

SERMON VI.

Let no man deceive you with vain words ; for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.—
EPII. v. 6.

THE apostle had argued *ab incongruo*, from what was indecent and misbecoming in us ; now *a periculo*, from the danger of such practices. There is *pœna damni*, the punishment of loss, exclusion from the kingdom of God ; and *pœna sensus*, the punishment of sense, the hazard of God's eternal wrath and displeasure : ' Let no man deceive you,' &c.

In the text we have two things—

1. A caution, ' Let no man deceive you with vain words.'

2. A commination, ' For because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.'

First, The caution is against error, and showeth the certainty of their punishment, whatever false teachers whispered to the contrary. This is premised that we may neither deceive ourselves nor suffer ourselves to be deceived by others.

1. That we may not deceive ourselves. Frequent warnings are given against this self-flattery : 1 Cor. vi. 9, ' Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God ;' 1 John iii. 7, ' Little children, let no man deceive you ; he that doeth righteousness is righteous ;' 1 Cor. xv. 33, ' Be not deceived ; evil communication corrupts good manners ;' Gal. vi. 7, ' Be not deceived ; God is not mocked : for what a man soweth, that shall he also reap.' Men do what they can to live securely and undisturbedly in their sins, and to guard their hearts against the apprehension of all danger and punishment.

2. That we may not be deceived by others. There were false teachers in those early days, that countenanced profane and licentious christians ; some that taught fornication was an indifferent thing, or at least no such great matter, or not so dangerous ; that a man might be righteous, and yet live in sin ; that a bare profession of faith without a strict life was enough to salvation ; which poison was greedily sucked up by careless christians, who were convinced of the truth of christianity, but as yet had no power to overcome their lusts. It is strange that such gross conceits should possess their minds. But there is that which the apostle calleth ' a reprobate sense or mind,' Rom. i. 28. There is such an efficacy of error and deception in our corrupt natures, that men soon hear in this ear, and please themselves with the thoughts of impunity, though they live in gross sins : 2 Peter ii. 18, ' They allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.'

Secondly, A denunciation of God's wrath, ' Because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience.' You have it again, Col. iii. 6.

In which words observe—

1. The evil denounced, ‘The wrath of God cometh.’
2. The meritorious procuring cause, ‘For these things.’
3. The persons, or proper seat and subject of his vengeance, ‘Upon the children of disobedience.’

1. The evil denounced, ‘The wrath of God cometh;’ meaning by ‘wrath,’ punishment from God, who is angry and displeased with these sins. And it is said, ‘it cometh;’ it is an allusion to a thing that falleth from a higher place, and crusheth those upon whom it falleth. So this wrath is said to be poured down upon them from heaven: Ps. xi. 6, ‘Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire, and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup;’ that is, their judgment shall be terrible, irresistible, and remediless. So Rom. i. 18, ‘For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness.’ They cannot make a wall against heaven to keep off that which shall come upon them from thence.

2. The meritorious procuring cause, ‘For these things,’ fornication, uncleanness, and such like gross sins. God is not severe upon ordinary failings and frailties, but these sins are of another nature.

3. The persons upon whom this vengeance cometh; it shall light ‘upon the children of disobedience.’ What children of disobedience signifieth I shall show anon. Some by it here understand infidels, as if that were the argument: How could these things be tolerable in christians, when they were the sins for which God plagued the heathens or infidels? Or rather, take the common sense; children of disobedience are such as live in an open defiance of God’s precepts, and will by no means be reclaimed, and forsake their sins, or be persuaded to seek after God, and his healing and renewing grace. And so it teacheth us two notes—

[1.] Those that are given to these sins are to be reckoned among the children of disobedience, or accounted rebels to God. Though they be christians in name, yet they are heathens, profane christians, that never heartily obeyed the gospel, nor thoroughly renounced their heathenish impurities: ‘As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance,’ 1 Peter i. 14. *Τέκνα ὑπακοῆς*, ‘obedient children,’ are opposite to these *υἱοὺς τῆς ἀπειθείας*, ‘children of disobedience,’ that profess obedience, and yet relapse into their old practices.

