of God are immutably engaged in this matter; and hence ensues an indispensable necessity of our being holy. God commands that we should be so, but what if we are not so? Why, as sure as God is holy and powerful we shall eternally perish, for with the threatening of that condition, is his command accompanied in case of disobedience. What if we do comply with the command, and become holy? Upon the same ground of assurance, we shall be brought unto everlasting felicity. And this is greatly to be considered in the authority of the commandment. Some, perhaps, will say, that to yield holy obedience unto God, with respect unto rewards and punishments, is servile, and becomes not the free spirit of the children of God. But these are vain imaginations: the bondage of our own spirits may make every thing we do servile. But a due respect unto God's promises and threatenings, is a principal part of our liberty. And thus doth the necessity of holiness, which we are engaged in the demonstration of, depend on the command of God, because of that authority from whence it doth proceed, and wherewith it is accompanied. It is, therefore, certainly our duty, if we would be found walking in a course of obedience, and the practice of holiness, to keep a sense hereof constantly fixed on our minds. This is that which, in the first place, God intends in that great injunction of obedience, Gen. xvii. 1. 'I am God Almighty, walk before me, and be thou perfect.' The way to walk uprightly, to be sincere or perfect in obedience, is always to consider, that he who requires it of us is God Almighty, accompanied with all the authority and power before mentioned, and under whose eye we are continually. And, in particular, we may apply this unto persons and occasions.

[1.] As to *persons*. Let them in an especial manner have a continual *regard* hereunto, who on any account are *great*, or *high*, or *noble*, in the world, and that because their especial temptation is to be *lifted* up unto a forgetfulness or regardlessness of this *authority* of God. The prophet distributes incorrigible sinners into two sorts, and gives the different grounds of their impenitency respectively. The first are the poor; and it is their folly, stupidity, and sensual lusts

that keep them off from attending to the command; Jer. v. 3, 4. 'They have refused to receive correction, they have made their faces harder than a rock, they have refused to return; therefore I said, Surely these are poor, they are sottish, for they know not the way of the Lord, nor the judgment of their God.' There is a sort of poor incorrigible sinners, whose impenitency ariseth much out of their ignorance, blindness, and folly, which they please themselves in, although they differ but little from the beasts that perish. And such do we abound withal, who will take no pains for, who will admit of no means of, instruction. But there is another sort of sinners to whom the prophet makes his application, and discovers the ground of their incorrigible impenitency also; 'I will get me to the great men, and will speak unto them, for they have known the way of the Lord, and the judgment of their God;' v. 5. Great men, by reason of their education and other advantages, do attain unto a knowledge of the will of God, or at least may be thought so to have done, and would be esteemed to excel therein. They, therefore, are not likely to be obstinate in sin, merely from stupid ignorance and folly. No, saith the prophet, they take another course; 'they have altogether broken the yoke, and burst the bonds.' They are like a company of rude beasts of the field, who having broken their yokes and cords, do run up and down the fields, treading down the corn, breaking up the fences, pushing with the horn, and trampling on all before them. This is the course of men in the pursuit of their lusts, when they have 'broken the yoke of the Lord.' And this the prophet declares to be the especial evil of great men, the rich, the mighty, the honourable in the world. Now this 'breaking of the yoke,' is the neglecting and despising of the authority of God in the command. Seeing, therefore, that this is the especial temptation of that sort of persons, and things innumerable there are of all sorts, that concur to render that temptation prevalent upon them, let all those who are of that condition, and have the least sincere desire after holiness, watch diligently, as they love and value their souls, to keep always, and in all things, a due sense of the authority of God in his commands upon their minds and consciences. When you are in the height of your greatness, in the fulness of your enjoyments,

in the most urgent of your avocations by the things or societies of the world, and those who belong to it, when the variety of public appearances and attendencies are about you, where you are uppermost in the words of others, and it may be in your own thoughts, remember him who is over all, and consider that you are subject and obnoxious unto his authority, equally with the poorest creature on the earth. Remember that it is your especial temptation to do otherwise: and if you do yet abhor those who by this means are come to be sons of Belial, or such as have altogether broken the yoke, and run up and down the world in the pursuit of their lusts, saying, ‘Our lips are our own, and who is Lord over us,’ be you watchful against the least beginnings or entrances of it in yourselves.

