

Israel is: Isa. i. 3, 'My people will not consider;' and the same complaint may be made of us. Things are evident and clear to faith, reason, and conscience; but we will not consider, and so wander out of the way.

3. The next thing we exhort you to do, is to make choice for your own souls. That is the use Moses makes of it: Deut. xxx. 19, 'Therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live.' Hearing, believing, considering, are all in order to choice; and without choice, and a determined, fixed, bent of heart, you will never walk evenly in heaven's ways. Determine not only that you must, but you will, walk in the way which God hath set forth for you. God's ways must be chosen: Ps. cxix. 30, 'I have chosen the way of truth;' and ver. 173, 'I have chosen thy precepts;' Josh. xxiv. 15, 'If it seem evil to you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom you will serve.' Not as if it were indifferent, but to set an edge upon their appetite. There is much strength in the bond, when a man bindeth himself freely, and makes him the more inexcusable if he doth not observe it. All will choose life before death, but they are out in the means; they do not choose good before evil, the good of holiness before the evil of sin. Every man desireth some good. It is as natural for the reasonable creature to desire to be happy, as it is for the fire to burn; but we do not make a right choice of the means that may bring us to that happiness that we desire. They would be happy, but they choose means quite contrary to happiness. Oh, then, choose the ways of God; let life be your motive, and holiness your choice. This is the way to live for ever, to avoid hell beneath. As soon as we come to years of discretion, we should make our choice to go on in the ways of life. To this we are obliged by the most weighty reasons, urged by the enforcements of the word, and by the sad and numerous examples of young people, who make an ill choice in the beginning, and go on, and are hardened therein, and perish for ever.

SERMON XVIII.

Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.—
MAT. VII. 12.

It is a general complaint of the world that Christians are defective in the duties of the second table. Some hypocrites may be so, to mask over a dishonest life with a pretence of worship and godliness; but we are not to judge of the rest of the people of God by these, no more than we would judge of the glory of a street by the filthiness of the sink or canal, or of the sound grapes in the cluster by the rotten ones. For certainly all that have truly submitted to Christianity do find that religion doth influence their relations, and run out and issue itself in all the duties which they owe to man as well as unto God. And it was not a boast which Austin said to the heathens, 'Let all

the religions of the world produce such princes, such subjects, such husbands, wives, parents, children, as the Christian religion produceth.' This was the glory of religion then, and it should not fall in our hands. Or possibly this may be the cause of it, unrenewed men which allow one another in their excesses, and glory in some kind of mutual civilities, may equal or overpass the godly therein. Look, as dogs excel men in the acuteness of smell, and the eagle in sharpness of sight, and many other beasts in other senses, because it is their excellency, so there are certain lower respects which the men of the world mutually pay one towards another, and they may excel in these as their peculiar worth.

But, however, be that complaint true or false, it concerns us to take notice of it, and to prevent all suspicion of this kind. And therefore we need to press moralities upon Christians, and that from the true root, the love of God; for that is the great mistake of this age, to set up a sort of false morality, and forget the true one that is built on faith in Christ and love to God.

Now, to set down each particular duty would be tedious. The life of man is short, and the law in all its necessary explications long and voluminous; and therefore to have a sure rule, and a short one, would be a very great advantage to us in this matter.

And this one direction which I have read to you out of the word of God will serve instead of all. It is a *sure* rule, for Christ gives it us, who is truth itself; and though it be short, it is *full* enough for our purpose, for here is the substance and quintessence of the law and prophets, all drawn into one compendious rule and abridgment of our duty, the best epitome that ever was. A sentence this is of such weight, that the Emperor Severus (as Lactantius reporteth out of Lampridius) was so taken with it, that, having heard it from some Jew or Christian, he wrote it in his palace, and caused it to be engraven in golden letters in the courts of justice, and to be proclaimed at the punishment of offenders. And therefore I shall briefly discourse of this rule, and present it to your serious consideration.

In the words there is:—

I. A rule of life: *whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.*

II. The commendation of it: *for this is the law and the prophets.*

III. The illative particle: *therefore.*

My business shall be to open these circumstances.

I. Here is the rule of life. This general precept may be considered in the affirmative or in the negative (for negatives are included in their affirmatives). The affirmative is in the text, 'All those things that you would men should do unto you;' the negative is in that noted saying, *Quod tibi fieri non vis, alteri ne feceris*—that which you would not have done to you, do not you to them. The one, the negative, conduceth to restrain injury; but the other, the affirmative, urgeth us to do good. The negative enforceth justice and equity in us to others; the affirmative, love and charity. Heathens by the light of nature were more sensible of negatives, that they should not hurt others in their body, goods, or good name, as we would not in either of these things be wronged ourselves; therefore Christ, passing that, layeth

down the affirmative, of which nature is less sensible, of doing good to them, as we desire they should do to us in our extremities.

