

things which are at a distance near to the eye, so doth faith, heaven, and glory, seem near. A Christian will not be weary of service that hath the crown in his eye. (2.) The second persevering grace is hope. Hope animates the spirits; it is to the soul as cork to the net, which keeps it from sinking. Hope breeds patience, and patience breeds perseverance. Hope is compared to an anchor, Heb. vi. 19. The Christian never sins, but when he casts away his anchor. (3.) Persevering grace is love. Love makes a man that he is never weary. Love may be compared to the rod of myrtle in the traveller's hand, which refresheth him, and keeps him from being weary in his journey. He who loves the world, is never weary of following the world: he who loves God will never be weary of serving him; that is the reason why the saints and angels in heaven are never weary of praising and worshipping God; because their love to God is perfect, love turns service into delight. Get the love of God into your hearts, and you will run in his ways, and not be weary.



JAMES iii. 17. *To him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.*

THE apostle, in the former verses, had met with a sin common in those days, a sinful boasting among men, verse 13. 'Go to now, ye that say, to-day or to-morrow, we will go into such a city, and buy and sell, and get gain;' whereas you know not what shall be on the morrow: you may be in your graves before to-morrow; 'for what is your life? It is even a vapour.' A vapour being an exhalation, it cannot continue long; as it is raised by the sun, so it is dispersed by the wind; such is your life; a vapour; a short breath, a flying shadow; it appears for 'a little time, and then vanisheth.' Well might they say, what need we be taught such a plain lesson? Who knows not all this, that life is a vapour, and that we ought not to boast what we will do to-morrow. The apostle seems in the text to meet with them by way of answer, Do ye know all this? Then the greater is your sin that you do it not; 'to him that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, to him it is sin.' I shall only explain this phrase, 'to him it is sin;' that is, it is an heinous sin, it is a sin with a witness: every infirmity, every thing that falls short of this rule, is sin; much more, that which contradicts the rule. This man's sin hath an emphasis, it is a crimson sin, and it shall have a greater punishment; 'he that knew his master's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes,' Luke xii. 47. If he that sins ignorantly be damned, then he that sins knowingly shall be double damned.

1. Doctrines implied, *That we ought to know to do good; know our duty.*
2. *That we ought not only to know to do good, but to do it.*
3. *That he that knoweth to do good, and doth it not, is of all others most guilty.*

I. Doctrines implied, That we ought to know to do good; we ought to be well informed of those things which are to be done by us, in order to salvation. The word written is a rule of knowledge, and the word preached is a commentary upon the word written: and both of them are to enrich our understanding, and to nurse us up in the knowledge of that which is good.

The reasons why we should know to do good, are,

1. Knowledge is our lamp and star to guide us in the truth. It shews us what we are to do, and what we are to leave undone. If we do not know that which is good, we can never practise it.

2. Knowledge is the foundation of all graces; of faith; 'They that know thy name will put their trust in thee,' Psal. ix. 10. and of love, Phil. i. 9. 'This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge.' And of perseverance: the apostle joins these two, such as are unlearned, will be unstable.

3. The chief work in conversion consists in knowledge, Rom. xii. 2. 'Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind.' The mind being renewed, the man is transformed. The first part of God's image consists in knowledge, Col. iii. 10.

4. There is nothing in religion, though never so excellent, can do us good without knowledge.

Uſe. See how necessary it is to get the knowledge of what is good; it utters in salvation, 1 Tim. ii. 4. Ignorance of God is the cause of all sin, Jer. ix. 3. Ignorance of God damns, Hof. iv. 6. It is sad to be ignorant in gospel times; but many, alas! do not only not know God, but they are not willing to know, Jer. ix. 6. 'They refuse to know me, saith the Lord.'

II. Doctrines. 'That we ought not only to know to do good, but to do it.' This the apostle implies, 'to him that knows to do good, and doth it not;' he implies, that he who knows to do good should do it; the end of knowledge is practice. Search from one end of the Bible to the other, and you will find, that it is the practical part of religion is chiefly intended. The crown is not set upon the head of knowledge, but practice, Rev. xxii. 14. 'Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life.'