[2.] In *general*, let us all endeavour to carry a constant regard unto the *authority* of God in his *commands*, into all those *seasons, places, societies, occasions*, wherein we are apt to be surprised in any *sin*, or a neglect of *duty*. And I may reduce this instruction, or point it unto three heads or occasions; namely, *secrecy, businesses, and societies*. 1st. Carry this along with you into your *secret retirements* and *enjoyments*. Neglect hereof is the next cause of those secret actual provoking sins which the world swarms with. When no eye sees but the eye of God, men think themselves secure. Hereby have many been surprised into folly, which hath proved the beginning of a total apostacy. An awe from the authority of God in the command upon the heart, will equally secure us in all places, and on all occasions. 2ndly. Let us carry it into our *businesses*, and the exercise of our *trades* or *callings*. Most men in these things, are very apt to be intent on present occasions, and having a certain end before them, do habituate themselves unto the ways of its attainment. And whilst they are so engaged, many things occur which are apt to divert them from the rule of holiness. Whenever, therefore, you enter into your occasions, wherein you may suppose that temptations will arise, call to mind the greatness, power, and authority over you, of him who hath commanded you in all things to be holy. Upon every entrance of a surprisal, make your retreat into such thoughts which will prove your relief. 3rdly. Carry it with you into your *companies* and *societies*. For many have

frequent occasions of engaging in such societies, as wherein the least forgetfulness of the sovereign authority of God, will betray them unto profuseness in vanity, and corrupt communication, until they do with delight, and hear with pleasure, such things as wherewith the Holy Spirit of God is grieved, their own consciences are defiled, and the honour of profession is cast to the ground.

Secondly, The *command* of God that we should be *holy*, is not to be considered only as an effect of *power* and *authority* which we *must* submit unto, but as a fruit of *infinite wisdom* and *goodness* also, which it is our *highest advantage* and interest to comply withal. And this introduceth a peculiar necessity of holiness, from the consideration of what is equal, reasonable, ingenuous; the contrary whereunto is foolish, perverse, ungrateful, every way unbecoming rational creatures. Where nothing can be discerned in commands, but mere authority, will, and pleasure; they are looked on as merely respecting the good of them that command, and not at all theirs who are to obey, which disheartens and weakens the principle of obedience. Now, though God, because his dominion over us is sovereign and absolute, might have justly left unto us no other reason or motive of our obedience, and, it may be, did so deal with the church of old, as to some particular temporary ceremonial institutions; yet he doth not, nor ever did so, as to the main of their obedience. But as he proposeth his law as an effect of infinite wisdom, love, and goodness, so he declares and pleads, that all his commands are just and equal in themselves, good and useful unto us, and that our compliance with them is our present, as well as it will be our future, happiness. And that this is so, that the command of God requiring that we should be holy, as a fruit of wisdom and goodness, is equal and advantageous unto ourselves, appears from all the considerations of it.

First, Look upon it *formally*, as a *law prescribed* unto us, and it is so because the obedience in *holiness* which it requires, is *proportioned* unto the *strength* and *power* which we have to *obey*, which declares it *equal* unto us, and an effect of infinite *wisdom* and *goodness* in God. The command, as we shewed before, may be considered either as it belonged unto the old covenant, or as it is annexed unto, and so is a part of, the

new. In the first way, as it belonged unto the old covenant, the strength of grace which we had originally from God under the law of creation, was sufficient to enable us unto all that holy obedience which was required therein; and our not doing so, was from wilful rebellion, and not from any impotency or weakness in us. We fell not from our first estate for want of power to obey, but by the neglect of the exercise of that power which we had. God made us upright, but we sought out many inventions. And in the latter way, as it belongs to the covenant of grace, there is by virtue of that covenant a supply of spiritual strength given in by the promise, unto all them who are taken into it, enabling them to answer the commands for holiness, according to the rule of the acceptance of their obedience, before laid down. No man who is instated in the covenant of grace, comes short or fails of the performance of that obedience which is required and accepted in that covenant, merely for want of power and spiritual strength. For God therein, 'according to his divine power gives unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue;' 1 Pet. i. 3.

