

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

Cor. x. 13, 'There hath no temptation taken you but such as is ἀνθρώπινος, human, or common to men;' 2 Sam. vii. 14, 'I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men;' that is, not in rigour, but with a gentle and fatherly hand.

2. The matter is delivered by comparison of what is now due with what was formerly done by them when they were under the slavery of sin.

[1.] What they had done; they 'Yielded their members to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity.' Mark here, two sins are mentioned, uncleanness and iniquity. By *uncleanness* some understand carnal sins; by *iniquity*, spiritual wickedness. Others by *uncleanness* understand those sins whereby the pleasure of the carnal inclination is gratified; by *iniquity* the violence of the passions. But the words are taken in a larger sense; all sin is uncleanness, as defiling the soul; all sin is iniquity, as disagreeing with the equity of God's law. But divers words are heaped up to show—(1.) That they stuck at no sin; and whereas it is said, they 'Yielded up themselves to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity,' it teacheth us, that seldom doth sin stand alone; one doth as it were impel and bind us to another, venture a little and you have a tie upon you to go further. (2.) That they rested not in the inward consent or lust, but added iniquity unto iniquity, that is, from the habitual inclination they proceeded to actual sin.

[2.] What they should now do; they should 'yield up their members servants to righteousness unto holiness;' that is, employ their time and strength to serve and please God, and continually to grow in grace.

Doct. Those that are recovered from sin to God should show the reality of their change by being as earnest in holiness as before they were in sinning.

In all reason this may be required of you, and less we cannot require. Let me so open the point that you may take along with you the sense of the words of the text.

1. That there is a great change wrought in all them that are brought home to God is evident by the whole scripture, which sets them forth as those that have been 'Called out of darkness into light,' 1 Peter ii. 9; 'Who have passed from death to life,' John iii. 24; 'Translated from the power of Satan into the kingdom of Christ,' Col. i. 13; and many other such expressions. And therefore every one that would judge of his own estate must look after this change of state, and wherein he differeth from himself unconverted, when unconverted, not only from others, but from himself, when and how the case is altered with him, since he was acquainted with God in Christ.

2. The difference between the two estates is chiefly seen in the change of masters, or the dominating principle in the soul; what governeth the man? for that determines our estate. There are some who are under the reign of sin, even 'Those who are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness,' Rom. ii. 9. But there are others who are under the empire and sovereignty of grace, who are fitted and framed for what is right, good, and holy, and hate the contrary: Eph. iv. 24, 'And that ye put on the new man,

which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.' The constitution of their souls is for holiness and against sin. Therefore we must see what governeth us.

3. The two masters are sin and righteousness: as ver. 18, 'Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness.' Righteousness is the opposite master to sin; before sin was their master, now righteousness governs them. He doth not say, Being now made free from sin, ye became the servants of God, but servants of righteousness. All will pretend they are servants of God; but if you be so, you will be servants of righteousness, that is, do those things which right and reason calleth for at your hands. Therefore, if you be servants of God, you will not neglect his precepts. What do you for him?

4. The difference between the two services is very great: the service of sin is a captivity and bondage, but the service of righteousness is true liberty. In the general they agree that both are service; committing sin or living in sin is a servitude: John viii. 34, 'Who-soever committeth sin is the servant of sin;' and living to righteousness is a service also, not a slavery, but a voluntary service, as we oblige ourselves to God to live righteously ever after the time we enter into his peace and obedience. Therefore both are expressed in the text by terms that imply serving. Our emancipation from sin implieth a slavery before, and our giving up ourselves to God an obedience for the time to come; therefore we are said to be servants of righteousness; it is service in regard of the strictness of the bond, but liberty in regard of the sweetness of the work; it is service, because we live according to the will of another; but it is liberty, because of our inclination and delight to do it. In short, though we are said to be the servants to righteousness, yet there is no work more pleasant, more honourable, more profitable.

