

Monergism

WALKING HUMBLY with GOD

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by John Owen

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Walking Humbly With God - Sermon, Part I

"And to walk humbly with thy God."—MIC. 6:8

THE beginning of this chapter contains a most pathetic expostulation of God, by the prophet, with his people, about their sins and unworthy walking before him. Having, "with an apostrophe to the mountains and hills, verses 1, 2, stirred up their attention, and raised them to the consideration of his plea with them in verses 3–5, he emphatically presses them with the mercies he had of old bestowed upon them, with the patience and love toward them which he showed and exercised in his dealings with them.

The conviction being effectual to awaken them, and fill them with a sense of their horrible ingratitude and rebellions, verses 6, 7, they begin to make inquiry, according as is the custom of persons under the power of conviction, what course they shall take to avoid the wrath of God, which they could not but acknowledge was due to them. And here, as God speaks, Hos. 7:1, when he would heal them, their iniquity and wickedness is discovered more and more; they discover the wretched principles

whereon they were acted, in all that they had to do with God.

Indeed convictions, on what account soever, made effectual upon the soul, draw out its inward principles; which are not otherwise to be discovered. Many there are who have, in notion, received the doctrine of free justification by the blood of Christ, whom, while they are secure in their ways, without trouble or distress, it is impossible to persuade that they do not live and act upon that principle, and walk before God in the strength of it. Let any great conviction, from the word or by any imminent or pressing danger, befall these men,—then their hearts are laid open,—then all their hopes are in their repentance, amendment of life, performance of duties in a better manner; and the iniquity of their self-righteousness is discovered.

Thus was it with these Jews. Their sins being charged home upon them by the prophet, so that they are not able to stand under their weight and burden, he now discovers the bottom of all their principles in dealing with God; and that is this, that having provoked him, something they must do whereby to appease him and atone his anger.

In their contrivance to this purpose, they fix on two general heads. First, They propose things which God himself had appointed, verses 6, 7;—secondly, Things of their own finding out, which they supposed might have a farther and better efficacy to the end aimed at than any thing appointed of God himself, verse 7.

First. They look to sacrifices and burnt-offerings for help;—they consider whether by them, and on their account, they may not come before the Lord, and bow themselves before the high God; that is, perform such a worship for which they may be acquitted from the guilt of their sins.

Sacrifices were a part of the worship of God appointed by himself, and acceptable to him when offered in faith, according to his mind; yet we find God frequently rejecting them in the Old Testament, whilst yet their institution was in force, and themselves good in their kind. Now, this rejection of them was not absolute, but with respect to somewhat that vitiated the service in them. Among these, two were most eminent:—

1. When they were rested in, as the matter and cause of their justification and acceptance with God, beyond their typical virtue.
2. When they were relied on to countenance men in the neglect of moral duties, or to continue in any way of sin.

Both these evils attended this appeal of the Jews unto their sacrifices. They did it first to please God, or appease God,—that on their account they might be freed from the guilt of sin, and be accepted: and then to countenance themselves in their immoralities and wickedness; as is evident from the prophet's reply, verse 7, calling them from their vain confidence in sacrifices, to justice, judgment, mercy, and humble walking with God. But,—

Secondly, They find this will not do; conscience will not be satisfied nor peace be obtained by any performance of these ordinary duties, though they should engage in them in an extraordinary manner; no, though they could bring thousands of rams, and ten thousand rivers of oil. Though men attempt never so vigorously, in never so extraordinary a manner, to quiet their souls, terrified with the guilt of sin, by any duties whatever, it will not do,—the work will not be accomplished; therefore they will make farther attempts. If nothing that God hath appointed will reach the end they aim at, because they were never appointed by him for that end, they will invent or use some way of their own that may appear to be of more efficacy than the other: "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression?"

The rise and occasion of such sacrifices as here are mentioned,—the sacrificing of men, of men's sacrificing their own children; the use of such sacrifices throughout the world, among all nations; the craft and cruelty of Satan in imposing them on poor, sinful, guilty creatures, with the advantages which he had so to do,—I have elsewhere declared. For the present, I shall only observe two things in the state and condition of convinced persons, when pressed with their sins, and a sense of the guilt of them, who are ignorant of the righteousness of God in Christ;—

1. They have a better opinion of their own ways and endeavours, for the pleasing of God and quieting their consciences, than of any thing of God's institution, or the way by him appointed for that end. This is the height

that they rise to, when they have fixed on what is most glorious in their own eyes. Tell a Papist who is convinced of sin, of the blood of Christ,—it is folly to him. Penances, satisfaction, purgatory, intercession of the church in the mass, have much more desirableness in them:—these Eliabs must wear the crown. The case is the same with innumerable poor souls at present, who hope to find more relief in their own duties and amendment of life than in the blood of Christ, as to the appeasing of God and obtaining of peace.

2. There is nothing so horrid, desperate, irksome, or wicked, that convinced persons will not engage to do under their pressure on the account of the guilt of sin. They will burn their children in the fire, whilst the cries of their conscience outcry the lamentation of their miserable infants: which, as it argues the desperate blindness that is in man by nature, choosing such abominations rather than that way which is the wisdom of God; so also the terrors that possess poor souls convinced of sin, that are unacquainted with the only remedy.

This being the state and condition of these poor creatures, the prophet discovers to them their mistake and desperate folly in the verse of my text.

Two things are contained in this verse;—the one is implied, the other expressed in words:—

First. Here is something implied; and that is, a reproof of the error and mistake of the Jews. They thought sacrifices were appointed for the appeasing of God by their performance of them; and that this was their business in their worship,—by their duty in performance of them, to make satisfaction for the guilt of sin. This the prophet calls them from, telling them that is not their business, their duty: God hath provided another way to make reconciliation and atonement; it is a thing above their power. Their business is to walk with God in holiness; for the matter of atonement, that lies on another hand. "He hath showed thee, O man, what he requireth of thee:" he expects not satisfaction at thy hands, but obedience on the account of peace made.

Secondly. What is expressed is this,—that God prefers moral worship, in

the way of obedience, to all sacrifices whatever; according to the determination afterward approved by our Saviour, Mark 12:33, "What doth the LORD require of thee?"

Now, this moral obedience he refers to three heads:—Doing justly; loving mercy; and walking humbly with God.

How the two first are comprehensive of our whole duty in respect of men, containing in them the sum and substance of the second table, I shall not stay to declare.

It is the third head that I have fixed on, which peculiarly regards the first table and the moral duties thereof.

Concerning this I shall do these three things:—I. I shall show what it is to walk with God. II. What it is to walk humbly with God. III. Prove this proposition: Humble walking with God, as our God in covenant, is the great duty and most valuable concernment of believers.

I. As to our walking with God, some things are required to it, and some things are required in it:—

1. Some things are required to it; as,—

(1.) Peace and agreement. Amos 3:3, "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" And he tells us, that walking with God, when there is no peace with him, is like walking in a forest where and when the lion roareth, verse 8,—when a man can have no thoughts but what are full of expectation of his immediately being torn asunder and devoured. So God threateneth to deal with them that pretend to walk with him, and yet are not at peace with him, Ps. 50:22, "Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver." Who are these? Those to whom he speaks, verse 16, "But unto the wicked, God saith:" the exceptive "but," distinguishes them from those of whom he spoke before, verse 5, who had made a covenant with him by sacrifice, and so obtained peace in the blood of Christ. When Cain and Abel went into the field together, and were not agreed, the issue was, that the one slew the other. When Joram met Jehu in the field, he cried, "Is it peace?" and finding by

his answer that they were not agreed, he instantly flew, and cried out for his life. " 'Agree,' saith our Saviour, 'with thine adversary whiles thou art in the way,' lest the issue be sad to thee."

You know at what enmity God and man do stand, whilst he is in the state of nature. They are alienated from God by wicked works,—are enemies; and their carnal mind is enmity to him, Rom. 8:7; and his wrath abideth on them, John 3:36;—they are children of his wrath, Eph. 2:3. Were I to pursue this head in particulars, I could manifest from the rise and first breach, from the consideration of the parties at variance, the various ways of managing of it, and its issue, that this is the saddest enmity that can possibly be apprehended. You know, also, what our peace and agreement with God is, and whence it doth arise. Christ is "our peace," Eph. 2:14. He hath made an end of the difference about sin, Dan. 9:24. He hath made peace for us with God; and by our interest in him, we, who were afar off, are made nigh, and obtain peace, Rom 5:1; Eph. 2:14, 15.

This, then, I say, in the first place, is required to our walking with God,—that we are at peace with him, and agreement in the blood of Christ;—that we are by faith actually interested in the atonement;—that our persons are accepted, as the foundation of the acceptation of our duties. Without this, every attempt for walking with God in obedience, or the performance of any duties, is,—

[1.] Fruitless. All that men do is lost. "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination;" their holy things are dung, which God will remove. In all their duties they labour in the fire; not any of their works shall turn to their eternal account. God looks on all their duties as the gifts of enemies, that are selfish, deceitful, and, of all things, to be abhorred. Such men may have their reward in this life; but as to what they aim at, their pains are lost, their hearing is lost, their alms are lost,—all is fruitless.

[2.] Presumptuous. They put themselves upon the company of God, who hates them, and is hated by them. Ps. 50:16, "But unto the wicked saith God" (this is God's language to them in their duties), "Thou bold, presumptuous rebel, what hast thou to do to take my name in thy mouth? Why dost thou howl thus before me, and offer swine's blood in my presence? How camest thou hither, not having a wedding garment? I hate

thy most solemn oblations." Indeed, it will be found at the issue, that intolerable presumption lies at the bottom of all unregenerate men's attempts to walk with God. They count it a slight thing to do so;—they deal with him as one that took very little notice how he is dealt withal.

This, I say, is the first thing required to our walking with God,—that we be at peace and agreement with him in the blood of Christ. And, as the psalmist says, "Consider this, ye that know not God," who have not made a covenant with him in. and by the sacrifice of his Son. You meet him in the field,—you put yourselves upon his company,—you pretend to walk with him in these duties, and those other, which custom, education, conviction, or self-righteousness, puts you upon;—in every one of them you provoke him to his face to destroy you. You seem to flatter him that you are agreed, when he declares that you are at enmity. Let a man deal thus with his ruler:—conspire against his crown and dignity, attempt his death, despise his authority, reproach his reputation; and then, when he is proclaimed rebel and traitor, and condemned to die, let him come into his presence, as in former days, and deal with him as a good subject,—offer him gifts and presents;—shall he think to escape? Will he not be seized on, and delivered over to punishment?

Every man, in his natural estate, is a rebel against God. Thou hast rejected his authority, conspired his ruin, the ruin of his kingdom,—art proclaimed by him a traitor and rebel,—art sentenced to eternal death: is it for thee now to meet him,—to go and flatter him with thy mouth, and fawn upon him in thy other duties? Will he not remember thy rebellions, despise thy offerings, command thee out of his presence into bonds and prison,—abhor thy gifts? What canst thou else expect at his hands? This is the best and utmost of their condition, in their obedience, who are not interested in Christ; and the more earnest and zealous you are, the more ready in the performance of duties, the more do you put yourselves on him and his company who hates you upon the justest grounds in the world, and is ready to destroy you.

(2.) The second previous thing is, oneness of design. For persons occasionally to fall into the company of one another, and so to pass on together for a little season, doth not suffice for them to be said to walk together. Oneness of aim and design is required to it.

The aim of God, in general, is his own glory; he makes all things for himself, Prov. 16:4; Rev. 4:11;—in particular, as to the business of our walking with him, it is the praise of his glorious grace, Eph. 1:6.

Now, in this aim of God to exalt his glorious grace, two things are considerable:—First, That all which is to be looked for at the hand of God, is upon the account of mere grace and mercy, Tit. 3:4, 5. God aims at the exalting of his glory in this,—that he may be known, believed, magnified, as a God pardoning iniquity and sin. And, secondly, That the enjoyment of himself, in this way of mercy and grace, is that great reward of him that walks with him. So God tells Abraham, when he calls him to walk before him, "I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward," Gen. 15:1. The enjoyment of God in covenant, and the good things therein freely promised and bestowed by him, is the exceeding great reward of them that walk with God. This also, then, is required of him that will walk with God,—that he hath the same design in his so doing as God hath;—that he aims in all his obedience at the glory of God's grace; and the enjoyment of him as his exceeding great reward.

Now, according to what was before said of the design of God, this may be referred unto three heads:—

[1.] In general:—that the design of the person be the glory of God. "Whatever we do," saith the apostle (that is, in our worship of God, and walking with him), "let all be done to his glory." Men who, in their obedience, have base, low, unworthy ends, walk as contrary to God in their obedience as in their sins. Some serve him for custom; some for an increase of corn, wine, or oil, or the satisfying of some low earthly end; some aim at self and reputation. All is lost;—it is not walking with God, but warring against him.

