

SERMON XVIII.

But God be thanked, that you were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you.—ROM. VI. 17.

IN the sixteenth verse the apostle had laid down a general maxim, which he applieth, first to the matter in hand, in the same verse; now to the persons to whom he wrote, the believing Romans, in the text, 'But God be thanked,' &c.

In the words there are three things—

1. Their past estate by nature, or what they were before conversion, 'Ye were the servants of sin.'

2. Their present estate by grace, 'But ye have obeyed from the heart that form of sound doctrine which was delivered to you.'

3. The praise of all is given to God's grace, 'But God be thanked.'

To open these, I shall begin with—

1. Their past estate, They had been servants of sin, that is, lived long in a course of sin: John viii. 34, 'Whoso committeth sin, is the servant of sin;' that is, whosoever doth voluntarily and ordinarily indulge sin, and goeth on in an open course of sinning, he is a servant or slave to sin; for he doth not, yea, cannot, do that which reason and conscience judgeth to be good, or the word of God requireth from him; but doeth the contrary, that which the word of God and conscience disalloweth. This was sometimes their estate, and ours also; for we are all hewn out of the same quarry and rock. Only let me tell you, that the servitude of sin is either natural or acquired.

[1.] Natural or hereditary from our first parents; so we are all prone to evil, and averse from and unable to that which is good: Gen. viii. 21, 'The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.' The word which we translate *youth*, signifieth also childhood; and the scripture elsewhere runneth up to the womb: Ps. li. 5, 'Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.' We see how early children manifest sin. Now the earliness and commonness and universality of these evil inclinations showeth what contagion hath invaded all mankind.

[2.] Acquired, when time and custom doth confirm these evil habits in us: Jer. xiii. 23, 'Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, who are accustomed to do evil.' We use to say, Custom is as a second nature. It is so here; it is corrupt nature confirmed, or inbred and native corruption improved. Thus were they servants of sin, and though all do not improve corrupt nature to such a height and degree as others do, yet all serve sin till grace maketh a change.

2. Their present or converted estate; where take notice—

(1.) Of their rule, 'That form of doctrine;' (2.) The manner of applying it, 'Which was delivered unto you;' (3.) The effect, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart.'

[1.] The rule, the 'form of doctrine,' that is, the whole gospel, or at least some summary of the christian doctrine concerning things to be

believed and done, called 'the pattern of wholesome words,' 2 Tim. i. 13, or 'the principles of the doctrine of Christ,' Heb. vi. 1.

[2.] The manner of application, 'Which was delivered unto you,' or 'whereinto ye were delivered,' εἰς ὃν παρεδόθητε τύπον διδαχῆς. The doctrine of the gospel is the pattern and mould according to which the new creature is framed; as metal taketh its form from the mould into which it was cast, there is a due impression left upon the soul; or as the stamp and seal leaveth a suitable impression on the wax; but rather the former.

[3.] The effect, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart.' There is—(1.) Obedience; and (2.) Obedience from the heart.

The most precious truths will do us no good unless they be digested into love and practice. When truth is turned into love, or received into the heart, it becometh a new nature to us; and when it is obeyed and practised, it attaineth its proper use and effect. For the truths of the gospel were not delivered to us to try the acuteness of men's wits, who can most subtly dispute of these things; nor the strength of memory, who can most firmly retain them; or plausibleness of discourse, who can most elegantly speak of them; but the readiness of obedience, who can best practise them. Therefore here is obedience spoken of, 'Ye have obeyed,' that is, begun to obey, 'the doctrine of the gospel;' therefore you must go on still, and not return to your old slavery and bondage. And this 'from the heart,' which implieth both the voluntariness and sincerity of their obedience.

(1.) It was free and voluntary, not compelled; for that is said to be from the heart which is not done grudgingly and of necessity, but readily and cheerfully: 2 Cor. ix. 7, 'Every one according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give, not grudgingly, nor of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.'

(2.) It was sincere, and not dissembled: Col. iii. 23, 'Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as unto the Lord, not unto men.' God seeth all things; what is done to him must be sincerely done.

3. There is one thing yet to be explained; and that is his giving thanks for this, χάρις τῷ Θεῷ, 'God be thanked.' Here it may be inquired—(1.) Concerning the object, for what he giveth thanks; (2.) The subject, from whom he expects this performance.