Uſe 1. It shews us wherein most Christians are defective in the times of gospel, viz. in the doing part of religion, they know how to do good, but do it not. They know they should obtain

from evil, and pursue holiness; but though they know this, yet they do it not.

(1.) They know they should abstain from evil. Thus they know they should not swear, Mat. v. 34. 'Swear not at all;' yet they do it; they are more free of their oaths than their alms. They know uncleanness to be a sin; that it wastes the body, wounds the conscience, blots the name, damns the soul, Gal. v. 19. yet they will go on in that sin, and for a cup of pleasure drink a sea of wrath. They know drunkenness to be a sin; that it doth make them like beasts, takes away their reason, unfits them for happiness; for they cannot think to go reeling to heaven; they know that God is preparing a cup for the drunkard, Rev. xvi. 19. yet for all that they will not leave their drunken fits. Men know that rash censuring is a sin, James iv. 11. 'Speak not evil one of another, brethren;' yet they are guilty of this; they will not swear, but they will slander; and speak to the prejudice of others; they can never make them recompence for this: no physician can heal the wounds of the tongue. Thus they know that covetousness is a sin, yea, the root of all evil; yet the world engrosseth all their time and thoughts: they thirst after gold more than grace, and are labouring more to have a full purse than a good conscience. They know they should not vent their passions, Jam. i. 26. 'If any man among you seems to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, this man's religion is vain.' Origen observes of the rich man in the gospel, he had no water to cool his tongue: he had sinned most in his tongue, therefore was punished most in it. How unworthy is it for men to have their eyes and hands lifted up to heaven, and their tongues set on fire from hell; at one time praying, and another time cursing? How can such pray in a family, that are possessed with an angry devil? Thus men know they should abstain from evil, but they do it not.

(2.) They know they should pursue holiness, but they do it not. They know they should read the word, sanctify the sabbath, use holy conference, pray in their families, redeem the time, walk circumspectly; they know to do good, but do it not.

Qu. Whence is it that men know to do good, yet do it not.

Ans. It is for want of sound conviction. Men are not thoroughly convinced of the necessity of practical godliness; they think there is a necessity of knowledge, because else there is no salvation; they will get some notions of Christ, that he is a Saviour, and has satisfied divine justice, and they hope they believe in him; well then, we tell them that faith and obedience go together; then God is merciful; and though they are not so good as they should be, yet free grace will save them. Thus men content

themselves with general notions of religion, but are not convinced of the practical part of godliness.

(2.) Men know to do good, yet do it not, because they are not awakened out of their spiritual sloth. It is easy to get the knowledge of a truth, to give assent to it, to commend it, to profess it; but to digest knowledge into practice is difficult.

3. Men know to do good, but do it not, through incredulity; they are in part Atheists. Did they believe that sin were so bitter, that wrath and hell followed it, would they not leave off their sins? Did they believe that to do the will of God were a privilege, religion were their interest, that there is joy in the way of godliness, and heaven at the end, would they not espouse holiness? But people, though they have some slight transient thoughts of these things, yet they are not brought to the belief of them; therefore though they know to do good, yet they do it not. The reason why there are so few doers of the word, is, because there are so few believers.

4. Men know to do good, but do it not, because the knowledge in their head never works into their hearts; it doth not quicken them, nor warm their affections with love to the truth.

5. Men know to do good, but do it not, because of prejudicate opinion. The things to be done in religion are judged to be too strict and severe; they restrain sin too much, or they press too much to holiness.

6. Men know to do good, yet do it not, because they love their sin more than they love the world, Hos. iv. 8. 'They set their heart on their iniquity.' Some content themselves with having means of knowledge, Judges xvii. 13. 'Then said Micah, now I know that the Lord will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to be my priest.' But what is one the better to know what physic he should take, if he doth not take it.