[2.] That the wrath of God lighteth not upon them that have once fallen into these sins, or it may be often, in their unregeneracy, but afterwards repent and return to an holy life, but upon the ‘children of disobedience,’ that remain obstinate and impenitent, and will not be reduced from this impure course of living.

Doct. 1. That all those words which promise impunity or immunity from the wrath of God to gross open sinners are vain words.

They are vain, because they cannot make good what they promise, being expressly both against the light of nature and scripture. And here I shall inquire—

1. What are the vain words wherewith sinners usually deceive themselves.

2. How it cometh to pass that such gross self-flattery can ever possess their minds.

I. What are the vain words or pretences by which they usually harden their hearts?

1. That God will not call them to an account, or punish them for their sins. That there is such a thought in their minds appeareth plainly in their actions to any discerning beholder: Zeph. i. 12, 'I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees, that say in their hearts, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.' There are implicit thoughts and explicit thoughts; explicit thoughts are what we actually and inwardly conceive in our minds, and do expressly think of; implicit thoughts are the latent principles which lurk in our hearts, which, though they do not bubble up into actual thoughts and opinions, yet secretly govern us and taint our actions. And these are usually called in the scripture, 'Saying in their hearts,' and are known by interpreting and running up our actions into their proper principle; for man being a reasonable creature, it is supposed that all he doth is influenced by some reasonings of his mind, either more close or reserved, or more apparent and open. And now, though we in bashfulness and unconfidence of their truth for a while suppress our principles, yet their force and influence is too discernible in our actions. As, for instance, men that live securely in open sins, condemned not only by the light of scripture but nature, surely they are influenced by this thought, that either there is no God, or that he is careless of human affairs, and will not call them to an account whether they do good or evil: Ps. xxxvi. 1, 'The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes;' that is, their lewd life showeth that they have no reverence of God, and plainly bespeaketh this thought in their mind and observation, that either they think there is no God, or that he is a senseless idol, and taketh no notice of human affairs so as to call men to any account for them; for what could they do more wickedly if they were professedly leavened and plainly possessed with these opinions? But these are but vain words; for if there be no God, how could things fall into this order and proportion wherein we see them? Scripture and nature, reason and conscience, will tell thee there is a God. Look within thee, without thee, upward, downward, round about thee, everything thou seest, hearest, and feelest, proclaimeth a God to thee. And if there be a God, doth he not take notice of what men do? Surely there is such a thing as good and evil, vice and virtue, sin and holiness; the one worthy of blame, the other of praise. If it be not so, whence is it that we all affect to be counted honest and good; to seem so at least, if we have no mind to be so? The most wicked are offended to be taken for such as they are, and endeavour to cover their vices with the appearance of virtue and goodness. If all things were utterly indifferent in their own nature, it were no more crime for a man to kill his father than his neighbour's dog, or to rob and murder men in the woods than to hunt a hare, to lie and forswear in our dealings than to be honest, just, and sincere. Surely there is a God, and there is moral good and evil; and if it be so, will not God punish the evil and reward the

good? If you think he will not, it is because he hath no right, or no power, or no will to do it. You cannot say no right, because man is his creature, and therefore his subject. You cannot say no power, for our life is in his hands. Now if he will not trouble himself with human affairs, or mind what is done here below, if he is neither pleased with our good deeds nor angry with our offences, why then hath he made a law with a sanction? This is against all sense, reason, and experience. It is against the purity of his holy nature that he should be indifferent to good or evil, and wholly connive at the disorders of mankind. How then can we pray to him for mercies, or praise him for benefits? Or could there be any such thing in men towards God as fear and hope; fear that God will avenge their misdoings, or hope that he will support them in a righteous cause? Which yet is against the universal sentiment of all mankind and common experience; for God doth daily make known himself by punishments and benefits: Heb. ii. 2, 'For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward,' &c.; Rom. i. 18, 'But the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men;' Acts xiv. 17, 'He left not himself without a witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' We see the effects of his wrath in pestilences, tempests, inundations, and of his goodness in fruitful seasons. Therefore why will you cherish such vain thoughts, as if God would never call you to an account, when he is known by the judgments which he executeth daily?

