

S E R M O N CXLVIII.

Q U E S T I O N XL.

WHAT did GOD at first reveal to Man as the Rule of his Obedience?

A N S W E R.

THE Rule which GOD at first revealed to Man for his Obedience was the Moral Law.

WE have under the former taken an Account of Man's Duty in general; both that there is a Duty which he owes to God, and what it is, viz. *Obedience to his revealed Will.* And this presumes that there is some Revelation, that God hath made of his Will to Man, by which he may know, what is his Duty, and how he is to discharge it. Now the very Nature of this Obedience, supposeth a Rule, and points us to enquire after it; for
except



except we are acquainted with that, we shall be at a loss to know what is Man's Duty, nor shall we rightly understand what is the Misery that he is under by the Apostacy. There are three Propositions lying before us, the clearing up whereof will give us light into this Affair; viz. 1. That God did at first give to Man, a Rule for his Obedience. 2. That this Rule was the Moral Law. 3. That by giving him this Rule, he did reveal to him, what was his Duty.

I. THAT God did at first give to Man a Rule for his Obedience. Man no sooner came out of God's Hand by Creation, but he had a Directory afforded him, which pointed him how he was to live and please God. That Man had such a Law given him from the first will appear, because Man could not have otherwise served to the end of his Creation. So that both the Wisdom of God, the Nature of Man, and the End he was made for, require it. And this will be more distinctly evident by the following Conclusions,

1. THAT Man was made to glorify God actively. God made all things for his own Glory, *Prov. 16. 4.* For he must needs be his own last End, in all his Works of Efficiency. As all proceeded from him, so all must return to him again, *Rom. 11. 36. For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.* But all things were not alike capable of paying him this Tribute, by reason of the diverse Natures and Powers put into them. Some things therefore could only passively glorify him, being myrrours of his Perfections, in which they were to be read, *Psal. 19. 1. 2. The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament sheweth his handy work. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.* But having placed Man in a superiour order of Being, he expected of him an active Service. Hence that, *Isai. 43. 21. This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* *Psal. 145. 10.*

2. THAT Man might glorify God actively, he was to do it as a Cause by Counsel. It is certain, that God can be actively glorified, by no other but a Reasonable Creature, which having an Understanding to judge, and a Will to chuse or refuse, doth deliberately & voluntarily give unto him the Glory that is due to him; and consequently, in no other Actions doth he so glorify him, but such as proceed from this Principle. *Psal. 47. 7. For God is the king of all the earth, sing ye praises with understanding.*

3. THAT Man as a Cause by Counsel then only glorifies God, when he conforms himself to his Will. It is not Man's merely using of his Understanding and Will as a Reasonable Creature, that brings Glory to God actively. Nay, because these are depraved by Sin since the Fall, he too often dishonours God by so doing. It is only by a free and willing complying with God's revealed Will, that we can honour him. *1 Pet. 4. 2. That he should no longer live the rest of his time in the flesh, to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.*

4. THAT he may so conform, it is necessary that he know this Will of God. It is true, all second Beings do in all their Operations, fulfil the Will or Pleasure of God. But for passive Obedience, it is not necessary that they know it, but it sufficeth, that God know his own purpose concerning them, and governs them by a Law which he hath in his Decree laid out to himself, under the powerful influence whereof he holds them; nor can they go an hairs breadth besides it. *Eph. 1. 11.* But the case is otherwise in respect of Man, as to his active conformity. It is not sufficient that he doth the thing that God wills, but he must do it upon choice, and as it is God's Will, that he may therein please him; which it is impossible for him to do, except he be acquainted with it. And therefore the want of this Knowledge, is inevitably destructive to Man. *Hos. 4. 6. My people are destroyed for lack of vision.*

5. THAT he may so know it, he must have a Rule given him by which he may discover it. The Obligation lying on Man to conform to God's Will, necessarily supposeth, that there is right and wrong, and that the Man may as well miss as go right. Now there can be no other way for him deliberately to take the right, and avoid the wrong, but by having a Rule before him, according to which, to make a judgment of things; for it is of the nature of a Rule to put a difference between that which is straight, and that which is crooked. Hence that, *Mich. 6. 8. He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?*

6. HENCE if Man had been any time without this Rule, he had been so long at a loss about his Duty. For without this, he could not have known how to take one right step in pursuit of his great End: He would therefore have been without one main part of his Furniture for the Service he was made for, and God would so long unavoidably have lost his Glory by him, as he was a Man; which was altogether inconsistent with the Divine Wisdom.

