

4. It is his cordial desire to walk in all God's commands, Pl. cxix. 5. 'O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes?' Though his strength fails, yet his pulse beats.

5. He doth really endeavour to obey God's law perfectly: and wherein he comes short he runs to Christ's blood to make supply for his defects. This cordial desire, and real endeavour, God esteems as perfect obedience, 2 Cor. viii. 12. 'If there be a willing mind, it is accepted.' 'Let me hear thy voice, for sweet is thy voice,' Cant. ii. 14. Though the prayers of the righteous are mixed with sin, yet God sees they would pray better: God picks out the weeds from the flowers; he sees the faith and winks at the failing. The faint's obedience, though he falls short of legal perfection, yet having sincerity in it, and Christ's merits mixed with it, finds gracious acceptance. When the Lord sees endeavours after perfect obedience, this he takes well at our hands: as a father that receives a letter from his child, though there be blots in the letter, and false spellings, yet the father takes all in good part: O what blottings are there in our holy things! but God is pleased to take all in good part: faith God, it is my child, and he would do better if he could; I will accept it.



ALL SINS NOT EQUALLY HEINOUS.

Q. LXXXIII. *ARE all transgressions of the law equally heinous?*

Ans. Some sins in themselves, and by reason of several aggravations, are more heinous in the sight of God than others.

John xix. 11. 'He that delivered me unto thee hath the greater sin.' The Stoic philosophers held, that all sins were equal: but this scripture clearly holds forth, that there is a gradual difference in sin; some are greater than others; some are 'mighty sins,' Amos v. 12. and 'crying sins,' Gen. xviii. 21. Every sin hath a voice to speak, but some sins cry. As some diseases are worse than others, and some poisons more venomous; so some sins are more heinous, Ezek. xvi. 47. Jer. xvi. 12. 'You have done worse than your fathers, your sins have exceeded theirs.' Some sins have a blacker aspect than others: to clip the king's coin is treason, but to strike his person is a higher degree of treason. A vain thought is a sin, but a blasphemous word is a greater sin. That some sins are greater than others, appears, (1.) Because there was difference in the offerings under the law; the sin offering was greater than the trespass offerings. (2.) Because some sins are not capable of pardon as others are, therefore they must needs be more heinous, as

the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost, Mat. xii. 31. (3.) Because some sins have a greater degree of punishment than others, Mat. xxiii. 14, 24. 'Ye shall receive greater damnation.' 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?' God would not punish one more than another, but that his sin is greater. It is true, "all sins are equally heinous in respect of the object," or the person against whom sin is committed, viz. the infinite God: but in another sense, all sins are not alike heinous; some sins have more bloody circumstances in them, which are like the dye to the wool, to give it a deeper colour.

Qu. *What sins may be said to be more heinous than others?*

Ans. 1. Such sins as are committed without any occasion offered: a man swears or is angry, and hath no provocation. The less the occasion of sin is, the greater is the sin. 2. Such sins are more heinous, that are committed presumptuously. Under the law there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sins, Numb. xv.

Qu. *What is it to sin presumptuously, which doth heighten and aggravate sin, and make it more heinous?*

Ans. To sin presumptuously, is to sin against convictions and illuminations, or an enlightened conscience, Job xxiv. 13 'They are of those that rebel against the light.' Conscience, like the cherubim, stands with a flaming sword in its hand, to deter the sinner; yet he will sin. Did not Pilate sin against conviction, and with an high hand, in condemning Christ? He knew that of envy the Jews had delivered him, Matt. xxvii. 18. he confessed 'he found no fault with him,' Luke xxiii. 14. and his own wife sent to him, saying, 'have nothing to do with that just man,' Matt. xxvii. 19. Yet for all this, he gave the sentence of death against Christ. Here he sinned presumptuously, against an enlightened conscience. To sin ignorantly, doth something extenuate and pare off the guilt, John xv. 22. 'If I had not come, ye had had no sin;' that is, your sin had been less; but to sin against illuminations and convictions, doth enhance and accent men's sins. These sins make deep wounds in the soul; other sins fetch blood, these are a stab at the heart.