[2.] To exalt the glory of God's grace. This is one part of the ministry of the gospel,—that in obedience we should seek to exalt the glory of grace. The first natural tendency of obedience was, to exalt the glory of God's justice. The new covenant hath put another end upon our obedience: it is to exalt free grace;—grace given in Christ, enabling us to obey; grace accepting our obedience, being unworthy; grace constituting this way of

walking with God; and grace crowning its performance.

[3.] Aiming at the enjoyment of God, as our reward. And this cuts off the obedience of many from being a walking with God. They perform duties, indeed; but what sincerity is there in their aims for the glory of God? Is it almost once taken into their thoughts? Is not the satisfaction of conscience, the escape of hell and wrath, the sole aim they have in their obedience? Is it of concernment to them that the glory of God be exalted? Do they care, indeed, what becomes of his name or ways, so they may be saved? Especially, how little is the glory of his grace aimed at! Men are destroyed by a self-righteousness, and have nothing of a gospel obedience in them. Look on the praying and preaching of some men: is it not evident that they walk not with God therein, seek not his glory, have no zeal for it, no care for his name; but rest in the discharge of the duty itself?

(3.) That a man may walk with another, it is required that he have a living principle in him, to enable him thereunto. Dead men cannot walk; or if they do, acted by any thing but their own vital principle and essential form, they are a terror to their companions,—not a comfort in their communion. For a dead carcase, or a trunk, to be moved up and down, is not walking. Hence this is everywhere laid down as the principle of our obedience,—that we "who were dead are quickened;" that "the law of the Spirit of life makes us free from the law of sin and death," Rom. 8:2. That we may walk with God, a principle of a new life is required; that we may have power for it, and be pressed to it from that which is within us. Had not a man rather walk alone, than have a dead carcase, taken out of a grave, and acted by an external force and power, to accompany him?

This, I say, is a third consideration. The matter of our walking with God consists, as shall be showed, in our obedience,—in our performance of duties required. In this, we are all more or less engaged; yea, so far, that perhaps it is hard to discover who walks fastest, and with most appearance of strength and vigour. But, alas! how many dead souls have we walking amongst us!

[1.] Are there none who are utter strangers to a new spiritual life—a life from above, hid with Christ in God, a life of God—that mock almost at

these things; at least, that can give no account of any such life in them;—that think it strange it should be required of them that they should give any account of this life, or of being begotten again by the Spirit; yea, that make it a most ridiculous thing? "What, then, is it they will yet plead for themselves? Why do they not walk with God? Is not their conversation good and blameless? Who can charge them with any thing? Do they not perform the duties required of them?" But, friend, would it be acceptable to thee to have a dead man taken out of his grave, and carried along with thee in thy way? All thy services, thy company, is no other to God; he smells nothing but a noisome steam from thy presence with him: thy hearing, praying, duties, meditations,—they are on this account all an abomination to him. Tell me not of thy conversation. If it be from a pure conscience (that is, a conscience purified in the blood of Christ), and faith unfeigned, which is the life, or a fruit of it, whereof we are speaking,—it is glorious and commendable; if from other principles, the Lord abhors it.

[2.] Are there none who are acted, in their obedience and duties, not from inward principles, and spiritualized faculties, but merely from outward considerations, and external impressions? The apostle tells us how believers "grow," and "go on to perfection," Eph. 4:16; Col. 1:19. Christ is the head; from him, by the Spirit, into every joint and sinew is derived an influence of life, that the body may thereby and therewith go on towards perfection. How is it with sundry others? They are set upon their feet by custom or conviction: one joint is supplied by repute, another by fear and shame, a third by self-righteousness, a fourth by the lash of conscience; and so they are driven on by a mere external impress. And these are the principles of the obedience of many. By such things as these are they acted in their walking with God. Do you suppose you shall be accepted, or that peace will be your latter end? I fear many that hear me this day may be in this condition. Pardon me if I am jealous with a godly jealousy. What means else that hatred of the power of godliness, that darkness in the mystery of the gospel, that cursed formality, that enmity to the Spirit of God,—that hatred of reformation, that is found amongst us?

Use. If there be so many things required to walking with God, to fit men for it; and many who do strive to walk with him are yet lost from a defect of them, in the midst of their obedience and performance of duties,—what

will become of them, where shall they appear, who never once attempted to walk with him,—who are wrought upon by no considerations to make it their business so to do? I speak not only of those amongst us, young and old, whose pride, folly, idleness, debauchery, profaneness, hatred of the ways of God, testify to their faces, to all the world, to the shame and danger of the places wherein they live, that they are servants to sin, and walk contrary to God,—who also will walk contrary unto them, until they are no more. I speak not, I say, of such as these, who are judged of all; nor yet only of those who are kept to outward observances merely on the account of the discipline of the place, and the hopes which they have laid up in it for their outward good, with such other carnal aims;—but of some also who ought to be leaders of others, and examples to that flock that is amongst us. What endeavours to walk with God are found upon them, or seen in their ways? Vanity, pride in themselves, families, and relations, yea, scoffing at religion and the ways of God, are the examples some give. I wish worldliness, selfishness, hardness, and straitness of bowels, with open vanity, do not eat up all humble walking with God, as to the power of it, in others.

The vanity of the highest profession, without this humble walking, which is another deceit, shall be afterward spoken unto.

For the present, let me speak to them of whom I have spoken somewhat already. If many shall cry, "Lord, Lord," and not be heard; if "many shall strive to enter," and shall not; what will be their lot and portion? Poor creatures! you know not the condition of your souls; you cry "Peace, and sudden destruction is at hand." Take heed, lest the multitude of sermons and exhortations you have, make you not, like the men that dwell by the falls of mills, deaf with their continual noise. God sends his messengers sometimes to make men deaf, Isa. 6:10. If that be your portion, it will be sad with you. Give me leave to ask you two or three questions, and I have done:—

1. Do you not please yourselves, some of you, in your ways, and that with contempt of others? Do you not think they are fools, or envious, or hypocrites, or factious, that reprove you; and scorn them in your hearts? Do you not rather love, honour, imitate, such as never pressed you (nor will) to this business of a new life,—to walk with God; and so suppose the

times ruined, since this new-fangled preaching came up amongst you;— desiring to hear things finely spoken, and fopperies of men ignorant of God and themselves? Or,—

2. Do you not relieve yourselves, with the help of profligate souls, that you will be better,—you will repent when the season is better suited for it, and your present condition is changed? Or,—

3. Do not some of you labour to put far from you all thoughts of these things? "Amici, dum vivimus, vivamus;"—"It will be well enough with us, though we add drunkenness to thirst." Do not, I say, one or all of these rotten, corrupted principles lie at the bottom of your loose walking with God? Take heed, I beseech you, lest the Lord tear you in pieces!

Walking Humbly With God - Sermon, Part II

HAVING told you what things are previously required to our walking with God,—

2. Our next inquiry is, as to the matter or thing itself;—what it is to walk with God.

The expression itself is very frequent in Scripture, both as to the examples of them that did so, and as to precepts for others so to do.

It is said of Enoch, that he "walked with God," Gen. 5:24. And "Noah walked with God," Gen. 6:9. Hezekiah "walked before God," Isa. 38:3. Abraham is commanded to walk with God, Gen. 17:1; yea, and the same thing is almost a hundred times in the Scriptures, with some little variation, so expressed. Sometimes we are said to "walk with God;" sometimes to "walk before him;" sometimes to "follow after him," to "follow hard after him;" sometimes "to walk in his ways;"—all to the same purpose.

The expression, you know, is metaphorical; by an allusion taken from

things natural, spiritual things are expressed therein.

Not to press the metaphor beyond its principal intention, nor to insist on all particulars wherein any thing of allusion may be found, nor yet insist on the proof of that which is owned and acknowledged,—walking with God, in general, consisteth in the performance of that obedience, for matter and manner, which God, in the covenant of grace, requires at our hands.

I shall only manifest unto you some few of the chief concernments of this obedience, which give life and significancy to the metaphor, and so pass on:—

(1.) That our obedience be walking with God, it is required that we be in covenant with him, and that the obedience be required in the tenor of that covenant.

This, as to the matter of it, was spoken to before, under the head of what was required to this walking with God,—namely, that we have peace and agreement with him. Here it is formally considered—from that expression, "with God"—as the spring and rule of our obedience. Therefore this expression is comprehensive of the whole duty of the covenant on our part. As, Gen. 17:1, "I am God Almighty," or "All-sufficient,"—that is, unto thee I will be so,—as this is comprehensive of the whole of the covenant on the part of God,—that he will be unto us an all-sufficient God; so the words that follow are comprehensive of the whole of our duty,—"Walk before me;" which are exegetically explained in the next words, "and be thou perfect." The covenant,—the agreement that is between God and us in Christ, wherein he promises to be our God, and we give up ourselves to be his people,—is the bottom and spring of that obedience which is walking with God; that is, at an agreement with him, in covenant with him,—with whom, out of covenant, we have no commerce.

(2.) It is an obedience according to the tenor of that covenant wherein we are agreed with God. Walking with God according to the tenor of the covenant of works was, "Do this, and live." The state is now changed. The rule now is that of Gen. 17:1, " 'Be thou perfect,' or upright, 'before me,' in

all the obedience I require at thy hands."

Now, there are sundry things required to our walking with God in obedience, so that it may answer the tenor of the covenant wherein we are agreed.

[1.] That it proceed from faith in God, by Christ the mediator. Faith in God, in general, is, and must be, the principle of all obedience, in what covenant soever, Heb. 11:6; but faith in God, through Christ the mediator, is the principle of that obedience which, according to the tenor of the new covenant, is accepted. Hence it is called "The obedience of faith," Rom. 1:5; that is, of faith in God by Christ, as the foregoing and following words evince. His blood is the blood of this covenant, Heb. 9:15, 10:29. The covenant itself is confirmed and ratified thereby; and by the blood of that covenant do we receive what we receive from God, Zech. 9:11. Hence, whenever God makes mention of the covenant to Abraham, and stirs him up to the obedience that is required in it, he still mentions the "seed;" "which is Christ," saith the apostle, Gal. 3:16. As it is said, in general, that "he that comes to God must believe that he is;" so, in particular, as to the new covenant, Christ says of himself, "I am the way:" there is no going to the Father but by him, John 14:6. They who have believed in God, must be careful to maintain good works, Tit. 3:8; that is, they who have believed in God through Christ. If, in our obedience, we walk with God according to the tenor of the new covenant, that obedience ariseth from justifying faith; that is, faith in God through Christ.

[2.] That it be perfect; that is, that the person be perfect or upright therein: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," Gen. 17:1. It was said of Noah, that he was "perfect in his generations," Gen. 6:9; as it is also said of many others. David bids us "mark the perfect man," Ps. 37:37; that is, the man that walketh with (God according to the tenor of the new covenant. And our Saviour, calling for this obedience, commands us to "be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect," Matt. 5:48.

Now there is a twofold perfection:—

1st. There is a τελείωσις,—a consummation in righteousness. So it is said of the law, that it "made nothing perfect," Heb. 7:19, or brought nothing

to perfect righteousness. And the sacrifices made not the comers unto God by them perfect, Heb. 10:1. They could not τελειῶσαι, consummate the work of righteousness, which was aimed at. In this sense we are said to be perfect, "complete" in Christ, Col. 2:10; and, as it is said in another case, Ezek. 16:14, our beauty is "perfect" through his comeliness. This is the perfection of justification; whereof we speak not.

2dly. There is a perfection within us. Now this also is twofold:—A complete perfection of enjoyment; and a perfection of tendency towards enjoyment:—

(1st.) In respect of the first, Paul says he was not made perfect, Phil. 3:12; and tells us where and by whom it is obtained, Heb 12:23, "The spirits of just men made perfect." Just men are not thus made perfect until their spirits be brought into the presence of God. This perfection is the aim of Christ's redemption, Eph. 5:25, 26; and of all their obedience, Eph. 4:14. But this is not the perfection which the covenant requires, but which it tends and brings to, whilst by the promise of it we are carried on in the work of "perfecting holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. 7:1. See Job 9:20.