But because one cannot well be handled without the other, I shall begin with the negative consideration, which concerns right and justice to the persons, names, goods, and possessions of others. We are earnest to have fair dealing from others; we should be as earnest to yield the same again. There is no man but hath a quick sense of injuries done to himself. When we are wronged by lying, slandering, oppression, or by fraudulent bargains, how will we discourse of equity, and plead for right upon these occasions? Why, the like tender respect, the like sense, should we have in our dealing with others; as you would not others should defame, oppress, or overreach you, so should not you do to them. In other men's dealings with us we are masters, acute discerners of right in our own case, able to teach what men ought to do; but in our dealing with others we are scarce scholars. We would be revered, commended, fairly used, have others tender of our credit; and if we be abused in person, disgraced in speech, endamaged in goods or good name, we complain of the wrong. Therefore it was well said of Calvin, that it would be much better for mankind if we were as faithful learners of active duties as we are acute doctors concerning passives; that is, that we would not offer such usage to others as we would not be well pleased with ourselves, but give as we would receive.

To impress the rule upon you, I shall give four considerations in the negative sense.

1. That in the duties of the second table we have more light than we have in the first; for when Christ sets forth the sum of both the tables, Mat. xxii. 36, 37, he tells us that we must 'love God with all our hearts, our souls, our strength, and mind;' but when he comes to the love of our neighbour, he gives a measure more easily discernible; we are to 'love our neighbour as ourselves.' Love will tell us what is good for ourselves. The love of God must be preferred both to ourselves and to our neighbours. And in guiding and expressing our love to God, we need many rules. Our desires of good to ourselves are a complete measure and rule of that respect we owe to our neighbours. This principle of self-love would show us what we owe to one another. But though nature discovers a God, and reason that this God should be worshipped, yet nature could never carve out such a worship as is proper to God, and as God likes; there needs a larger explication. Let a man be free from passion and from inordinate self-love, consider what he would have done to himself; this will direct him plainly what should be done to others that agree with us in the same common nature, and who have an original right with us in things that belong to justice and equity, and should be as fairly respected by us as we expect to be treated by them.

2. The breach of this rule is more evil in him which hath experienced the bitterness of wrongs or misery than in another; because experience giveth us a truer knowledge of things than a naked idea and conception of them. He that knoweth things by mere contemplation, doth but know them at a distance, and as it were afar off; but he that knoweth things by experience, knows them at hand, and feels

the smart of them. Therefore conscience should work more in them by way of restraint, because they know what it is to be oppressed and disgraced, and remember how grievous it was when they did lie under any wrong. Look, as it is made an argument of confidence in Christ's pity, because his heart was made tender by experience: he was tempted, he was despitely used, he experimented all our sorrows; therefore 'he is able'—that is, has a greater fitness—'to succour those which are tempted,' Heb. ii. 18. And in another place we read, that 'He learned obedience by the things which he suffered,' Heb. v. 8. Did Christ learn anything better, or improve his knowledge, which had 'the Spirit without measure'? Yes, he might have an experimental learning and feeling. Thus, when he suffered things so regretful and contrary to that life he had assumed, he knew what it was to overrule the natural inclinations of life, and subordinate them to the will of God, and learn obedience by the things which he suffered, and will more compassionate when poor creatures are put upon duties against flesh and blood. And it is used as an argument why we should come to the throne of grace with boldness: Heb. iv. 15, Because 'we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with our infirmities,' &c. He hath experimented them in his own person, he knows these things himself. And so Exod. xxii. 21, 'Thou shalt not vex a stranger, nor oppress him; for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' The people of Israel knew what it was to be exposed to the envy of the natives, where they had few friends and many enemies. But especially observe that Lev. xix. 33, 34, for there you have this great law repeated: 'And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land, ye shall not vex him; but the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be as one born amongst you, and thou shalt love him as thyself.' Mark, what thou wouldst have done to thyself, do to the stranger. Why? 'For ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.' They knew how burdensome it was to their souls to be under the yoke, how grievous a thing oppression was. Now suitably it concerneth all those which have lain under defamation, slander, and oppression, they should be mighty tender and careful how they speak of others, and what they do to others. They which have been servants themselves, and have felt the burden of heavy tasks and short allowance, hard and unmerciful usage from their masters, they should not exact all their labours, nor deal cruelly unto servants when they are masters themselves; for not only the law of God, but their own experience, will rise up in judgment against them, and increase the sting of their conscience. So the drift of that parable would do well to be considered in these times: Mat. xviii. 33, 'That servant which had his own debt forgiven him, yet he plucked his fellow-servant by the throat. Shouldst thou not have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, as I had compassion on thee?' When we are under restraint, and groan for our liberty, we would fain have an opportunity of glorifying God. If God should hear us in these kinds, should not we be like affected to our fellow-servants, and not seek to hunt every one, that do a little dissent from us, as vermin to death, and as unworthy to be allowed among us? A man which is in debt, how grievous is it when others deal rigorously with him? Now, for him to deal so with others is a double crime, as being a sin against a

law and against experience. You complain to God in the bitterness of your soul, when ye are under these oppressions; so will they complain against you: therefore it is more evil in you. The—

