

## SERMON X.

*Whisperers, backbiters.*—ROM. I., part of the 29th and 30th verses.

THE context showeth how corrupt and miserable man's nature is without Christ. His heart was first withdrawn from God, and then became a sink of loathsome sins and vices; therefore the apostle telleth us how after men were false to God, how little they were true to themselves, whether considered singly and apart, or as to commerce and society: singly and apart, defiling themselves with uncleanness of all sorts; as to commerce and human society, full of malice and contention, which sometimes goeth as far as blood; at other times showeth itself in falseness and baseness of disposition, generally in self-love and detraction from others.

Of all judgments, spiritual judgments are the sorest. When God leaveth mankind to its own degeneracy and corruption, and one great branch of this corruption is detraction, which venteth itself either by whispering or backbiting. So it is in the text, 'Whisperers, backbiters.' These two words agree that they both wound the fame of our neighbour, and they both do it behind his back or in his absence. But they differ—(1.) In that whispering doth it secretly and closely, but backbiting openly—the one being privy, the other open defamation, and are like theft and rapine; what theft and robbing are to our goods, the same are whispering and backbiting to our good names. (2.) Whispering tendeth to breed strife among our friends, or to disgrace us to some who are well conceited of us; but backbiting to our general disgrace before all the world, or amongst whomsoever. The one seeketh to deprive us of the good-will of our friends, the other to destroy our service. But however they agree and differ, they are often conjoined in scripture: 2 Cor. xii. 20, 'I fear lest when I come among you I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not; lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.' The apostle foresaw it as too probable that neither of them would be much pleased with their meeting together: nor he with the Corinthians, when he should find them corrupted with partialities and divisions; nor the Corinthians with him, when he should be forced to inflict censures upon them for their factions and emulations, too much bewrayed by their backbitings and whisperings against each other. So here in the text they are conjoined, 'whisperers, backbiters,' when the apostle speaketh of the reigning sins among the Gentiles.

*Doct.* One great sin wherein the corruption of human nature bewrayeth itself is detraction, or depriving others of a good repute.

Here I shall show:—

I. What is detraction.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

I. What it is. (1.) The nature of it. (2.) The kinds of it.

First, The nature of it in general. It is an unjust violation of another's fame, reputation, or that good report which is due to him. God, that hath bidden me to love my neighbour as myself, doth therein

bid me to be tender not only of his person and goods, but of his good name. And indeed one precept is a guard and fence to another. I cannot be tender of his person and goods unless I be tender of his fame. For every man liveth by his credit: and therefore certainly this is—(1.) A sin against God; (2.) A wrong to men; (3.) It proceedeth from evil causes.

1. It is a sin against God, who hath forbidden us to bear false witness against our neighbour, and to speak evil of others without a cause: Eph. iv. 31, 'Let all evil-speaking be far from you;' by evil-speaking is meant there disgraceful and contumelious speeches, whereby we seek to stain the reputation of others.

2. It is a wrong to man, because it robbeth him of his good name, which is so deservedly esteemed by all that would do anything for God in the world: Prov. xxii. 1, 'A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold.' The meaning is in order to service, and as it more nearly respects both life and livelihood. So Eccles. vii. 1, 'A good name is better than precious ointment.' Their ointments were reckoned by those Oriental people amongst their most precious riches and treasures, yet a good name is preferred before them; which inferreth this conclusion, that the man himself should prize it so: for he that is lavish of his fame is not usually over-tender of his conscience. Therefore, as he himself should not prostitute his good name, so others should not blast it and blemish it; for it is a greater sin than to steal the best goods which he hath, and it is such an evil as scarce admits any sound restitution; for the imputation even of unjust crimes leaveth a scar though the wound be healed.