It is true, this grace or strength, is administered unto them by certain ways and means, which if they attend not unto, they will come short of it. But, this I say, in the careful, diligent, sedulous use of those means appointed, none who belong to the covenant of grace, shall ever fail of that power and ability which shall render the commands of the gospel easy and not grievous unto them, and whereby they may so fulfil them, as infallibly to be accepted. This the Scripture is plain in, where Christ himself tells us, that 'his yoke is easy, and his burden light;' Matt. xi. 30. and his holy apostle, that 'his commands are not grievous;' 1 John v. 3. For, if they should exceed all the strength which we either have, or he is pleased to give unto us, they would be like the Jewish ceremonies, a yoke which we could not bear, and a law not only grievous but unprofitable. But on the contrary, our apostle expressly affirms, and so may we, 'that he could do all things,' that is, in the way and manner, and unto the end for which they are required in the gospel, 'through Christ that strengthened him.' Some would confound these things, and cast all into disorder. They would

have men that are under the old covenant, to have a power and spiritual strength to fulfil the commands of the new, which God hath never spoken of nor declared, and which indeed is contrary to the whole design of his grace. They would have men, who having broken the old covenant, and forfeited all their strength and ability which they had by it for obedience, and are not initiated in the new covenant, yet to have a power of their own to fulfil the command of the one or the other, which God neither giveth, nor is obliged to give, nor is it necessary to prove that the command is equal and holy. For, as was observed, God giveth us no command of holiness and obedience, but in, with, and by virtue of, some covenant. And there is no more required to prove them to be just and equal, but they are easy unto them who walk with God in that covenant whereunto they do belong, and that that performance of them shall be accepted which they have power for. If any will sinfully cast away their covenant, interest, and privilege, as we did all that of our original creation, we must thank ourselves if we have not power to answer its commands. Nor doth it belong unto the equity of the command of the new covenant,^f that those who are not yet made partakers of it by grace, should have power to fulfil them. Nay, if they had so, and should do so accordingly (were any such thing possible), it would not avail them. For, being supposed not as yet to belong unto the new covenant, they must belong unto the old. And the performance of the commands of the new covenant in the way and manner which are required therein, would not avail them who are really under the rule and law of the old, which admits of nothing short of absolute perfection. But what the 'law speaks, it speaks unto them that are under the law;' and what the gospel speaks, it speaks unto them 'who are not under the law, but under grace.' And the formal transition of men from one of these states unto another, is by an act of God's grace, wherein themselves are merely passive, as hath elsewhere been demonstrated. See Col. i. 13.

This is that which I do intend. God at first made a covenant with mankind, the first covenant, the covenant of works. Herein he gave them commands for holy obedience. These commands were not only possible unto them, both for matter and manner, by virtue of that strength and power

which was concreated with them, but easy and pleasant, every way suited unto their good and satisfaction in that state and condition. This rendered their obedience equal, just, reasonable, and aggravated their sin with the guilt of the most horrible folly and ingratitude. When by the fall this covenant was broken, we lost therewith all power and ability to comply with its commands in holy obedience. Hereupon, the 'law continued holy, and the commandment holy, just, and good,' as our apostle speaks, Rom. vii. 12. For what should make it otherwise, seeing there was no change in it by sin, nor did God require more or harder things of us than before? But to us it became impossible, for we had lost the strength by which alone we were enabled to observe it. And so 'the commandment which was ordained to life, we find to be unto death;' Rom. vii. 10. Towards all, therefore, that remain in that state, we say, the commandment is still just and holy, but it is neither easy nor possible. Hereon God brings in the covenant of grace by Christ, and renews therein the commands for holy obedience, as was before declared. And here it is, that men trouble themselves and others about the power, ability, and free-will that men have as yet under the first covenant, and the impotence that ensued on the transgression of it to fulfil the condition of the new covenant, and yield the obedience required in it. For this is the place where men make their great contests about the power of free-will, and the possibility of God's command. Let them but grant, that it is the mere work of God's sovereign and almighty grace effectually to instate men in the new covenant, and we shall contend with them or against them, that by virtue thereof, they have that spiritual strength and grace administered unto them, as render all the commands of it to be not only possible but easy also, yea, pleasant, and every way suited unto the principle of a holy life wherewith they are endued. And this we make an argument for the necessity of holiness. The argument we have under consideration, is that whereby we prove the necessity of holiness with respect unto God's command requiring it, because it is a fruit of infinite wisdom and goodness. It is so in an especial manner as it belongs unto the new covenant. And therefore, by our disobedience or living in sin, unto the contempt of God's authority, we add that of his