2. That God will be merciful to them; though they sin against him, they shall notwithstanding escape well enough; that he will not be severe against his creatures. But you reflect but upon one part of God's nature, his mercy, without his holiness and justice, and so fancy an unreasonable indulgence in God. You lessen his holiness: Ps. l. 21, 'Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself.' They feign God to be what they would have him to be, and judge of his goodness by their own interest. A good man is troubled and grieved and offended with the impurities of others: 2 Peter ii. 7, 8, 'And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked; for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds.' And yet a good man is but a partaker of the divine nature, hath but some strictures of it. Besides, you overlook his justice, which belongeth to his office as governor of the world, as if he would be merciful however men are qualified.

But doth not God deal with us in pure mercy, without any respect to qualifications?

I answer—We must distinguish between the mercy which God exerciseth as a free lord, and the mercy which he exerciseth as a righteous governor. The one is spoken of Rom. ix. 16, 'So then, it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.' The other, 1 Cor. ix. 24, 'So run that you may obtain.' There is a mercy that he showeth in converting some as a free lord, and a mercy that he showeth as a righteous governor, in

rewarding and punishing. The first is not that you depend upon, for you are yet in your sins, and care not to come out of them; and the second you cannot presume of, that you shall find mercy though you go on in your sins; for God, that is arbitrary in his gifts, is not so in his judgments. Mercy is for the support of the penitent. 'There is a duty God requireth of us before we can expect it from him: Isa. lv. 7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; and let him turn unto the Lord, and he will have mercy; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' It is their cordial and thy poison: Ps. lxxviii. 20, 21, 'He that is our God is a God of salvation; and unto God the Lord belong the issues from death. But God shall wound the head of his enemies, and the hairy scalp of such an one as goeth on still in his trespasses.' Besides, you abuse God's mercy, and put it to the worst use, when you think it shall spare all and pardon all: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness.' They only make a dung-cart of God's mercy to carry away all their filth; for God will show mercy only to true penitents: Ps. cxxx. 7, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord; for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him there is plenteous redemption.' Mercy is wrested from its proper use to increase our carnal security and boldness in sinning, and not to invite us to return to God. Well, then, according to rule, licentious persons cannot expect mercy, or they that impenitently live in a course of sin hope that they shall escape his vindictive justice.

3. That they are christians, and by external profession have received the faith of Christ. But the name will not save you without the power: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'And let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.' Christ came to save sinners, but *from* their sins, not *in* their sins: Mat. i. 21, 'He shall save his people from their sins.' And you mistake the nature of faith if you think it lieth in a strong confidence, and freedom from trouble for sin. No; it is a hearty consent of subjection to Christ. He is not the best christian that hath least trouble, but the least cause for it. Otherwise to wink hard, and shut our eyes against all knowledge of christian duty and obedience, would make the best faith. No; this is a purifying as well as a comforting grace: Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith.' And they are the best christians where Christ performeth most of his office in turning them to God: Acts iii. 26, 'God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.'

4. That none is perfect, and the rarest saints have fallen into as great faults, and so are persuaded that these gross sins are but frailties and human infirmities. *Si David, cur non et ego?*—If David fell, why may not I? was an old excuse in Salvian's time. They fell into sin, but did they wallow and lie in it? Will you live in sin, because in some rare case some of God's choicest servants have fallen into it? Is the rest of your lives like theirs? Did not they smart grievously for these sins? and was not their repentance as remarkable as their fall? Surely there is a difference between imperfection and wickedness, as there is between falling by the stumbling of an horse into the mire, and wallowing therein in our drunkenness, or between the drowning of fields in a land-flood, and their being overflown by every tide.