[1.] More pleasant, because it implieth a rectitude and harmony in the soul of man; it is a feast to the mind to do those things that are good and holy. The heathens saw it, τὰ δέοντα πράττειν, &c. It breeds serenity. Surely much of the happiness of a man is to enjoy himself, which a wicked man cannot do whilst his soul is in a mutiny, and his heart disalloweth himself in the things which he doth love and practise, and his convictions check his affections and inclinations: 'The fruit of righteousness is peace,' Isa. xxxii. 17; 'And all the paths of wisdom are pleasantness,' Prov. iii. 17. In the body the vigorous motion of the spirits breedeth cheerfulness, and health ariseth when all the humours of the body keep their due temperament and proportion. In the world, when all things keep their place, and the confederacies of nature are not disturbed, the seasons go on comfortably. In a kingdom, *pax est tranquillitas ordinis*—when all persons keep their rank and place, there is peace. So when all things are rightly governed and ordered in the soul.

[2.] No work more honourable: Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' Many think it to be a low-spirited thing to be godly, and, on the contrary, imagine it a sort of excellency to be free from the restraints of religion, and to live a life of pomp and ease, without any care of the world to come. The sensual world esteemeth little of a good man; but alas! that carnal

life, which maketh show of ease, delight, honour, and riches, is nothing to the life of grace ; for if God be excellent, they are excellent ; they are 'made partakers of his nature,' 2 Peter i. 4 ; admitted into the communion of his life, which all others are deprived of, Eph. iv. 18 ; when others live as beasts, they live as God ; when others live as beasts, their life is employed about the noblest objects and ends, and is assisted by the immediate influence of God's own Spirit. Therefore, if honour be derived from the true fountain of honour, those who are most God-like are the most noble and excellent.

[3.] No work is more profitable ; for it giveth us the favour and fellowship of God for the present, and makes way for an everlasting fruition of him in glory.

(1.) The favour and fellowship of God for the present. What an unprofitable drudgery is the life of an unsanctified worldling, in comparison of the work of a holy man, who lives in communion with God, and attendance upon God, and hath access to him when he pleaseth, with assurance of welcome and audience ! He hath a surer interest in God than the greatest favourite in the love of princes. God never faileth him : Ps. cxviii. 8, 9, 'It is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man : it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.' A poor christian, that liveth in obscurity in the world, is never upbraided with the frequency of his suits, never denied audience, never hath cause to doubt of success. The princes of the earth have uncertain minds, love to-day, hate to-morrow, as in the instance of Haman ; their being is uncertain : Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, in that very day all his thoughts perish ;' 1 Kings i. 21, 'Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders.' Therefore attendance upon God is surely a noble work, to be made courtiers and family servants of the infinite sovereign ; their hearts are employed in loving him, tongues in praising him, lives in serving him, and are constantly maintaining converse with him through the Spirit ; surely these have the most profitable service creatures can be employed in.

(2.) The everlasting fruition of God in glory hereafter : Ps. xvii. 15, 'I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness ;' 1 John iii. 2, 'Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be ; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Then we shall be admitted into his immediate presence, to see his face, and shall be changed into, and satisfied with his likeness : we shall then live with God for ever, and be in a larger capacity to know God, and love him ; and then our work shall be our reward, we shall be everlastingly loving and praising of God. Well, then, though we are not altogether at liberty when freed from sin, but enter into another service, yet this service is no bondage, but a blessedness, and a beginning of our eternal happiness, and therefore to be preferred before liberty itself.