Use 2. Of Exhortation. Let me beseech you all who have been hearers of the word, and have gotten a great measure of knowledge, that, as you know to do good, you would do it. This is the soul of religion, Luther says, I had rather do the will of God, than be able to work miracles. *1st*, To do what you know, evidenceth your relation to Christ. You count it an honour to be near allied to the crown, but it is more honour to be a-kin to Christ. *2^{dly}*, To know to do good, and do it, sets a crown upon the gospel, Rom. xvi. 19. 'Your obedience is come abroad unto all men;' not your knowledge, but your obedience. To know to do good, and not do it, hardens others in sin, scandalizeth religion, and makes people ready to turn atheists. When some of the Spaniards came to Hispaniola, the Spaniards' carriage being loose and profane, the Indians asked them, What God they served? They answered, the God of

Heaven : the Indians replied, sure your God is not a good God that hath such bad servants. Thus to know to do good, yet do it not, puts a fear in the face of religion, and brings an evil report upon it ; but to do what we know, trumpets forth the fame of the gospel, and makes them that oppose it, to admire it.

Sdly. To know to do good and to do it, entitles you to blessedness, Jam. i. 25. ‘ He shall be blessed in his deed :’ not for the deed, but in the deed.

III. Doct. *That he who knoweth to do good, and doth it not, is of all others the most guilty :* to him it is sin, crimson sin ; that is, it is heinous sin, capital sin, sin emphatically ; sin with a witness, and punished with a vengeance.

Qu. *What is it to sin presumptuously ?*

Ans. To sin presumptuously, is to sin against the light which shines in a man’s conscience, *i. e.* A man is convinced those things he doth are sin : conscience saith, O do not this great evil : conscience, like the cherubims, hath a flaming sword in its hand, to affright and deter the sinner, yet he will pluck the forbidden fruit : This is to sin presumptuously.

This sin is highly aggravate, for two reasons.

(1.) Because sinning presumptuously against conscience, is after counsels, admonitions, warnings. Such an one cannot say, he was never told of his sin ; he hath had ministers rising up early, who hath told him what a damnable thing sin was, yet he would venture on ; so that now he hath no excuse, John xv. 22. ‘ Now you have no cloke for your sin.’

(2.) It is an aggravation to sin presumptuously against conscience, when it is after afflictions. After God hath made him hear the voice of the rod, he hath made him to feel sin bitter, to read his sin in his punishment, yet he sins ; his sin was following evil company, and God hath punished him for it ; he hath almost wasted his estate with riotous living, or he hath almost drunk himself blind, yet he will not leave his sin : his sin was uncleanness, and his body is diseased, and full of noxious humours ; yet though he feels the smart of sin, he retains the love of sin. Here is an aggravation of sin, 2 Chron. xxviii. 22. ‘ In the time of his distress, did he trespass yet more against the Lord : this is that king Ahaz.’

Use 3. To know what is good, yet not to do it, is to sin presumptuously, is full of obstinacy and pertinaciousness ; it is so, because men can say nothing for their sins, can bring no reason, they make no defence for themselves, yet they are resolved to hold fast their iniquity like those, Jer. xviii. 12. ‘ And they said, there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices, and we will every one do after the imagination of his own evil heart.’

Use 3. Take heed of presumptuous sin. If God hath been

fo terrible againſt fins of infirmity and paſſion, as we ſee in Moſes and Uzziah ; O how fierce will his anger be againſt the preſumptuous ſinner ! better never have known the ways of God, than to know and not do it. Oh ! as you love your ſouls, take heed of this !

1. Preſumptuous fins are deſperate fins, becauſe they are committed with much premeditation and forethought. The preſumptuous ſinner doth not ſin unawares, but he doth project and caſt in his mind, how to bring his ſin about ; As Joſeph's brethren did in betraying him ; as Judas did in betraying Chriſt ; and as thoſe Jews did that laid wait for Paul.