wisdom and goodness also. Now that it is so a fruit of them, appears in the first place from hence, that it is proportioned unto the strength and ability which we have to obey. Hence obedience in holiness becomes equal, easy, and pleasant unto all believers who sincerely attend unto it. And this fully evinceth the necessity of it, from the folly and ingratitude of the contrary. That these things, and in them the force of the present argument may the better be apprehended, I shall dispose them into the ensuing observations.

1. We do not say, that any one hath this *power* and *ability in himself*, or *from himself*. God hath not in the new covenant brought down his command to the power of man, but by his grace he raiseth the power of man unto his command: the former were only a compliance with the sin of our nature, which God abhors; the latter is the exaltation of his own grace, which he aimeth at. It is not men's strength in and of themselves, the power of nature, but the grace which is administered in the covenant, that we intend. For men to trust unto themselves herein, as though they could do any thing of themselves, is a renunciation of all the aids of grace, without which we can do nothing. We can have no power from Christ, unless we live in a persuasion that we have none of our own. Our whole spiritual life is a life of faith; and that is, a life of dependance on Christ for what we have not of ourselves. This is that which ruins the attempt of many for holiness, and renders what they do (though it be like unto the acts and duties of it), not at all to belong unto it. For, what we do in our own strength, is no part of holiness; as is evident from the preceding description of it. Neither doth the Scripture abound in any thing more, than in testifying that the power and ability we have to fulfil the commands of God as given in the new covenant, is not our own, nor from ourselves, but merely from the grace of God administered in that covenant; as John xv. 5. Phil. ii. 13. 2 Cor. iii. 5. It will be said then, where lies the difference? Because it is the mere work of grace to instate us in the covenant, you conclude that we have no power of our own to that purpose. And if when we are in covenant, all our strength and power is still from grace, we are, as to any ability of our own to fulfil the command of God, as remote from it as ever. I answer: the first work of grace is merely upon us. Here-

by the image of God is renewed, our hearts are changed, and a principle of spiritual life is bestowed on us. But this latter work of grace is in us, and by us. And the strength or ability which we have thereby, is as truly our own as Adam's was his, which he had in the state of innocency. For he had his immediately from God, and so have we ours, though in a different way.

2. There is no such *provision of spiritual strength* for any man, enabling him to comply with the *command* of God for *holiness*, as to countenance him in the least *carnal security*, or the least *neglect* of the diligent use of all those *means* which God hath appointed for the communication thereof unto us, with the *preservation* and *increase* of it. God who hath determined graciously to give us supplies thereof, hath also declared, that we are obliged unto our utmost diligence for the participation of them, and unto their due exercise when received. This innumerable commands and injunctions give testimony unto; but especially is the whole method of God's grace and our duty herein, declared by the apostle Peter, 2 Epist. i. 3—11. which discourse I have opened and improved elsewhere. The sum is, that God creating in us a new spiritual nature, and therewithal giving unto us 'all things appertaining unto life and godliness,' or a gracious ability for the duties of a holy, godly, spiritual life, we are obliged to use all means in the continual exercise of all grace, which will ascertain unto us our eternal election, with our effectual vocation, whereon we shall obtain an assured joyful entrance into the kingdom of glory.

3. This administration of *grace* and *spiritual strength* is not *equally effectual* at *all* times. There are seasons, wherein to correct our negligences in giving place to our corruptions and temptations, or on other grounds to discover unto us our own frailty and impotency, with other holy ends of his own, that God is pleased to withhold the powerful influences of his grace, and to leave us unto ourselves. In such instances we shall assuredly come short of answering the command for universal holiness, one way or other. See Psal. xxx. 6, 7. But I speak of ordinary cases, and to prevent that slothfulness and tergiversation unto this duty of complying with all the commands of God for holiness, which we are so obnoxious unto.