3. Observation is this: That this rule is spiritual, and concerneth the inward man as well as the outward; not only actions, words, and practices (though it be said, whatsoever men *do* unto you), but the thoughts. The whole law of God is spiritual: Ps. xix. 7, 'The law of God is perfect, converting the soul;' not only guides the motions of the outward man, but reacheth to the workings of the heart. As is the first table, so is the second: for we are told, Mat. xxii. 39, 'The second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' How like to it? It is as spiritual as the first, and therefore not only what I do, but what I would think and purpose to do to others, is comprehended in it. Christ therefore speaks of adultery committed in the heart, by impure and wanton thoughts and desires. This rule, which concerns the whole second table, not only concerns the actions, but your dispositions and inclinations; and not only provides against hard speeches, and outward behaviour, but the secret grudgings in your hearts against others, that your affections may not be alienated from them. For mark, what is here, What ye would men should do to you, do the same to them. In other places it is, 'Love thy neighbour as thyself,' Gal. v. 14; so that all the duties and practices which concern the good of our neighbour, must proceed from a principle of love. The justice of the second table, as required of Christians, is a justice tempered and excited by love. Though our outward acts be never so pleasant, yet if love be not at the bottom of it, it is not right. As 1 Cor. xiii. 3, 'If I give all my goods to the poor, and have not charity, it signifieth nothing.' You will think that is excessive charity, to give all my goods; yea, but if it be not done with love, it is nothing worth, not accepted, nor rewarded by God. And so we must refer these words not only to the outward man, but the principle of love which is in the heart.

4. Proposition: That all which is done by virtue of this rule, must be done not only out of love to man, but out of love to God, and as an act of obedience. For when Christ gives us this direction, 'Whatsoever ye would,' &c., he doth not give it as a politic course, to establish peace in the world, but as a compendious rule to guide us in the duties of the second table. Self-love is the measure, but it is not the reason, ground, or principle of our actions. A measure it is, for we will certainly do right to ourselves; but to make it an act of obedience, so it is accepted of God. It is a common rule, all moral duties must be done as in and to the Lord; out of the love of God, fear of God, and obedience to his blessed majesty: therefore it is said, Eph. v. 21, 'Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.' That must be the great principle which swayeth us; not policy, or respect to our own interest, but conscience. There must be a right principle of motion, as well as a just action, if we will do exactly and according to the law of Christ. Therefore here is the great difference between a Christian and another man in the duties of the second table in his moralities; he turns second table duties into first table duties; it is a thing carried on throughout the whole scripture. Thus if he gives

alms, his alms is a sacrifice; sacrifice is a duty of the first table, but alms is clearly a duty of the second table. So all his commerce (I do but instance in one for all); what he doth to men must be done in and to the Lord. So here in this very case, love to man, it is but a stream which comes from a higher fountain, and that is love to God. A Christian loves God first, and indeed he loves nothing but God, for he loves God in all his creatures. In men we love his natural image, but in the saints his spiritual image: 1 John iv. 21, 'This commandment have we from him, that he who loveth God, love his brother also.' Our love to our ordinary brother must be excited and measured by our love to God; and our love to our Christian brother, our fellow-saints, must be from the love of God: 1 John v. 1, 'Every one that loveth him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him.' So much for the negative part.

Secondly, Now let us come to the affirmative part, which establisheth charity; for it is not enough if we do not hurt others, but we must do them good. Now charity is seen in two things—both in giving and forgiving.

First, In giving: 'What you would men should do to you, do you the same to them.' Be as ready to do good as to receive good. A man is never in a right frame of spirit until he takes as much delight in doing others good as he would take in having good done to himself; nay, more; for our Lord tells us that 'it is a more blessed thing to give than to receive,' Acts xx. 35. Why a more blessed thing? Because this comes nearest to the nature of God, who gives all, and takes of none. And therefore, as we would imitate God in other things, we should in this also; for all God's works should leave an impression upon us; his election should make us choose him and his ways; his love, to love him; his giving should make us to give. As a child hath part for part, limb for limb, answerable to his father, so should a child of God answer God in all his moral perfections, especially in his goodness. 'As you come behind,' saith the apostle, 'in no gift, so do not come behind in this also,' 2 Cor. viii. 7. And the rule of Christ here is that which doth enforce this ('As ye would,' &c.), do you afford to others that comfort, that succour, that relief in all their distresses, which you would desire they should afford to you if you were in the same case, and in the same distress? Alas! you will say, pity should be showed to a man by his friend; and will you be merciless, and shut up your bowels, and not show this pity to others? If you were pined with hunger, and your children cry for bread, and you have none to give them, would you not complain of the hardness of their hearts which have this world's goods, and shut up their bowels against them, and not dispense anything to their necessities? Why, if you know the heart of an indigent person, it cannot but move you to observe this rule. And the rather, because usually with what measure we mete to others, it is recompensed into our bosoms by God's providence; for whatever need others have of us, we have infinitely more of God, and there will a time come when we shall be as destitute before God as they are before you. For instance, in a time of sickness, when all outward helps fail: Ps. xli. 1, 'Blessed is he that considereth the poor; the Lord will consider him in time of trouble.' Why, he that is

affected with another's condition as his own, when it is a time of trouble and distress with him, and it may be his brother cannot help him, then the Lord will help him, either in sickness or trouble of conscience; when all outward comforts are as the white of an egg, when the poor perplexed sinner cries, Mercy! mercy! the Lord will show him mercy as he did to others: Mat. v. 7, 'Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.' Those that only seek to enrich themselves, and solace themselves with mirth and pleasure in the good things they have, must not expect the like promises. But those which have been merciful, bountiful, and ready to help others, God delights to show them mercy; and when they are most destitute, they shall find that God takes notice of this, that they were ready to relieve others.