[1.] Concerning the object; it respects not the former, but the latter clause: their being once sinners is not the matter of his thanksgiving, but that they had received and obeyed the christian faith. However, this must be said, that it doth heighten the mercy, or illustrate the benefit: it is a great mercy, that, having been once slaves of sin, yet now at length they were recovered by grace. To be brought into a state of light and life by the gospel were a great benefit, if a man had always been good and holy, at least not considerably bad; but when God will take us with all our faults, and those of so great and heinous a nature, surely we have the more cause to give thanks. Well, then, he doth not, could not give thanks, that once they had been the servants of sin. God was not the author of their servitude to sin, but he was of their obedience to the doctrine of life; his mercy turned the former evil to good. Or, if you will take that into any part of the

thanksgiving. it must be thus: Since the condition of the servants of sin is so miserable, God be thanked that you have escaped it.

[2.] From whom he expects this thankfulness. I answer—

(1.) It doth excite their thanksgiving; he exciteth them to give thanks for this blessed change wrought in them: he moveth them not to give thanks for riches and secular honours, nor so much as consider whether they had or wanted these things; but for the good estate of their souls, that they were partakers of so great a benefit, as from servants of sin to become servants of Christ.

(2.) It expresseth his own thanksgiving on their behalf, as congratulating and rejoicing with them in this mercy. The angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, Luke xv. 10. So should we rejoice in the good of others, especially the pastors of the church: 3 John 4, 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.' Nothing that I more delight in in the world than to hear that those that are converted by me live after a christian manner.

Doct. That to be turned from the service of sin to the sincere obedience of the gospel is a benefit that we cannot sufficiently be thankful for.

Let me represent it in the circumstances of the text—

First, Here is a reflection upon their past state, 'Ye were servants of sin.' This is necessary and useful—

1. To heighten the sense of our privileges by grace. Alas! what were we when God first sought after us? Slaves to sin and Satan, and children of wrath even as others. Look, as Jacob, by remembering his poor condition, doth raise his heart the more to admire God's bounty to him: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff I passed over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' It would cure the pride of many if they would remember their mean originals, and how, like the hop-stalk, they mount up and grow out of the very dunghill. God solemnly enjoined his people, when they enjoyed the plenty of the land, to remember the obscure beginnings of their being a nation; and therefore, when they offered the first-fruits, they used this confession, Deut. xxvi. 5, 'A Syrian ready to perish was my father when he went down to Egypt, and sojourned there with a few men, and became a nation great and mighty and populous.' Thus God taught them to acknowledge that their first estate and original was most wretched and miserable; and so must we. It holdeth more in moral things: Eph. ii. 1-5, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ; 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Who was before a blasphemer and a persecutor and injurious; but I obtained mercy,' *ἡλεήθην*, all to

be mercied. That God should take us with all our faults, and bring us into a better condition, how doth this heighten the mercy!

2. To quicken us to more diligence in our present estate. He that hath been a diligent servant to a hard and cruel master, from whom he could not expect any recompense worth his toil, surely should be diligent and faithful in the service of a loving, gentle, and bountiful master. This is urged, Rom. vi. 19, 'As you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity, even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.' And it is illustrated by several scriptures: 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10, 'I am the least of the apostles, and am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am; and his grace that was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all;' and Acts xxvi. 11, 'I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even to strange cities.'

3. To make the reality of the change more evident. There is a great change wrought in those who are brought home to God; it doth much hurt to believers, in judging of their own case, to forget what they once were; whereas, comparing these two, what they are and what they were, would sooner bring it to an issue, and make the change more sensible and evident. The scriptures often direct us to this method: Col. i. 21, 'And you that were sometimes alienated, and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled;' Eph. ii. 13, 'But now, in Christ Jesus, ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ;' and Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' Our gradual progress in holiness is more insensible, and therefore we may overlook the mercy, because we see not such eminent effects as we found at first. But all that belong to God may see a change, and say, as the blind man, John ix. 25, 'This one thing I know, that whereas I was blind, I now see;' they may see plainly they are not the same men they were before. But when men forget the estate they were once in, and the great change the Spirit wrought in them, and feel not such alterations continually, they live in doubtfulness and darkness. As our forgetting our poverty and affliction maketh us undervalue a more plentiful condition, and those comforts which we would account a wonderful mercy before; or as when recovered and in health we forget the tediousness of sickness, and are not thankful for the comfortable days and nights we enjoy, when we go about our business and sleep without pain. So we undervalue the present state of grace by forgetting the unfruitful works of darkness, or the evil dispositions and practices of our unregeneracy, and have not such comfortable apprehensions of the mercy which the Spirit of God showed in our cure. Cannot you remember when it was once much otherwise with you? that you are not now the persons you were then?