3. The causes it proceedeth from. They are these:—

[1.] Malice and ill-will, which prompteth us to speak falsely of others, so to make them odious, or do them wrong or hurt. Now, to hate our brother in our heart is no way consistent with that goodness and charity which the impression of the love of Christ should beget in us. The apostle saith, 1 Peter iv. 8, 'Above all things have fervent charity among yourselves, for charity shall cover a multitude of sins.' If nothing but love and fervent love will restrain us, surely where hatred is allowed, men care not what they think, or speak, or do against others. Now, as there is a brotherly love due to our fellow-saints, so there is a love due to all men. 2 Peter i. 7, I am to hate no man, but to seek their good. There is a twofold hatred—the hatred of offence and abomination, and the hatred of enmity. The hatred of offence, which is opposite to the love of complacency, may be justified as to the wicked: Prov. xxix. 27, 'An unjust man is an abomination to the just, and he that is upright in the way is an abomination to the wicked.' But then we should first and most abominate ourselves for sin; this very hatred and abhorrence should begin at home, and we should be most odious to ourselves for sin, for we know more sin by ourselves than we can do by another. But for the other hatred, the hatred of enmity, which is opposite to the love of benevolence, that should be quite banished out of the heart of a Christian. And it is not enough for God's people to keep themselves free from hatred and malice against one another, but against all men: Titus iii. 2, 'Put them

in mind to speak evil of no man, to be no brawlers, but gentle, showing all meekness to all men: for we ourselves were sometimes disobedient, &c. If this old hatred were gone, a multitude of offences would be covered.

[2.] It comes from uncharitable credulity, whereby men easily believe a false report, and so propagate and convey it to others: Jer. xx. 10, 'I have heard the defaming of many; Report, say they, and we will report it. All my familiars watched for my halting,' &c. The prophet complaineth—Many, and those no mean ones, have I heard reproaching and taunting me, so that he was a terror to himself and to all his friends. Many had combined by false suggestions and malicious informations against him to work his ruin. If any will raise a report tending to the discredit of another, some will foster it, and it loseth nothing in the carriage, till by additions and misconstructions it groweth to a downright and dangerous infamy.

[3.] It comes through rashness and unruliness of tongue: some men never learned to bridle their tongues, and the apostle James telleth us that 'therefore their religion is vain,' James i. 26. Till we make conscience of these evils, as well as others, we content ourselves with a partial obedience, and therefore cannot be sincere. But many never set themselves to learn this part of their duty, and therefore divulge a report before they try it, or receive any just proof of it. Possibly it may not come from downright malice, but their tongues hang too loose, without the coercion and just restraint of grace, and so they either report false things, or speak truth to an evil end: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets; but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.' Whisperers must be talking, and be it true or false, out it comes. Certainly it is a sin as long as you knew it not to be true, or, if you do, when you have no warrantable call to mention it. To reveal secrets which you may conceal without wrong to God, or your own consciences, or the common good, or the good of your neighbour, is loquacity, or the sin of idle and impertinent talkativeness, the disease of a whisperer and tale-bearer.

[4.] It comes from carnal zeal, which is nothing else but passion for our different interests and opinions. The bitter envying which the apostle speaketh of, James iii. 14, hath made mad work in the world as to strifes, and confusions, and quarrels, and bloodsheds, and persecutions. But usually it venteth itself in evil-speaking; for the apostle maketh 'backbitings and whisperings' the fruits of 'swellings and tumults,' 2 Cor. xii. 20. Oh, what false and lying tales are there carried to and fro, that a man knoweth not what or whom to believe! So many lies walk under the disguise of religion, that not to credit them, or countenance the report, seemeth a decay of affection, but surely not to religion, but only the interest of a faction.

But a question ariseth, Is all speaking evil of another unlawful?

*Ans.* I cannot say so, but yet it is hard to keep it from sin.

1. He that doth it without just cause is plainly a detractor, and so a grievous sinner before God. You may impose and impute false crimes upon others, which is properly called slander, and God thereby convinceth the professor of the true religion to be a hypocrite: Ps. l. 20, 'Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, and slanderest thy

own mother's son.' God doth not only reject the liars for hypocrites, but also the backbiters and slanderers. Those that allow themselves in the frequent practice of this sin, what hopes can they have of acceptance with God, since he hath entered his plea against them? For the act to be sure is sinful; there can be no other end in it but the wronging of our brother's fame and reputation, to his loss and hurt. The nature of the thing showeth it.

2. He that doth but speak what he hath heard from others, without any assertion or asseveration of his own, as not knowing the truth of the report, can hardly be excused from sin. For if without just cause he speaketh those things that may wound the reputation of others, he is in part accessory: for he reporteth those things which may induce the hearers to think ill of another, or at least beget a suspicion in their minds concerning him, and so is a concurring cause to wrong another's name and good report. Now we should be so jealous of sin, that we should not countenance it in others without a just and weighty cause.

