



SERMON IV.

QUESTION II.

 **W**HAT RULE hath God given to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy Him?

ANSWER.

The **WORD** of God (which is contained in the Scriptures of the *Old & New Testament*) is the **ONLY** Rule to direct us, how we may glorify and enjoy Him.

 **E**VERY wise Agent always observes this method: he first propounds an *End* to himself, and fixeth upon it, and then he sets himself to study and find out proper & suitable *Means*, which he may improve in his regular pursuance of it. This Scheme, Idea, or Exemplar of the means, and the way rightly to apply them to his purpose, is that which is called his *Rule of Operation*. And such a Rule is requisite in order to the practice of every *Art*; and he that is thoroughly acquainted with it, and dexterous at it, may only be called an *Artist*. Such a method as this is followed in our *Catechism*, in laying down the Doctrine of Religion or Divinity. Having therefore rightly stated and limited man's great *End*, in the former question, there remains nothing but to set him in the *Way* to his unfailling obtainment of it; which is the design of all that follows. And there are two things here requisite, *viz.* that we be *satisfied about our Rule*,

and that we be well *acquainted with the Contents of it*. The former is endeavoured in the Question we are now upon; the latter is pursued in those that follow after.

THE main scopethen of the present Inquiry, is about *the Rule it self*. Man's happiness is a great and momentous thing; if he mis of that, he hath laboured in vain. He had need therefore have a *sure & unerring Rule*, to direct him thereunto, that he be not deceived & disappointed; because his loss will be irreparable. We are therefore *here* pointed to this Rule, and have it characterized unto us.

FOR a right Understanding, and full Explication of this Question and Answer; there are these things will call for our distinct Consideration. (1.) That Man *must* have a Rule to direct him, or else he can never attain to his chief end. (2.) That this Rule can be but *one*. (3.) That the *Word of God* is the *only* Rule. (4.) That this word, which is the Rule, is contained in the *Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*.

Prop. I. **THAT** Man *must* have a **RULE** to direct him, with which he is well acquainted; or else he can never attain to his chief End. There are two things contained in the Proposition. (1.) That there must be a Rule. (2.) That we must have *Acquaintance* with it. Both these may be evidenced.

Article 1. **THERE** *must* be a Rule. Man cannot be led to his End *without* one. The necessity of Man's having a Rule, may be argued from two Considerations.

[1.]

[1.] FROM the Consideration of *the Respect which Man bears to his End*: and that whether lookt upon in a state of *Integrity* or of *Apostasy*.

(1.) LOOK upon him in his *Primitive Perfection*, standing in his *Integrity*; and here he could never reach his *End* without a *Rule*. The following *Conclusions* will evidence the *Truth* of this *Affertion*.

1. *MAN* was not made happy. That *Man* was (strictly speaking) neither happy nor miserable in his *first* state, is a *Truth* undeniable, if we do but acknowledge his happiness to consist in his *attaining his chief End*, and his misery in his *missing* or falling short of it. He was *fit* for happiness, inasmuch as he had all that stock of *Grace* put into his hands, which was sufficient by *improvement* to make him happy. There was nothing wanting in that *Image of God*, which he had stamped upon him: And yet he was capable of *losing* his *felicity*, and becoming *unhappy*; being made mutable, and capable of losing that *Image*, as the *Event* unhappily proved. *Man* was therefore at first made a *probationer* for happiness: and that by the law of *Special Government*.

2. *HAPPINESS* was proposed to *Man* at first in a *Covenant-Way*. That there was a *Covenant* between *God & Adam*, the *Scripture* assures us, and gives us an account of the *Nature* and *Terms* of it. Now in a *Covenant* there are always those two things, *Something promised* upon condition on one part, and the *conditions required* on the other part, in order to the obtaining it. The *Thing* proposed to *Man* in the first *Covenant* was *Happiness*. The *manner* of proposing it, was by telling him *how he was to come by it*, if ever he expected to become the owner of it. The *Terms* therefore so run, *Do & Live*, Rom. 10. 5.