(2.) Preſumptuous fins are deſperate, becauſe they are accompanied with pride. The ſinner who knows the mind of God, yet will act contrary to it, ſays like Pharaoh, ' Who is the Lord that I ſhould obey him ?'

(3.) Preſumptuous fins are deſperate, becauſe they are accompanied with impudency. Such ſinners are hardened, fearfuls and without ſhame. Like Judas they are hardened : though woes be pronounced againſt them, they will ſin ; they are without fear like the leviathan, Job iv. 33. ' And they have ſinned away ſhame,' Zeph. iii. 5. ' The unjuſt knoweth no ſhame, he hath a forehead of braſs.' Nay, ſome are ſo far from bluſhing, that they glory in their ſhame, Phil. iii. 19.

4. To ſin preſumptuouſly, to know what is good, yet not to do it, is heinous, becauſe it is ingratitude : it is a high abuſe of God's kindneſs, and God cannot endure of all things, to have his kindneſs abuſed. God's kindneſs is ſeen in this, that he hath acquainted the ſinner with his mind and will ; that he hath not only inſtructed him, but perſuaded him, made mercy ſtoop and kneel to the ſinner ; he hath wooed him with his ſpirit, that he would flee from ſin, and purſue holineſs : kindneſs is ſeen in this, that God hath ſpared the ſinner ſo long, and not ſtruck him dead in the act of ſin : kindneſs in this, that though the ſinner hath ſinned againſt his conſcience, yet now, if he will repent of ſin, God will repent of his judgments, and mercy ſhall be held forth, Jer. iii. 1. ' Thou haſt played the harlot with many lovers ; yet return again to me, ſaith the Lord.' But the ſinner is of a baſe ſpirit : he is not melted with all this love, but his heart like clay hardens under the ſun. Here is an apparent abuſe of God's kindneſs ; and God cannot endure to have his kindneſs abuſed. The vulture draws ſickneſs from perfumes ; ſo the ſinner contracts wickedneſs from the mercy of God. Here is high ingratitude.

5. To ſin preſumptuouſly, to know what is good, yet not to do it, is a contempt done to God. He cares not whether God be pleaſed or not ; he will have his ſin. Therefore the preſumptuous ſinner is ſaid to reproach God, Numb. xv. 30.

‘ The soul that doth ought presumptuously, the same reproacheth the Lord,’ he reproacheth the Lord, though not explicitly, yet interpretatively; by his presumptuous sin, makes as if God were either ignorant, and did not know his wickedness; or impotent, and were not able to punish him. How horrid is this! there is a kind of blasphemy against God in every presumptuous sin.

6. To sin presumptuously, to know what is good, yet not to do it, is a bold contest with God, a daring of God to punish. The man that sins against conscience presumptuously, and will not be reclaimed, doth in effect say, what care I for the commandment? It shall be no check upon me, but I will go on in sin, and let God do his worst. A godly man is said to fear the commandment, Prov. xiii. 13. He dares not sin, because the law of God stands in his way: but the presumptuous sinner doth not value the commandment; he will sin in spite of God’s law. O desperate madness, to dare God to his face! 1 Cor. x. 22. ‘ Do we provoke the Lord to anger? Are we stronger than he?’ Good reason then we should take heed of presumptuous sin, since it is so heinous and desperate! ‘ To him that knows to do good, yet doth it not to him it is sin;’ it is sin with a witness.