Secondly, Here is a description of their present state by grace, which deserveth to be weighed by us. In it I observe—

1. That the doctrine of the gospel is in conversion imprinted on them; for it is said, that they have obeyed from the heart the form of doctrine into which they were delivered. Their very heart and soul

was modelled according to the tenor of the gospel and the truths revealed therein.

[1.] I will prove that it is so with all converts by that promise of the new covenant: Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts.' The thing written is the law of Christ or the new covenant, or the substance of the doctrine of the gospel; not every lesser opinion or minute circumstance of their duty, but those points which are essential to christianity; smaller matters depend upon a particular gift. The book is the mind and heart of the believer: by the mind is meant the understanding; by the heart the will or rational appetite: in the one is the directive counsel; in the other, the imperial and commanding power of the soul; the one is compared to the ark in which the law was put, 'I will put my laws into their minds;' the other to the tables of stone upon which the law was written. God will convince their understandings of their duty, and incline their affections to receive and obey it. The writer, *I.* God challengeth it as his proper work: 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God.' By this Spirit the mind of man is enlightened, the heart is inclined; but yet we must do our duty, both to understand the will of God, and set our hearts upon it, and do the things required of us. To understand, we must 'dig for knowledge, and cry for understanding,' Prov. ii. 3, 4; and for inclining our hearts, Ps. cxix. 112, 'I have inclined my heart to perform thy statutes always, even unto the end;' and for actual obedience, we are solemnly consecrated to God in baptism, that we may take up that course of living that is prescribed of God in the gospel; and therefore it is said, 1 Peter i. 14, 'Not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance.' We must not mould ourselves to any form but that of this doctrine, cast all our actions into this mould.

[2.] I will show the fruits of it. They are either internal, within the man, or essential to this work, or resulting from it by immediate consequence; such as an abhorrence from sin, and a promptitude and readiness to holy actions.

(1.) For the first, where the doctrine of the gospel is imprinted on our hearts, it is an awing principle which restraineth us from sin: Ps. xxxviii. 31, 'The law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide;' he that knoweth and loveth what is commanded, knoweth and hateth what is forbidden; therefore his heart giveth back when anything contrary is offered to him: 1 John iii. 9, 'Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin, for his seed remaineth in him; neither can he sin, because he is born of God.' Still something riseth up by way of dislike; he looketh upon sin not only as contrary to his duty, but his nature: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' The heart as thus constituted is not easily brought to it. By this temptations are defeated, whether from Satan or our own hearts. From Satan: 1 John ii. 14, 'I have written unto you, young men, because ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' Or from our own hearts: Ps. cxix. 11: 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' Our hid-

ing the word in our hearts is subordinate to God's writing it in our hearts ; we must use the means, the grace is from him.

(2.) A promptitude and readiness to holy actions ; for all holy and heavenly actions are suited to them, and there is a cognation between the law within and the law without, so that they are carried after them with more love, delight, and pleasure: Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is within my heart ; I delight to do thy will, O God.' There is an inclination and propensity to do the will of God, and to please and serve him, which maketh our obedience more easy and even.

[3.] The benefits of being stamped and moulded into the form of this doctrine.

(1.) It is ready for our use ; they have principles laid up to be laid out upon all occasions, either of trouble or temptation, or business, and affairs: Prov. vi. 21, 22, 'Bind them continually upon thine heart, tie them about thy neck. When thou goest, it shall lead thee ; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee ; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee.' So that the christian is a bible to himself, as the heathens were said to be a law unto themselves ; there was something urging them to duty, restraining them from sin.

(2.) It preventeth vain thoughts. What is the reason evil is so ready and present with us ? Because our hearts are not stocked with the knowledge of heavenly truths. Vain thoughts cannot be prevented unless the word dwell richly in our hearts. If a man have many brass farthings, and but a few pieces of silver, he will more readily draw out farthings than pieces of silver. But a christian, when alone, and destitute of outward helps, Ps. xvi. 7, 'His reins instruct him in the night season,' when he hath no benefit of the Bible, or other literal instruction.