5. Others say they are justified, and depend on the righteousness of Christ. You may, if you have a right to it; but, 1 John iii. 7, 'He that doeth righteousness is righteous.' Where Christ is made righteousness, he is also made sanctification: 1 Cor. i. 30, 'But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.' You have very great cause to doubt of your justification when you constantly live in sin. There are some sins which are not consistent with sincerity and an interest in Christ's righteousness; otherwise there were no distinction between the godly and the ungodly: but the scripture tells us the distinction is clear and manifest: 1 John iii. 10, 'In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness, is not of God.' It is strange and groundless arguing, I am justified, therefore my sins of oppression, drunkenness, fornication, &c., shall do me no harm; but it is sound arguing, I live in ordinary wilful heinous sins, therefore I am not justified or sincere, nor can I by the laws of christianity look upon myself such, the scripture witnesses, as shall obtain acceptance with God.

6. That if they be in an unjustified estate for the present, they hope they shall repent at last, and then they will leave off their sins, and cry God mercy. But you live in flat disobedience to God for the present: Heb. iii. 7, 'The Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.' And besides, you only presume of future grace out of self-love, but can be content that God be dishonoured longer, provided that at length you may be saved. And besides, you leave a necessary indispensable duty to great uncertainties. God may take you away in the next act of sin, as he took away Zimri and Cosbi, and Korah and his accomplices, and so leave you no space to call for mercy; or you may be smitten with an apoplexy, lethargy, or some stupid disease, that shall take away all opportunity of making your peace with God. If we were sure of repentance, it is great folly to play the mountebank with our own souls, and give ourselves a deadly wound to try the strength of a plaster or sovereign unguent; or drink poison, and contract a surfeit, in expectation to remove the distemper by a vomit. The presuming delayers are usually given up to hardness of heart, so as that they never repent: Gen. vi. 3, 'My Spirit shall not always strive with man.' Therefore to defer the forsaking of wilful sins and known enormities is to run a desperate hazard in the most momentous case. The grieved Spirit may at length be tired and wearied out, and you may grow more sottish and blockish every day. Therefore these are but vain words.

7. That they do make amends for a course of sin in one kind by abounding in other duties; as some that live in uncleanness will be charitable, hoping to expiate the offences of a filthy life by charity, and so make alms a sin-offering, which should be a thank-offering: Heb. xiii. 16, 'But to do good and to communicate forget not; for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.' So some will be just, and do no wrong, yet cannot deny their intemperance: Ezek. xxxiii. 13, 'If he trust in his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousness shall not be remembered;' that is, upon that account, or presumption of his other righteousness and good qualities. The apostle taxeth this want of entire and uniform obedience: Rom. ii. 22, 'Thou that abhorrest

idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?' The Jews' form was abhorring idols; but they were entangled in a crime as enormous, and robbed God of his offerings. Most men's goodness is but to hide their secret indulgence to some other lewd practice or sinful course wherein they live. I say, to hide it, not only from the world, but their own hearts, as if our delinquency in some things might be excused by a supererogation in other duties; as the Jews hoped to repair their want of mercy by a multitude of sacrifices; as the stomach, when it hath no solid food, filleth itself with wind. But God will be obeyed in all things: 'God spake all these words,' Exod. xx. 1. The same authority that forbids stealing forbids adultery; therefore we must be complete in all the will of God. These are some of the sorry fig-leaves by which men hope to cover their nakedness, those sandy foundations upon which they build their hopes.

II. The reasons how it cometh to pass that such gross self-flattery can possess their minds. Though it be as plain as noon-day that they that live in gross sins shall be damned, yet the most profane have good thoughts of their condition. ~

1. The causes lie in themselves; as—

[1.] Self-love, which is very partial, and loath to think of the evil of our condition: Prov. xvi. 2, 'All the ways of man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits.' Alas! few bring their actions to the balance of the sanctuary, and desire to know the worst by themselves.

[2.] Unbelief of God's word and divine promises and threatenings. Unbelief and obstinate impenitency always go together. God hath his word, and they have their word. Now rather than believe God's word, they will put it to the venture and trial, whose word shall stand, God's or theirs? Jer. xlv. 28, 'And all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, mine or theirs;' that is to say, which shall be fulfilled and made good, their foolish confidence or God's threatenings?