Use 2. Trial. Let us examine if we are not guilty of sinning thus presumptuously, knowing to do good, yet not to do it. (1.) Is it not to sin presumptuously, when we live in the total neglect of duty? We know we ought to pray in our families, yet do it not. To live in the neglect of family duties, is not this to sin presumptuously? (2.) Is it not to sin presumptuously, when we will venture upon the same sins which we condemn in others? Rom. ii. 1. Thou (Christian) condemnest another for pride, and yet thou livest in that sin thyself. A father condemns his son for swearing, yet he himself swears; the master reproves his servant for being drunk, yet he himself will be drunk. Is not this to sin presumptuously, to live in those sins which we condemn in others? (3.) Do not they sin presumptuously against conscience, who will sin in spite of heaven? Though they see the judgments of God executed on others, yet will adventure on the same sins? Dan. v. 22. ‘ And thou his son, O Belshazzar, hast not humbled thy heart, though thou knewest all this:’ that is, thou sawest the judgments I inflicted on thy father. (4.) Do not they sin presumptuously, they know to do good, yet do it not, who labour to stifle the convictions of their conscience, and will not let conscience speak freely to them? This the scripture calls, ‘ Holding the truth in unrighteousness,’ Rom. i. 18. (5.) Do not they sin presumptuously who after they have felt the smart of sin, it hath bred a worm in their conscience, a moth in their estate; yet after all this, they again embrace their sins.

That I may shew you what you have to fear, and that I may beat you off from presumptuous sins, let these things be seriously laid to heart; (1.) These presumptuous sins, do much harden the heart. These are two of the greatest blessings, a sound judgment and a soft heart: but sinning presumptuously and knowingly doth congeal the heart; it doth both waste the conscience, and scar it, 1 Tim. iv. 2. By sinning knowingly, a person gets a custom of sin: and the custom of sinning takes away the sense of sinning, Eph. iv. 19. 'being past feeling.' Tell the presumptuous sinner, there are treasures of wrath laid up for him, he fears not; his heart is like a piece of marble or adamant, that will take no impression. When men know to do good, yet do it not, their hearts are hardened insensibly, and that is dangerous. (2.) Such as sin presumptuously, or they who know to do good, yet do it not, are self-condemned, Tit. iii. 11. 'The sinner knows in his conscience he is guilty: that he hath sinned against warnings, education, conviction, therefore his own heart does and must condemn him. And when God judges and condemns him, he will clear his judge, Ps. li. 4. (3.) Presumptuous sins make deep wounds in the soul. They lead to despair, and despair is the agony of the soul. Spira, in despair, was like a living man in hell: despair did suck out his marrow and vital blood: it made him a very anatomy. The sinner goes on stubbornly: yet his foolish heart tells him all will be well? but, when God begins to set his sins in order before him, and conscience, which was before like a lion asleep, begins to be awakened and roars upon him, and he sees death and hell before him, now his heart faints his presumption is turned to despair, and he cries out as Cain, Gen. iv. 13. 'My punishment is greater than I can bear.' Now the sinner begins to think with himself thus; I would have my sins, and I had them; and now I have the wrath of God upon them; O how foolish was I to refuse instruction! But it is too late now; the mercy-seat is quite covered with clouds; I am shut out from all hopes of mercy; my wounds are such, that the balm of Gilead will not heal. The more presumption in the time of life, the more despair at the hour of death.

(4.) To know to do good and not to do it, to sin presumptuously, God may, in just judgment, leave such an one to himself. It is a terrible thing, when God shall say, thou hast, by thy presumptuous sin, affronted me, and provoked me to my face: therefore I will give thee up to thine own heart, thou shalt sin still, seeing thou wilt be filthy, thou shalt be filthy still.

(5.) To know what is good, yet not to do it; to sin presumptuously, is a great degree of the sin against the Holy Ghost. Such as sin presumptuously sin wilfully. Though presumption is not final apostacy, yet it comes very near to it; and a little

matter more will make thee so guilty, that there remains no more sacrifice for sin. To sin presumptuously against light, may in time bring on malice and despite to the Spirit: as it was with Julian, who threw up his dagger in the air, as if he would be revenged on God: when once it is come to this, there is but one step lower a man can fall, and that is into hell.

(6.) There is little hope for such as know to do good, yet do it not: know what is evil, but will not forbear. There were sacrifices for sins of ignorance, but no sacrifices for sins of presumption, Numb. xv. 30. Indeed presumptuous sinners hope all will be well, Prov. xv. 16. 'The fool is confident.' Such a fool is spoken of, Deut. xxix. 19. 'When he hears the words of this curse, he blesteth himself, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk after the imagination of my heart, to add drunkenness to thirst; the Lord will not spare him, but the anger and jealousy of the Lord shall smoke against that man.'