Secondly, In forgiving, the same rule holds. A necessary duty; for while we are here in the world, there will be weaknesses and offences, and we need mutually to forgive, and to take pardon. It is said, Col. iii. 13, 'Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.' See the same, Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgiving one another, as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.' Mark, he proceeds upon this principle that Christ layeth down: 'Whatsoever ye would,' &c. We are in the world and in the flesh, and therefore should not rigidly exact upon the failings of others, lest they or others deal so with us when our turn comes. We need pardon in this kind, for we give offence: Eccles. vii. 21, 22, 'Take no heed unto all words that are spoken; lest thou hear thy servant curse thee; for oftentimes also thine heart knoweth that thou thyself likewise hast cursed others.' The meaning is, we should not be over-affected with others speaking ill of us, because we know we have spoken ill of others, and should pass it by with meekness and neglect; therefore the consideration of our passions and of our infirmities should move us to pardon. We have been, or may be as bad as they; we have been once, Titus iii. 3, 'foolish and disobedient,' led by our unruly appetites and desires, therefore we should show meekness to them. Ay, and we may be surprised again: James iii. 1, 'My brethren, be not many masters, for in many things we offend all.' Be not many masters, that is, severe, masterly, or supercilious, if another be fallen and hath offended us, for we shall receive the greater condemnation.

The apostle argueth from another argument, Col. iii. 13; and Eph. iv. 32, 'Forgive others, as God hath for Christ's sake forgiven us.' There is no man can wrong us as much as we trespass against God; and though we are but as the drop of the bucket, and the small dust of the balance, yet our great and many sins are freely forgiven to us; therefore it should prevail with us freely and easily to pardon one another. The scripture urgeth this. Oh, when we consider Christ's example, how Christ hath forgiven us; when we consider the greatness of the wrongs which he pardons, sins that are of a scarlet and crimson dye, Isa. i. 18; when we consider our own baseness in comparison of him, Isa. xl. 22, 'Who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers;' and when we consider his omnipotency to right himself of the wrongs done to him, how he 'can

cast body and soul into hell fire;’ surely this should move us to forgive others. Yea, and it is not only a motive, but a rule. Forgive others, as God forgives us; what is that? Sincerely, not hypocritically; freely, not unwillingly; fully, not by halves; irrevocably, not for a time only; but as God forgives and casts all our sins into the depth of the sea, so should we forgive and pass by the sins of others.

Christians, shall I urge another argument in this case, what need there is of forgiveness? Hereby a man overcometh himself, hereby he shames the party that did him wrong, and hereby he takes God’s course to get the victory over the person which hath done him the wrong. Hereby he overcometh himself, his own nature, which thirsteth after revenge: Prov. xvi. 32, ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city.’ He is able to rule himself, so it is his glory; he doth overcome that revengeful and froward disposition which is in his own nature. And hereby he overcomes and shames the party that did him wrong; there is no such way to do this as by forgiveness. Thus David did overcome Saul, 1 Sam. xxiv. 17, when David had him at an advantage and spared him, Saul said to David, ‘Thou art more righteous than I.’ Oh, what a victory was this, to overcome that fierce man’s heart and reconcile him. And you keep God’s way in overcoming him; it is God’s prescribed course that you should thus overcome him by kindness and meekness: Rom. xii. 21, ‘Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.’

But wherein must we express this forgiveness towards others? As to the wrong to be forgiven, we must consider it either as an offence against God, or sometimes against public laws, or as it is an offence against us. So far as it is an offence against God or the public laws, here we have not power to forgive, and punishment is due to the common good, *Pana debetur*. The Lord himself, that forgives us, and forgives for Christ’s sake, hath secured the honour of his governing justice by satisfaction; and if the law requires it, we cannot intermeddle there, only we must pray to God earnestly for them, that is our duty, James iv. 15; and in some cases we may intercede with the magistrate to take off the penalty, and are so bound.

This forgiveness implieth two things—a removal of an inward grudge, and a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to them.

1. A removal of an inward grudge and endeavours after private revenge: Lev. xix. 17-18, ‘Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart; thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him; thou shalt not avenge nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.’ Thou shalt not bear a grudge against him, for then you hate him in your heart.

2. There must be a readiness to do all duties of love and kindness to him who hath done the wrong, as God ministereth occasion and ability. There are many laws for this: Exod. xxiii. 4-5, ‘If thou meet thine enemy’s ox or ass going astray, thou shalt surely bring it back to him again; if thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie under his burthen, and wouldst forbear to help him, thou shalt surely help with him;’ Luke vi. 27, ‘Love your enemies, do good to them

that hate you, bless them that curse you.' Now, so far are we bound to remit the private grudge because of the offence done to us, and also to take all occasions to do them good.