Qu. *How many ways doth a man sin against illuminations and convictions?*

Ans. 1. When he lives in the total neglect of duty. He is not ignorant that it is a duty to read the word, yet he lets the Bible lie by as rusty armour, that he seldom makes use of; he is convinced that it is a duty to pray in his family, yet he can go days and months, and God never hear of him; he calls God father but never asks his blessing. Neglect of family-prayer doth, as it were, uncover the roof of men's houses, and make way for a curse to be rained down upon their table.

2. When a man lives in the same sins he condemns in others, Rom. ii. 2. 'Thou that judgest another, dost the same thing.' As Austin saith of Seneca, "He wrote against superstitions, yet he worshipped those images which he reprov'd." One man condemns another for rash censuring, yet lives in the same sin himself; a master reproveth his apprentice for swearing, yet he himself swears. The snuffers of the tabernacle were of pure gold: they who reprove and snuff the vices of others, had need themselves to be free from those sins. The snuffers must be of gold.

3. When a man sins after vows, Ps. lvi. 12. 'Thy vows, O God, are upon me.' A vow is a religious promise made to God, to dedicate ourselves to him. A vow is not only a purpose, but a promise. Every votary makes himself a debtor, he binds himself to God in a solemn manner. Now to sin after a vow, to vow himself to God, and give his soul to the devil, must needs be against the highest convictions.

4. When a man sins after counsels, admonitions, warnings, he cannot plead ignorance: the trumpet of the gospel hath been blown in his ears, and sounded a retreat to call him off from his sins; he hath been told of his injustice, living in malice, keeping bad company, yet he would venture upon sin: this is to sin against conviction, it aggravates the sin, and is like a weight put into the scale, to make his sin weigh the heavier. If a sea mark be set up to give warning, that there are shelves and rocks in that place, yet, if the mariner will sail there, and split his ship, it is presumption; and, if he be cast away, who will pity him?

5. When a man sins against express comminations and threatenings. God hath thundered out threatenings against such sins, Ps. lxxvi. 21. 'God shall wound the hairy scalp of such an one as goes on still in his trespasses.' Yet, though God set the point of his sword to the breast of a sinner, yet he will commit sin. The pleasure of sin doth more delight him, than the threatenings affright him: he, like the 'leviathan, laughs at the shaking of a spear,' Job xli. 29. Nay, he derides God's threatenings, Isa. v. 19. 'Let him make speed, and hasten his work, that we may see it:' we have heard much what God intends to do, and of judgment approaching, we would fain see it. For men to see the flaming sword of God's threatenings brandished, yet to strengthen themselves in sin, is in an high manner to sin against illumination and conviction.

6. When a man sins under affliction. God doth not only thunder by threatening, but hath let his thunder-bolt fall: he hath inflicted judgments on a person; he may read his sin in his punishment, yet he sins. His sin was uncleanness: he hath wasted his strength as well as his estate. He hath had a fit of apoplexy; yet, though he feels the smart of sin, he retains the love of sin. This is to sin against conviction, 2 Chron. xxviii.

22. ' In his distress did he trespass yet more ; this is that king Ahaz.' This doth enhance and make the sin greater than other sins : for sinning against an enlightened conscience : (1.) Is full of obstinacy and pertinaciousness ; men give no reason, make no defence for their sins, yet they are resolved to hold fast iniquity. This is desperate wilfulness ; and, *Voluntas est regula et mensura actionis*, the more of the will in a sin, the greater the sin, Jer. xviii. 12. ' We will walk after our own devices.' Though there be death and hell every step, we will march on under Satan's colours. This made the sin of the apostate angels so great, because it was wilful ; they had no ignorance in their mind, no passion to stir them up ; there was no tempter to deceive them, but they sinned obstinately and out of choice. (2.) To sin against convictions and illuminations, is joined with slighting and contempt of God. It is bad for a sinner to forget God, but it is worse to contemn him, Prov. x. 13. ' Wherefore do the wicked contemn God ?' An enlightened sinner knows, that by his sin he disobligeth and angers God ; but he cares not whether God be pleased or not, he will have his sin : therefore such an one is said to reproach God, Numb. xv. 30. ' The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord.' Every sin displeaseth God, but sins against an enlightened conscience reproach the Lord. To contemn the authority of a prince, is a reproach done to him. (3.) It is accompanied with impudency. Fear and shame are banished, the veil of modesty is laid aside, Zeph. iii. 5. ' The unjust knoweth no shame.' Judas knew Christ was the Messiah ; he was convinced of it by an oracle from heaven, and by the miracles he wrought, and yet he impudently goes on in his treason ; nay, when Christ said, ' He that dips his hand with me in the dish, he shall betray me : ' and Judas knew Christ meant him. And when Judas was going about his treason, Christ pronounced a wo to him, Luke xxii. 22. yet, for all that, he proceeded in his treason. Thus to sin presumptuously, against an enlightened conscience, dyes the sin of a crimson colour, and makes it greater than other sins.