4. We do not say, that there is in the *covenant of grace* spiritual *strength* administered, so as that by virtue thereof we should yield *sinless and absolutely perfect obedience* unto God, or to render any one duty so *absolutely perfect*. If any such there are, or ever were, who maintain such an imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto us, as should render our own personal obedience unnecessary, they do overthrow the truth and holiness of the gospel. And to say, that we have such supplies of internal strength, as to render the imputation of the righteousness of Christ unto our justification unnecessary, is to overthrow the grace of the gospel, and the new covenant itself. But this alone we say; there is grace administered by the promises of the gospel, enabling us to perform the obedience of it, in that way and manner as God will accept. And herein there are various degrees, whereof we ought constantly to aim at the most complete, and so to be perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord. And where we signally come short of the best rules and examples, it is principally from our neglect of those supplies of grace which are tendered in the promises.

5. There is a twofold *gracious power* necessary to render the command for *holiness* and *obedience* thereunto *easy* and *pleasant*.

(1.) That which is *habitually resident* in the hearts and souls of *believers*, whereby they are constantly inclined and disposed unto all *fruits of holiness*. This the Scripture calls our life, a new principle of life, without which we are dead in trespasses and sins; where this is not, whatever arguments you constrain and press men withal to be holy, you do, as it were, but offer violence unto them, endeavouring to force them against the fixed bent and inclination of their minds. By them all you do but set up a dam against a stream of waters, which will not be permanent, nor turn the course of the stream contrary to its natural inclination. Unto such the command for holiness must needs be grievous and difficult. But such a disposition and inclination, or a principle so inclining, and disposing of us unto duties of holiness, we have not in nor of ourselves by nature; nor is it to be raised out of its ruins. For the 'carnal mind' (which is in us all) 'is enmity against God,' which carrieth in it an aversation unto every thing that is required of us in a

way of obedience, as hath been proved at large. And yet without this habitual principle, we can never in a due manner comply with any one command of God that we should be holy. Want hereof is that which renders obedience so grievous and burdensome unto many. They endure it for a season, and at length either violently or insensibly cast off its yoke. Light and conviction have compelled them to take it on themselves, and to attend unto the performance of those duties which they dare not omit. But having no principle enabling or inclining them unto it, all they do, though they do much, and continue long therein, is against the grain with them, they find it difficult, uneasy and wearisome. Wherein they can by any pretences countenance themselves in a neglect of any part of it, or bribe their consciences into a compliance with what is contrary unto it, they fail not to deliver themselves from their burden. And, for the most part, either insensibly by multiplied instances of the neglect of duties of obedience, or by some great temptations, before they leave the world, they utterly leave all the ways of holiness, and respect unto the commands of God; or if they continue any, it is unto external acts of morality which pass with approbation in the world, the inward and spiritual part of obedience they utterly renounce. The reason hereof, I say, is, because having no principle within, enabling them unto a compliance with the commands of God, with delight and satisfaction, they grow grievous and intolerable unto them. So unto many on the same ground, the worship of God is very burdensome, unless it be borne for them, by external additions and ornaments.

(2.) There is an *actual assistance of effectual grace* required hereunto. We are not put into that condition by the covenant, as that we should be able to do any thing of ourselves, without actual divine assistance. This were to set us free from our dependance on God, and to make us gods unto ourselves. The root still bears us, and the springs of our spiritual life are in another. And where both these are, there the command is equal not only in itself, but unto us, and obedience unto it as easy as just.

6. And both these sorts of *grace* are administered in the *new covenant*, suited unto the holy obedience it requires.

(1.) For the *first*, it is that which God so frequently, so

expressly promiseth, where he says, that he will 'take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh; that he will write his laws in our hearts, and put his fear in our inward parts;' that we shall 'fear him,' and 'never depart from him;' that he will 'circumcise our hearts' to 'know' and 'love' him: which promises, and the *nature* of the grace contained in them, I have before at large explained. It is sufficient unto our present purpose, that in and by these *promises*, we are *made partakers of the divine nature*, and are therein endowed with a constant *habitual disposition and inclination* unto all acts and duties of *holiness*; for our *power* followeth our *love* and *inclinations*, as *impotency* is a consequent of their defect.