[3.] Non-attendance to God's warnings, if they are not guilty of express unbelief: Mat. xxii. 5, 'But they made light of it;' Eccles. v. 1, 'Keep thy foot when thou goest into the house of God, and be more ready to hear than to give the sacrifice of fools; for they consider not that they do evil;' compared with Acts xvi. 14, 'Whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul.'

[4.] Non-application: Job v. 27, 'Lo! this, we have searched it; hear it, and know it for thy good;' Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we say to these things?' Jer. viii. 6, 'No man repented him of his wickedness, saying, What have I done?' Now when men neither believe, nor consider, nor apply, no wonder if self-love carrieth it; and in the greatest soul-dangers they flatter themselves into a fool's paradise, that they shall do well enough though they live in their sins.

2. The devil joineth with our self-love, and lulleth us asleep in our carnal security and abuse of grace: Gen. iii. 4, 5, 'And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.' In the first temptation he peremptorily denieth the terror of the curse, as if it were a vain scarecrow.

As the cunning huntsman playeth least in sight till the beast be gotten into the snare and toil ; all is hushed and quiet, and then he appeareth with shouts and outcries ; so Satan glutteth men with carnal delights, and taketh care their pleasures be not disturbed with any thoughts of the world to come, or serious minding of their danger, till they are past remedy, and then torments with despairing fears as much as he hardened us before with presumptuous thoughts of mercy. He that now tempts you to disobey the command, at death or sickness will tempt you to distrust the promise.

3. He stirreth up instruments, that, with the charms of false doctrine, he may hinder the sight of sin and fears of judgment, and strengthen the hands of the wicked : Jer. xxiii. 17, 'They say still unto them that despise me, The Lord hath said, Ye shall have peace ; and they say unto every one that walketh after the imagination of his own heart, No evil shall come upon you.' They confirm people in their wickedness, and keep them from repentance, by bearing them in hand, that God will be merciful to them ; and if they can but trust in the merits of Christ, or God's mercy, they are safe. These are those that are said to 'daub with untempered mortar,' Ezek. xiii. 10, and to 'sew pillows under men's arms,' ver. 18 ; that is, lull men asleep in their sins. The church of God hath ever been troubled with such unskilful and unfaithful guides, and daubers with untempered mortar ; and they are found in every party that delude poor drossy unsanctified souls with promises of peace and pardon, and by loose strains of grace hinder their conversion.

Use. Let no man deceive you.

1. It is sure you are not justified while you are yet in your sins. Men are first regenerated and then pardoned : Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sin.' Till you are converted you cannot determine your right. So in the golden chain, sanctification is one necessary link. It is not omitted by the apostle, but included in one of the things there mentioned : Rom. viii. 30, 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called ; and whom he called, them he also justified ; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Sanctification is included in effectual calling ; there is initial sanctification, and the progress of it is in the word 'glorified,' for it is a part of glory. You cannot imagine God can err in judgment ; and justification is an act of judgment, as condemnation is ; he deemeth and accounteth none just but those who are really changed. There is *sententia legis* and *sententia judicis*, the sentence of the law and the sentence of the judge ; the sentence of the law is justification constitutive, the sentence of the judge is justification declarative.

2. How much God is concerned to right himself, the honour of his providence, and the truth of his word, against such as flatter themselves in their sins : Deut. xxix. 19, 20, 'And it come to pass when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst : the Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.' When men excuse or

extenuate the greatest sins, and the danger of them, when they think light of them, or presume of impunity, God is concerned to vindicate himself.

Doct. 2. It should deter us from wilful and heinous sins to think of the wrath of God that shall come upon those that live in them.