3. He that doth speak that which is true, but tendeth to the infamy of another, may be guilty of sin, if he have not a sufficient call and warrant. As for instance—(1.) If it be a matter we have nothing to do with, but only speak of their faults for talk sake; this is to be 'busy-bodies and tattlers,' 1 Tim. v. 13: as we all love to speak of other men's faults, when we look little at home. This is a sin, when it is not matter of our cognisance. Or (2.) If we aggravate things beyond their just size and proportion; for then we do not exercise Christian lenity and meekness towards those that are fallen, Gal. vi. 1. Or (3.) If we urge their crimes, and deny their graces; this is like flies to pitch on the sore place. Is there no good amongst all this evil? But it may be done, when crimes are public, and men themselves have forfeited all good repute, and God doth as it were hang them up in chains for a warning to the rest of the world; or when their reputation may injure the truth, and seduce the souls of others, or be an injury to the just who are slandered by them. In short, when the glory of God, or love to the public good, or the avoiding some great danger that may befall others by their esteem, then a lesser good is to be neglected to procure a greater, and a growing evil prevented, when men, by dissembling their wickedness, seek a fame to the manifest hurt of others' souls.

Secondly, The kinds of it are two in the text—whispering and backbiting.

1. Whispering, which is privy defamation of our brother, to bring him into disfavour and disrespect with those that formerly had a better opinion of him. Herein whispering differeth from backbiting, because the whisperer stingeth secretly, but the other doth more openly attack our credit. Now this whispering is a great sin:—

[1.] Because it is here reckoned among the sins which reigned among the heathen, and God hath expressly forbidden to his people: Lev. xix. 16, 'Thou shalt not go up and down as a tale-bearer among thy people.' You see tale-bearing and crimination is expressly against God's word; and if your hearts stand in awe of the word of God, how dare you indulge it and allow it in yourselves? It is

observed that the Hebrew word *rokel* properly signifieth a merchant or a trafficker up and down with spices and other things; whereupon *rakil*, the word there used, is a tale-bearer, that accuser that makes merchandise of words, and like a pedlar goeth from place to place to open his pack, and utter his wares, to hear and spread abroad criminations of other men. This is made the property of very wicked men: Jer. xi. 4, 'Every neighbour will walk with slanders.'

2. It is against natural equity, because they do that to others which they would not have done to themselves, Mat. vii. 2; and therefore storm and take great offence when God, by a righteous providence, permitteth others to retaliate with them, and pay them home in their own coin, as usually he doth; for they who are not tender of the credit and reputation of others, their names are cast out of God's protection, and permitted to the strife of tongues.

3. They are a cause of much mischief in the world, as—

[1.] Grief to the party wronged: Prov. xviii. 8, 'The words of a tale-bearer'—we read in the margin 'of a whisperer'—'are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly;' that is, they equally hurt as a sharp sword that is thrust into us, and causes pain and anguish. By 'the chambers of the belly,' is understood the heart. Now whether the heart of the hearer, or the heart of the party injured? Why not both? The hearer; the words pierce into his heart, and breed hatred, or at least suspicion of his friend. The party injured; when he comes to the knowledge of it, they breed his grief and vexation.

[2.] They are a cause of much debate and strife: Prov. xxvi. 20, 'Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no tale-bearer (or whisperer) strife ceaseth.' Where strife is compared to fire, and the whisperer's informations or criminations, to the wood or matter that feedeth the fire; the extinction, or putting out of the fire, to the ceasing of strife and contention, which is caused by the absence of the whisperer; that is, when he is not admitted by either party: Prov. xvi. 28, 'A froward man soweth strife, and a whisperer separateth choice friends.' Husband and wife, parents and children, masters and servants, princes and subjects, intimate friends. Now 'He that soweth discord between friends or brethren is an abomination to the Lord,' Prov. vi. 19. Therefore, how can one that feareth God, allow himself in speaking evil privily against his neighbour?

[3.] There is a greater mischief than this, and that is, it many times tendeth to the destruction of another's life: Ezek. xxii. 9, 'In thee are men that carry tales to shed blood.' Usually the vapours of slander descend in the showers of persecution; and the devil was first a liar, and then a murderer. By whispers men are stirred up to hate others, and then pursue them with all manner of hostility and displeasures. As Doeg the Edomite first accused, and then, by the command of Saul, slew Abimelech the high priest, and all his family, destroying the whole city of the priests called Nob, as you may see 1 Sam. xxii. 9. David, when he professeth the uprightness of his government, would allow no such in his court, but would severely punish them: Ps. ci. 5, 'Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off.' These ways of whispering and detraction, by which

men are wont to gain confidence, favour, and employment from princes, should not only miss of their aims with him, but be severely punished when he met with them.