And here we may stay a little, to confirm our principal assertion. Upon the supply of this grace, which gives both strength for, and a constant inclination unto, holy obedience, the command for it becomes equal and just, meet and easy to be complied withal. For none can refuse a compliance with it in any instance, but their so doing is contrary unto that disposition and inclination of the new nature which God hath implanted in themselves. So that in them to sin, is not only contrary to the law without them, to the light of their minds, and warning of their consciences, but it is also unto that which is their own inclination and disposition, which hath sensibly in such cases a force and violence put upon it, by the power of corruptions and temptations. Wherefore, although the command for holiness may and doth seem grievous and burdensome unto unregenerate persons, as we have observed, because it is against the habitual bent and inclination of their whole souls; yet neither is it, nor can it be, so unto them who cannot neglect it, or act any thing against it, but that therein, also, they must crucify and offer violence unto the inclinations of the new creature in them, which are their own. For in all things, 'the spirit lusteth against the flesh;' Gal. v. 17. and the disposition of the new creature is habitually against sin, and for holiness. And this gives a mighty constraining power unto the command, when it is evident in our own minds and consciences, that it requires nothing of us but what we do or may find an inclination or disposition in our own hearts unto. And by this consideration we may take in the power of it upon our souls, which is too fre-

quently disregarded. Let us but upon the proposal of it unto us, consider what our minds and hearts say to it, what answer they return, and we shall quickly discern how equal and just the command is. For, I cannot persuade myself, that any believer can be so captivated, at any time, under the power of temptations, corruptions, or prejudices, but that (if he will but take counsel with his own soul, upon the consideration of the command for obedience and holiness, and ask himself what he would have) he will have a plain and sincere answer, That indeed I would do and have the good proposed, this holiness, this duty of obedience. Not only will conscience answer, that he must not do the evil whereunto temptation leadeth, for if he doth evil will ensue thereon; but the new nature, and his mind and spirit will say, This good I would do, I delight in it, it is best for me, most suited unto me. And so it joins all the strength and interest it hath in the soul, with the command. See to this purpose the arguing of our apostle, Rom. vii. 20—22. It is true, there is a natural light in conscience, complying with the command in its proposal, and urging obedience thereunto, which doth not make it easy to us, but where it is alone, increaseth its burden and our bondage; for it doth only give in its suffrage unto the sanction of the command, and adds to the severity wherewith it is attended. But that compliance with the command which is from a principle of grace, is quite of another nature, and greatly facilitates obedience. And we may distinguish between that compliance with the command which is from the natural light of conscience, which genders unto bondage, and that which being from a renewed principle of grace, gives liberty and ease in obedience. For, the first respects principally the consequent of obedience or disobedience, the good or evil that will ensue upon them; Rom. ii. 14, 15. Set aside this consideration, and it hath no more to say: but the latter respects the command itself, which it embraceth, delighteth in, and judgeth good and holy, with the duties themselves required, which are natural, and suited thereunto.

(2.) *Grace* of the latter sort also, *actual grace* for every holy act and duty, is administered unto us according to the *promise* of the *gospel*. So God told Paul, that ‘his grace was sufficient for him.’ And he ‘worketh in us both to will

and to do, of his own good pleasure;’ Phil. ii. 13. so as that we ‘may do all things,’ through him that enables us, the nature of which grace also hath been before discoursed of. Now, although this actual working of grace be not in the power of the wills of men, to make use of or refuse as they see good, but its administration depends merely on the grace and faithfulness of God, yet this I must say, that where it is sought in a due manner by faith and prayer, it is never so restrained from any believer, but that it shall be effectual in him, unto the whole of that obedience which is required of him, and as it will be accepted from him.