First, It is a powerful motive ; for God's wrath is very terrible. It is God's anger makes us truly miserable, and not man's. God is our supreme Judge, and God liveth for ever. Man's anger is finite and limited : Heb. x. 31, 'It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.' The great and mighty men are afraid of this : Rev. vi. 15-17, 'The kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, shall hide themselves in dens, and in the rocks of the mountains ; and say to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb : for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand ?' and the thing itself showeth it. Consider—

1. The intension of this wrath. It is compared to a 'consuming fire,' Heb. xii. 29. It is a fire that burneth, not only to the ground or the surface of the earth, but to the lowest hell : Deut. xxxii. 22, 'For a fire is kindled in mine anger, and shall burn to the lowest hell ;' that should not only manifest itself by visible judgments in the world, but invisible and unknown judgments in the world to come. There is often a standing out against God by our obstinacy and rebellion ; but there is no standing before him when his anger is kindled but a little. It can not only destroy the body, and those bodily things which gratify it, but it can light upon the conscience and the souls of men. Here if but a spark of his wrath light upon the conscience, what a burden are men to themselves ?

2. As to extension ; the wrath of God compriseth all those evils which are the fruit of sin, be they bodily or spiritual, in life or death, or after death. It is said, Deut. xxix. 21, 'The Lord shall separate him unto evil ;' ver. 27, 'The anger of the Lord was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book.' The book of the law is full of curses to the sinner ; it hath a mouth to speak terrible things. But, Deut. xxviii. 61, 'And also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the book of this law, them will the Lord bring upon thee until thou be destroyed.' What is written or unwritten, revealed in the word or dispensed in providences, by way of plague or punishment, that is included in the wrath of God.

3. For duration ; the wrath of God 'abideth' on the impenitent, John iii. 36, and that not for a while, but 'for ever.' We despise God who is an infinite good, and forsake eternal happiness for a little temporal delight ; and therefore the punishment is eternal. A wound may be received in an instant that is never healed. A man may suddenly slip into a pit out of which he shall never recover ; he may be in a moment bound with a chain that shall never be loosed. Now can we remain in carnal security whilst this wrath of God hangeth over our heads ?

Secondly, It is a kindly motive. That is a question whether it be so or no, therefore let us state the matter.

1. We are principally to avoid sin as sin and as displeasing to God: Gen. xxxix. 9, 'How shall I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' If we see not the evil of sin in itself as well as in the effects, we may be tempted to think God is unjust in over-punishing it. And true repentance lieth in hating sin as sin, for the evil that is in it as well as after it, as it is a repugnancy to God's will, or a transgression of his law.

2. We must abstain from it, as it will bring down wrath and judgment upon us. So God urgeth this argument, Ezek. xviii. 30, 'Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin.' Not only our obligations to God should hold us to our duty, but our fear of his dreadful displeasure.

3. The *pœna damni*, to fear the punishment of loss, is out of question. *Timor separationis a Deo includitur in charitate*—A man cannot love God and not fear the loss of his favour. To a gracious heart this is more grievous than all the fire and brimstone of hell. The soul that placeth its happiness in acceptance with God, and the enjoyment of God, is afraid to lose him: 2 Cor. v. 8, 'We are confident, I say, and willing, rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord;' 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'Lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway.'

4. The *pœna sensus*, the punishment of sense, is necessary also to quicken men to their duty, and to guard their love, and to show that God doth not make little reckoning of sin; for, 2 Cor. v. 11, 'Knowing the terror of the Lord, we persuade men.' This is necessary in case of great deadness and numbness of conscience, and especially when a man is apt to miscarry by boisterous temptations, such as great fears and passionate and pleasing lusts. Fears: Luke xii. 4, 5, 'Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear: Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.' As one nail driveth out another, so the fear of God driveth out the fear of men and pleasing lusts: Rom. viii. 13, 'If you live after the flesh, ye shall die.'

5. The effect which it must produce is not such a fear as driveth us from God, but bringeth us to him; not torment, and perplexity, and despairing anguish (1 John iv. 18, 'Fear hath torment'), but flight and caution. We ought to represent it as a great evil, from whence we must fly by faith and repentance: Mat. iii. 7, 'Who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?' and Heb. vi. 18; to quicken us in our flight to Christ, and taking sanctuary at the grace of the gospel; and to engage us to more thankfulness for our deliverance by Christ: 1 Thes. i. 10, 'And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivered us from the wrath to come;' and so keep at a distance from those things that may bring the wrath of God upon us.