Object. But whether may not we have recourse to the magistrate for the recovery of our right, and reparation of our wrongs?

Ans. Certainly we may, provided we go not to law for trifles; for when we go to law for small matters, and that before infidels, the apostle reproveth it, 1 Cor. vi. 2; and when after all lawful means and courses are used before, for taking away the occasion, as ver. 5, 'Is there not a wise man among you to take up the difference?' And when it is not with a spirit of revenge and rigour, for a Christian should show his moderation in all things, Phil. iv. 5, and his lenity, gentleness, and readiness to forgive. But if it be out of a spirit of revenge, not the conscience of justice, we abuse God's ordinance to our private passions, Rom. xiii. 3.

Having thus explained the law, let me vindicate this rule.

1. It seems not to be so perfect a rule. Because many desire and wish much evil to themselves, should they desire evil to others? As he that would be drunk, should he make another drunk? and he that commits filthiness, should he entice others? *Ans.* The meaning is not what we do in a passion, which works not the righteousness of God, but it is meant of a regular will; not that we do with evil desires, as that we do in right reason, that which you do well informed, well advised, free from discomposed passion; what is according to the law of nature engraven upon your hearts, which is most legible in our own case; what the law of nature would judge to be the duty of other men to do. It is not meant of inordinate sinful desires.

2. But doth not this rule make all men equal, and destroy all order and superiority, if every man must do as he would be done unto? What, shall a master require of a servant no more than he will do to him? Would a poor man have a rich man give him relief? Should he give him no more than he expects back again from this poor man? No; the meaning is, that for that time we should suppose ourselves in the condition of servants, and of that poor man. You should put yourselves in their stead, and suppose if I were a servant, if I were poor. We should put ourselves in the same equality with them, and by the law of proportion the same things that would seem reasonable to you if you were in their condition you should cheerfully do to them. For instance, if I were a servant, and did obey, would not I judge such exaction burthensome and unreasonable? If I were poor, and driven to seek relief, would not I judge a denial harsh? If I were a master, should not I judge such an offence injurious to my authority?

3. Doth not this establish revenge and retaliation of injuries to do to him as he hath done to me? *Ans.* No, rather much to the contrary; for it is not what they have done to us; Christ doth not say so, but what we would have to be done to us that do to them. See Prov. xxiv. 29, 'Say not I will do so to him as he hath done to me; I will render to the man according to his work.' That is an ill reasoning within ourselves, and takes God's work out of his hands, whose prerogative it is to give to every man according to his work. The rule is not look backward, but forward. It doth not look to what they have

done to us, but what we should do to them. To think to do the same would certainly break this rule of Christ, and make us be burthensome to others by such actions, and burthensome to ourselves, and so sin not only against our own conscience but against sense and feeling of the thing committed. Injury and revenge differ only in order. He that returns injury for injury doth but imitate the adversary; and he that imitates that which is evil in another sins twice, both against the law and his own conscience.

4. If all the world were contented to observe this rule, then we should have a quiet world; but others are very oppressive, unjust, and very hard to me, this is to live by the loss, and to bring a restraint upon myself from which others are free. *Ans.* Do your duty to them though they do not theirs to you. Others' sins will not exempt you from the law of God, which is your rule, and not their actions. Whatever they do to you, yet carry it Christianly and meekly towards them. You are accountable to God for your own actions, not for the actions of another man. Therefore if you be able to guide your own spirit to them, how perverse soever they be to you, you will have the comfort that you have endeavoured to do your duty.

Having vindicated the rule, let me show you the grounds and the equity of it. What are the intrinsic grounds and reasons why Christ hath given such a rule to us? No question it is founded not in his bare authority, but in great equity. There are two grounds:—

1. The actual equality of all men by nature.

2. The possible equality of all men as to their condition and state of life.

1. The actual equality of all men by nature: Mal. ii. 10, 'Have we not all one Father? hath not one God created us?' Were we not all created by the same God? Ay! and mark the equality goes further: we were all 'made of one blood,' Acts xvii. 26, all descended from Adam. Unequal diversity of rank doth not take away identity of nature. There is a diversity of rank indeed. Some are high, some low, some rich, some poor, some governors, some governed, some teachers, and some obey; but we are all made of one blood. So Neh. v. 5, 'Our flesh is as the flesh of our brethren, our children as their children.' Some are highly advanced above others, yet the poorest creature and you is one flesh, and by nature hath an equal right with you; therefore it is said, Isa. lviii. 7, 'Thou shalt not hide thyself from thine own flesh.' Thy poor, pined, starved brother is thine own flesh.