If then this be the condition of the command of holiness, how just and equal must it needs be confessed to be, and therefore how highly reasonable is it that we should comply with it, and how great is their sin and folly by whom it is neglected! It is true, we are absolutely obliged unto obedience by the mere authority of God who commands; but he not only allows us to take in, but directs us to seek after, these other considerations of it, which may give it force and efficacy upon our souls and consciences. And among these, none is more efficacious towards gracious ingenuous souls, than this of the contemperation of the duties commanded, unto spiritual aids of strength promised unto us. For what cloak or pretence of dislike or neglect is here left unto any? Wherefore, not only the authority of God in giving a command, but the infinite wisdom and goodness of God in giving such a command, so just, equal, and gentle, fall upon us therein, to oblige us to holy obedience. To neglect or despise this command, is to neglect or despise God, in that way which he hath chosen to manifest all the holy properties of his nature.

Secondly, The *command* is *equal*, and so to be esteemed from the *matter* of it, or the *things* that it doth require. Things they are that are neither great nor grievous, much less perverse, useless, or evil; Micah vi. 6—8. There is nothing in the holiness which the command requires, but what is good to him in whom it is, and useful to all others concerned in him, or what he doth. What they are, the apostle mentions in his exhortation unto them; Phil. iv. 8. They are ‘things true,’ and ‘honest,’ and ‘just,’ and ‘pure,’ and ‘lovely,’ and of ‘good report,’ and what evil is there in any of

these things, that we should decline the command that requires them? The more we abound in them, the better it will be for our relations, our families, our neighbours, the whole nation, and the world, but best of all for ourselves. 'Godliness is profitable unto all things;' 1 Tim. iv. 8. 'These things are good and profitable unto men;' Tit. iii. 8. Good to them that do them, and good to those towards whom they are done. But both these things, namely, the usefulness of holiness unto ourselves and others, must be spoken unto distinctly afterward, and are, therefore, transmitted unto their proper place.

As, therefore, it was before observed, it is incumbent on us, in the first place, to endeavour after holiness, and the improvement of it, with respect unto the command of God that we should be holy, and because of it, and that especially under the consideration of it which we have insisted on. I know not what vain imaginations have seemed to possess the minds of some, that they have no need of respect unto the command, nor to the promises and threatenings of it, but to obey merely from the power and guidance of an inward principle. Nay, some have supposed, that a respect unto the command would vitiate our obedience, rendering it legal and servile. But I hope, that darkness which hindered men from discerning the harmony and compliance which is between the principle of grace in us, and the authority of the command upon us, is much taken away from all sincere professors. It is a respect unto the command which gives the formal nature of obedience unto what we do. And without a due regard unto it, there is nothing of holiness in us. Some would make the light of nature to be their rule, some in what they do, look no farther for their measure than what carries the reputation of common honesty among men. He that would be holy indeed, must always mind the command of God, with that reverence and those affections which become him to whom God speaks immediately. And that it may be effectual towards us, we may consider:

1. How God hath *multiplied his commands* unto this purpose, to testify not only his own infinite *care* of us, and *love* unto us, but also our eternal *concernment* in what he requires. He doth not give out unto us a single command that we should be holy (which yet were sufficient to oblige us for

ever), but he gives his commands unto that purpose, 'line upon line, line upon line, precept upon precept, precept upon precept.' He that shall but look over the Bible, and see almost every page of it filled with commands, or directions, or instructions for holiness; cannot but conclude, that the mind and will of God is very much in this matter, and that our concernment therein is inexpressible. Nor doth God content himself to multiply commands in general, that we should be holy, so as that if we have regard unto him they may never be out of our remembrance, but there is not any particular duty or instance of holiness, but he hath given us especial commands for that also. No man can instance in the least duty that belongs directly unto it, but it falls under some especial command of God. We are not only then under the command of God in general, and that often reiterated unto us, in an awful reverence whereof we ought to walk, but upon all occasions, whatever we have to do or avoid in following after holiness, is represented unto us in especial commands to that purpose. And they are all of them a fruit of the love and care of God towards us. Is it not then our duty always to consider these commands, to bind them unto our hearts, and our hearts to them, that nothing may separate them? O that they might always dwell in our minds, to influence them unto an inward constant watch against the first disorders of our souls, that are unsuited to the inward holiness God requires, abide with us in our closets, and all our occasions for our good.