3. *HENCE* there was a *fixed or stated way*, to which *Man's* being made happy was *restrained*. For, if *Happiness* were not promised to man *absolutely*, but *hypothetically*, it must needs depend upon that *hypothesis*; and the performance of the *Condition* is the *way* to his *felicity*: and that this was *fixed*, is therein evident, because together with a *firm Promise* made to him, That if he obeyed, he should be happy, there was as strong a *Threatning*, That if he came short of it, he should undoubtedly be miserable, Gen. 2. 17.

4. *HE* could neither find nor keep this way, without a *Rule of direction*; and consequently could never have reached blessedness. He could never have known, when he *serv'd* to his end, or when he *miss'd* of it. He had been lost in a wilderness, out of which he could not have gotten, but must have been at an utter *Loss*. In summ, there was a *Medium* between a state of *Innocence*, and a state of *Felicity*: there was a way to pass safe to it, and a way to miss of it. And to enable him to chuse the one, and avoid the other, he must have a *Rule*.

(2.) *MUCH* more does *Man* need a *Rule*, if we look upon him in his state of *Apostasy*. And this is that which we are mostly concerned in; for that is the *Condition* of all *Adam's* *Posterity*. That fallen *Man* needs a *Rule* to guide him to *Salvation*, will appear if we consider, —

1. *THAT Sin* hath made him truly & woefully

Miserable and Wretched. He is not only not happy, but he is fallen from that *Nearness* to it, in which he once stood, into a great *Distance* from *Felicity*. He is separated from his end, is fallen short of the *Glory of God*, (Rom. 3. 23.) and is removed from the *Enjoyment* of him, (Isa. 59. 2.) and because in these Two, his *Blessedness* did consist, the *loss* of them declares him wretched.

2. *THAT* if ever fallen *Man* recover happiness, he must be brought back again to his *great End* of his. As long as he is out of his road, nothing but *destruction* and *misery* are in his ways, (Rom 3. 16.) He can never be truly blessed, but only in the glorifying *God*, and enjoying him; because happiness is only in reaching his chief end.

3. *THERE* is something required of man, in order to his recovering his *Felicity*. He is not only to be passive, but *active* too in this affair. There is *Faith* in *Christ*, and new *Obedience* requisite, as will afterwards appear. As man was at first made capable of being happy in a *Covenant-way*: So fallen man is recovered to *Blessedness* in a *Covenant-way*. Hence the terms are declared in the *Gospel*. See *Mark* 16. 16. *Rom.* 8. 13. *Heb.* 12. 14.

4. *HENCE* he must have a *Rule* for this. The *Gospel* must have its *Precepts*, as well as the *Law*. Fallen *Man* cannot steer his course without a *Compass*. The *gate* is *strait*, and the *way* is *narrow*, and few find it. (Mat. 7. 14.) It is vain for him to endeavour it, unless he have a *Clue* to direct him.

THAT *Man* must have a *Rule* further appears, —

[2.] FROM the Consideration of *the nature of a Rule*. A *Rule* is nothing else but that whereby a man is guided so to do his *Work*, as to *suete it to the End* and *Use* for which he doth it: and the reason of it is, because he may else miss, and so lose his *Labour*. There is necessarily requisite a *Sutableness* between the *Means*, and the *End*, for which they are used: Else means are vain. The right *sueting* of them, 'tis the nature of a *Rule* to discover: and no man can be an *Artist* in any employment without it. And how then shall *Man* work out his *Salvation*, if he have no such *Direction*?

Articl. 2. *THAT* *Man* must have *Acquaintance* with this *Rule*. It is not enough that there be one, but he must be *skilled* in it. To clear this, Consider —

1. *MAN* is made a *Cause* by *Counsel* of his own *Actions*. *God* hath given him an *understanding*, capable of discerning; and a *will*, able to choose his way. This is a *priviledge* bestowed upon *Man* above all other *Creatures* in this lower *World*. Job 35. 11. *God* teacheth us more than the *beasts* of the earth, and maketh us wiser than the *fowls* of heaven.