But here ariseth a question, whether all private complaints and informations against others come under the name of whispering?

I answer—No, with these cautions:—

1. If the party be duly admonished; for before we go any further, the rule is, Mat. xviii. 15, ‘First tell him his fault between him and thee alone.’ Private admonition must always precede crimination to others; therefore if you forbear privately to admonish the offender in love, and seek not to reclaim him from his sinful course, you cannot be excused from sin.

2. If it be made to such as have power to redress the fault, by the most discreet and gentle means, before it break out any further. So it is said, Gen. xxxvii. 2, Joseph ‘brought unto his father their evil report;’ that is, their infamous carriage, which caused evil report of them; which is set down, not to note his ill-will, but his good affection and godliness.

3. If the complainer seeketh nothing but the amendment of the party; otherwise, to vent and divulge the fault, to make the party less respected, or to his hurt, is not love, but closer malice; for true zeal is not for destruction, but for edification.

4. If he grieve that he hath cause to complain, and pray for his conversion; for then it is more likely that all is done in love. Many times the grief is personated, and when whisperers have a mind to wound to the quick, they will say, I am sorry to hear such a thing, loth to speak of it. But this is like the archer that draweth back his hand that the arrow may fly with the more force. But when we pray to God, there is the greater presumption of sincerity, because we explicitly make him a party, and do what we do as in his sight and presence.

*Secondly*, Backbiting is a more public speaking evil of our absent brother, to the impairing of his credit. Now, this may be done two ways:—

1. With respect to the good things found in him.

2. With respect to the evil supposed to be committed by him.

1. With respect to the good things found in him. There are four degrees in this:—

[1.] The first and highest is, when we deny those good things which we know to be in another. This is not only to wrong our neighbour, but to rob God of his own praise; for he expecteth to be glorified for all those gifts and graces which he hath scattered among the sons of men, not only actively by persons themselves, but objectively by the beholders. As for instance, if God hath made any a new creature, he is to be ‘to the praise of his glorious grace,’ not only actively, but objectively, Eph. i. 12; though the man in whom this work was wrought be silent, yet the work should speak for itself, that is, give occasion to beholders to praise God. Now to deny this work, is not only to wrong the party, but wrong God. Thus Job’s friends counted him a hypocrite, when upright; and the people of God are often traduced as ‘dissemblers, when yet true,’ 2 Cor. vi. 8. Jesus Christ himself was

counted a wine-bibber, because of his free and social course of life; for he affected not a monkish austerity. This is the highest degree, when men plainly deny those gifts and graces which are conspicuous in others.

[2.] When they do not deny, but lessen, the gifts and graces of others. To extenuate and clip another's due praise is envy, but in honour to prefer them above ourselves is charity and humility: Phil. ii. 3, 'In lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself.' Humility is content to sit in the lowest place: Rom. xii. 10, 'In honour preferring one another.' Some say this is not to be understood of that opinion we have of others, but the respect we put upon them. We are to honour others, *non sententia mentis, sed actionibus et officiis*; that is meant of offices of love and outward respect, but not of the sentiments of the mind. Certainly it is just that we should contemn no man, but give every one all agreeable honour and respect. But that a rich man should judge a poor man to be in place and estate before him; a learned man, an ignorant man more knowing; a godly man, a wicked more holy, is impossible and sometimes inconvenient. Therefore they understand it of condescending to mutual offices of love and respect, or, rather detracting from ourselves than others. But though this exposition might fit the latter place, yet not the former. 'Esteeming others better than ourselves,' must relate to the opinions and sentiments of our minds: therefore the meaning is, We should carry all things with that quietness and humility as if every one had a better opinion of others' wisdom and godliness than his own. And this is reasonable enough for every one that is acquainted with himself. Humility will teach him to think meanly of himself or anything that is his; and his charity will prompt him to give others all that possibly can belong to them, without any retrenchment or defalcation.