7. IT was of infinite Concernment, that Man should practise this Conformity, because his Happiness or Misery were to turn upon it. Besides the common Government of God, under which Man was placed equally with other Creatures, there was a special Government, in which only intelligent Beings were concerned, in which God would lead them to an Everlasting State of Happiness or Misery, which was to terminate according to his Carriage in respect to the rule of Obedience given him, with these Sanctions. Because therefore Man was made to be under this Government, he had the rule of conformity to the Law of it, given him as soon as he was made, else the Sanctions of it could not have taken hold of him.

II. THAT this Rule was the Moral Law. For a more distinct laying of this open, we may Inquire, 1. What we are to understand by the Moral

Moral Law? 2. *Whether all Mankind are under the obligation of Obedience to this Law?* 3. *Whether the Fall do not take off this Obligation, or it continues still?* 4. *To what Use the Moral Law is still serviceable to fallen Man?*
 1. *WHAT we are to understand by the Moral Law?*

Ans. I shall not here inquire into the Parts of it, which will afterwards come to be considered off: But only consider it as distinct from all other Laws whatsoever. Which may be laid open in this Description; *The moral Law is a Divine Unchangeable Rule given to Man, and accommodated to his Nature, as he was created by God, obliging him to serve to God's Glory as his last End.* In the opening of which Description, we may observe, both *wherein it agrees with, and wherein it differs from all other Laws?* To make way to which, we may take notice, that there are other Laws, both *Divine and Humane*: *The Divine* are generally distinguished into *Ceremonial, Judicial, & Moral.* *Humane Laws, are such Ordinances as are given by Men, who are in their ban is a Legislative Power.* I shall not treat of these in particular, but take notice of them, in laying open this one. Here then we may observe these things in the Description given,

1. *IT is a Rule.* And herein it agrees with all Laws whatsoever. For the very end of a Law, is to regulate Men and Things. And what is that which so doth, other than a Rule? There are *two Principle Uses of a Rule*, both whereof belong to this Law, *vz* *to direct us in our Actions*, by shewing what is right, and what is wrong. On which account *David* gives it that commendation, *Psal* 119. 105. *Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* And to make *Trial of our Actions by*, that we may know whether we have done well or ill. And there one that is declared of the Word of God, *Heb* 4. 12. *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.* And for both of these, the moral Law is abundantly furnished, in that it reacheth to all the Actions of Heart, Tongue and Hand. And for that reason it hath that title of *Perfection* given it, *Psal* 19. 7.

2. *IT is a Divine Rule*: i. e. it proceeds from God as the Author of it, and it derives from no other Original. For which reason he hath the Attribute of Lawgiver assigned to him, as his Prerogative, *Isa* 33. 22. And limited to him, *Jam* 4. 12. *There is one lawgiver, who is able to save, and to destroy.* And hence those Epethets must necessarily belong to it, *Rom* 7. 12. *Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.* It could not else be agreeable to the Nature of him from whom it proceedeth. And herein it agrees with the ceremonial and judicial Laws, which proceeded from him alone, and are therefore stamped with his Authority, I

am the Lord. And herein it differs from Humane Laws, which have their Authority immediately from Men. It is true, as *Civil Powers* are authorized by God, so there is a Submission due to them and their Ordinances, *for Conscience sake*, *Rom* 13. 5. i. e. *because we acknowledge God's Authority in them*: For Conscience is truly subject unto none but God. And here *we must distinguish of Humane Laws*: *Some are nothing else but the Laws of God, or moral Duties, reinforced with a Civil Sanction added to them.* These, Men owe Obedience to Conscienciously, because they are indeed God's Laws; and for the same reason we ought to submit to the Civil Sanctions of them, so far as they agree with the Word of God, because herein they are properly the Ministers of God: But if their Sanctions do moral Equity, though there is a passive Subjection due, yet we are not in Conscience obliged to approve them, because God doth not. *Some are Prudentials, concerning things in themselves indifferent*, which are limited & limited, with Humane Sanctions added, for the common benefit of the Subject: These, so far as they are expedient and convenient, agree with the general Rules of the Law of God, and ought for that reason to be complied withal. But they add no new Obligation on the Conscience, as they proceed from Men, nor doth the meer neglect of these Laws amount to Sin, except Consent be added to it. Neither yet, can the Obligation on Conscience to obey them, as they are for the common Good abide, any longer than the reason of them doth. Others are wicked Laws; and there are many such that proceed from humane Lawgivers, *Psal* 94. 20. *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee, which frameth mischief by a law?* Now we are so far from being bound to pay active Obedience to such Laws, that we shall sin against God if we do: And hence, when called we are to refuse it, and run the greatest hazards. So they, *Dan* 3. 16, 17. And the Apostles in that Prohibition, *Act* 4. 19, 20. and 5. 29.