(2dly.) There is also a perfection of tendency to this end. So Noah is said to be perfect, and Job perfect; and God commands Abraham to be perfect; and David describes the happy condition of the perfect man. Concerning this, observe,—

[1st.] There is no word in the Scripture whereby this perfection, and being perfect, is expressed, that in its use is restrained to such an absolute perfection as should admit of no mixture of failing or defect. The word used concerning Noah, and in the terms of the covenant to Abraham, is תָּמִים, of תָּם, from תָּמָה; which hath various significations. When spoken in the abstract, as תָּם is often used, it signifies "simplicity of manners," without craft; which, in the New Testament, is ἀκακία [ἄκακος, Rom. 16:18]. So Jacob is said to be תָּם וְיָשָׁר, Gen. 25:27, which we have rendered, "a plain man;" that is, plain-hearted, without guile,—as Christ speaks of Nathanael. Of this sense of the word you have a notable example, 1 Kings 22:34, where the man that slew Ahab is said to draw a bow לְתָמוֹ, "in his simplicity," which we have rendered, "at a venture;" that is, without any pernicious design in particular. So, Job 9:21, תָּם is opposed to רָשָׁע; that is,

to him that is "unquiet, malicious," and "perverse." Such a man in the New Testament is said to be ἀνέγκλητος and ἄμωμος,—that is, "one that cannot be justly blamed," or reprov'd, "for dealing perversely." Many other instances might be given. The word ἁγῆς, which we have commonly rendered "upright," is used also to this purpose; but it is so known that this word in its use in the Scripture goes no farther than "integrity," nor reaches to an absolute perfection, that I shall not need to insist on it.

The words used in the New Testament are chiefly τέλειος and ἄρτιος, neither of which in their use is restrained to this perfection. Hence James saith, he is τέλειος, who bridles his tongue, chap. 3:2. The word is but once used positively of any man in an indefinite sense; and that is, 1 Cor. 2:6, where it evidently denotes only men of some growth in the knowledge of the mystery of the gospel. But I shall not farther pursue the words.

[2dly.] Two things are contained in this perfection of obedience that is required in our walking with God in the new covenant. The first whereof regards our obedience; the second, the persons obeying.

1st. The perfection that respects the obedience itself, or our objective perfection, is that of parts, or the whole of the will and counsel of God as to our obedience. The law or will of God concerning our obedience is perfect; it hath an integrity in it; and we must have respect to all the parts of it that are revealed to us. So David, "I have a respect unto all thy commandments," Ps. 119:6. See James 2:10.

2dly. Subjective perfection, in respect of the person obeying, is his sincerity and freedom from guile,—the uprightness of his heart in his obedience. And this is that which is mainly intended in that expression of being "perfect,"—being upright, without guile, hypocrisy, false or selfish ends,—in singleness and simplicity of heart doing the whole will of God.

This, then, I say, is that perfection of obedience which makes it walking with God. Whatever comes short of this,—if the heart be not upright, without guile, free from hypocrisy and self-ends,—if the obedience be not universal, it is not walking with God. This is a perfection in a tendency to that which is complete; which Paul wished for the Corinthians, 2 Cor.

13:9; and which he exhorted the Hebrews to, chap. 6:1. If we fail in this, or come short of this perfection, by any guile of our hearts, by voluntary retaining any sweet morsel under our tongue, by keeping a knee for Baal, or a bow for Rimmon,—we walk not with God. It is sad to think how many lose all they do or have wrought by coming short in this perfection. One vile lust or other,—love of the world, pride, ambition, idleness, hard-heartedness,—may lose all, spoil all; and men walk contrary to God when they think they walk most with him.

(3.) That our obedience may be walking with God, it is required that it be a constant, progressive motion towards a mark before us. Walking is a constant progress. He that is talking towards a place that he hath in his eye may stumble sometimes, yea, perhaps, and fall also; but yet, whilst his design and endeavour lies towards the place aimed at,—whilst he lies not still when he falls, but gets up again and presses forward,—he is still, from the chief aim of his acting, said to walk that way. But now, let this man sit down, or lie down in the way, you cannot say he is walking; much less can you say that he is walking that way, if he walk quite contrary. So is it in that obedience which is walking with God. "I press forward," saith the apostle, "to the mark," Phil. 3:14; "I follow after it," chap. 3:12. And he bids us "so run that we may obtain." There is a constant pressing forwards required in our obedience. Saith David, "I follow hard after God." The enjoyment of God in Christ is the mark before us; our walking is a constant pressing towards it. To fall into, yea, perhaps, fall under, a temptation, hinders not but that a man may still be said to be walking, though he makes no great speed, and though he defiles himself by his fall. It is not every omission of a duty, it is not every commission of sin, that utterly cuts off in the performance of the duty; but to sit down and give over,—to engage in a way, a course of sin,—this is that which is called walking contrary to God, not with him.

(4.) Walking with God, is to walk always as under the eye of God. Hence it is called "walking before him," before his face, in his sight. The performance of all duties of obedience as under the eye of God, is required unto this walking with him.

Now, there are two ways whereby a man may do all things as under the eye of God:—

[1.] By a general apprehension of God's omniscience and presence, as "all things are open and naked before him," Heb. 4:12; on this consideration, that he knows all things,—that his understanding is infinite,—that nothing can be hid from him,—that there is no flying out of his presence, Ps. 139:7, nor hiding from him, the darkness being light to him. Men may have a general persuasion that they are under the eye of God: and this is in the thoughts of all;—I do not say actually, but in respect of the principle of it that lies in them; which, if it may freely act itself, will make them know it and consider it, Ps. 94:9; Job 24:23; Prov. 15:3.

[2.] There is a performance of obedience under the eye of God, as one that is peculiarly concerned in that obedience. God says to David, Ps. 32:8, " 'I will guide thee with mine eye.' The consideration of mine eye being upon thee, shall instruct thee, or teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. Mine eye is on thee, as concerned in thy ways and obedience." This is to walk before God,—to consider him as looking on us, as one deeply concerned in all our ways, walking, and obedience.

Now, we consider the Lord as thus concerned, as one from whom we receive,—1st, Direction; 2dly, Protection; 3dly, Examination and trial.

1st. Direction. So before,—"I will guide thee with mine eye." Consideration of the eye of God on us, sends us to him for counsel and direction in the whole course of our obedience. If a child walk in any way with his father looking on him, if he be at a loss at any time which way he ought to go, will he not inquire of him who knows, who looks on him in all his ways? Are we at any loss in our way? know we not what to do, or how to steer our course?—[Let us] look to Him whose eye is upon us, and we shall have direction, Prov. 22:12.

2dly. Protection in our walking in our obedience: Ps. 34:15, His eyes are so upon them, that his ears are open to them, to give them protection and deliverance: so fully, 2 Chron. 16:9, This is one end why the eyes of God are upon his and their ways,—that he may show himself strong in their behalf. "I have seen it," he lays at the bottom of all their deliverance.

3dly. For trial and examination: Ps. 11:4, 5, His eyes are upon us, for to

search and try if there be, as David speaks, any way of wickedness in us. This use he makes of the consideration of the omnipresence and omniscience of God, Ps. 139:7–18. Having set forth God's intimate knowledge of and acquaintance with him, and all his ways, verses 23, 24, he makes use of it, by appealing to him about his integrity in his obedience. So saith Job to God, "Hast thou eyes of flesh? or seest thou as man seeth?" chap. 10:4; that is, thou dost not. And what is this spoken in reference unto? Even his trying the paths and obedience of the sons of men, verse 6. When our Saviour comes to try, examine, and search the obedience of his churches, he is said to have "eyes of fire," Rev. 1:14. And, in pursuit of it, he still tells his churches, "I know thy works;"—or, "I have not found thee perfect; I have something against thee:"—all arguing a trial and examination of their obedience.

This, I say, is to walk before God, or under his eye,—to consider him looking on us peculiarly, as one concerned in our ways, walking, and obedience; that we may constantly take counsel of him, fly to him for protection, and consider that he weighs and tries all our ways and works, whether they are perfect according to the tenor of the covenant of grace.

Now, there are two things that will certainly follow this consideration of our walking with God, being under his eye and control:—

(1st.) Reverential thoughts of him. This God, who is a consuming fire, is nigh to us; his eyes are always on us. "Let us," saith the apostle, "have grace, whereby we may serve him acceptably," Heb. 12:28, 29. If men order their deportment and carriage, at least, unto a reverential appearance before their rulers or governors, who see only their outside, shall we not have a regard of Him who always hath his eye upon us, searches our hearts, and tries our reins,—the most secret reserve of our souls? But of this afterward.

(2dly.) Self-abasement under a sense of our great vileness, and the imperfection of all our services. But both these belong properly to the next consideration,—of what it is to walk humbly with God.

(5.) Our walking with God in our obedience, argues complacency and delight therein, and that we are bound unto God in his ways with the

cords of love. He that goes unwillingly, by compulsion, with another, when every step is wearisome and burdensome to him, and his whole heart desires to be discharged of his company, can very improperly be said to walk with him, and no farther than as the mere motion of the body may be so expressed. The Lord walketh with us, and he rejoiceth over us, and in us, Zeph. 3:17; as also he expresseth his delight in the particular service that we yield unto him, Cant. 2:14. So also saith the Son and Wisdom of God, Prov. 8:31; his joy and his delight is in the obedience of the sons of men. Hence are those longing expressions of God after the obedience of his people, " 'O that there were such an heart in thee, that thou wouldst fear me! Turn ye, turn ye; when shall it once be!' What have you seen in me, that you are gone away?" And our Saviour, the husband of the church, carries this to the greatest height imaginable, Cant. 4:9–16. He speaks as one transported by a delight not to be borne, which he receives from the love and obedience of his spouse,—comparing it with things of the highest natural delight, and preferring them far before them.

Now, surely, if God hath this delight in us in our walking before him, is it not expected that our delight should be in him in our obedience? It suits not my present business to go over the testimonies of Scripture, wherein either we are required to delight in the Lord, or have the example of the saints, who did so to the height proposed to us; or to insist on the nature of the delight I speak of. Job makes it a sure mark of a hypocrite, that he "will not," notwithstanding all his obedience, "delight himself in the Almighty," Job 27:10. Only take notice that there is a twofold delight in this matter:—[1.] A delight in the obedience itself, and the duties of it; [2.] A delight in God in that obedience.

[1.] There may be a delight in the duties of obedience, upon some foreign respect, when there is no delight in God in them. A man may delight to go along with another in the way, on the account of some pleasantness in the way, or other occasions which he hath to draw him that way, though he hath no delight at all in the company of him with whom he walks. God tells us of a hypocritical people, that sought him daily, and delighted to know his ways, and took delight in approaching to God, Isa. 58:2. And it is said of some, that Ezekiel's ministry was to them as "a cheerful song of one that had a pleasant voice;" wherefore they came and heard and

attended on it, when their hearts went after their sins, Ezek. 33:31, 32. There may be something in the administration of the ordinances of God, in the person administering, in the things administered, which may take the minds of hypocrites, so that they may run after them, and attend to them with great delight and greediness. John "was a burning and a shining light," saith our Saviour to the wicked Jews; and "they were willing for a season to rejoice" (or delight) "in his light," John 5:35. How many have we seen running after sermons, pressing with the multitude, finding sweetness and contentment in the word, who yet have nothing but novelty, or the ability of the preacher, or some outward consideration, for the bottom of their delight!

[2.] There is a delight in God in our obedience,— "Delight thyself in the LORD," saith the psalmist, Ps. 37:4;—and a delight in obedience and duties, because it is his will, and his ways. When a person aims in every duty to meet with God, to have converse with him, to communicate his soul to him, and to receive refreshment from him; when on this account our duties and all our ways of obedience are sweet and pleasant to us;— then do we in them walk with God. Let not men think, who perform duties with a bondage-frame of spirit; to whom they are weariness and burdensome, but that they dare not omit them; who never examine their hearts whether they meet with God in their duties, or have any delight in so doing;—let them not think, I say, whatever they do, that at all they walk with God.

I shall not insist on more particulars.

Use 1. Of direction. Know that it is a great thing to walk with God as we ought. We heard before how many things were required to render it acceptable; now, some of the things that it consists in. Who, almost, hath prepared his heart to walk with God as he ought? who considers whether his walking be such as it ought to be? Believe me, friends, a formal performance of duties, in a course or a round, from one day, one week to another, both in private and public, may possibly come exceeding short of this walking with God. Men content themselves with a very slight and formal course. So they pray morning and evening; so they take part with some of the people of God against open profane persons; so they keep themselves from such sins as would wound a natural conscience,—all is

well with them. Be not deceived, walking with God must have,—

(1.) All the strength and vigour of the soul laid out in it. "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart." The soul and heart of a man is to be in the work; his design and contrivance about it; his contending in it. Form and a course will not do it.

(2.) It is to have the perfection of the new covenant in universality, and sincerity attending it. It is not the doing of this or that thing, but the doing of all things by Christ commanded; not a loving of friends only, but of enemies; not a denial of the ways of ungodly men only, but a denial of self and the world; not a doing hurt to none only, but a doing good to all; not a hatred to evil men's ways only, but a love to their persons; not praying and hearing only,—but giving alms, communicating, showing mercy, exercising loving-kindness in the earth; not a mortification of pride and vanity only, especially if as to others in any outward appearance,—but of envy, wrath, discontent. In a word, it is "perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord" that is required. If men professing religion, who are almost devoured by world, or flesh, or envy, or faction, or idleness, or uselessness in their generation, would but lay their hearts to the rules we have considered, they would find they had but little cause to hug themselves in their ways and walking.