[3.] When we own the good done by them, but deprave it by supposing a sinister intention. Thus Satan could not deny but that Job served God, but (Job i. 9) 'Doth Job serve God for nought?' It is usual to count the servants of God hypocrites and self-seekers, and accordingly to persecute them. If one be poor, it is discontent, melancholy, or some fleshly ends set him on work. If mean and simple, it is their folly and ignorance makes them so scrupulous and precise. If ministers be zealous for God, they must do something for their calling; if great men, they only mind their own interest and advantage. Where the action is fair, we are not competent judges of the intention of the heart.

[4.] When neither denying, nor lessening, nor depraving, but when we have just occasion to speak of a man's due commendation, we enviously suppress it. Envy is a natural sin: James iv. 5, 'The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy.' And it bewrayeth itself by a dislike of other men's just praise. This is a sin of omission at least; therefore it is said, 1 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Charity envieth not.' Nothing is more contrary to the goodness commended to us in the gospel than such a spirit, which cannot bear the good of another whether seen or spoken of. Thus Joseph's virtue was an eyesore to his brethren, therefore they endeavoured his destruction. Charity rejoiceth in the

gifts and graces of others as in our own; but where this hath no place, their praises are our disgrace. And few there be that can say with John the Baptist, 'He must increase, but I must decrease,' John iii. 30; that is, in splendour and fame, and so confirmed the testimony given to Christ.

2. As to evil supposed to be committed by them.

[1.] When we publish their secret slips, which in charity we ought to conceal: Prov. xi. 13, 'A tale-bearer revealeth secrets.' Certain things should have a veil drawn over them, and not be manifested without sufficient cause. But when a man intrudeth himself into the mention of things faulty, which he might with better manners and more honesty conceal, it is the effect of a base heart.

[2.] When, in relating any evil action of another, we use harder terms than the quality of the fact requireth, and make evils worse than they are, beams of motes, and mountains of mole-hills. We should lessen sins all that we can; I mean, the sins and faults of others: Acts iii. 17, 'And now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.' Certainly we should not aggravate things to the height, nor from a simple act determine the state of the person, nor from the failings of a single person conclude the whole party.

[3.] By imposing false crimes: Prov. x. 18, 'He that uttereth a slander is a fool;' that is, a wicked person. As Mephibosheth said of Ziba, 2 Sam. xix. 27, 'He hath slandered thy servant unto my lord the king.' The most godly and innocent persons cannot escape the scourge of the tongue, and unjust calumnies.

II. The heinousness of the sin.

1. In general, that is evident from what is said already. I shall urge two arguments more.

[1.] That men shall be called to an account for these sins as well as others; they are not passed by in the judgment: Jude 15, 'God will execute judgment upon all ungodly sinners,' not only for their ungodly deeds, but 'for all their hard speeches.' Now, if injurious and contumelious language come into the judgment, how should all beware of the least accession to this guilt? So I Peter iv. 4, 5, 'They speak evil of you, who shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' The mockers as well as persecutors were to give a strict and sad account. It is no slight and light sin to divulge and spread false calumnies to hurt the credit of our brethren. God takes notice of a thought in our heart against them, a word in our mouths, and will exact a strict account thereof.

[2.] It is the property of a citizen of Zion, one that shall be not only accepted with God now, but dwell with God for ever, not to be given to backbiting: Ps. xv. 3, 'He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour;' that is, that makes strict conscience of backbiting or calumniating, and abstaineth from doing any kind of wrong or reproach to his neighbour.

2. More particularly, it is the more heinous:—

[1.] Partly from the person against whom it is committed. As suppose the godly and irreprovable for the main, who by their life and conversation have the best right to honour and esteem; to do it against them is most unjust: Ps. lxiv. 3, 'They whet their tongues as a



sword; they shoot their arrows, even bitter words, that they may shoot in secret at the perfect; suddenly do they shoot at him and fear not; that is, their slanders and calumnies are shot like poisoned darts and arrows secretly or clancularly, without any desert or notice of the party against whom they are intended; or else against persons publicly employed, and in the special service of God, as magistrates: Num. xii. 8, 'Were ye not afraid to speak against my servant, against Moses?' So in the ministry: 1 Tim. iii. 7, 'He must have a good report from them without, lest he fall into reproach, and the snare of the devil.' Against these it is not only unjust, but noxious and hurtful to God's service.