2. *GOD* deals with man in a way that is suited to his *Nature*. He treats him as a *Reasonable Creature*. He suetes his state to his *Constitution*, accommodates it to such a sort of *Being*. Inferior *Beings* have a *Rule*, as well as *Man*: But *God* guides them only by *Instinct*. They cannot know their *Rule*. It is sufficient for

them, that He knows it, and hath imprinted it upon their Natures. But God deals with Man in a way of *Precepts, Promises, & Threatnings*, which is a *Moral Way*. The whole Scripture gives us account of this manner of God's treating Man.

3. *HENCE Man can never attain his End, without he knows his Rule.* The Service God expects of Man is a *reasonable Service*, (Rom. 12, 1.) He must be *voluntary* in his Obedience: God requires the *Heart*. He must *choose* the ways of God: And how can he do so, except he *knows* them? For this reason it is said, that *without knowledge* the mind of Man cannot be good, and that a people are *destroyed* for lack of Knowledge. There is no such thing as blind Obedience in Religion.

Prop. II. *THAT this Rule can be but ONE.* This Proposition is not so to be understood, as if there were not *many particular Rules* prescribed, to be followed by men, in order to Salvation. Out of doubt, so many several *Precepts* as are laid down in Scripture, are so many particular Rules to direct us in our way. But the meaning is, that there is but one *System* or *Body of Rules*; but one *Directory*, according to which he can so order his way as to be happy. This is called a *Rule*, Gal. 6. 16. And that this is but *One*, will appear, if we consider these Arguments.

1. *THAT Man's Happiness depends upon his performing the Conditions of the Covenant, in which it is offered to him.* God is the Author of Blessedness, and it is his free gift. He therefore hath sovereign arbitrary Authority to propose the *Terms* on which he will bestow it: and having so done, if Man expects to be happy, he must see to the fulfilment of *those Terms*; else he can never lay Claim or pretend a Title to it. Nay, if he miss of the *Condition* of the promise, he presently brings himself under the *Threatning*; and for this reason Precepts are not only given affirmatively, but *negatively* too.

2. *THAT there is but one Way, in one Covenant, according to which God hath engaged to make Man happy.* It is true, there are two Covenants, in which God hath been concerned with Man; the Covenant of *Works*, and the Covenant of *Grace*: and these have their *several* ways and rules. In the *first*, Man was to be made happy by *Works*; in the *second*, by *Grace*. The former depended upon man's *personal Obedience*: the latter upon *Christ's*. The former called for *doing*, the other for *believing*. But each of them have their *limited* way. And man being *fallen* from the first Covenant-Condition, and set it against him, and having lost his strength, it can *no more* be a Rule of Happiness to him. It is now only by the *New Covenant*, that he can ever hope to obtain Life & Salvation: and the Way to it, according to this Covenant, is determined; and therefore the Rule can be but one. For,

1. *THERE is no Salvation without Reconciliation to God.* As long as God and He are *Enemies*, He is unhappy. God only can save him; and he will save him only in the way of Reconciliation. Nay, he cannot be happy but in the *Enjoyment* of God; which how can he

come at, till reconciled? Till then, he is *without God*, Eph. 2. 12.

2. *THERE is but one Mediator of reconciliation, and that is Jesus Christ, as the Apostle tells us expressly, 1 Tim. 2. 4.* There is no coming to God but *by him*: out of him God is a *Consuming Fire*. He only hath satisfy'd provoked Justice, and pulled down the wall of partition. Thro' him then, and in no other way must we obtain Reconciliation.

3. *THERE is but one way to become interested in the Satisfaction of Christ, and partake in reconciliation by him; and that is by believing in him.* Joh. 3. 36. *He that believeth on the Son, hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son, shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.* Christ is not *actually* a Saviour to all men indiscriminatively, but *only* to Believers. He therefore had his Disciples to preach *That*, as the *Sum* of the Gospel. Mark 16. 15, 16. *Preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*

4. *THERE is but one way of serving God in new & evangelical Obedience, and that is by living to the will of God.* (1 Pet. 4. 2.) God hath told man *what* is his Will, wherein he expects to be served by him, (Mic. 6. 8) and this only hath a *Promise* given to it: without which, it is bold *presumption* for a man to challenge to himself a reward of Blessedness.