(3.) It furnisheth and supplieth our speech ; for the tap runneth according to the liquor with which the vessel is filled. In prayer, the new nature beareth a great part, for its desires and inclinations furnish us with requests, its annoyances and grievances with complaints, its solaces and satisfactions with thanksgivings ; and where it is not obstructed, there cannot be that leanness and baseness of soul wherewith we are often surprised: Ps. xlv. 1, 'My heart is inditing a good matter ; I will speak of the things that I have made touching the king ; my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.' As to ordinary converse : Mat. xii. 35, 'A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.' When the spring is dried up, there can be no water in the stream.

(4.) It giveth us greater certainty of the religion we profess, when we feel the power of it in our hearts : 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself ;' he hath a sense of what he hath heard ; he hath felt the power of the Spirit inclining him to God and heavenly things, and subduing his carnal affections ; he hath tasted the sweetness of God's love in Christ, and you cannot persuade a man against his own sense ; therefore, when men have tasted and tried, and found the admirable effects of the gospel upon their hearts, they will know that which bare speculation could never discover to them, in order to love, certainty, and close adherence ; they find all made good and accomplished to them ; they find the truth doth make them free, heal their souls, and sanctify their natures, appease their

anguish, offer them help in temptations, relieve their distress, bind up their broken hearts, &c.

(5.) Then the truth hath a power upon us; when it is put into their mind and heart, they have, an inward engrafted principle: James i. 21, 'Receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls.' They find not only truth in the word, but life; and obey God, not only as bound to obey, but as inclined to obey; there needeth no great enforcing: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'Ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another;' and Prov. ii. 10, 'Wisdom entereth into thy heart;' it becometh another nature to us; if it enters upon the mind only, it begets but a lazy and faint inclination.

(6.) It begets a holy conversation; for those who have the word of God stamped upon their hearts and minds will show it in their actions. So it is said, 2 Cor. iii. 3, 'Ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.' Believers are Christ's epistle, by which he doth recommend himself and his doctrine to all men, when they see what excellent spirits his religion breedeth. So Phil. ii. 15, 16, 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world, holding forth the word of life.'

2. I observe that the fruit of this imprinting of the doctrine of the gospel upon their hearts was obedience; for so saith the apostle, 'Ye have obeyed.' All that knowledge we have must still be directed to practice: Deut. iv. 6, 'Keep therefore, and do them; for this is your wisdom and understanding;' otherwise we do little more than learn these truths by rote, or at best to fashion our notions of religion, that we may make them hang together.

[1.] We are bidden to inquire after the ways of God, not to satisfy curiosity, but to walk therein: Jer. vi. 16, 'Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls; but they said, We will not walk therein.' Their disobedience was not so much against the knowledge of the truth, as against the practice thereof. Men are not against truth so much in their minds as in their hearts; they will not do what they know.

[2.] The comfort and sweetness is in keeping and obeying: Ps. xix. 11, 'In keeping thy commandments there is great reward;' not only hereafter, but now. There is a sweetness in knowing; for all truth, especially heavenly truth, is an oblectation of the mind; but there is more in keeping and obeying, because practice and obedience giveth a more experimental knowledge of these things, as a taste is more than a sight, and by a serious obedience the taste of these blessed truths is kept upon our hearts. It is but a flush of joy that is stirred up by contemplation; the durable solid joy is by practice and obedience. Besides that, God rewardeth acts of obedience more than acts of contemplation with comfort and peace; for contemplation is an imperfect operation of man, unless the effect succeedeth; yea, we are not capable to receive this comfort, for knowledge doth not prove the sincerity of our hearts so much as obedience; therefore it is practice that hath the blessing in the bosom of it.

[3.] Where men receive the doctrine of the gospel rather in the

light than in the love of it, they do but increase their punishment : Luke xii. 47, 'That servant that knew his master's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, he shall be beaten with many stripes.' All the privilege of their exact knowledge shall be but a hotter hell.