No man can be a servant of righteousness but he that is first by the goodness and mercy of God freed from the power and slavery of sin ; for the apostle saith, 'Being made free from sin, ye became the

servants of righteousness.' There is an order in our deliverance, and one part conduceth to another; for righteousness and the conscience of our duty can have no hold on us till the power of our lusts be broken. As soon as we are freed from the slavery of sin, we are in part righteous; but when we are freed from the being of sin, we are altogether holy and righteous; but where sin reigneth, there is an obstruction of the life of grace; there the creature is valued above God, earth before heaven, the body before the soul; neither faith, love, nor hope can produce any thorough work in our souls. Not faith: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only. Nor love: 1 John ii. 15, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. Nor hope: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things that are seen, that are but temporal, but at the things that are not seen, that are eternal.' The person that hath not his heart and hopes in heaven, and looketh not at that as his only happiness, and doth not make it the business of his life to attain it, but setteth his heart more upon the things of this life, is certainly unconverted: 1 Cor. xv. 19, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' This should be regarded by us, that we may look more after this, whether we have escaped the bondage of corruption, and that we do not return to bondage again, but that we maintain our liberty: Gal. v. 1, 'Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made you free, and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.'

6. He that is a servant of righteousness shows it by doing as much for righteousness as formerly he did for sin. This is the end of the apostle's reasoning with them in this place; therefore I shall a little insist upon it.

[1.] That in reason and strict justice more might be required of us; for the reasons moving us to good are more than the reasons moving us to evil, if we consider either master, work, or wages.

(1.) The master; shall we not do as much for God as we did for Satan? Whose are you? Christians, from whom did you receive your beings? and from whom do you expect your happiness? From God or the devil? Whom will you call father or master? Pretences will do nothing in the case; it will be tried by your work: 'Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do,' John viii. 34; 'He that committeth sin is of the devil,' 1 John iii. 8. God be merciful to us! we have done too much of the devil's work already, it is time to give over; the business is for the future; whose work do you mean to do, and how will you do it, halflingly, superficially, perfunctorily, or in the greatest earnest?

(2.) The work; sin is a deordination, a prostituting of the noble faculties of our souls to our base lusts and vain pleasures: Titus iii. 3, 'Serving divers lusts and pleasures;' whereas by holiness we obey the rational appetite, the will guided by the highest reason, which is the law and will of God: 1 Peter iv. 2, 'That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.' The business is, whether for the future we will be beasts or men, and employ our remaining time in the service of the flesh, or in

obedience to the will of God; whether the beast should ride the man, or reason and conscience be put in dominion again over sense and appetite?

(3.) The wages. Surely reason will teach you that there should be greater care to secure your life and salvation than to ruin and damn yourselves. Now you went on earnestly in a way of sin, as if you could not soon enough or sure enough be damned: the sure 'wages of sin is eternal death,' ver. 23, determined by the righteous appointment of God's law; and though through the patience of God it be not presently executed, yet conscience showeth the justness of it, and the word showeth you how sin hath made it your due; and therefore, should you not do as much for salvation as you have done in order to damnation, especially when your eyes are opened, and you begin to have eternal blessedness in view and pursuit? Well, then, reason will inform you that you should do more for God, and more for heaven, and more for holiness than ever you did for sin; so that it is an equitable proposal, or the rule of our duty expressed after a modest manner, there is less than in strict reason may be required of you. Men are weak, and cannot bear too much severity. What shall we say then? Do as much for righteousness as you did for sin.

[2.] That in exact proportion even this equitable rule will not always hold good. Why? Because in corrupt nature our principles were entire, but in our renewed estate they are mixed: Gal. v. 17, 'The flesh lusteth against the spirit;' there is a counterpoise to the life of grace, therefore our evil works were merely evil, but the good we do is not merely good. Our Lord telleth us that 'the children of this world' (and such we were all by nature) 'are wiser εἰς τὴν γενεὰν ἑαυτῶν, in their generation, than the children of light,' Luke xvi. 8. We have the advantage of the world in matter of motive and reason; but they have the advantage of us in matter of principle. Grace is a powerful thing, but it is like a keen sword in the hands of a child. The opposition of the flesh causeth weakness. Our motives are more noble, but their principles are more entire.