6. Punishments on others are for our warning. When God's judgments are upon others for sin, his hand is to be observed with great reverence; as David: Ps. cxix. 119, 120, 'Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: my flesh trembleth for fear of thee, and I am afraid of thy judgments.' Naturalists say a lion will tremble to

see a dog beaten before him: Ps. lii. 6, 'The righteous shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him.' It is observable in the text, he doth not say the wrath of God shall come upon *you*, but upon 'the children of disobedience;' for he speaketh to the Ephesians as believers, or persons justified and sanctified. And it teacheth us that the dreadful wrath of God, that lighteth on reprobates, is for our warning. Though we do not look upon it as the portion of our cup, yet we must look upon it as *debitum peccati*, as an evil that God doth inflict for such sins; therefore that sin ought to be shunned by the saints. God scourgeth and punisheth the wicked in our sight, that the regenerate may make use of their experience, and by their dying horrors, when they come to feel the effects of these sins, may tremble the more, and abhor those sins which are so displeasing to God.

Use. To teach us in what rank to place principles of obedience. There are several principles by which men are acted and influenced.

1. Some are false and rotten; as custom: Zech. vii. 3, 'As I have done these so many years.' Vainglory: 'To be seen of men,' Mat. vi. 1. Rapine: Mat. xxiii. 14, 'To devour widows' houses.' Envy: Phil. i. 15, 16, 'Some preach Christ out of envy and strife, and some also out of good will: the one preach Christ out of contention, not sincerely.'

2. Some are more tolerable; as the hope of temporal mercies: Hosea vii. 14, 'They have not cried unto me with their hearts when they howled upon their bed: they assemble themselves for corn and wine.' Fear of temporal judgments: Isa. lviii. 5, 'Is it such a fast that I have chosen, a day for a man to afflict his soul? is it to bow down his head as a bulrush, to spread sackcloth and ashes under him? Wilt thou call this a fast, and an acceptable day unto the Lord?' Jer. ii. 26, 'As the thief is ashamed when he is found, so is the house of Israel ashamed;' frightened into a little religiousness, when death is at their backs: Ps. lxxviii. 34, 'When he slew them, then they sought him, and they returned and inquired early after God.' To this rank I reckon also fear of hell, when it is alone. They shall be damned; all their duties are a sin-offering, a sleepy sop to appease a guilty conscience; all their repentance is but attrition, not contrition.

3. Some are very good and sound; as when duties are done out of obedience to God, upon the urgings of an enlightened conscience, without the bent of a renewed heart; for a regenerate man obeyeth not only as enjoined, but inclined. The principle is sound in the other, but the heart is not fitted. When a man considereth himself as a creature bound to obey his creator, whether willingly or unwillingly, he must do it: 1 Cor. ix. 16, 17, 'For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of; for necessity is laid upon me, yea, woe is unto me if I preach not the gospel: for if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed to me.' There is a bond of duty lying upon us. But now it is better when it is enlarged and fitted by grace: Luke i. 74, 75, 'That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days;' Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts;' Ps. xl. 8, 'Thy law is

in my heart.' So fear of hell : ' Destruction from God was a terror to me,' Job xxxi. 23. Hope of heaven : Heb. xi. 26, ' He had respect to the recompense of reward.' Their state of happiness is a state of likeness to God. These principles with others do well. So also thankfulness and love to God : Rom. xii. 1, ' Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service ;' Titus ii. 11, ' The grace of God, which bringeth salvation to all men, hath appeared,' &c. ; 1 John iv. 19, ' We love him, because he first loved us.' The glory of God : 1 Cor. x. 31, ' Whether ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' Love to the work for the work's sake, when holiness hath our very hearts : Ps. cxix. 140, ' Thy word is very pure, therefore thy servant loveth it.' And then—

4. Some are rare and excellent ; as when we love God not only for his benignity, but holiness, and eye our reward for his sake, and love the glory of God above our own happiness, and can subordinate the happy part of our eternal estate to his glory : Rom. ix. 3, ' For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ, for my brethren and kinsmen according to the flesh.' Now we are brought from one principle to another, from rotten to tolerable, from tolerable to sound, from sound to rare and excellent.