(7.) Such as sin presumptuously, that know to do good, yet do it not, know what is evil, yet will not forbear it, God refuseth all their services, whether reading, hearing, praying, or communicating. 'God abhors their sacrifice,' Isa. i. 15. 'When you make many prayers, I will not hear; your hands are full of blood.' And Hof. viii. 13. 'They sacrifice flesh for the sacrifices of mine offerings, but the Lord accepted them not; now will he remember their iniquities, and visit their sins.' Thus you see what cause you have to tremble, who are guilty in this kind; you see your misery.

Besides all that hath been said, consider these two things.

(1.) You that sin presumptuously, that know to do good, and do it not; that know what is evil, yet will not forbear; you cannot sin so cheap as others: though sin will cost every one dear, yet it will cost you dearer. You go directly against conscience; and if there be either justice in heaven, or fire in hell, you shall be sure to be punished.

(2.) You who sin presumptuously, cannot take so much pleasure in your sin as another may have. One whose conscience is less enlightened, though his sin will be bitter to him afterwards, yet at present he may roll it as honey under his tongue, and find pleasure in it: but you that sin against your knowledge, you cannot have so much pleasure in sin as he; for conscience will put forth a sting, and all the threatenings of the word will set themselves in battle-array against you, so that you can have no quiet. And that trouble thou feelest now in thy conscience, is but the beginning of sorrow.

Qu. What shall we do, that we may not sin presumptuously against conscience?

Ans. 1. Take heed of little sins, though (to speak properly) there are no such things as little sins, no little treason; but com-

paratively, one sin may be lesser than another. Take heed of little sins. The frequent committing of lesser sins, will prepare for greater. A lesser distemper of the body, if it be let alone, prepares for a greater distemper : being unjust in a little, prepares for being unjust in much, Luke xvi. 10. Such as were at first more modest, yet by accustoming themselves to lesser sins, by degrees their sins have grown up to a greater height, jail-sins have begun at little sins. (2.) If you would not sin presumptuously, viz. knowingly and wilfully, then reverence the dictates of conscience : get conscience well informed by the word, as you set your watch by the sun, and then be ruled by it ; do nothing against conscience. If conscience saith, Do such a thing, though never so displeasing, set upon the duty. When conscience saith, Take heed of such a thing ? come not nigh the forbidden fruit. Conscience is God's deputy or proxy in the soul ; the voice of conscience is the voice of God ; do not stifle any checks of conscience, lest God suffer thee to harden in sin, and by degrees come to presumptuous sin. (3.) Labour to have your knowledge sanctified. Men sin against their knowledge, because their knowledge is not sanctified. Sanctified knowledge works upon the soul ; it inclines us to do good ; it makes us flee from sin ; sanctified knowledge is like a breast-plate, which keeps the arrow of presumptuous sin from entering.

COL. iii. 11. *But Christ is all in all.*

THE Philosopher saith, every science takes its dignity from the object ; the more noble the object, the more rare the knowledge. Hence it is that Jesus Christ being the most sublime and glorious object, that knowledge which leads us to Christ, must needs be most excellent ; it is called the ' excellency of the knowledge of Christ,' Phil. iii. 8. So sweet is this knowledge, that St. Paul ' determined to know nothing but Christ,' 1 Cor. ii. 2. And indeed what needed he to know more ? for ' Christ is all in all.'

In the text there is a negation and an assumption, something the apostle sets down privatively, and something positively.

1. Privatively. St. Paul tells the Colossians what will not avail them, ' neither circumcision, nor uncircumcision availeth,' &c. Circumcision was a great privilege, it was a badge and cognizance to distinguish the people of God from those who were *exteri* and foreign ; it was a pale between the garden inclosed, and the common. The people of circumcision were a people of God's circumspection, they were under his eye, and his wing ; they were his household family ; rather than they should want,