3. *IT is an Unchangeable Rule.* And herein it differs both from ceremonial & judicial Laws, which were of a shorter date. They were but temporary, & were to have an end: There were Sacraments in the state of Innocence; but they soon ceased. There were many positive Laws given after the Apostasy; and at length there was a Body of them given to the Church of *Israel*: but as these were of a later Original, not being from the beginning, so they were to expire, when the state of the Church to which they were suited, was to come to an end, *Heb* 9. 9, *Sec.* And he tells us, *Chap* 7. 12. *For the Priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change of the law.* Whereas the moral Law took place as soon as Man was made, and continues to the end, without any alteration. The same that it was, when given to *Adam* in Integrity, the same it was when renewed on *Moses*, *Sec.* and is still the same in the days of the *Prof-*



pel. Hence that in, *Pfal. 119. 152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old, that thou hast founded them for ever.* And Christ assures us, in *Mat. 5. 18. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

4. *IT was a Rule given to Man.* There are two sorts of Creatures, that come under the special Government of God, Angels and Men, both of which were under a Law or Rule of active Obedience. But tho' we may suppose this Rule to agree to both in the main Articles of it, yet there was necessarily a difference between that given to one and the other in many Points, because of their different Natures. Angels were Spirits purely, but Men were imbedded Spirits, and not only their Souls, but Bodies too, were under the direction and government of that Law, *1 Cor. 6. 20. For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.* God did not treat with them jointly, but separately. Hence that, *Job 28. 28. And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding.*

5. *IT was accommodated to Man's Nature, as created by God.* How far it is distant to Man's Nature as depraved by Sin, is another matter: But consider him in his primitive State, and it was every way suited for him. And for this reason it is said to be *Good, Mich. 6. 8.* And indeed, it could not have been a right Rule if it had not been such. If it had been above his Nature, he could not have reached it; and if it had been below it, he could not have been made happy by conformity to it. Now there are two things, wherein this suitability appears,

(1.) *IT was adapted to the Powers that were put into him, and conferred upon him.* He had an Understanding, Will, Affections, and these were furnished with the Image of God, or a moral rectitude, consisting in Knowledge, Righteousness, and Holiness. Now these sanctified Powers in him, could not but approve, chuse, and love the Law. That fallen Man in his natural state doth not so, is because he hath lost that rectitude which was on his Faculties, and they are become depraved: But Godly Men, so far as they are renewed, have it restored to them again. *Psal. 119. 128, 30. 97. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and hate every false way. I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I had before me. O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day.* Yea, the very relics of the Law in the Consciences of Men, do acknowledge the equity of this Law, and how unreasonable it is to break them. *Rom. 1. 22. and 2. 14.*

(2.) *IT is a suitable Medium to his great End.* Man was made for an End, viz. to glorify God; and in subordination thereto, to seek and obtain Blessedness. Now where there is an End propounded, there must be a way to

obtain it; and that which directs to this way, is the Rule; and when it is a proper way to it, it is then accommodated to the Design. Such was the moral Law. And for this reason it is called the moral Law, because it is fitted for the regulating of Man in all the Actions of his Will, both *Elicite and Imperate.* And by his Obedience to it, he should have attained Everlasting Felicity. *Jam. 1. 25.* Man had a natural craving after Happiness, and this was a way to have brought him to it. Herein also it differs from the ceremonial and judicial Laws. The former was only accommodated for fallen Man, while he was in expectation of a Redeemer to come, to help his Faith in the mean while: The other was only adapted to the present state of the Jewish Church during their Minority.