2. We may do well to consider what *various enforcements* God is pleased to give unto those *multiplied commands*. He doth not remit us merely to their authority, but he applieth all other ways and means whereby they may be made effectual. Hence are they accompanied with exhortations, entreaties, reasonings, expostulations, promises, threatenings, all made use of to fasten the command upon our minds and, consciences. God knows how slow and backward we are to receive due impressions from his authority; and he knows by what ways and means the principles of our internal faculties are apt to be wrought upon, and therefore applies these engines to fix the power of the command upon us. Were these things to be treated of severally, it is manifest how great a part of the Scripture were to be transcribed. I shall.

therefore, only take a little notice of the reinforcement of the command for holiness, by those especial promises which are given unto it. I do not intend now the promises of the gospel in general, wherein in its own way and place we are interested by holiness, but of such peculiar promises as God enforceth the command by. It is not for nothing that it is said, that 'godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come;' 1 Tim. iv. 8. There is in all the promises an especial respect unto it, and it gives them in whom it is an especial interest in all the promises.

This is, as it were, the text which our Saviour preached his first sermon upon. For all the blessings which he pronounceth consist in giving particular instances of some parts of holiness, annexing an especial promise unto each of them. 'Blessed,' saith he, 'are the pure in heart;' heart purity is the spring and life of all holiness; and why are such persons blessed; why, saith he, 'they shall see God;' he appropriates the promise of the eternal enjoyment of God, unto this qualification of purity of heart. So also it hath the promises of this life, and that in things temporal and spiritual. In things temporal we may take out from amongst many that especial instance given us by the psalmist; 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor.' Wisely to consider the poor in their distress, so as to relieve them according to our ability, is a great act and duty of holiness. He that doth this, saith the psalmist, he is a blessed man. Whence doth that blessedness arise, and wherein doth it consist? It doth so in a participation of those especial promises which God hath annexed unto this duty, even in this life; 'the Lord will deliver him in the time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him and keep him alive, and he shall be blessed on the earth, and thou wilt not deliver him into the hand of his enemies; the Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing, and thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness;' Psal. xli. 1—3. Many especial promises in the most important concerns of this life, are given unto the right discharge of this one duty. For godliness hath the promise of this life. And other instances might be multiplied unto the same purpose. It is so also with respect unto things spiritual. So the apostle Peter having repeated a long chain of graces, whose exercise he presenteth unto us, adds for an encouragement, 'If ye

do these things ye shall never fall ;' 2 Pet. i. 10. The promise of permanency in obedience, with an absolute preservation from all such fallings into sin as are inconsistent with the covenant of grace, is affixed unto our diligence in holiness. And who knows not how the Scripture abounds in instances of this nature ? That which we conclude from hence is, that together with the command of God requiring us to be holy, we should consider the promises wherewith it is accompanied (among other things) as an encouragement unto the cheerful performance of that obedience, which the command itself makes necessary.

Wherefore, the force of this argument is evident, and exposed unto all. God hath in this matter positively declared his will, interposing his sovereign authority commanding us to be holy ; and that on the penalty of his utmost displeasure ; and he hath therewithal given us redoubled assurance (as in a case wherein we are very apt to deceive ourselves), that be we else what we will, or can be, without sincere holiness he will neither own us, nor have any thing to do with us. Be our gifts, parts, abilities, places, dignities, usefulness in the world, profession, outward duties what they will, unless we are sincerely holy, which we may not be, and yet be eminent in all these things, we are not, we cannot, we shall not, be accepted with God.

And the Holy Ghost is careful to obviate a deceit in this matter, which he foresaw would be apt to put itself on the minds of men. For, whereas the foundation of our salvation in ourselves, and the hinge whereon the whole weight of it doth turn, is our faith ; men might be apt to think, that if they have faith, it will be well enough with them although they are not holy. Therefore, because this plea and pretence of faith is great, and apt to impose on the minds of men, who would willingly retain their lusts with a hope and expectation of heaven, we are plainly told in the Scripture, that that faith which is without holiness, without works, without fruits, which can be so, or is possible that it should be so, is vain ; not that faith which will save our souls, but equivocally so called, that may perish for ever with those in whom it is.