I might here go over all the particulars that have been insisted on, and try our obedience by them. But,—

Use 2. For others, I shall only ask over the heads of what have been delivered. Would you be thought to walk with God?—

(1.) What evidence have you that you are in covenant with him? that your covenant with hell and death is broken, and that you are taken into the bond of the covenant of grace? What account can you give to God, others, or your own souls, of this your covenant state and condition? How many are at a loss as to this foundation of all walking with God!

(2.) Is your obedience from faith? What evidence have you thereof? Go over all the causes, effects, and adjuncts of a justifying faith, and try whether you have this principle of all acceptable obedience. How hath it

been wrought in you? What work of the Spirit have you had upon you? What have been your conviction, humiliation, and conversion? When, how, by what means wrought? Are your hearts purified by it, and are you by it baptized into one Spirit with the people of God? or are you still enemies to them?

(3.) Is your walking universal and perfect, according to the tenor of the covenant? Have you no sweet morsel under your tongue, no beloved lust that is indulged to, that you cannot as yet thoroughly part with? no allowed reserve for sin?

(4.) Do you delight in God in that obedience you yield? or are his ways a burden unto you, that you are scarce able to bear them,—weary of private prayer, of Sabbaths, of all the worship of God? I leave these things with your consciences.

Walking Humbly With God - Sermon, Part III

WHAT it is to walk with God hath been declared.

II. What is added thereunto of duty, in this qualification, comes nextly to be considered.

Amongst the many eminent qualifications of the obedience of believers, we shall find, in the issue, this to stand in the forefront, among the chiefest (the words in the original are, וְהִתְצַנַּע לַקָּהָן): To "humble thyself in walking," or, to "walk with God."

A man would think that it is such an honour and advancement, that a poor sinful creature should be taken into the company of the great God, to walk with him, that he had need be exhorted to take upon him great thoughts of himself, that he may be prepared for it. "Is it a light matter," says David, "to be son-in-law to a king?" "Is it a light matter to walk with God? How had the heart of a man need to be lifted up, which hath such

apprehensions of its condition!" The matter is quite otherwise. He that would have his heart exalted up to God, must bring it down in itself. There is a pride in every man's heart by nature, lifting him up, and swelling him until he is too high and big for God to walk with.

Now, whereas there are two things in our walking with God considerable:—first, The inward power of it; and, secondly, The outward privilege of it, in an orderly admittance to the duties of it;—the former alone is that which edifieth us in this duty; the latter puffeth up. These Jews here, and their successors the Pharisees, having the privilege of performing the outward duty of walking with God, were, as Capernaum, lifted up unto heaven; and, trusting in themselves that they were righteous, they despised others;—of all men, therefore, they were most abhorred of God. This is that which the Holy Ghost beats them from,—resting in the privilege to come up to the power. God tells us of the prince of Tyrus, that he set his heart as the heart of God, Ezek. 28:6;—he would be on even terms with him, independent, the author of his own good, fearless. So, in some measure, is the heart of every man by nature; which, indeed, is not to be like God, but the devil.

To prevent this evil, I shall inquire, what it is that is here required of us, under these two heads:—1. What it is in reference whereunto we are to humble ourselves in walking with God; 2. How we are to do it:—

1. There are two things that we are to humble ourselves unto in our walking with God:—(1.) The law of his grace? (2.) The law of his providence:—

(1.) In all our walking with God, we are to humble ourselves in bowing to the law and rule of his grace; which is the way that he hath revealed wherein he will walk with sinners. The apostle tells us of the Jews in sundry places, that they had a mind to walk with God; they had "a zeal for God." So he had himself in his Pharisaism, Phil. 3:6. He "was zealous towards God," Acts 22:3; and so were the Jews, Rom. 10:2, "I bear them record, they have a zeal of God." And they followed after righteousness, "the law of righteousness," chap. 9:31; they took pains to "establish their righteousness," chap. 10:3. What can be more required to walking with God than a zeal for him,—for his laws and ways, and a diligent endeavour

to attain a righteousness before him? How few do we see attain thus much! What repute have they in the world that do so? But yet, saith the apostle, they did not attain to walk with God, nor the righteousness they sought after, chap. 9:31. But what is the reason of it? Why, in their attempt to walk with God, they did not bow themselves to the law of his grace. So chap. 10:3; they went about to establish their own righteousness, and did not submit themselves to the righteousness of God. What righteousness is that? Why, "the righteousness of faith," according to the law of grace, Rom. 1:17. "They sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law," chap. 9:32. And the ground of all this is discovered, verse 33. Behold, here are two effects of Christ towards several persons: some stumble at him, and so are not able to walk on with God. Who are they? He tells you, verse 32. Some are not ashamed. Who are they? They that believe, and so submit to the law of God's grace. It is evident, then, that men may labour to walk with God, and yet stumble and fall, for want of this humbling themselves to the law of his grace.

Let us see, then, how that may be done, and what is required thereunto. It is, then, required,—

[1.] That the bottom of all a man's obedience lie in this,—that in himself he is a lost, undone creature, an object of wrath, and that whatever he have of God in any kind, he must have it in a way of mere mercy and grace. To this apprehension of himself must proud man, that would fain have something of his own, humble himself. God abhors every one that he sees coming towards him on any other account. Our Saviour Christ lets men know what they are, and what they must be, if they will come to God by him. "I came," saith he, "to save that which was lost," Matt 18:11. "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance," Matt. 9:13. Verse 12, "The whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick." "I came into the world," says he, "that they that are blind may see, and that they which see might be made blind," John 9:39. This is the sum: "If you intend to have any thing to do with God by me, know yourselves to be lost sinners, blind, sick,—dead; so that whatever you have, you must have it in a way of mere grace."

And how was this direction followed by Paul? Will you see the foundation of his obedience? You have it, 1 Tim. 1:13–15, "I was thus and thus: I am

the chief of sinners; 'but I obtained mercy.' It is mere mercy and grace upon the account whereof I have any thing from God:"—which principle he improves to the height, Phil. 3:7–9, "All loss, all dung; Christ is all in all." This the proud Pharisees could not submit unto. It is the subject of much of their disputes with our Saviour. To be lost, blind, nothing,—they could not endure to hear. Were they not children of Abraham? Did they not do so and so? To tell them that they are lost and nothing, is but to speak out of envy. And on this rock do thousands split themselves, in the days wherein we live. When they are overpowered by any conviction to an apprehension of a necessity of walking with God (as more or less, at one time or other, by one means or other, most men are), they then set themselves on the performance of the duties they have neglected, and of the obedience which they think acceptable, abiding in that course whilst their conviction abides; but never humbling themselves to this part of the law of God's grace,—to be vile, miserable, lost, cursed, hopeless in themselves;—never making thorough work of it. They lay the foundation of their obedience in a quagmire, whose bottom should have been digged into; and stumble at the stumbling-stone, in their first attempt to walk with God.

Now, there are two evils attending the mere performance of this duty, which utterly disappoint all men's attempts for walking with God:—

1st. That men without it will go forth, somewhat, at least, in their own strength, to walk with God. "Why," say the Pharisees, "can we do nothing? 'Are we blind also?' " Acting in the power of self will cleave to such a one, so as not to be separated; it will steal upon him in every duty he goes about. Now, nothing is more universally opposite to the whole nature of gospel obedience than this, that a man should perform the least of it in his own strength, without an actual influence of life and power from God in Christ. "Without me," says Christ, "ye can do nothing," John 15:5. All that is done without strength from him, is nothing. God works in us "to will and to do of his good pleasure," Phil. 2:13. Whatever a man doth, which God works not in him, which he receives not strength for from Christ, is all lost, all perishing. Now, our fetching in of strength from Christ for every duty, is founded wholly in that subjection to the law of grace whereof we speak.

2dly. His obedience will build him up in that state wherein he is, or edify him towards hell and destruction:—of which more afterward.

[2.] The second thing that we are to humble ourselves unto in the law of grace is, a firm persuasion, exerting itself effectually in all our obedience, that there is not a righteousness to be obtained before God by the performance of any duties or obedience of ours whatever. That this lies in the law of the grace of God, the apostle disputes at large, Rom. 4:13–15, "If," saith he, "righteousness be by the law,"—that is, by our obedience to God according to the law,—"then faith and the promise serve to no purpose;" there is an inconsistency between the law of grace (that is, of faith and the promise) and the obtaining of a righteousness before God by our obedience. So Gal. 2:21, "If righteousness were by the law, then Christ is dead in vain." "You would walk with God according to his mind; you would please him in Jesus Christ. What do you do? You strive to perform the duties required at your hand, that on their account you may be accepted as righteous with God. I tell you," saith the apostle, "if this be the state of things, 'Christ is dead in vain:' if this be a righteousness before God to be obtained by any thing you can do, the gospel is to no purpose."

And this, also, is the proud heart of man to humble himself to, if he will walk with God;—he must obey, he must perform duties, he must be holy, he must abstain from every sin; and that, all, under a quick, living, energetical persuasion, that by these things a righteousness before God is not to be obtained. This is to influence all your duties, to steer you in your whole course of obedience, and to accompany you in every act of it. How few are influenced with this persuasion in their walking with God! Do not most men proceed on other practical principles? Is not their great reserve for their appearance before God hewed out of their own obedience? God knows they walk not with him.

[3.] In the midst of all our obedience which is our own, we must believe and accept of a righteousness which is not our own, nor at all wrought or procured by us; of which we have no assurance that there is any such thing, but by the faith we have in the promise of God: and thereupon, renouncing all that is in or of ourselves, we must merely and solely rest on that for righteousness and acceptance with God. This the apostle

affirms his heart to be humbled unto, Phil. 3:7–9, the place before mentioned. He reckons up all his own duties,—is encompassed with them,—sees them lying in great abundance on every hand; every one of them offering its assistance, perhaps painting its face, and crying that it is "gain;" but saith the apostle, " 'You are all loss and dung;' I look for another righteousness than any you can give me."

Man sees and knows his own duty, his own righteousness and walking with God; he seeth what it costs and stands him in; he knows what pains he hath taken about it; what waiting, fasting, labouring, praying it hath cost him; how he hath cut himself short of his natural desires, and mortified his flesh in abstinence from sin. These are the things of a man, wrought in him, performed by him; and the spirit of a man knows them; and they will promise fair to the heart of a man that hath been sincere in them, for any end and purpose that he shall use them. But now, for the righteousness of Christ,—that is without him; he seeth it not, experiences it not; the spirit that is within him knows nothing of it; he hath no acquaintance with it, but merely as it is revealed and proposed in the promises, wherein yet it is nowhere said to him, in particular, that it is his, and was provided for him, but only that it is so, to and for believers. Now, for a man to cast away that which he hath seen, for that which he hath not seen; to refuse that which promises to give him a fair entertainment and supportment in the presence of God, and which he is sure is his own, and cannot be taken from him, for that which he must venture on upon the word of promise, against ten thousand doubts, and fears, and temptations that it belongs not to him;—this requires humbling of the soul before God; and this the heart of a man is not easily brought unto. Every man must make a venture for his future state and condition. The question only is, upon what he shall venture it? Our own obedience is at hand, and promises fairly to give assistance and help: for a man, therefore, wholly to cast it aside upon the naked promise of God to receive him in Christ, is a thing that the heart of man must be humbled unto. There is nothing in a man that will not dispute against this captivity of itself: innumerable proud reasonings and imaginations are set up against it; and when the mind and discursive, notional part of the soul is overpowered with the truth, yet the practical principle of the will and the affections will exceedingly tumultuate against it. But this is the law of

God's grace, which must be submitted unto, if we will walk with him;—the most holy, wise, and zealous, who have yielded the most constant obedience unto God,—whose good works and godly conversation have shone as lights in the world,—must cast down all these crowns at the foot of Jesus, renounce all for him, and the righteousness that he hath wrought out for us. All must be sold for the pearl;—all parted with for Christ. In the strictest course of exactest obedience in us, we are to look for a righteousness wholly without us.