[3.] Though the exact proportion will not strictly hold, yet there is enough to distinguish the servants of righteousness from those that are not made free from sin; as—

(1.) The main bent of the heart and life is for righteousness, and not for sin. Where the main bent of the heart and life is still for the flesh and the world, they are far from grace; for there the flesh and the world, and by them Satan, is superior still, the influence of corruption is more seen in their lives and actions than the influence of grace; but he whose main bent both of heart and life is for God, he now serveth God as before he served sin; and therefore, 'being made free from sin, is become the servant of righteousness.'

(2.) Because there is some proportion and resemblance between his activity in the new and spiritual life, and the former activity in a way of sin. To clear this—(1.) I will show wherein the resemblance holdeth good; (2.) The reasons why it must be so.

First, The resemblance holds good in these things—

1. We may take notice of a care and solicitude to do evil: Rom. xiii. 14, *μὴ ποιῆσθε πρόνοιαν*, 'Make no provision for the flesh;' they are provident in sin, studied to please their lusts. Surely such a

like care should we have of sanctity, 'Providing things honest,' Rom. xii. 17; 'Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear,' 1 Peter i. 17. When men are solicitous that the new nature be not annoyed, as they were formerly that the carnal nature might be gratified, it is a sign that serious godliness possesseth their hearts. Now men were careful heretofore that their lusts might want no satisfaction, and shall they not be careful that the course of their obedience shall be carried on without interruption?

2. Industry and diligence is notable in the servants of sin. We read of some that 'do evil with both hands earnestly,' Micah vii. 3. There is an eager disposition in many to sin. Wicked men take a great deal of pains to go to hell; we all served sin with all our might and strength. Now, should there not be such an unwearied diligence in holiness? Rom. xii. 11, 'Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.' As industrious as you were in obeying your base lusts and vile affections, so industrious should you be in obeying the precepts of Christ. Our vigour is turned into another channel. See Paul's instance, 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 unto strange cities;' compared with 2 Cor. v. 13, 'For whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God, or whether we be sober, it is for your cause.'

3. With a like promptness and readiness of mind. There need no great deal ado to draw men to evil, as a stone runneth down hill of its own accord, because of its natural tendency thereto, and the smallest temptations seem to have an irresistible force in them: Prov. vii. 21, 'With the flattery of her lips she forced him.' Now after grace received we should be as ready to obey the motions of the Spirit. There is no greater evidence of the new nature than that our obedience becometh more easy and even. There needeth not much ado to persuade the new creature to such things as belong unto and suit with the new nature: 1 Thes. iv. 9, 'For as touching brotherly love, ye need not that I write to you, for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another.' Inclination preventeth persuasion. Others with much ado are brought to a sense of their duty, and after all they put off God with a little compulsory service, which they have no mind unto, and had rather forbear than do it.

4. Resolution and self-denial. How firm are men to a purpose of sinning, and go on still, though it cost them dear, much expense of time, waste their estate, bring a blot on their name, yea, many a wound in their consciences, and 'flesh and blood is consumed,' Prov. v. 11. Oh! that we could thus deny ourselves for Christ! Every lesser hindrance is pleaded by way of hesitancy and bar to our duty; a little inconvenience in the service of God seemeth irksome and grievous to us; those that do not take notice of the inconveniences of sin, but will easily take notice of the troubles of afflicted godliness: 'What iniquity have you found in me?' Jer. ii. 5. Alas! that we cannot more deny ourselves for God, who gave us all that we have, and can give us greater things than ever we lost for him.