6. *IT obliged Man, to serve to the Glory of God as his last End.* This was the proper End of the moral Law. We have already observed, that Man was to glorify God actively, for which he must have a Rule, else he will be ever at a loss. Now as the whole Man is to be consecrated to this Glorifying of God, and that in all our Life, and every Action of it, *1 Cor. 10. 30.* So the moral Law is as large, to comprehend the whole of this. It is *David's* Observation, *Psal. 119. 96. I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.* It tells us how we shall order our Thoughts, our Words, and our Actions. It points to the Matter, Manner, and End of our Duty. It regulates us in our Carriages towards God, and towards Men: Gives us Rules how to manage our selves in every Relation that Providence sets us in. So that we need not be at a loss at any time, in any thing that we are concerned in.

2. *WHETHER all Mankind are under the Obligation of Obedience to this Law?*

Ans. THIS may be briefly resolved in a few Particulars,

1. *THE Law is to be considered either as it is a Covenant, or only a Rule.* This distinction must be allowed, or else we shall not be able to reconcile many Texts in Scripture. Now the Law is then considered as a Covenant, when we look upon it as delivered with Sanctions, by virtue whereof it became the Foundation of relative Justice, in which God would proceed with Man in the Administration of his special Government: So to be understood, in *Gal. 3. 10. For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things written in the book of the law to do them.* Whereas, separate from the consideration of those Sanctions, it contains in it all those Precepts, which are to direct Man in his Life and Conversation, and so is look'd on only as a Rule. And so it is frequently used in the *Psalms.*

2. *THAT Man is to be considered, either as before, or since the Fall.* There is a vast difference between the state of Integrity, and the state of Apostasy. Man's primitive state, was

a state of Perfection, Eccl. 7. 29. *God made man upright.* There was a moral rectitude in all his Powers. He was an Instrument in Tune. But by the Fall, he hath lost those moral Principles which were in him by virtue of the Sanctification of his Nature, and is become wilfully corrupt, Rom. 3. 12.

3. *MAN* since the Fall is to be considered, either in his natural, or his regenerate state. As long as he abides in his natural state, he is under the reigning power of Sin, and an utter impotency to that which is truly good: Whereas there is another better state introduced by Christ, and wrought by the Spirit of God in Regeneration, into which Men are brought by the Grace of God. And the Condition of fallen Man is wonderfully altered hereby. As appears from Eph. 1. 5, 8. Now we are to resolve the Case before us with a due respect to these things. Here then,

(1.) *THAT Man in his state of Integrity, was under the Law as a Covenant, which comprehended all Mankind.* It is certain, that when God gave the Law to Man at first in Paradise, he gave it with its Sanctions, he annexed to it both the Promises and Threatnings, whereby it became a proper Instrument of Government. The Threatning is exprest in Gen. 2. 17. *In the day thou eat of thereof, thou shalt surely die.* And the Promise is to be gathered from other Places in the Word of God; according to that, Rom. 10. 5. *For Moses described the righteousness which is of the law, that the man which doth these things, shall live by them.* Now that this Covenant was plighted with Adam, not as a private, but a publick Person, representing all Mankind that were to derive from him is evident, and hath formerly been made good, when we were on that Subject; and is plain from; Rom. 5. 12. *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.*

(2.) *THAT Man in his natural Estate abides under the Law as a Covenant.* This is plain from the forecited, Gal. 3. 10. For how else should the Curse of the Law take hold of him? The Law as a Rule saith, this thou shalt do, and this thou shalt not do. And as a Covenant it saith, if thou do so, thou shalt live, if otherwise thou shalt die. And hence the natural Man hath no other Rule to try his title to Life or Death but this. His Duty of Obedience abides, and he is still liable to Penalty for defect in it.

(3.) *THAT regenerate Man is under a New Covenant, in which the Law still abides as a Rule.* It is true, he being under the Covenant of Grace, is no longer under the Law as a Covenant: Which is evident, from Rom. 6. 14. *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace.* But that the Law still abides to him a Rule of his Life is evident, because it is reinforced in the Gospel, and put into the Articles of this Covenant, which makes Sanctification one of the Benefits of Christ's Redemption, and en-

joyns us Holiness and Righteousness. According to Tit. 2. 11, 12. *For the grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared to all men; Teaching us, that denying ungodliness & worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world.* And is enforced from Evangelical Considerations, 1 Cor. 6. 20. And on this account it is called, both an *old and a new Covenant*, 1 Joh. 2. 8, 9.