2. The possible equality of all men as to condition, and as to state of life: they are equal by nature, and it is possible they may be in the same state of life. You stand to-day, another is fallen; you are liable to the same corruption and the same calamities. To the same corruption: Gal. vi. 1, 'If any one be fallen, ye that are spiritual restore such an one with a spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.' Rigid censurers may fall into like sins or worse themselves. Alas! the devil is very assiduous in tempting, and the Lord permits him to surprise those that are severe to others. Therefore you should show pity and compassion to the fallen. And then as to possibility of calamities: Heb. xiii. 3, 'Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them, and them which suffer adversity, as being

yourselves also in the body.' There is a twofold interpretation of that place. Some understand it of the mystical body of Christ; but I think rather it is meant of the body of flesh, while we are here in the present life. Strange changes may come before we go out of the body; they that are highest may be lowest. In 2 Kings iv. 13, we read of the Shunammite that had given harbour and entertainment to the prophet, and the prophet said, 'What is to be done for thee? wouldst thou be spoken for to the king, or to the captain of the host? and she answered, I dwell among mine own people.' She was well, and needed nothing; she was able to dwell at home, and to maintain herself well enough, and needed not the prophet to speak to the king for her; but afterwards there comes a great famine, and her inheritance was invaded, and she that would not be beholden to the prophet was beholden to Gehazi, the prophet's man. Compare 2 Kings iv. 13, with 2 Kings viii. 3.

There may be great changes here in the earth, great calamities may befall us; therefore, since we are in the body, and since those that are high to-day may be low to-morrow, and you may need the like help from others, we must have a fellow-feeling with them. God, who is the great arbiter of human affairs, can pull down and set up at his pleasure. We have opened the rule, the first part of the text.

II. The second part is the commendation of this rule: 'For this is the law and the prophets;' that is, this is the sum of the doctrine of God. The law and the prophets were the scriptures only then in force, and therefore the phrase is used proverbially in many places: Mat. xi. 13, 'For all the prophets and the law prophesied till John; Luke xvi. 31, 'They have Moses and the prophets; let them hear them;' Acts xxiv. 14, 'I believe all the law and the prophets have spoken.' The law and the prophets were all the Bible they had for that time. Now, saith Christ, the law was as the text, and the prophets as the comment upon the text, to expound and confirm the law by a larger explication.

But you will say, Is this the whole sum of the law and the prophets? Are there not doctrines delivered there insisted upon concerning our respects to God and all the institutions of his worship; are they not contained in the law and prophets?

I answer—The proposition must be understood according to the matter in hand. This is the law and the prophets as to all they say concerning our converse with men. You may have many rules in the law and the prophets, where they are more copiously delivered, but they all issue themselves into this general rule. The worship of God and duties to him are also established by the law and the prophets; for when our Lord had spoken of what we owe to God as well as to man, he saith, Mat. xxii. 40, 'On these two hang all the law and the prophets.' These are the two things that all the law and the prophets seek to establish—viz., love to God and man. But our Saviour here speaks only concerning the second table; what concerns that is comprised in this sentence. All that part of religion which is *inferioris hemispherii*, of the lower hemisphere of duty, is distilled into this quintessential extract. As in the spirits of things the virtue is contracted, which otherwise is largely diffused while it is mingled with grosser

matter, so here the spirits, the extract of law and prophets, are all distilled as to moral matters into this one saying, 'Whatsoever you would,' &c.

III. The third thing to be considered is the illative particle, 'therefore.' From what is this inferred? In the foregoing verses our Saviour speaks of audience in prayer: 'If ye, being evil, know how to give good things unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father know how to give good things to them that ask him? Therefore, whatsoever ye would,' &c. Christ makes many notable arguments, and shows that God is ready to give good things to us: 'Ask, and ye shall have,' &c. He proves it from the kindness of earthly parents to their children. And, now, therefore, to intimate this, that if men have their prayers granted, they must observe this rule; they must perform all duties of civil righteousness, as well as be earnest in acts of piety. Upon this limiting it to the audience of prayer, it plainly implies three things:—

1. That God is the judge of human actions; he will take cognizance of this, whether you do to others as they do to you, and you shall hear of it in your dealing with God; that is the first and lowest thing; and remember, you have to do with God as much as they have to do with you. He shows this to bridle the excesses of those that are in power. There are a sort of men that think they may do anything if they can do it safely: Micah ii. 1, 'That do evil because it is in the power of their hand.' They eagerly prosecute their purposes and desires when they have power to effect them. Now a Christian should pause upon the matter, and consider not only what is possible to be done, but what is just and lawful to be done; and conscience should put a severe restraint when nothing else can hinder us; as Joseph said, Gen. xlii. 18, 'This do, and live; for I fear God.' He had a full advantage against them that wrought him so much mischief, but he had an inward principle laid up in his heart which begat a tenderness, 'I fear God.' But when men will do everything they are able to effect, and will do anything as far as their power will reach, remember you must come before God, and God can requite it, though they cannot. It is not conscience which governs the greatest part of the world, but interest. When it is not for men's interest, they will do no wrong; but when they have power enough to do what they intend, they care not how they trample upon their own brethren, hate and pursue them with all that is evil. It is hard to avoid this snare when we are in power. Men forget God and abuse their power, and many times, by a strange providence, they are brought to suffer the like hardness themselves. When we see the oppressions of the innocent, and things carried so perversely, we are apt to say, Lord, who shall call these men into question? who shall accuse them? Why, the sighs and groans of the oppressed before God's tribunal upon¹ all persons depend every moment, these will be more authentic witnesses than any matters of fact can be produced in a lower court.