Doct. 3. That their condition is of all most miserable who are not only sinners, but stubborn and obstinate in their sin. The wrath of God cometh on the children of disobedience.

1. Who are the disobedient ? It may be said of two sorts—First of all, men in their natural condition with respect to the law : Rom. viii. 7, ' The carnal mind is enmity against God ; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' And, secondly, of those that refuse the gospel : 2 Thes. i. 8, ' In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and obey not the gospel ;' 1 Peter iv. 17, ' What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel ?' viz., those that will not submit themselves to God, or be persuaded to forsake their sins.

2. Now as to the disobedient sinners—(1.) They are slaves to sin : Titus iii. 3, ' We were sometime foolish, disobedient, serving divers lusts.' They do what their lusts bid them, are at the whistle of a temptation ; but all the reasons in the world shall not persuade them to do what God commandeth them. (2.) They are of the devil's party : Eph. ii. 2, ' According to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience.' (3.) They are rebels to God : Job xxiv. 13, ' They are of those that rebel against the light ; they know not the ways thereof, they abide not in the paths thereof.' They have light enough to condemn their practices, but yet they live in them : ' Have the workers of iniquity no knowledge ?' Ps. liii. 4. Their light hath no authority to bind them to their duty, but rather irritateth their corruptions : ' They are a very froward generation, children in whom is no faith,' Deut. xxxii. 20.

Use. Well, then, let us be none of these. A man may err and straggle out of the way through ignorance, incogitancy, or being overcome by the violent incursion of a temptation, but let us have a care of being children of disobedience. When we wander out of the way of our duty, let us look to God's word for direction in our way, and

follow the guidance of it ; as the wise men, that took a long journey to see Christ, followed the star that went before them, till it brought them to the house where Christ was, Mat. ii. 9, 10. [See this more largely handled in the next sermon.]

SERMON VII.

Be not ye therefore partakers with them.—EPH. v. 7.

WE have handled in the 6th verse—

1. A caution, ‘ Let no man deceive you with vain words.’

2. A denunciation, ‘ For these things’ sake the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience.’

Now I come to—

3. A dissuasion ; this is in the text, and is inferred out of the former verse ; where we have—

[1.] The evil dissuaded from, *συμμέτοχοι αὐτῶν*, ‘ Be not partakers with them,’ that is, do not join with them in their evil ways, by committing these and the like sins.

[2.] The reason, ‘ Therefore ;’ that is, because the wrath of God cometh upon the children of disobedience, do not join in their sins, that you may not be involved in their punishment ; as Rev. xviii. 4, ‘ Be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.’

Doct. The dreadful estate of the children of disobedience should keep us from joining with them in their evil ways.

Here let me show you—(1.) Who are children of disobedience ; (2.) The misery of their condition ; (3.) Why this should deter us from being partakers with them.

I. Who are children of disobedience.

1. Those who are not only sinners, but stubborn, obstinate, and ignorant sinners ; such as are prone to all evil, and are not only indisposed, but averse from all good. Both parts of the character must be minded. They presently do what lust biddeth them, and are at the beck of a temptation, but all the reasons in the world shall not persuade them to do what God commandeth them. They are as wax to Satan, but as a stone to God. They find an irresistible force in temptations : Prov. vii. 21, 22, ‘ With her much fair speech she caused him to yield ; with the flattery of her lips she forced him. He goeth after her straightway, as an ox goeth to the slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks.’ But as to good, they are not only weak and indisposed, but cannot endure to be subject to God. The more holy any creature is, the more readily does he obey God : Ps. ciii. 20, ‘ Bless the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word.’ But for others, a small matter serveth their turn ; neither promises nor threatenings will gain them to their duty.

2. This good is either to be determined by the light of nature or the light of the gospel.