[4.] We must humble ourselves to place our obedience on a new foot of account, and yet to pursue it with no less diligence than if it stood upon the old. Eph. 2:8–10, "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them." "If not of works, then what need of works any more? The first end appointed to our obedience was, that we might be saved. This end, it seems, is taken away: our works and duties are excluded from any efficiency in compassing of that end; for if it be of works, 'then grace is no more grace,' Gal. 2:21. Then let us lay all works and obedience aside, and sin, that grace may abound." That many did, that many do, make this use of the grace of God, is most evident; so turning it into lasciviousness. "But," saith the apostle, "there is more to be said about works than so. Their legal end is changed, and the old foundation they stood upon is taken away. But there is a new constitution making them necessary,—a new obligation, requiring them no less exactly of us than the former did, before it was disannulled." So Eph. 2:10, " 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.' God saving us by grace, hath, on that account, appointed that we should walk in obedience. There is this difference:—before, I was to perform good works because I was to be saved by them; now, because I am saved without them." God saving us in Christ, by grace, hath appointed that we shall perform that in a way of acknowledgment of our free salvation, which before we were to do to be saved. Though works left no room at all for grace, yet grace leaves room for works, though not the same they had before grace came. This, then, are we to humble ourselves to,—to be as diligent in good works, and all duties of obedience, because we are saved without them, as we could be to be saved by them. He that

walks with God must humble his soul to place all his obedience on this foot of account. He hath saved us freely; only let our conversation be as beseemeth the gospel. How this principle is effectual in believers, as to the crucifying of all sin, Paul declares, Rom. 6:14, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace." The argument to carnal reason would lie quite contrary. "If we are not under the law,—that is, the condemning power of the law,—then let sin have its dominion, power, sway. Did not the law forbid sin, under pain of damnation?—'Cursed is every one that continueth not,' etc. Did not the law command obedience with the promise of salvation?—'The man that doth the things of it shall live therein.' If, then, the law be taken away from having power over us to these ends and purposes, as to forbid sin with terror of damnation, and I command obedience for righteousness and salvation, what need we perform the one or avoid the other?" "Why, upon this account," saith the apostle, "that we are under grace; which, with new ends, and on new motives and considerations, requires the one and forbids the other."

Have we now, or do we constantly humble ourselves to this part of the law of God's grace,—that we build up and establish our obedience on grace, and not on the law; on motives of love, not fear; from what God hath done for us in Christ, rather than from what we expect,—because "eternal life is the gift of God, through Jesus Christ our Lord?"

[5.] We are to humble ourselves to this,—that we address ourselves to the performance of the greatest duties, being fully persuaded that we have no strength for the least. This is that which lies so cross to flesh and blood, that our souls must be humbled to it if ever we are brought to it; and yet without this there is no walking with God. There are great and mighty duties to be performed in our walking with God in a way of gospel obedience: there is cutting off right hands, plucking out right eyes; denying, yea, comparatively, hating father, mother, and all relations; dying for Christ, laying down our lives for the brethren; crucifying the flesh, cutting short all earthly desires, keeping the body in subjection, bearing the cross, self-denial, and the like;—which, when they come to be put in practice, will be found to be great and mighty duties. This is required in the law of grace,—that we undertake and go through with

these all our days, with a full assurance and persuasion that we have not strength of ourselves, or in ourselves, to perform the least of them. "We are not sufficient of ourselves," saith the apostle, 2 Cor. 3:5. We cannot think a good thought. Without Christ we can do nothing, John 15:5. This, to a carnal heart, looks like making of brick without straw. "A hard saying it is, who can bear it?" May not men sit down and say, "Why doth he yet complain? Is he not austere, reaping where he hath not sown? Are his ways equal?" Yea, most equal, righteous, and gracious; for this is the design of his thus dealing with us, that upon our addressing ourselves to any duty, we should look to him from whom are all our supplies, and thereby receive strength for what we have to do. How unable was Peter to walk upon the water! Yet, when Christ bids him come, he ventures in the midst of the sea; and with the command hath strength communicated to support him. God may call us to do or suffer what he pleases, so that his call have an efficacy with it to communicate strength for the performance of what he calls us to, Phil. 1:29.

This, I say, are we to humble ourselves unto,—not only in the general to reckon that the duties that are required of us are not proportioned to the strength residing in us, but to the supply laid up for us in Christ; but also to lie under such an actual conclusion in every particular duty that we address ourselves to. This, in civil and natural things, were the greatest madness in the world; nor is it needful that you should add any farther discouragement to a man from attempting any thing, than to convince him that he hath no strength or ability to perform or go through with it. Once persuade him of that, and there is an end of all endeavours; for who will wear out himself about that which it is impossible he should attain? It is otherwise in spirituals: God may require any thing of us that there is strength laid up in Christ for, enough to enable us to perform it; and we may by faith attempt any duty, though never so great, if there be grace to be obtained for it from Christ. Hence is that enumeration of the great things done by believers through faith,—utterly beyond their own strength and power, Heb. 11:33, 34, "Out of weakness were made strong." When they entered upon the duty, they were weakness itself; but in the performance of it grew strong, by the supply that was administered. So we are said to come to Christ to "find grace to help in time of need," Heb. 4:16,—when we need it, as going about that which we have no might nor

power for.

This is the way to walk with God,—to be ready and willing to undergo any duty, though never so much above or beyond our strength, so we can see that in Christ there is a supply. The truth is, he that shall consider what God requires of believers, would think them to have a stock of spiritual strength like that of Samson's, since they are to fight with principalities and powers, contend against the world, and self, and what not; and he that shall look upon them will quickly see their weakness and inability. Here lies the mystery of it,—the duties required of them are proportioned to the grace laid up for them in Christ,—not to what they are at any time themselves intrusted withal.

[6.] This, also, is another thing we are to humble ourselves unto,—to be contented to have the sharpest afflictions accompanying and attending the strictest obedience. Men walking closely with God, may perhaps have some secret reserves for freedom from trouble in this life: hence they are apt to think strange of a fiery trial, 1 Pet. 4:12; and therefore, when it comes upon them, they are troubled, perplexed, and know not what it means; especially if they see others prospering, and at rest in the land, who know not God. Their estates are ruined, names blasted, bodies afflicted with violent diseases, children taken away, or turning profligate and rebellious, life in danger every hour,—perhaps killed all the day long: hereupon they are ready to cry, with Hezekiah, Isa. 38:3, "LORD, remember;" or to contend about the business, as Job did, being troubled that he was disappointed in his expectation of dying in his nest. But this frame is utterly contrary to the law of the grace of God; which is, that the children that he receives are to be chastised, Heb. 12:6; that they are to undergo whatever chastening he will call them to: for, having made the Captain of their salvation perfect through all manner of sufferings, he will make his conformable to him. This, I say, is part of the law of the grace of God, that in the choicest obedience we willingly undergo the greatest afflictions. The management of this principle between God and Job were worth while to consider; for although he disputed long, yet God left him not until he brought him to own it, and to submit unto it with all his heart. This will farther appear in our second head, about submitting to the law of the providence of God. The truth is, to help our poor weak

hearts in this business, to prevent all sinful repinings, disputes, and the like, he hath laid in such provision of principles as may render the receiving of it sweet and easy to us; as,—

1st. That he doth not correct us for his pleasure, but that he may make us partakers of his holiness: so that we are not in heaviness unless it be needful for us; which we may rest upon, when we neither see the cause nor the particular of our visitation;—then, on this account we may rest on his sovereign will and wisdom.

2dly. That he will make all things work together for our good. This takes the poison out of every cup we are to drink, yea, all the bitterness of it. We have concernments that lie above all that here we can undergo or suffer; and if all work for our advantage and improvement, why should they not be welcome to us?

3dly. That conformity and likeness to Jesus Christ is hereby to be attained; and sundry other principles there are given out, to prevail with our hearts to submit and humble our souls to this part of the law of God's grace: which is a thing that the devil never thought Job would have done, and was therefore restless until it was put to the trial; but he was disappointed and conquered, and his condemnation aggravated.

And this is the first thing required of us,—namely, that we humble ourselves to the law of the grace of God.

Use 1. Let us now take some brief account of ourselves, whether we do so or no. We perform duties, and so seem to walk with God; but,—

(1.) Is the bottom of our obedience a deep apprehension and a full conviction of our own vileness and nothingness,—of our being the chief of sinners, lost and undone; so that we always lie at the foot of sovereign grace and mercy? Is it so? Then, when, how, by what means, was this apprehension brought upon us? I intend not a general notion that we are sinners; but a particular apprehension of our lost, undone condition, with suitable affections thereunto. Do we cry to the Lord out of the depths? or is the end of our obedience to keep ourselves out of such a condition? I am afraid many amongst us, could we, or themselves, by any means dive

into the depths of their hearts, would be found to yield their obedience unto God merely on the account of keeping them out of the condition which they must be brought unto before they can yield any acceptable obedience to him. If we think at all to walk with God, let us be clear in this, that such a sense and apprehension of ourselves lies at the bottom of it,—“Of sinners I am chief.”

(2.) Doth this always abide in our thoughts, and upon our spirits,—that, by all we have done, do, or can do, we cannot obtain righteousness to stand in the presence of God; so that in the secret reserves of our hearts we place none of our righteousness on that account? Can we be content to suffer loss in all our obedience, as to an end of righteousness? and do we appear before God simply on another head, as if there were no such thing as our own obedience in the world? Herein, indeed, lies the great mystery of gospel obedience,—that we pursue it with all our strength and might, with all the vigour of our souls, and labour to abound in it, like the angels in theirs,—perfecting holiness in the fear of the Lord; and yet, in point of the acceptance of our persons, to have no more regard unto it than if we had yielded no more obedience than the thief on the cross.

(3.) Do we, then, humble ourselves to accept of the righteousness that God in Christ hath provided for us? It is a common working of the heart of them whom God is drawing to himself;—they dare not close with the promise, they dare not accept of Christ and his righteousness,—it would be presumption in them. And the answer is common,—that indeed this is not fear and humility, but pride. Men know not how to humble themselves to a righteousness purely without them, on the testimony of God: the heart is not willing to it; we would willingly establish our own righteousness, and not submit to the righteousness of God. But how is it with our souls? Are we clear in this great point, or no? If we are not, we are at best shuffling with God;—we walk not with him. He admits none into his company, but expressly on the terms of taking this righteousness that he hath provided; and his soul loathes them that would tender him any thing in the room thereof, as men engaged to set up their wisdom and righteousness against his. But I must conclude.

Use 2. If all these things are required to our walking with God, where shall they appear, what shall be their lot and portion, who take no

thought about these things? Some we see visibly to walk contrary to him, having no regard to him at all, nor considering their latter end. Others have some checks of conscience,—that think to cure these distempers and eruptions of sin with a loose cry of "God be merciful to them." Some go a little farther,—to take care of the performance of duties; but they seek not God in a due manner, and he will make a breach upon them. The Lord awaken them all before it be too late!

Walking Humbly With God - Sermon, Part IV

WHAT it is to humble ourselves to the law of God's grace, you have heard.

(2.) I come now to show what it is to humble ourselves to the law of his providence.

By the law of providence, I intend, God's sovereign disposal of all the concernments of men in this world, in the variety, order, and manner which he pleaseth, according to the rule and infinite reason of his own goodness, wisdom, righteousness, and truth.

[1.] To evince what it is to humble ourselves to this law, some general observations must be given. And,—

1st. There is, and ever was, somewhat, very much, in God's providential administration of the things of this world, and the concernments of the sons of men therein, which the most improved reason of men cannot reach unto, and which is contrary to all that is in us, as merely men;—of judgment, affections, or what else soever we are acted by.

"Thy judgments," saith David unto God, "are far above out of his sight," Ps. 10:5; that is, of the man he is speaking of: he is not able to see the ground and reason, the order and beauty of them. And Ps. 36:6, "Thy righteousness is like a great mountain, and thy judgments are a great deep;" that is, as the sea, which none can look into the bottom of, nor know what is done in the caverns thereof. So that there is a height in the

judgments of God not to be measured, and a depth not to be fathomed. Men cannot look into his ways. So also Ps. 77:19, "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known." Men must be content to stand at the shore, and admire at the works of God; but as to the beauty and excellency of them, they cannot search them out. To this purpose discourseth Zophar, in Job 11:7–12. It is of the excellency and perfection of God in his works of providence that he is speaking; in the consideration of whose unsearchableness, he closes with that of verse 12, "Vain man would know the secrets of the counsels of God, the reason of his ways; but, in his attempts after it, he is as an ass, as a wild ass, as the colt of a wild ass;"—than which nothing could be spoken with more contempt, to abase the pride of a poor creature.

The ways of God are, we know, all perfect. He is our rock; and his work is perfect: nothing can be added to them, nor taken from them; yea, they are all comely and beautiful in their season. There is not any thing comes out from him, but it is from wonderful counsel; and all his ways will at length be found to praise him. But, as Job speaks, chap. 9:11, we perceive it not,—we take no notice of it; for who hath known his mind, or been his counsellor? Rom. 11:33, 34.