5. They stopped at no sin: 'Ye yielded your members to uncleanness, and to iniquity unto iniquity.' From habitual sin they proceeded to actual, from one kind to another, rested not in the lust or purpose,

but were still accomplishing what their lusts craved at their hands. So will you count yourselves servants of righteousness, because you have some purpose to do good, or have some wishes to be better, though they never come into act and effect? Alas! a christian is to be determined not by knowing or wishing and woulding, but by doing; 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me,' John xiv. 21: 'And whoso keepeth my words, in him verily is the love of God perfected,' 1 John ii. 5. The carnal nature venteth itself not in lusts only, but practices; so doth the new nature; it is a habit and principle that influenceth your daily course of life. The same God that ruleth the heart doth also rule the life. The root is for the fruit, and the life within to enable us for action without; so we have the root and life of grace and holiness, that we may bring forth the fruit and do the works of grace and holiness. Therefore, whatever wishes and desires men have, if they live as they did before, neither God nor any wise man will judge that they are freed from sin and become the servants of righteousness.

6. The progress; they went forward from one sin to another, and never stopped. Now, as they heaped up sin upon sin, so should we add to grace grace: 2 Peter i. 5-7, 'Add to your faith, virtue; to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity.' You should always grow more pure and holy, and aim at a higher degree of sanctification, till all be perfected in heaven: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Perfecting holiness in the fear of God.' The more grace overcometh nature, the more comfortable every day will your lives be, and religion will grow a more easy and delightful thing to you. The complete subjection of our will to the will of God is the health, ease, and quietness of our wills; therefore study to be perfect.

Secondly, The reasons why it must be so.

1. From the love and goodness of God showed in our change, which should constrain us, and awaken in us principles of gratitude towards him: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us,' &c.; Luke vii. 47, 'Her sins, which are many, are forgiven her, for she loved much.' It is a trouble to them that God hath been so long detained out of his right, that the devil hath engrossed so much of their choicest time and best strength, and therefore now they would make some recompense: as travellers that set forth late, ride the faster. Especially doth this hold good of them that have been great sinners. It is possible that some have stuck at no villany, but have engulphed themselves in all manner of dissoluteness. Oh! how zealous should they be for God for time to come, and bestir themselves that they may show forth the sacred influence of grace, as they have done the cursed rigour of nature!

2. By grace we have received a new principle and power. Now *principiata respondent suis principiis*—a new heart showeth itself by newness of life; therefore the power and effect of grace must as much discover itself as formerly we betrayed the power of sin, otherwise why is this new principle planted in our hearts? It is dangerous to receive objective grace in vain: 2 Cor. vi. 1, 'We then, as workers together with him, beseech you that you receive not the grace of God in vain.'

We frustrate the method of God when we suffer the gospel to be cast away upon us; but to receive subjective grace in vain is worse, as this is a closer application, as a power put into our hearts, and we make the choicest gifts of the Spirit idle and unuseful.

Use. Is to persuade us to make our new obedience more clear and explicit.

1. By manifesting the change: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away, behold all things are become new.'

2. By our growth and increase: 1 Thes. iv. 1, 'Furthermore then we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus Christ, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more.'

3. By exceeding in a course of holiness, as ye did before in sin: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'I laboured more abundantly than they all.'

Reasons—

1. It is not an indifferent thing whether ye be eminent in obedience, yea or no. God maketh a great matter of it, as appeareth by his strict injunctions: Ps. cxix. 4, 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently;' by his ample promises: Deut. xi. 26–29, 'Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing if you keep the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day;' by his punishment of the disobedient: 2 Thes. i. 8, 9, 'To take vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power;' by the example of Christ: Heb. v. 8, 9, 'Though he were a son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him.' You have gained a great point when you are persuaded of this.

2. That the government of God is not for the ruler's benefit, but the subject's welfare. It is as the physician's prescriptions, the pilot's steerage to direct us to our happiness, the parent's education: Deut. v. 29, 'Oh! that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!'

3. That after grace received there is still the weakness of our flesh. The mind in part is blind and ignorant, in the corrupt will there is a back-bias, passions are turbulent, temptations of sense and appetite are incessant and powerful; therefore watchfulness and caution are not unnecessary; the heart is very treacherous.

4. The honour of grace is much concerned in our activity and zeal; for the new creature is formed for somewhat: Eph. ii. 10, 'We are the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.'