2. It implieth this, and it enlargeth the rule, that whatsoever usage we expect to meet with at God's hands, the same in some measure we should dispense and deal out to others. He is willing to give all, provided you are willing to do to others as you would be done unto. All

¹ Qu., "upon whom"?—ED.

the mercy and goodness we expect from him, that must sway our practice and conversation with men. Whatever need others have of us, the same need have we of God: Eph. vi. 8, 'Whatsoever good thing any man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free.' So for other relations. In the practice of this rule Christians are to consider not only how they would be dealt withal by men, but with God himself for Christ's sake, which carrieth the precept far beyond the heathen latitude, and mightily enlargeth the rule. Alas! from God we have nothing but undeserved mercy, pardon of sins, &c. So we are to practise this rule, not only to those that love us, but to our enemies; we must show mercy to the worst for Christ's sake. Strict justice, by the light of nature, requires the injurious should suffer according to the wrong is done to me. Ay! but what do I expect from God? Therefore, I am to consider how God will deal with me if I am rigid, severe, exact, and stand upon all things to the uttermost.

3. Another consideration which mightily enforceeth the rule is, that if you do such things to others as you would not have them do to you, God will do that to you which you have done to others; for vengeance is his. They are not to do the same to you again, nor exact nor desire it, but God will. It is good to consider God's judgment, of counter-passion or retaliation: 'As thou hast done, so shall it be done to thee; thy reward shall return upon thine own head,' Obad. ver. 15. They that were pitiless, merciless to their brethren in the day of their flight from Jerusalem, God will pay them home in their own coin: 'And with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again,' Mat. vii. 1, 2; Gen. ix. 6, 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' It is not only a law what is to be done, but a rule of providence, what God will do. What more usual than malefactors to be dealt withal according to their own wickedness? There are many instances of this judgment of counter-passion, God doing to them what they have done to others.

Adonibezek, when the people caught him and cut off his thumbs and his great toes, said, 'Threescore and ten kings having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me. And they brought him to Jerusalem, and there he died.' Usually this is the dealing of God. The Israelites had their children drowned in the water by Pharaoh. What then? Pharaoh and all his host, within a little while, all his nobility and men of war, were all drowned in the water. Ahab's blood was lapped up by dogs in the place where they shed the blood of Naboth; and Jezebel, being more guilty, was devoured with dogs. Ahab only permitted this contrivance, but Jezebel acted it. Ahab humbled himself, therefore he was buried with honour; but Jezebel was entombed in the belly of dogs, and her flesh devoured by them. A gallows, we read, was made for Mordecai, and Haman was hanged on it himself. Henry the Third of France, in that very chamber where the massacre was contrived against the Protestants, there he was slain; and his brother before him, Charles the Ninth, was found flowing in blood in his bed, who had shed so much of the blood of God's saints. Judges ix. 18, 19, compared with ver. 23, 24. When the men of Shechem had done great injury to the house of Jerubbaal, 'Ye are risen up against my father's house, and have slain his sons, threescore

and ten persons upon one stone.' What then? ver. 23, 'Then God sent an evil spirit between Abimelech and the men of Shechem; and the men of Shechem dealt treacherously with Abimelech, that the cruelty done to the threescore and ten sons of Jerubbaal might come, and their blood be laid upon Abimelech their brother, which slew them.' So also the observation of Austin is not to be passed by, upon the parable of the rich man; he that denied a crumb, could not find a drop to cool his tongue.

But you will say, Is it so with good men also, the children of God, if they should break his law, doth the Lord give them according as they have done to others? Yes; God observes the same justice; though he doth pardon the eternal punishment and take it off, yet here in this world, as to temporals, they shall have like for like. Jacob supplanted his brother; he came to Isaac as the elder, the younger instead of the elder; and Laban brings him the elder instead of the younger, Leah instead of Rachel. Asa, which put the prophet into the stocks, we read of him that he was diseased in his feet. Nay; I shall give you greater instances than that. Joseph's brethren they were not flexible to their brother, and did not hear his cry; at length they came to Egypt upon an honest errand for corn in time of famine, and the man is inexorable: Gen. xlii. 21, 'We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us.' What was the matter? How comes this to work? In a storm, things at bottom we see come up to the top; so ever sins in trouble will bubble up, and we shall see that we saw not before. How come they to remember the trouble of their brother, for they knew not Joseph, and twenty years were past since they sold him? They found the man as inexorable as they had been to their brother. God's judgment of counter-passion sets their conscience a-work. A greater instance we have of Paul, that consented to the stoning of Stephen, and was present too at his execution; and it is said, 'They laid down their garments at Paul's feet;' and he himself takes notice of it with great remorse afterwards, Acts xxii. 20. Well, what then? after his conversion how doth God deal with Paul? Stephen had prayed for him too among the rest, 'Lord, lay it not to their charge;' yet God gave him some smart remembrance of his sin. When Paul and Barnabas had been preaching at Iconium, though Barnabas had irritated them as well as Paul, they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercurius, because he was the chief speaker. Barnabas, who was equal with him in preaching, God ordered it so he was not stoned; but Paul, that had consented to Stephen's stoning, was stoned himself and carried out for dead. What need have we to be exact in observing what is required of us here, for the Lord by one means or other will return it into our bosoms. We have done that to others which we would not should be done to ourselves, and therefore will God do that to us which we do to others.