3. I observe that it is obedience from the heart ; and so it must needs be, if we consider the contexture of the words, or the imprinting the doctrines of the gospel ; it is first upon our hearts, and then upon our lives : Isa. ii. 7, 'The people in whose heart is my law. So Deut. vi. 6. These words that I command thee this day, shall be in thy heart ; for by the love of it we are brought to the obedience of this holy law. So Prov. iv. 4, 'Let thy heart retain my words ;' Prov. xxii. 22, 'Lay up my words in thy heart ;' there is the proper repository of the law of God ; it cannot work any good effect upon us till we get it there ; there is its proper seat, thence its influence. I shall urge but two arguments—

[1.] It is *terminus actionum ad intra* ; it is the end of all those actions that come inward. The heart is that which God looks after : Prov. xxiii. 26, 'My son, give me thy heart.' He commandeth the ear, but still his commands reach the heart. It is the heart wherein Christ dwelleth, Eph iii. 17 ; not in the ear, tongue, or brain ; till he take possession of the heart all as is nothing. The bodies of believers are temples of the Holy Ghost, but still in relation to the heart or soul ; nothing is prized by God but what cometh thence. Men care not for obsequious compliances without the heart : 2 Kings x. 15, 'Is thine heart right as my heart is with thy heart ?' Some content themselves with a bare profession of religion, or some superficial practices ; but all is nothing to God. Though thou pray with the pharisee, pay thy vows with the harlot, Prov. vii. kiss Christ with Judas, offer sacrifice with Cain, fast with Jezebel, sell thine inheritance for a public good, as Ananias and Sapphira, yet all is nothing without the heart. Judas was a disciple, yet Satan entered into his heart, Luke xxii. 2. Ananias joined himself to the people of God, but 'Satan filled his heart to lie unto the Holy Ghost,' Acts v. 3. Simon Magus was baptized, but 'his heart was not right with God,' Acts viii. 22. The great defect is in the heart.

[2.] It is *fons actionum ad extra*, the well-spring of all those actions which look outward ; as Prov. iv. 23, 'Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life ;' Mat. xv. 19, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' If the heart be kept pure and loyal to God, the life will not be so spotted and blemished ; for *principiata respondent suis principiis*, the actions suit with the heart, and it is impossible for men so to disguise their conversation but that their principles and inclinations will appear ; they may disguise it in a particular action, but not in their course and way ; it will appear how their hearts are constituted by the tenor of their actions.

Thirdly, Here is thanks given to God for this change, *χαρίς Θεῷ*.

1. Thanksgiving to God is a great and necessary duty, the very life and soul of our religion : 1 Thes. v. 18, 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you ;' Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to his name.

Our great business is to give thanks to God for Jesus Christ both in word and deed.

2. We are chiefly to give thanks for spiritual mercies. They much excel those which are temporal and transitory; therefore if there be a just esteem of the mercies we pray God for, we will bless God for them: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' Temporal favours we all understand, but a renewed heart is most taken up with spiritual blessings. Ephraim said, Hosea xii. 8, Blessed be God, 'I am become rich;' but it is better to say, Blessed be God, I was once a servant of sin, but now I have obeyed God from my heart.

[1.] These are discriminating mercies, and come from God's special love: Ecces. ix. 1-3, 'No man knows either love or hatred by all that is before them. All things come alike to all: there is one event to the righteous and to the wicked, to the good, and to the clean, and to the unclean,' &c.; and Ps. xvii. 14, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; Ps. cxix. 132, 'Look upon me, and be merciful to me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name;' and Ps. cvi. 4, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people, O visit me with thy salvation.'

[2.] These concern the better part: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day;' the other concern the outward man: Ps. xvii. 14, 'Whose portion is in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure; they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance unto their babes.'

[3.] These are purchased at a dear rate: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' Others run in the channel of common providence.

[4.] These have a nearer connection with heaven: 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of our God.'

[5.] These incline and fit the heart for praise and thankfulness to God: Eph. i. 12, 'That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.'

[6.] These are never given in anger, as outward mercies may be: Jer. xvii. 14, 'They that depart from me shall be written in the earth.'

[7.] These render us acceptable to God: Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright;' 1 Peter iii. 4, 'The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.'