3. Such sins are more heinous than others, which are sins of continuance. The continuing of sin is the enhancing of sin. He who plots treason, makes himself a greater offender. Some men's heads are the devil's mint-house, they are minting of mischief, Rom. i. 30. ' Inventors of evil things.' Some invent new oaths, others new snares ; such were those presidents that invented a decree against Daniel, and got the king to sign it, Dan. vi. 9.

4. Those sins are greater which proceed from a spirit of malignity. To malign holiness is diabolical. It is a sin to want grace, it is worse to hate it. In nature there are antipathies,

as between the vine and laurel. Some have antipathy against God because of his purity, Isa. xxx. 11. 'Cause the holy One of Israel to cease from before us.' Sinners, if it lay in their power, would not only unthrone God, but unbecome God; if they could help it, God should no longer be God. This sin is boiled up to a greater height.

5. Those sins are of a greater magnitude which are mixed with ingratitude. God cannot endure, of all things, to have his kindness slighted. God's mercy is seen, in relieving men so long, in wooing them by his Spirit and ministers, to be reconciled, in crowning them with so many temporal blessings: now, to abuse all this love, when God hath been filling up the measure of his mercy, that men should fill up the measure of their sins: this is high ingratitude, and doth make their sins of a deeper crimson. Some are worse for mercy. The Vulture (saith Aelian) draws sickness from perfumes. So the sinner contracts evil from the sweet perfumes of God's mercy. The English chronicle reports of one Parry, who being condemned to die, queen Elizabeth sent him his pardon; and, after he was pardoned, he conspired and plotted the queen's death; just so some deal with God; he bestows mercy, and they plot treason against him, Isa. i. 2. 'I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me.' The Athenians, in lieu of the good service Themistocles had done them, banished him their city. The snake, in the fable, being frozen, stung him that gave it warmth. Certainly sins against mercy are far more heinous.

6. Those sins are more heinous than others, which are committed with delectation. A child of God may sin through a surprisal, or against his will, Rom. vii. 19. 'The evil which I would not, that do I.' Like one that is carried down the stream involuntarily. But, to sin with delight, doth heighten and greaten the sin; a sign the heart is in the sin, Hof. iv. 8. 'They set their heart on their iniquity,' as a man follows his gain with delight, Rev. xxii. 15. 'Without are dogs, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.' To tell a lie, is a sin; but to love to tell a lie is a greater sin.

7. Those sins are more heinous than others, which are committed under a pretence of religion. To cozen and defraud is a sin; but to do it with a Bible in one's hand, is a double sin; to be unchaste is a sin, but to put on a mask of religion to play the whore, makes the sin greater, Prov. vii. 14. 'I have peace-offerings with me; this day have I paid my vows: come let us take our fill of love.' She speaks as if she had been at church, and had been saying her prayers: who would ever have suspected her of dishonesty? But, behold her hypocrisy; she makes her devotion a preface to adultery, Luke xx. 47. 'Who

devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayers.' This sin was not in making long prayers; (for Christ was a whole night in prayer) but to make long prayers, that they might do unrighteous actions, did make their sin more horrid.