Hence, not only the heathen were entangled in the consideration of the works of providence,—some, upon it, turning Atheists; most, ascribing all things to blind, uncertain chance and contingency; and others (very few) labouring to set a lustre upon what they could not understand,—but we have the people of God themselves disputing with him about the equality of his ways; bringing arguments against it, and contending against his wisdom in them; "Ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal," Ezek. 18:25. And again are they at it, chap. 33:20, "Yet ye say, The way of the LORD is not equal." Yea, not only the common people, but the choicest of God's servants, under the Old Testament, were exceedingly exercised with this, that they could not oftentimes see the beauty and excellency, nor understand the reason or order, of God's dispensations; which I might prove at large, in the instances of Job, David, Heman, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, and others. Yea, there was nothing that God was more put to, in dealing with his people of old, than to justify the righteousness and perfections of his providential dispensations against their unjust,

unbelieving complaints and manners.

This, then, being the condition of God's providential dispensations in general,—that there is much in them, not only above us, and unsearchable to us, as to the reason and beauty of his ways, but also contrary to all that is in us of reason, judgment, or affections; there is surely need of humbling our souls to the law of this providence, if we intend to walk with him. Neither is there any other way to come to an agreement with him, or to quiet our hearts from repining.

2dly. There are four things in God's providential disposing of the things and concernments of men in the world that require this humbling of ourselves to him, as being no way able to grapple with him:—(1st.) Visible confusion; (2dly.) Unspeakable variety; (3dly.) Sudden alterations; (4thly.) Deep distresses.

(1st.) Visible confusion,—like that mentioned, Isa. 8:22. He that takes a view of the general state of things in the world, will see nothing but trouble, darkness, and anguish; "yea, darkness cover the earth, and gross darkness the people." The oppression of tyrants, wasting of nations, destruction of men and beasts, fury and desolations, make up the things of the past and present ages;—the greatest and choicest parts of the earth, in the meantime, inhabited by them that know not God,—that hate him, that fill and replenish the world with habitations of cruelty, sporting themselves in mischief, like the leviathan in the sea. In respect hereof, God is said to make "darkness his secret place" and his pavilion, Ps. 18:11; and to "dwell in the thick darkness," 2 Chron. 6:1;—and to wait for the issue of this dispensation, to humble themselves to the law of it, is the patience and wisdom of the saints. See Hab. 2:1.

(2dly.) Unspeakable variety. Not to insist on particulars, the case of the saints throughout the world is the only instance I shall mention, and that on a twofold account:—

[1st.] Compared among themselves, in what unspeakable variety are they dealt withal! some under persecution always,—some always at peace; some in dungeons and prisons,—some at liberty in their own houses; the saints of one nation under great oppression for many ages,—of another,

in quietness; in the same places some poor, in great distress, put hard to it for daily bread all their lives,—others abounding in all things; some full of various afflictions, going softly and mourning all their days,—others spared, and scarce touched with the rod at all;—and yet, commonly, the advantage of holiness and close walking with God lying on the distressed side. How doth God deal, also, with families in respect of grace, while he takes one whole family into covenant, and leaves out another whole family, whose heads and springs are no less holy? He comes into a house, and takes one, and leaves another;—takes a despised outcast, and leaves a darling. Of them, also, some are wise, endowed with great gifts and abilities;—others weak to contempt and reproach. Who can, now, with an eye of reason, look upon them, and say they are all the children of one Father, and that he loves them all alike? Should you come into a great house, and see some children in scarlet, having all things needful, others hewing wood and drawing water,—you would conclude that they are not all children, but some children, some slaves: but when it shall be told you that they are all one man's children; and that the hewers of wood, that live on the bread and water of affliction, and go in tattered rags, are as dear to him as the other; and that he intends to leave them as good an inheritance as any of the rest;—if you intend not to question the wisdom and goodness of the father of the family, you must resolve to submit to his authority with a quiet subjection of mind. So is it in the great family of God; nothing will quiet our souls, but humbling ourselves to the law of his providence.

[2dly.] Comparing them with others was the hard case of old; the pleading whereof by Job, David, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk, is so known, that I shall not need farther to insist upon it.

I shall not farther manifest this from the variety which is in the dispensations of God towards the men of the world, which the wisest of men can reduce to no rule of righteousness, as things pass among us Solomon acquaints us with it, Eccles. 9:11. Things are disposed of according to no rule that we may fix our expectations on; which ruined the reason of that mirror of mankind, in a natural condition, Marcus Brutus, and made him cry out, ὦ τλῆμον ἀρετή.

(3dly.) Sudden alterations. As in the case of Job, God takes a man whom

he hath blessed with choice of blessings, in the midst of a course of obedience and close walking with himself, when he expected to die in his nest, and to see good all his days;—ruins him in a moment; blasts his name, that he who was esteemed a choice saint, shall not be able to deliver himself from the common esteem of a hypocrite; slays his children; takes away his rest, health, and every thing that is desirable to him. This amazes the soul; it knows not what God is doing, nor why he pleads with it in so much bitterness. A man that either is, or may fall into such a condition, will find that he will never be able to walk with God in it, without humbling himself to the law of his providence.

(4thly.) Great, deep, and abiding distresses have the same effects with sudden alterations;—of which more afterwards.

And these are, in general, some of the things in God's providential disposal of the things of men in this world, that are too hard and wonderful for flesh and blood; wherein his paths are in the deep; which are contrary to all rules of procedure that he hath given us to judge by, who are to judge of things but once, he being to call all things to a second account.

[2.] Having given these two observations, I return to what I first proposed,—namely, the duty of humbling ourselves to the law of the providence of God, so far as it concerns us in particular.

I do not intend merely that men, in general, should be content with the dealings of God in the world; but that we should humble our hearts to him in what falls to be our share therein, though it come under any one or more of the heads of difficulty before mentioned. Our lots are various in this world: how they may be farther different before we go out of it we know not. Some are in one condition,—some in another. That we envy not one another, nor any in the world; that we repine not at God, nor charge him foolishly,—is that I aim at;—a thing sufficiently necessary in these days, wherein good men are too little able to bear their own condition, if in any thing it differs from [that of] others.

The next thing, then, is, to consider how and wherein we are to humble ourselves to the law of the providence of God. There are things on this

account which our souls are to be humbled unto:—

First. His sovereignty. May he not do what he will with his own? This is so argued out in Job that I shall need to go no farther for the confirmation of it. See chap. 33:8–13. The words are the sum of what was, or was apprehended to be, the complaint of Job,—that in the midst of his innocency and course of obedience, God dealt hardly with him, and brought him into great distresses. What is the reply hereunto? Verse 12, "Behold, in this thou art not just." It is a most unequal thing for any man to make any such complaints. Whether Job did so or not, may be disputed; but for any one to do so, is certainly most unjust. But on what ground is that asserted? See the words following: " 'God is greater than man; why strivest thou with him?' It is to no purpose to contend with him that is mightier than thou. And it is likewise unjust to do it with him, who is infinitely and incomparably so, upon the account of his absolute dominion and sovereignty. 'For,' saith he, 'He giveth no account of his matters.' He disposeth of all things as he will, and as he pleaseth." This is pursued to the utmost, chap. 34:18, 19. Men will not be forward openly to revile or repine against their governors; and what shall be said of God, who is infinitely exalted above them? Hence you have the conclusion of the whole matter, verses 31–33.

This, I say, is the first thing that we are to humble ourselves unto. Let us lay our mouths in the dust, and ourselves on the ground, and say, "It is the Lord; I will be silent, because he hath done it. He is of one mind, and who can turn him? He doth whatever he pleaseth. Am not I in his hand as clay in the hand of the potter? May he not make what kind of vessel he pleases? When I was not, he brought me out of nothing by his word. What I am, or have, is merely of his pleasure. Oh, let my heart and thoughts be full of deep subjection to his supreme dominion and uncontrollable sovereignty over me!" This quieted Aaron in his great distress; and David in his, 2 Sam. 15:25, 26; and Job in his. It is pleaded by the Lord, Jer. 10, Rom. 9:11, and innumerable other places. If we intend to walk with God, we must humble ourselves to this, and therein we shall find rest.

Second. His wisdom. He is wise also, as he speaks in derision of men's pretending to be so; indeed, God is only wise. Now, he hath undertaken to make "all things work together for good to them that love him," Rom.

8:28;—that we shall not be in heaviness unless it be needful, 1 Pet. 1:6. In many dispensations of his providence we are at a loss,—we cannot measure them by that rule. We see not how this state or condition can be good for the church in general, or us in particular. We suppose it would be more for his glory, and our advantage, if things were otherwise disposed. Innumerable are the reasonings of the hearts of the sons of men on this account; we know not the thoughts of our own souls herein, how vile they are. God will have us humble ourselves to his wisdom in all his dispensations, and to captivate our understandings thereunto. So Isa. 40:27, 28. This is that which our hearts are to rest in, when ready to repine,—there is no end of his understanding; he sees all things, in all their causes, effects, circumstances,—in their utmost reach, tendency, and correspondency. We walk in a shade, and know nothing of what is before us. The day will come when we shall see one thing set against another, and infinite wisdom shining out in them all; that all things were done in number, weight, and measure; that nothing could have been otherwise than it is disposed of, without the abridgment of the glory of God and the good of his church. Yea, I dare say, that there is no saint of God, that is distressed by any dispensation of providence, but that, if he will seriously and impartially consider his own state and condition, the frame of his heart, his temptations, and ways, with so much of the aims and ends of the Lord as will assuredly be discovered to faith and prayer, but he will have some rays and beams of infinite wisdom shining in it, tempered with love, goodness, and faithfulness. But whether for the present we have this light or not, or are left unto darkness, this is the haven and rest of our tossed souls, the ark and bosom of our peace,—to humble our souls to the infinite wisdom of God in all his procedure; and on that account quietly to commit all things to his management.

Third. His righteousness. Though God will have us acquiesce in his sovereignty, when we can see nothing else, yet he will have us know that all his ways are equal and righteous. The holy God will do no iniquity. That he is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works, is pleaded as much as any thing that he hath discovered of himself: "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Is God unjust who inflicteth vengeance? God forbid. The righteousness of God—all which springeth from, and is reduced to, the universal rectitude of his nature, in respect of the works

that he doth—is manifold. It is that which is called "Justitia regiminis,"—his righteousness in rule or government, in the dispensation of rewards and punishments,—that I am speaking of. Now, because we are not able to discern it in many particulars of his proceedings, to help us in humbling our souls unto it, take these considerations:—

First. That God judgeth not as man judgeth. Man judgeth according to the seeing of the eye, and the hearing of the ear; but God searcheth the heart. Little do we know what is in the heart of men;—what transactions there are or have been between God and them, which, if they were drawn forth, as they shall be one day, the righteousness of God in his procedure would shine as the sun. Rest on this,—we know much less of the matter on the account whereof God judgeth, than we do of the rule whereby he judges. Most things are to him otherwise than to us.

Secondly. God is the great Judge of all the world,—not of this or that particular place; and so disposeth of all as may tend to the good of the whole, and his glory in the universality of things. Our thoughts are bounded—much more our observation and knowledge—within a very narrow compass. That may seem deformed unto us which, when it lies under an eye that at once hath a prospect of the whole, is full of beauty and order. He that was able to see at once but some one small part of a goodly statue, might think it a deformed piece; when he that sees it altogether is assured of its due proportion and comeliness. All things in all places, of the ages past and to come, lie at once naked before God; and he disposes of them so as that, in their contexture and answer one to another, they shall be full of order;—which is properly righteousness.

Thirdly. God judges here, not by any final, determinate sentence, but in a way of preparation to a judgment to come. This unties all knots, and solves all difficulties whatever. This makes righteous and beautiful the deepest distresses of the godly, and the highest advancements of wicked men. And there let our souls rest themselves in quietness, Acts 17.

Fourthly. His goodness, kindness, love, tenderness. Our souls must submit themselves to believe all these to be in all God's dispensations. I shall but name that one place wherein the apostle disputes for it, Heb. 12:1–6; and add that wherewith Hosea closes his declaration of God's

various dispensations and dealings with his people, chap. 14:9.

This, now, it is to humble our souls to the law of God's providence in all his dispensations,—to fall down before his sovereignty, wisdom, righteousness, goodness, love, and mercy. And without this frame of heart, there is no walking with God; unless we intend to come into his presence to quarrel with him,—which will not be for our advantage.