3. *WHEATHER the Fall hath not taken off this Obligation, or it abides still on fallen Man?*

Ans. THIS might be resolved from what hath been already said: But to prevent Mistakes let me here add,

1. *THAT the Fall hath not taken off from Man, the Obligation to Obedience to the Law, as a Rule.* This abides, and will so do, as long as Man abides under the special Government of God: As will appear from these Reasons,

(1.) *BECAUSE the Law was the Rule of Relative Justice in that Government.* As Man owed himself to the Service of God, so God gave him this Law to direct him in that Service; and he cannot discharge himself from this Duty. Man is by the Fall a Rebel against his lawful Sovereign; but the Rebel owes Duty and Allegiance notwithstanding; and it is his Fault that he denies it. That therefore is a Truth always, Job. 28. 28. *And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil, is understanding.*

(2.) *BECAUSE the Law it self is an Unchangeable Rule.* It was not a temporary Dispensation, as the ceremonial and judicial were, but standing; it was never to be altered. And hence, whatsoever change the Man passeth under, that still abides: As hath been already made evident.

(3.) *BECAUSE the Law is properly suited for the glorifying of God, by the Reasonable Creature.* God did not only in Sovereignty, but Wisdom too, give the Law at first. It was adapted to Man's Nature. And for that reason it is called by Divines *the Law of Nature*; as will hereafter be observed. For which reason the natural Conscience subscribes to the Equity and Goodness of it.

2. *THOUGH the Apostasy hath not discharged Man from the Law as a Covenant, yet we are wariety to take it up.* Many are mistaken in their resentments of this, and it is not a little hurtful to them. Here then, let two things be observed,

(1.) *THAT the Fall hath utterly cut Man off from ever obtaining Life by the Law, as a Covenant.* There was a Promise of Life in that Covenant made to perfect Obedience, and so Man at first stood as a Probationer for Life by it: But that is utterly ceased. That Covenant still saith, that if Man had so obeyed, he should have lived, but because he obeyed not, but disobeyed, it hath brought him under the other Sanction, which holds him fast, and stands in the way to hinder this Life. So that they err, who think, that if fallen Man could now perform perfect Obedience to the moral Law, he should live. For tho' he cannot, and

to it is a vain supposition, yet if he could, he is under Arrest already, he is dead in Law, how then should he live? Hence that, Gal. 3. 21. *Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given, which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law.*

(2.) HENCE the Law, as a Covenant, holds the Sinner under the Curse of it, and neither can his Ignorance nor Impotency excuse him from the Condemnation of it. The Law saith, Ezek. 18. 4. *The soul that sinneth, it shall die.* Such is every fallen Man by Nature, and in Act. This Sentence must needs abide, till it hath taken place. Hence Christ saith, Mat. 5. 18. *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven & earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.* Sin hath made the man a Prisoner of Justice, and he must pass a Trial, where if found guilty, he must needs die for it. It is vain for him to plead Ignorance of the Law; for Man was created with a perfect Knowledge of it, and lost it by his own Default. Besides, that there are the remains of the Law on Men's Consciences, which they either stifle, or resist, and imprison the Truth in unrighteousness, Rom. 1. 18. And this will leave them inexcusable. And it will be as vain to pretend Inability; for tho' Man hath lost his strength, and that is a Truth concerning every Man is his lapsed estate, Josh. 24. 19. *And Joshua said unto the people, Ye cannot serve the Lord; for he is an holy God: he is a jealous God, he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins.* Yet Man by his own folly, hath disabled himself, who once was every way furnished for Obedience. And it would be a strange way for a Servant to make up Accompts with his Master, to tell him he hath embezzel'd his Stock.

USE. FROM what hath been hitherto said, let me only here observe, *How miserable Man hath rendred himself by the Apostasy.* Did God give the Law to Man as the Rule of his Obedience, and was it the only way to keep himself in God's Favour, and obtain true Felicity? Certainly then the Fall hath brought us under unconceivable Infelicity, in that we are thus fallen short of the Glory of God, and have laid our selves open to his Indignation. Let us then bemoan this our Unhappiness, and restlessly seek after the one Way of Delivery which the rich Grace of God hath open'd to us in the Gospel.

[DECEMBER 17. 1700.]

SERMON CXLIX.

4. **T**O what use the moral Law is still servicable to fallen Man?

Ans. THAT we may take this up aright, we may look upon fallen Man under diverse Considerations: in every of which there is an answerable Usefulness of the moral Law.

1. *MAN is to be considered, either as in a*