APPLICATION.

Use 1. To inform us:—

First, What an advantage religion is to mankind, even with regard

to the present life. The world hath a prejudice against religion as if it were an ill-natured thing, and made men forget equity and humane respects in favourable dealings with others. But certainly there is no reason for this prejudice, when it doth require not only love of all in their several capacities, but to do to them all the good possibly we can, and to seek out objects to whom we may do good, and be of a God-like affection. Therefore, see that it be so in your profession and practice, that you may recover the credit of religion by this rule. If this were practised :—

1. How securely and safely might we live one by another ! Whence come all the oppressions and injuries wherewith the world aboundeth, but for want of love to their neighbours as themselves ? How easily might we be brought to pardon wrongs ! And how patiently would we bear the modest dissent of others, when their judgments are not of our size and mould ! How far would we be off doing hurt to others, even as far as doing hurt to ourselves.

2. Consider how beneficial and mutually helpful men would be to each other, seeking others' good as their own, and rejoicing in another's welfare as their own. If the world would but consider how much of Christianity doth consist in loving and doing good, as if all the world had but one soul, one interest, it would render it very amiable to them. Take this rule quite away, and there is nothing so false, bad, cruel, that you would not be drawn to think, or say, or do against your brother.

Secondly, It informs us how much mankind is degenerated, and how few true Christians are in the world. Witness our injustice to the names, persons, and estates of others. We are very critical in determining our own rights and proportions, and what others owe to us. Surely we have all reason to allow others what they justly expect. When you are slandered you are passionate, and therefore should not you be tender of other men's names and estates ? When your debts are detained, you complain of wrong. Should we not be as conscionable for the speedy payment of others ? To buy with a great measure, and sell with a less, is an abomination to the Lord and to men. We judge things done to us thus and thus, and shall we be careless what we do to them ? Uncharitableness, and want of sympathy with us in our troubles, much more insulting over us in our miseries, we look on with detestation ; and shall we pursue and afflict others when we have power to do hurt ?

Use 2. Exhortation. As that emperor wrote it on the doors of his palace and courts of justice, so the exhortation is to press you to get this rule deeply graven and written upon your hearts. In all matters of dealing towards others, be exact ; for God, that is the patron of human societies, observes whether you do as you would be done unto. Remember it is a short rule, yet sufficient ; and it is a clear rule, therefore it should more prevail with you.

1. It is a short rule ; and yet if it were well learned and kept, it would save the world a great deal of mischief. Change the persons, and we need not many perplexing rules to guide us. If this were done to me, would I take it kindly ? Turn the tables, put yourselves in their stead.

2. It is a clear rule. Look, as the apostle saith of Onesimus when he was converted, that he was doubly dear to Philemon, both 'in the

flesh and in the Lord,' so the same say I of this rule; it is doubly dear to us, both by nature and grace. The light of nature binds us, and it is prescribed by Christ.

[1.] If you break this rule you offer violence to an inbred principle of conscience. There are many talk of being Christians, yea, but get to be good heathens first. Never speak of higher mysteries of believing in Christ, and communion with Christ, while you live so contrary to the light of nature. What the apostle discourseth concerning the natural branches and the branches contrary to nature is applicable in this case, Rom. xi. 24; what he speaks of persons is true of doctrines: 'For if thou wert cut out of the olive-tree, which is wild by nature, and wert grafted, contrary to nature, into a good olive-tree; how much more shall these, which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive-tree?' The meaning is, if the Gentiles were taken into a covenant stock, how much more shall the Jews be grafted into their own stock? So it is true of doctrines. If the doctrines contrary to or above nature have brought in souls to believe in Christ and the higher mysteries of Christianity, certainly much more should those doctrines which are agreeable to our nature have a greater respect and regard by you.

[2.] It is also prescribed by Christ. Now our Lord reasons, Luke vi. 46, 'If you call me Lord and Master, why do ye not the things I say?' It is a mockage to call Christ Lord and Master, and disobey his commands, as it was for them to say, 'Hail, king of the Jews,' that spit upon him and buffeted him. 'Therefore, whatsoever ye would have others do to you, do ye the same to them;' for he hath told you and confirmed it, 'This is the law and the prophets.'

SERMON XIX.

For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.—
Eph. II. 10.

THE apostle in the context asserteth that our whole salvation is of grace, not of works; he now proveth it. That which is the effect of salvation cannot be the cause of it. But our well-doing is the effect of salvation, if you take it for our first recovery to God; but if you take it for full salvation, or our final deliverance from all evil, works go before it indeed, but in a way of order, not meritorious influence. To think them altogether unnecessary, would too much depreciate and lessen their presence or concurrence; to think they deserve it would as much exalt them, and advance them beyond the line of their due worth and value. The apostle steereth a middle course between both extremes. They are necessary, not meritorious. They go before eternal life, not as a cause but a way; for they are wrought in us by God, and are