AND here we have an easy Resolution to that CASE which some so perplex themselves about, viz.

Quest. *WHETHER Man may be saved in any Religion, provided he be true to the Observance of it?*

Ans. TO bring this Case to the *Premises*, I'll lay down these few following Conclusions;

1. *THAT*, if there be but *one Rule* guiding to blessedness, and Man must *know* that Rule, or he cannot be blessed, then no Religion can save a Man, but that only in which this Rule is made known. Hence therefore the Word of God discovers the *miser* of men who are *Strangers* to this Rule. The Apostle argues, Rom. 10. 14. *How shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? How shall man guide his steps to Life, if he have not a discovery of the Way? Or guide them right, if he have not the true Way? The Wise Man tells us, Where there is no Vision, the people perish,* Prov. 29. 18.

2. *THAT* there may be *different Sets* in Religion, and yet men may be *saved* in them. We are to distinguish between *diverse Religions*, and *Diversity in Religion*. Through our knowing *but in part*, it is come to pass, that Professors of Christianity have been of diverse Opinions in many things; and their difference hath occasioned several *Denominations*; but while they agree in the *Foundation*, they may be saved. So Paul assures us, 1 Cor. 3. 11, 12, &c.

3. *THAT* there are *Religions* in the World, that not only have *no discoveries* of this one Rule, but prescribe to men *Rules contradictory* thereunto. The Truth of this Assertion cannot be suspected, by him that hath but a little Acquaintance

quaintance with the several Religions, which the Children of Men have taken up, and followed. If we look upon all the Sects of the *Gentile* Religion, we shall not find in them any the least footsteps of man's Salvation by *Christ*, and faith in him. They have set up *Idolatrous* Worship, and served gods of their own making, bowed down to stocks and stones: among Twenty Thousand gods, have mist of the *true One*; have betook themselves to moral *Virtues*, as the way to felicity; and though they had *Sacrifices*, yet they neither used them as *typical* shadows of *Christ*, nor did they offer them to *GOD*, but to *Devils*. If we look upon the *Mahometan*; though they do in word acknowledge *God* and *Christ*, yet they neither acknowledge *Christ* as a *Redeemer*, nor do they prescribe *faith* in him as necessary, nor yet do they acknowledge his *Laws*; but set up *their own* in Opposition to his. If we consider the *Anti-Christians*; whatever pretence they make, yet they have *subverted* this Rule, in the foundations of it; inasmuch as they have joyned *other* Mediators unto *Christ*; have *enervated* faith in his *Righteousness* for Justification & Salvation; and brought back a Covenant of *Works*; have set up their own *Canons*, not only in equality with, but in *Opposition* to his Commands; and because they loved not the Truth, have been left to *believe Lies*.

4. HENCE the *closer* such men follow *these Religions*, the further they are from *Happiness*; because they thereby keep at the greater *distance* from the *only Rule* of Salvation. They mistake, that think *conscientious* following an erroneous Rule, is a *Salve* for the Errors of it. Ignorance is a damning evil; and Ignorance in the Understanding will beget *Error* in the *Conscience*, and there is no reason why God should not punish Sin in the *Conscience*, as well as Sin in the *Will*.

IT therefore tells us, that it is a matter of great, yea infinite Concernment to us, that we labour to be *rightly acquainted* with the Rule we are to follow in our pursuit of happiness; and therefore that we do not take it upon Credit; but make *diligent inquiry* to know, what is the good & perfect and acceptable Will of God, lest otherwise we take a great deal of pains to *no purpose*, and following a *false* guide, do in the end miss of, and finally fall altogether short of our desired Salvation.

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SERMON V.

Prop. III. THAT the WORD of GOD