This was Paul's frame, Phil. 4:11, "I have learned it," saith he; "it is not in me by nature, but I have now learned it by faith, I have humbled my soul to it," (ἐν οἷς εἰμι,)—"in the things, state, condition, good or bad, high or low, at liberty or in prison, respected or despised, in health or sickness, living or dying," (ἐν οἷς εἰμι,) "therein to bow myself to the law of the good providence of God; which is contentment." So was it also with David. Ps. 131:1: He did not exercise himself, or trouble himself, about the ways and works of God that were too high and too hard for him. How, then, did he behave himself? Verse 2: Something in his heart would have been inquiring after those things; but he quieted himself, and humbled his soul to the law of the providence of God, which hath that comfortable issue mentioned, verse 3,—an exhortation not to dispute the ways of God, but to hope and trust in him, on the account mentioned before. This is also the advice that James gives to believers of all sorts, chap. 1:9, 10. Let every one rejoice in the dispensations of God, willingly bowing their hearts to it.

This is a popular argument, of daily use. Should I insist on the reasons of it,—its consequence, effects, and advantage; its necessity, if we desire that God should have any glory, or our own souls any peace; the perfect conquest that will be obtained by it over the evil of every condition; and stretch it in application to the saddest particular cases imaginable (for all which the Scripture abounds in directions),—I should go too far out of my way.

This, then, I say, is the second thing we are to humble ourselves unto.

2. My other inquiry remains,—namely, how or by what means we are thus to humble ourselves to the law of grace and providence?

I shall but name one or two of the principal graces, in the exercise whereof this may be performed:—

(1.) Let faith have its work. There are, among others, two things that faith will do, and is suited to do, that lie in a tendency hereunto:—

[1.] It empties the soul of self. This is the proper work of faith,—to discover the utter emptiness, insufficiency, nothingness that is in man unto any spiritual end or purpose whatever. So Eph. 2:8, 9. Faith itself is of God, not of ourselves; and it teaches us to be all by grace, and not by any work of ours. If we will be any thing in ourselves, faith tells us then it is nothing to us; for it only fills them that are empty, and makes them all by grace who are nothing by self. While faith is at work, it will fill the soul with such thoughts as these: "I am nothing; a poor worm at God's disposal; lost, if not found by Christ;—have done, can do, nothing on the account whereof I should be accepted with God: surely God is to be, in all things, submitted to; and the way of his mere grace accepted." So Rom. 3:27. This is the proper work of faith,—to exclude and shut out boasting in ourselves; that is, to render us to ourselves such as have nothing at all to glory or rejoice in in ourselves, that God may be all in all. Now, this working of faith will keep the heart in a readiness to subject itself unto God in all things, both in the law of his grace and providence.

[2.] Faith will actually bring the soul to the foot of God, and give it up universally to his disposal. What did the faith of Abraham do when it obeyed the call of God? Isa. 41:2. It brought him to the foot of God. God called him, to be at his disposal universally, by faith to come to it, following him, he knew not for what, nor whither. "Leave thy father's house and kindred;"—he disputes it not, "Cast out Ishmael, whom thou lovest;"—he is gone. "Sacrifice thine only Isaac;"—he goes about it. He was brought by faith to the foot of God, and stood at his disposal for all things. This is the proper nature of faith,—to bring a man to that condition. So was it with David, 2 Sam. 15:26. This faith will do. Will God have me to suffer in my name, estate, family? "It is the LORD," saith faith. Will he have me to be poor, despised in the world,—of little or no use at all to him or his people? "Who," saith faith, "shall say to him, What doest thou?" In any state and condition, faith will find out arguments to keep the soul always at God's disposal.

(2.) Constant, abiding reverence of God will help the soul in this universal resignation, and humbling of itself. Now, this reverence of God is an awful spiritual regard of the majesty of God, as he is pleased to concern himself in us, and in our walking before him, on the account of his holiness, greatness, omniscience, omnipresence, and the like. So Heb. 12:28, 29; Ps. 89:7, 8:9.

Now, this reverence of God ariseth from three things, as is evident from the description of it:—

[1.] The infinite excellency and majesty of God and his great name. This is the apostle's motive, Heb. 12:29, 4:13. So Deut. 28:58. The excellency of God in itself, is not only such as makes wicked men and hypocrites to tremble, whenever the thoughts of it seize on them, Isa. 33:14, but also it hath filled the saints themselves with dread and terror, Hab. 3:16. Nor is there any bearing the rays of his excellency, but as they are shadowed in Christ, by whom we have boldness to approach unto him.

[2.] The infinite, inconceivable distance wherein we stand from him. Thence is that direction of the wise man to a due regard of God at all times, Eccles. 5:2: He is in heaven, whence he manifests his glorious excellency in a poor worm creeping on the mire and clay of the earth. So did Abraham, Gen. 18:27. What an inconceivable distance is there between the glorious majesty of God, and a little dust which the wind blows away and it is gone!

[3.] That this inconceivably glorious God is pleased, of his own grace, to condescend to concern himself in us poor worms, and our services, which he stands in no need of, Isa. 57:15. His eye is upon us,—his heart is towards us. This makes David break into that admiration, 1 Chron. 17:16; and should do so to us.

Now, what are the advantages of keeping alive a reverence of God in our hearts; how many ways it effectually conduces to enable us to humble our souls to the law of his grace and providence; what an issue it will put to all the reasonings of our hearts to the contrary,—I cannot stay to declare. And the improvement of these two graces, faith and reverence, is all that I

shall at present recommend unto you for the end and purpose under consideration.

But I come, in the next place, to that part of this whole discourse which was at first principally intended.

Walking Humbly With God - Sermon, Part V

WE have at large considered the nature of this duty.

III. Let us now proceed to prove the proposition at first laid down, and shut up the whole; viz.,—

Humble walking with God is the great duty and most valuable concernment of believers.

"What doth the LORD thy God require of thee?" This is sufficiently asserted in the words of the text itself, which being so emphatically proposed, stand not in need of any farther confirmation by testimony; but because this is a business the Scripture doth much abound in, I shall subjoin a single proof upon each part of the proposition,—that it is both our great duty and most valuable concernment.

For the former, take that parallel place of Deut. 10:12, 13. That which is summarily expressed in my text by walking humbly with God, is here more at large described, with the same preface, "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee?" It gives us both the root and fruit; the root, in fear and love; the fruit, in walking in God's ways and keeping his commandments. The perfection of both is, to fear and love the Lord with all the heart and all the soul, and to walk in all his ways. This is the great thing that God requires of professors.

A place of the same importance, as to the excellency of this concernment of believers, which is the second consideration of it, you have in the answer of the scribe, commended by our Saviour, Mark 12:33; as if he

should say, in these days, "This is better than all your preaching, all your hearing, all your private meetings, all your conferences, all your fastings." Whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices were then the instituted worship of God, appointed by him, and acceptable to him, as are the things which I now repeated. But all these outward things may be counterfeited,—hypocrites may perform the outward work of them, as they then offered sacrifice; but walking humbly with God cannot: nor are they, in the best of men, of any value, but as they are parts and fruits of humble walking. If in and under the performance of them there be, as there may be, a proud, unmortified heart,—not subdued to the law of the Spirit of life,—not humbled in all things to walk with God; both they and their performance are abhorred of God. So that, though these things ought to be done, yet our great concernment lies, as to the main, in humble walking: "Only let your conversation be as becometh the gospel."

This is the import of the expression at the beginning of the verse,— "What doth the LORD thy God require of thee?" Thou mayest cast about in thy thoughts to other things, wherein either thyself may be more delighted, or, as thou supposest, may be more acceptable to God. Be not mistaken; this is the great thing that he requires of thee,—to walk humbly with him.

The grounds of it are:—

1. Every man is most concerned in that which is his great end; the bringing about of that is of most importance to him; the great exercise of his thoughts is,—whether he shall succeed as to this or not. The chief end of believers is, the glory of God. This, I say, is so, or ought to be so. For this purpose they were made, redeemed to this purpose, and purchased to be a peculiar people. Now, the Scripture everywhere teaches, that the great means of our glorifying God, is by our humble walking with him, according as it was before described. John 15:8, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit." You may have many thoughts that God is glorified by works of miracles, and the like, amazing and dazzling the eyes of the world. Be it so; but in the most eminent manner, it is by your bearing fruit. You know the general rule that our Saviour gives his followers, Matt. 5:16. It is from our good works that men give glory to God. Which advice is again renewed by the Holy Ghost, 1 Pet. 2:12.

Now, there are sundry ways whereby glory redounds to God by believers' humble walking with him:—(1.) It gives him the glory of the doctrine of grace. (2.) It gives him the glory of the power of his grace. (3.) It gives him the glory of the law of his grace,—that he is a king obeyed. (4.) It gives him the glory of his justice. (5.) It gives him the glory of his kingdom;—first, in its order and beauty; secondly, in multiplying his subjects:—

(1.) It gives God the glory of the doctrine of grace, or of the doctrine of the gospel; which is therefore called "The glorious gospel of God," because it so brings glory to him. Walking according to this rule, we adorn the doctrine of the gospel in all things. So the apostle tells us, Tit. 2:11, 12: "This is that which this grace teacheth us; the substance is, to walk humbly with God." And when men professing it walk answerable to it, it is rendered glorious. When the world shall see that these are the fruits which that doctrine produceth, they must needs magnify it. The pride, folly, and wickedness of professors, hath been the greatest obstacle that ever the gospel received in this world. Nor will it, by any endeavours whatever, be advanced, until there be more conformity unto it in them who make the greatest profession of it. Then is the word glorified, when it hath a free course and progress, 2 Thess. 3:1; which it will not have without the humble walking of professors. What eminent gifts are poured out in the days wherein we live! what light is bestowed! what pains in preaching! how is the dispensation of the word multiplied!—yet how little ground is got by it! how few converted! The word hath a free course in preaching, but is not glorified in acceptable obedience. Is it not high time for professors and preachers to look at home, whether the obstacle lie not in ourselves? Do we not fortify the world against the doctrine we profess, by the fruits of it they see in ourselves, and our own ways? Do they not say of us, "These are our new lights and professors; proud, selfish, worldly, unrighteous; negligent of the ordinances themselves profess to magnify; useless in their places and generations;—falling into the very same path which they condemn in others"? Perhaps they may deal falsely and maliciously in these things; but is it not high time for us to examine ourselves, lest, abounding in preaching and talking, we have forgot to walk humbly with God;—and so, not glorifying the gospel, have hindered the free course of its work and efficacy?

(2.) Humble walking with God gives him the glory of the power of his grace,—his converting, sanctifying grace. When the world shall see a poor, proud, selfish, rebellious, froward, perhaps dissolute and debauched creature, made gentle, meek, humble, self-denying, sober, useful,—they cannot but inquire after the secret and hidden virtue and power which principled such a change. This is given as the glory of the grace that was to be administered under the gospel,—that it should change the nature of the vilest men;—that it should take away cruelty from the wolf, and violence from the leopard, rage from the lion, and poison from the asp,—making them gentle and useful as the kid and the calf, the cow and the ox, Isa. 11:6–9. It is not in our nature to humble ourselves to walk with God; we have an opposition to it and all parts of it: no angels or men can persuade us to it. Our carnal mind is enmity to him, not subject to his law,—nor can be. To have our souls humbled, brought to the foot of God, made always ready, willing, obedient, turned in their whole course, changed in all their ways and principles;—this glorifies the grace of God which is dispensed in Christ; by which alone it is that the work is wrought. When men make profession to have received converting and renewing grace from God, and so separate themselves from the men of the world on that account, yet live as they do, or worse, so that their ways and walking are contemptible to all;—it is the greatest reproach imaginable to that work of grace which they make profession of.

(3.) This gives God the glory of his law, whereby he requires this obedience at our hands. The obedience of them that are subject to it, sets forth the glory of the wisdom, goodness, and power of the lawgiver in that law. But this may be referred to the first head.

(4.) It gives him the glory of his justice, even in this world. There are two sorts of people in the world; the children of God, and others. Temptations lie on both, in reference to each other. The children of God are often disturbed by the outward prosperity of the wicked: the men of the world, at the public claim which they [the children of God] make in the privilege of God's love and protection: "Why they rather than others,—than we?" For the first, we know upon what principle they are to satisfy themselves. For the latter, this gives God the glory of his justice, when those whom he owns in this world, who expect a crown of reward from him, do walk

humbly with him. So the apostle, 2 Thess. 1:4, 5, "Your patience and faith in tribulation," saith he to the saints, "is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God, that ye may be counted worthy of his kingdom." Their patient and humble walking will be an evidence to convince even the world of the righteous justice of God, in rewarding of them and rejecting of itself. Though eternal life be the gift of God, and chiefly respects the praise of his glorious grace in Jesus Christ, yet God intending to bestow it on us in a way of reward, he will therein visibly glorify his justice also. Now, this gives a foretaste of it unto men, when they shall see those whom he will reward to walk humbly with him; wherein it may appear that his ways are equal, and his judgment righteous; or, as the apostle speaks, "according to truth."

(5.) It gives him the glory of his kingdom, in being an effectual means for the increase of the number of his subjects, and so the propagation of it in the world.