[2.] From the persons before whom the slander is brought, as suppose kings and princes; so that they are deprived not only of private friendships, but the favour and countenance of these under whose protection they have their life and service. Thus Haman whispered against the Jews, Esth. iii. 8, 'It is not for the king's profit to suffer them to live;' Doeg against the priests, Ps. lii. 1, 'Why boastest thou in mischief, O mighty man?' The goodness of God continueth for ever.' It is a strange matter of pleasure and joy to some persons in power to be able to mischief those that deserve it least. God is eminently great and good. This sort of pride is diametrically opposite to his nature. Alas! to trouble a few persons, how irrational is it! But such are our depraved natures. Some are never pleased with those things that alone yield durable pleasure; but to be able with their counsel, as with one poisonous vapour, to blast a multitude of innocent persons.

[3.] From the end of it. If it be done with a direct intention of hurting another's fame, it is worse than if out of a rash levity and loquacity. Some men have no direct intention of mischief, but are given to tattling. It is a great sin in them, and an unprofitable mis-pense of time; but it is a greater in those that make it their business to disgrace others or sow discord. These are the bane of human society.

[4.] From the effect or great hurt that followeth, be it loss of estate, as in the case of Mephibosheth, or a general trouble and persecution on the people of God. When their good names are buried their persons cannot long subsist afterward with any degree of service. And all this may be the fruit of a deceitful tongue.

The use is, to show how good-natured Christianity is, and befriendeth human societies; it condemneth not only sins against God, but sins against our neighbour. It bindeth its professors to the practice of the apostle: Acts xxiv. 16, 'Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men;' Phil. iv. 8, 'Whatsoever things are honest, just, good, and true; if there be any virtue, or any praise, think of these things.' The world hath taken up this prejudice, that religion makes us ill-natured. Of itself there is nothing more benign; it only condemneth those that are good-natured to others but not to God.

*Use 2.* Let us not speak evil of others behind their backs, but tell them their faults plainly in love and wisdom, nor encourage others in this sin: Prov. xxv. 23, 'As the north wind drives away the rain,

so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue.' They that receive tales and delight to hear other men's faults, encourage others in their sin, and are accessory to or partakers of the guilt. It brings an evil habit and custom in our own souls. In short, let us keep up a humble sense of our own faults, and looking at home, it will not only divert us from slandering of others, but make us compassionate towards them, and breed comfort in our own souls.

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## SERMON XI.

*This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*—GAL. V. 16.

IN these words observe—(1.) A duty enforced; (2.) The consequent and fruit of it.

1. The duty is *to walk in the Spirit*, which is the sum of all Christian piety.

2. The motive is taken from the consequent and fruit of it: *and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.* Let us fix the sense.

1. For the duty, 'to walk in the Spirit.' Walking implieth the tenor and course of our actions, in all which we should follow the direction and inclination of the Spirit. But what is meant by the Spirit? That it may be known, both the contrary principles must be explained together.

[1.] *Flesh* is sometimes taken for the body: as Eph. v. 29, 'For no man yet ever hated his own flesh;' it is brought as a reason why husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies, ver. 28, and *spirit* is taken for the soul, Eccles. xii. 7. But this is not the sense here, for every man hath soul and body, not the regenerate only; and a man is not only to look after the welfare of the soul, but his body also, it being the instrument which it useth in its operations.

[2.] The *spirit* is sometimes put for reason, and the *flesh* for sensual appetite: as Eph. iv. 23, 'And be renewed in the spirit of your mind;' and 1 John ii. 16, 'The lusts of the flesh.' But this will not take in the whole sense of this place, for other faculties are corrupted besides the sensual appetite, and other faculties must be renewed as well as the understanding.

[3.] There is another acceptation of *flesh* and *spirit*; that is, that spirit signifieth the uncreated Spirit, who is the author of grace; as John iii. 5, 'Except a man be born again of water and the Spirit.' Where *spirit* is put for the Holy Ghost, who immediately worketh grace in us, called therefore 'the Spirit of sanctification,' as that saving grace which is the effect of his work is called 'the sanctification of the Spirit.' And the opposite principle, *flesh*, signifieth the corrupt nature of man, as John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh;' corrupt, sinful, inclined to earthly things. Now though this would bear a good sense to interpret flesh and spirit of the Holy Ghost, and concupiscence