1. Sins of apostasy are more heinous than others. Demas forsook the truth, 2 Tim. iv. 10. and afterwards became a priest in an idol-temple, saith Dorotheus. To fall is a sin, but to fall away, is a greater sin. Apostates cast a disgrace upon religion. The apostate (saith Tertullian) seems to put God and Satan in the ballance, and, having weighed both their services, prefers the devil's service, and proclaims him to be the best master. In which respect, the apostate is said to put Christ to 'open shame,' Heb. vi. 6. This dyes a sin in grain, and makes it greater. It is a sin not to profess Christ, but it is a greater to deny him: not to wear Christ's colours is a sin; but to run from his colours, is a greater sin. A pagan sins less than a baptized renegado.

9. To persecute religion, makes sin greater, Acts vii. 29. 'To have no religion, is a sin: but to endeavour to destroy religion is a greater.' Antiochus Epiphanes took more tedious journeys, and ran more hazards, to vex and oppose the Jews, than all his predecessors had done in obtaining victories. 'Herod added this above all, that he put John in prison,' Luke iii. 20. He sinned before by incest; but, by imprisoning the prophet, this added to his sin, and made it greater. Persecution fills up the measure of sin, Matth. xxiii. 32. 'Fill you up the measure of your fathers.' If you pour in a porringer of water into a cistern, that adds something to it; but pour in a bucket-full or two, and that fills up the measure of the cistern: so persecution fills up the measure of sin, and makes it greater.

10. To sin maliciously, makes sin greater. Aquinas and other of the schoolmen, place the sin against the Holy Ghost in malice. The sinner, doth all he can to vex God, and despite the Spirit of grace, Heb. x. 29. Thus Julian, who threw up his dagger in the air as if he would have been revenged upon God. This swells sin to its full bigness, it cannot be greater. When a man is once come to this, blasphemously to despite the Spirit, there is but one step lower he can fall, and that is to hell.

11. & *ult.* It aggravates sin, and makes it greater, when a man not only sins himself, but endeavours to make others sin. (1.) Such as teach errors to the people, who decry Christ's Deity, or deny his virtue, making him only a political head, not an head of influence; who preach against the morality of the sabbath, or the immortality of the soul: these men's sins are greater than others. If the breakers of God's law sin, what do they that teach men to break them? Matth. v. 19. (2.) Such as destroy others by their bad example. The swearing

father hath taught his son to swear, and damned him by his example. These men's sins are greater than others, and they shall have an hotter place in hell.

Use. You see all sins are not equal; some are more grievous than others, and bring greater wrath; therefore especially take heed of these sins, Psal. xix. 13. 'Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins.' The least sin is bad enough; you need not aggravate your sins, and make them more heinous: He that hath a little wound will not make it deeper. O beware of these bloody circumstances which greaten your sin, and make it more heinous. The higher a man is in sinning, the lower he shall lie in torment.

WHAT SIN DESERVETH.

Q. LXXXV. *WHAT doth every sin deserve?*

Ans. God's wrath and curse, both in this life, and that which is to come.

Mat. xxv. 41. 'Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire.'—

Man having sinned, is like a favourite turned out of the king's favour, and deserves the wrath and curse of God.

I. God's curse, Gal. iii. 10. As when Christ cursed the fig-tree, it withered, Mat. xxi. 19. So, when God curseth any, he withers in his soul. God's curse blasts whether it comes.

II. God's wrath, which is nothing else but the execution of God's curse.

First, What this wrath is? In this wrath there is, (1.) Something that is Privative; that is, the being deprived of the smiles of God's face. It is hell enough to be excluded from God's 'presence; in whose presence is fulness of joy,' Psal. xvi. 11. God's smiling face hath that splendor and oriency of beauty shining in it, as ravisheth the angels with delight. This is the diamond in the ring of glory. And, if it were such a mercy for Absalom, that he might not see the king's face, 2 Kings xiv. 22. what will it be for the wicked to be shut out from beholding God's pleasant face! *Privatio Divinae visionis omnium suppliciorum summum.*

(2.) God's wrath hath something in it Positive: That is, his frown and enraged fury; which is 'wrath come upon the sinner to the uttermost,' 1 Thess. ii. 16. Here three positions or maxims;

1. God's wrath is irresistible, Psalm xc. 11. 'Who knows the power of thine anger?' Sinners may oppose God's ways,