Now, if on all these, and on sundry other considerations, God be glorified in a humble walking with him, beyond any thing else in this world; this humble walking must certainly be the great and incomparable concernment of all them whose chief end is the advancement of the glory of God.

2. It is our great concernment, because God is greatly delighted in it; it is well-pleasing to him. The humble walking of professors is the great delight of the soul of God,—all that he hath in this world to delight in. If this be our aim, if this be our great interest,—that we may please God, that he may delight in us, and rejoice over us; this is the way whereby it is to be done, Isa. 57:15, "As I dwell," saith God, "in the high and holy place, —delight to abide in the heavens, where I manifest my glory; so I dwell with the humble and contrite spirit with delight and joy." Men in an opposition to this frame, be they what they will else in outward profession, are proud men. Nothing takes away pride in the sight of God but this humble walking with him. Now, "the proud he knoweth afar off," Ps. 138:6; he takes notice of them with scorn and indignation; they are to him an abominable thing. It is three times solemnly asserted in the Scriptures, that God resisteth the proud, or scorneth the scorner, and giveth grace to the humble and lowly, Prov. 3:34; James 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5.

God scorns, abominates, resists, and sets himself against such men; but he gives grace or favour to the lowly, to the humble. This is admirably set out, Isa. 66:1–3. He deals there with a professing people,—men that in all they did, said, "Let the LORD be glorified," verse 5. These men, aiming at acceptance with him, and to have him delight in them, pretended principally two things:—

(1.) The glory of the temple,—that high and holy house that was built to his own name. Says God, as to this, "Do you think that I have any need of it, or any delight in it, as it is such a goodly and glorious fabric in your eyes? The heaven is my throne," saith he, "and the earth my footstool; my hands have made all these things,—what need have I of the house you have built, or what delight in it?"

(2.) They pleaded his worship and service; the duties they performed therein,—their sacrifices and oblations,—praying, hearing. "Alas!" saith God, "all these things I abhor." And so he compares them to the things which his soul did most hate, and which he had most severely forbid, verse 3. But if God will take delight in none of these things,—if neither temple nor ordinances, worship nor duty of religion, will prevail,—what is it that he delights in? Saith the Lord, ' "To this man will I look;" I will rejoice over him, and rest in my love.' Let now the proud Pharisee come and boast his righteousness, his duties, his worship, and performances;—the eye of God is on the poor creature behind the door, that is crying, "God be merciful to me, a sinner;" that is, giving himself up to sovereign mercy, and following after him upon that account. We have got a holiness that puffeth up, that in some hath little other fruit but "Stand from me; I am holier than thou." God delights not in it. It is a hard thing to excel in humble walking; it [i.e., to excel, distinction] is easier obtained by other ways; but God delights not in them.

3. It is our great concernment, because this makes us alone eminently conformable to Jesus Christ. When the church is raised up to an expectation of his coming, she is bid to look for him as one "meek and lowly," Zech. 9:9. And when he calls men to a conformity to his example, this he proposes to them. "Learn of me," saith he, Matt. 11:29. What shall we learn of him? what doth he propose to our imitation?—that we should work miracles? walk on the sea? open blind eyes? raise the dead? speak

as never man spake? "No," saith he; "this is not your concernment; but 'learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest for your souls.'" ' "Let this mind be in you," saith the apostle, "that was in Jesus Christ," Phil. 2:5. What mind was this? He describes it in the next verse,—in his humbling, emptying himself, making himself poor, nothing, that he might do the will of God; coming to his foot, waiting for his command, doing his will cheerfully and readily. "Let," saith he, "this mind be in you, to be like Christ in this." I might go over all the contents of humble walking with God, and show the excellency of Jesus Christ in them, and how our conformity to Christ doth principally consist therein; but I must hasten.

4. I might farther evince it, by an induction of the promises that are made unto humble walking with God. But this would be a long work, to insist on the most considerable particulars; so that I shall wholly omit it.

5. It will appear so by comparing it with any thing else wherein men may suppose their interest and concernment to lie:—

(1.) Some men (I speak of professors) live as though their great concernments were in heaping up to themselves the things of this world. Their hearts are devoured with cares about them, and their thoughts taken up with them. This I shall not so much as compare with humble walking with God; nor make it my business—from the vanity, uncertainty, uselessness as to any eternal end, unsatisfactoriness, attendings of fear, care, and love—to manifest their great incompetency once to come into consideration in this inquiry, as to what is the great concernment of a professor.

(2.) There are others whose designs lie after greatness, high places, esteem in the world,—to be somebody in their days; outrunning the providence and call of God to that end; and who make this their business and interest, without farther consideration. But we may say the same of these as of the former,—their way is folly, though they that follow them should praise their sayings.

(3.) There are those whose aim is to be learned indeed, and so accounted. This they make their work; on this they set up their rest; this takes up

their time and strength. If this succeed, all is well;—they have their hearts' desire. The beauty of this also is fully sullied, and the vanity of it hath been discovered by many, and the shame of its nakedness made to appear. Is this thy great concernment? Dost thou waste thy time and spirit about it? Is this the bosom of thy rest? Hast thou here laid up thy glory? and dost thou aim at this as thy end? Poor creature! thou snuffest up the empty wind. All this while God may abhor thee; and thy learning will never swell to such a greatness as that the door of hell will not be wide enough to receive thee. The vanity, vexation, dreadfulness, emptiness, of this concernment may be easily discovered.

Nay, put all these together; suppose thou hadst high places, learning, and an answerable repute and credit to them all,—that thou hadst on these heads all that thy heart can desire, and more than ever man had before thee,—would it all give rest to thy soul? Canst thou not look through it all? Why, then, dost thou spend thy strength for a thing of nought? Why is the flower of thy spirit laid out about these things, that indeed are not, or are as a thing of nought? But,—

(4.) Some men's great concernment seems to lie in a profession of religion. So they may attain to that, and therewithal a name to live, it doth suffice. Whether this humble walking with God, in any of the causes or effects of it, be found on them, they are not solicitous. That men may not rest here, give me leave to offer two or three considerations:—

[1.] All that they do may be counterfeited; and so, wherein is its excellency? It may be done by him who hath not the least of God or Christ in him. Hypocrites may hear much, pray often, speak of God and the things of God, perform all duties of religion, excel in gifts and parts, be forward in profession to a great repute,—and yet be hypocrites still.

[2.] All this hath been done by them who have perished. Many who are now in hell have done all these things, and went down to the pit with the burden of their profession and duties at their back. I could reckon up instances. And let me but try this foundation, which safely I may,—namely, that whatever excellencies have been found in hypocrites and perishing souls, may all meet in one, and yet he be an hypocrite still,—and I shall merit easily the best [repute] of mere profession. Take the zeal

of Jehu, the hearing of Herod, the praying of the Pharisee, the fasting of the Jews, Isa. 58, the joy of the stony ground, and you may dress up a perishing soul to a proportion of profession beyond what the most of us attain unto.

[3.] It is useless in the world. I shall freely say, Take away this humble walking, and all profession is a thing of nought; it doth no good at all in the world. Is it for the advantage of mankind, that a man should have credit and repute in religion, and cannot give an instance scarce that any man, high or low, rich or poor, hath been the better for him in the world? that they who should do good to all, do good to none at all? Is this being fruitful in the gospel? is this studying the good works that are profitable to all?—is this doing good to mankind in the places wherein we are?

[4.] This is the readiest way for a man to deceive himself to eternity. He that would go down to the pit in peace, let him keep up duties in his family and closet; let him hear as often as he can have an opportunity; let him speak often of good things; let him leave the company of profane and ignorant men, until he have obtained a great repute for religion; let him preach and labour to make others better than he is himself; and, in the meantime, neglect to humble his heart to walk with God in a manifest holiness and usefulness, and he will not fail of his end.

Let me not be mistaken. God forbid I should countenance profane men in their contempt of the ways of God, and the reproaches of hypocrisy that they are ready to cast upon the best of the saints of God; I say, God forbid. Nor let me be interpreted in the least to plead for men who satisfy themselves in a righteousness without these things,—whom I look upon as men ignorant wholly of the mystery of God and the Father, and of Christ, and evidently uninterested in the covenant of grace. No; this is all I aim at,—I would not have professors flatter themselves in a vain, empty profession, when the fruits they bear of envy, hatred, pride, folly, proclaim that their hearts are not humbled to walk with God. Will, then, these, or any of these things, stand in competition with that which we propose for the great concernment of souls? Doubtless, in comparison of it, they are all a thing of nought.

Use 1. Is humble walking with God our great concernment? Let us make it

our business and our work to bring our hearts unto it all our days. What do we, running out of the way all the day long, spending our strength for that which is not bread? My business is not,—whether I be rich or poor, wise or unwise, learned or ignorant; whether I shall live or die; whether there shall be peace or war with the nations; whether my house shall flourish or wither; whether my gifts be many or few, great or small, whether I have good repute or bad repute in the world;—but only, whether I walk humbly with God or not. As it is with me in this respect, so is my present condition,—so will be my future acceptance. I have tired myself about many things;—this one is necessary. What doth the Lord my God require of me, but this? What doth Christ call for, but this? What doth the whole sanctifying work of the Holy Ghost tend to, but that I may walk humbly with God?

Give me leave to name a motive or two unto it:—

(1.) In humble walking with God we shall find peace in every condition. "Learn of me; for I am meek and lowly: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." "Let war come on the nation,—I shall have peace. Let a consumption come on my estate,—I shall have peace. Let nearest relations be taken away,—I shall have peace." The soul that sets up its rest, and makes it its great concernment to walk humbly with God, is brought to his foot, bent to his will, is ready for his disposal; and whatever God does in the world with himself, his, or others, he hath peace and quietness in it. His own will is gone, the will of God is his choice; his great concernment lies not in anything that can perish, that can be lost.

(2.) We shall also find comfort. Mephi-bosheth cried, "Let all go, seeing the king is come in peace; which was all that I desired." When a man shall see, in the worst state and condition, that his great concernment is safe; that though all is lost, God, who is all, is not lost; that this can never be taken from him;—it fills his heart with delight. Is he in prosperity? he fears not the loss of that which he most values. Is he in adversity? yet he can walk with God still; which is his all. He can therefore glory in tribulations, rejoice in afflictions;—his treasure, his concernment is secure.

(3.) This alone will make us useful in our generation, and fruitful in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. On this depends all the glory we bring to God, and all the good we do to men.

Let us, then, make this our business,—aim at it; and, in the strength of Christ, we shall have peace in it.

Use 2. To humble us all, that we have spent so much of our time and days in and about things wherein we are indeed so little concerned, let us a little bring our ways and affairs to the balance of the sanctuary. One hath risen early, gone to bed late, and worn out himself to increase knowledge and learning. What is it, when we have done?—an engine in the hand of Satan to puff us up with pride and folly; a diversion from the knowledge of Christ, full of vexation of spirit. How many other things have entangled us! What weight have we laid upon them! How have we put a value upon that profession, which hath been a shame rather than an honour to the gospel! The Lord forgive us our folly, in spending ourselves in and about things wherein we are so little concerned; and help us, that our mistake be not at last found out to be fatal! Could we seriously take a view of our ways and time, and see how much of it we have spent in and about things that indeed will, in the issue, do us no good; it would certainly fill our souls with a great deal of shame and confusion.

Use 3. As to them who seem not at all to be concerned in this business, who never made it their design in their lives to walk with God in the way that hath been spoken to; let me tell such,—

(1.) It is more than probable that they may be apt to take advantage at what hath been spoken against empty professors and profession; to triumph in their thoughts against them all, and say, "Such, indeed, they are, and no better." If so, it is possible that this discourse, through the just judgment of God, may tend to their farther hardening in their sin,—pride and folly. What is the Lord's intendment towards you, I know not. It is my duty to warn you of it. Some that are professors may fail of the mark of our high calling; but you that are none, can never attain it: but take heed that this be not the issue of this dispensation of the word towards you. I had rather never speak more in this place, than speak any one word with an intention to give you an advantage against professors. If

you take it, it will be your ruin.

(2.) Consider this,—if the righteous be scarcely saved, where will you, and such as you, bitter scoffers, neglecters of ordinances, haters of the power of godliness and the purity of religion, appear? You whose pride and folly, or whose formality, lukewarmness, and superstition, whose company and society, whose ways and daily walking, proclaim you to be wholly strangers to this concernment of believers,—I say, what will be your lot and portion?

(3.) Consider how useless you are in this world. You bring no glory to God, but dishonour; and whereas by any outward acts you may suppose you do good sometimes to men, know that you do more hurt every day than you do good all your lives. How many are by you ensnared into hell! how many hardened! how many destroyed, by living in formality or profaneness!

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