[8.] We need acknowledge these, that God may have the sole glory of them. There are certain opinions which rob God of his glory, as that of the Stoics, *quod vivamus*, &c.—that prosperity is to be asked of God, but prudence belongeth to ourselves. Thus men are taught to usurp the glory of God. This opinion is sacrilegious, as if we should praise God for our felicities, and not for those things that belong to our duty and obedience. The other opinion is among christians, that teach you that Peter is no more beholden to God than Judas for his differenc-

ing grace ; but, 1 Cor. iv. 7, ' Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou hast not received ? Now, if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou didst not receive it ? ' Mat. xi. 25, 26, ' I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes : even so, Father ; for so it seemed good in thy sight.'

3. Among all spiritual mercies, we are to give thanks to God for our conversion. It is the fruit of election : Jer. xxxi. 3, ' The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee.' It is not from our merit, but wholly ascribed to God's mercy : 2 Tim. i. 9, ' Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus, before the world began.' It cometh not from any power in us, or ability in ourselves, but is the mere effect of his grace. We cannot break off the yoke of sin : Rom. viii. 2, ' The law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made us free from the law of sin and death ;' nor can we fit ourselves for future obedience : Eph. ii. 10, ' We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.' Therefore ascribe all to the proper author.

4. We must bless God not only for our own conversion, but the conversion of others. The body of Christ is the more completed : 1 Cor. xii. 14, ' The body is not one member, but many.' The glory of God is concerned in it : Rom. i. 8, ' First I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world ;' Gal. i. 23, 24, ' They had heard only that he which persecuted us in time past now preached the faith that once he destroyed, and they glorified God in me.' They are monsters of men that repine at the riches of grace poured down on men by their own or others' ministry, as if they could not endure any should be godly and serious : Acts xi. 23, ' Barnabas, when he came and had seen the grace of God, was glad.'

Use. Is there a change ?

1. Be in a capacity to bless God for spiritual blessings. Should a leper give thanks for perfect health ? a mad man that he is wiser than his neighbour ? or a man ready to die thank God for his recovery ? a slave of sin for his liberty by Christ ? This is to mock God. He may thank God for redemption, for the new covenant, for the offers and invitations of grace, for means and time to repent ; but for the great change, and for an actual interest in Christ, we can never thank him till first it be wrought in us and given to us.

2. Live in admiration and acknowledgment of grace. Let this endear God to your hearts : Eph. i. 6, ' To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved ;' and ver. 12, ' That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.'

3. Make your qualification more explicit, by being printed and marked with your religion in heart : 2 Cor. iii. 18, ' You are changed into the same image from glory to glory ;' in life, Phil. i. 27, ' Only let your conversation be as becomes the gospel.'

4. Never return unto your old bondage. The time of slavery is past: 2 Peter ii. 20, 'If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning.' They that revert to their old bondage have no due sense of the mercy of their deliverance out of it.

SERMON XIX.

Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.—ROM. VI. 18, 19.

THESE words are an inference and conclusion from the foregoing discourse, showing, that, as they had changed masters, they should change their course of life. In them observe two things—

First, The state of the believing Romans both past and present.

1. Past; that is implied; they were once under the bondage and slavery of sin.

2. Present; they were freed from that bondage, and become the servants of righteousness; where observe two things—

[1.] The freedom from their former servitude, *ἐλευθερωθέντες*. This word is used of them that are emancipated, or brought out of bondage into liberty. Sin was a cruel and hard master.

2. Their entrance into a new estate of obedience, in the word *ἐδουλώθητε*, 'ye became the servants,' or subjected yourselves; you have given up yourselves to a more ingenious service.

Secondly, The exhortation hence deduced. Where observe two things—(1.) The preface to sweeten it; (2.) The matter of it.

1. The preface to sweeten it, 'I speak after the manner of men, because of the infirmity of your flesh.' Some think the apostle excuseth the earthly similitude, whereby he had represented these matters, as if he were forced to use these notions of master and servants because of the weakness of their understandings, which could not brook a more sublime and spiritual way of discoursing. Rather I think it is meant of the equity of the proposal, which is set forth by two expressions—

[1.] The humanity of it.

[2.] The due consideration taken of the weakness of their flesh, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak,' Mat. xxvi. 41; that is, your will indeed is good, but you must remember it may be hindered by your natural frailty. So here, the weakness of the flesh is mentioned to intimate their disability wholly and fully to do the will of God, that is, allow for infirmities; and *ἀνθρώπων λέγω*, I speak moderately, humanly, and by way of condescension; I propound that which is common, and judged reasonable among men; that is said to be common to men, that doth not exceed the strength of men: 1