

SERMON CLV.

III. **W**E must Acknowledge him to be Our God. It is not enough that we ascribe to him those Properties & Perfections which are Divine, but we ought to see and make sure, that this God is our God: to acknowledge the Relation that there is betwixt him and us. The Command requires, that he be a God to us, or that we have him for a God. And that implies Property, & points us to a Covenant between him and us; for if he is a God to us, it signifies that we are to him a People, and that comprehends the whole of the Covenant, *Exod. 6. 7.* It is not enough, to acknowledge that he is ours by the right of Creation, but that he is so by the
right



right of a Promise; the latter of these can never fail, but the former may. For Property denotes a Priviledge, but God may so far cease to be our God, as to become our Enemy; and that is not our advantage, but our misery. *Isai. 63. 10. But they rebelled, and vexed his holy spirit: therefore he was turned to be their enemy, and he fought against them.* Now this acknowledgment is the Foundation of all true Worship, and we can in no wise else pay it to him. They that do not believe & confess him to be their own God, will never pay to him cordial and sincere Service. Hence that, *Deut. 6. 13. Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.* And *Psal. 118. 23. Thou art my God, I will praise thee; thou art my God, I will exalt thee.* How, or after what manner this Acknowledgment is to be paid to him, will be considered in the next. Here only in general we may observe, that there are two Things in which it is summarily comprehended.

1. *WE must acknowledge him to be our Rightful Lord and Sovereign, to whom we owe our selves, and all that we have and are.* We must confess him to be our King and Lawgiver, *Isai. 33. 22.* And consequently, that we owe all Allegiance to him; and that we are to fear and serve him, freely and cheerfully: That his Commands are to be grateful, and not grievous to us. We are to bring our selves under the strongest Obligations of Obedience to him, and pursue them with the greatest resolution, *Psal. 119. 106.* We are to acknowledge his Authority over us to be just and rightful, and our Obedience to be every way due to him, and that upon our own voluntary choice. That all his Commands are just and good, *Rom. 7. 12.* And consequently, that our Obedience to them, is but our reasonable Service, *Chap. 12. 1.* And this lets us understand, that the great reason of all our Obedience to every Precept of God, is grounded in the First Command, because if he be our God, he is our Lord, and we are his Subjects. His Will ought to be our Rule, and we are not to dispute, but to practice Duties, because we have professed him to be our God, and our selves to be his People. It also tells us, that no Obedience performed to God can be acceptable to him, but what is voluntary from us. Forced Obedience argues, that we look not upon him, as our Lord, but as a Tyrant over us. That therefore is Predicted of his Subjects, *Psal. 110. 3. Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning thou hast the dew of thy youth.*

2. *WE must also acknowledge him to be our alone Portion and Happiness.* As, when he promiseth to any to be their God, he engageth to be unto them, all that which they either do or can stand in need of, so when they profess him to be their God, they therein declare that they accept of him to be their all. So doth the Church, *Lam. 3. 24.* And this they are to do exclusively of all other

Beings in the World, *Psal. 73. 25.* That all their present Safety, and Comfort, & future Blessedness depends upon him, *Isai. 84. 11.* They are to acquiesce in him, and to count that he is Portion enough, and they need to go no whether else, but that they are happy in him, *Psal. 16. 5, 6.* God therefore reckoned that enough to quiet his People in hours of greatest Distress, *Isai. 41. 10.* Now the Command being an unchangeable Rule of Obedience, our Obligation thus to acknowledge him, can never cease, because, whensoever we fail of so doing, we transgress this Command; but still, the true Acknowledgement of this Relation, supposeth the Being of it, else we shall profess to a Falshood. Our first Care therefore is to see and make sure, that this God is our God, *Psal. 48. ult.* We must have him to be so. And hence all that is requisite to our obtaining this Interest in him, is a Duty lying upon us by this Command. And without a right Understanding of this, we must needs be at a Loss about our Duty in this regard. Here therefore let these Conclusions be observed.

1. *THAT when God gave to Man his Law at first, he became his God by Covenant.* That the Law was at first given in the way of a Covenant, is a Truth that hath its Foundation in the Word of God. God therefore not only delivered it to Man Preceptively, requiring Obedience of him as a natural Duty, but he indentured with him in a Promise of Life, as the Reward of his Obedience. He was practically to acknowledge God to be his Lord and Sovereign, and God promised upon this to be his Portion and Happiness. And thus God was his God upon a Covenant Contract, and would have been so forever, upon his Compliance with his Obligation. And this Consideration was, as the Reason of his Obedience, so the Encouragement he had to it.

2. *THAT Man in his Apostasy renounced this Relation, whereupon God ceased to be his God by Covenant.* It is true, God's Relation to him as his Creator and Governour could not cease, nor could his Duty to acknowledge him as such cease, nor could his Relation to that Covenant be hereby cut off, inasmuch as there was another Sanction belonging to it, which doomed him to die upon his Disobedience, which holds him fast under the Curse, and that according to Covenant; but that Relation to him as his God and Portion was hereby made void, and he lost all his Claim to him as such. He renounced God's Authority, and rebelled against his Government, and put himself under another Yoke. He hearkened to Satan, and ran himself upon the very Swords point of the Threatning, by doing of that individual thing, of which God gave him all assurance that he should dye if he did it, *Gen. 2. 17.* with 3. 6. And he renounced God from being his Portion, and chose lying vanities in his room: For therein the very nature of Sin, in regard of Man's Object, is comprehended; as is expressed

pressed in Jer. 2. 13. *For my people have committed two evils: they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns that can hold no water.*

3. HENCE till this Relation be recovered, Man is not capable of obeying this Command. The acknowledging him to be his God, must suppose him to be so; but he is not so to fallen Man, as long as he abides under the Curse which Sin hath brought upon him. All ungodly Men are on this account said to be Strangers, afar off, Enemies; and while they continue to be such, they cannot serve God according to the tenour of this Precept. The very frame of the natural Man's Heart is such as incapacitates him for this Obedience. He hath a rebellious Heart, and cannot be subject to the Law, by reason of Enmity, Rom 8. 7. His Heart is set upon Idols, and trusts in lying Vanities. How then should he take God for his Portion? And thus it will be, till the distance between them is removed, and they are reconciled.

4. GOD becomes our God again, only in the way of the New Covenant, which is in Christ. This Relation ceased according to the tenour of the First Covenant, and there was no provision made in that for the restoring of it again; but God hath opened a New Covenant, in which he treats with fallen Man, and sets a good Hope before him. And this is the great design of the whole Word of God, to open a way in which Man may be again restored to God's favour, and enjoy him as his God and Portion; and this was provided in and by Jesus Christ, who hath pulled down the Wall of Partition which Sin had set up, and made our Peace with God, Eph. 2. 14. And now, the way to obtain him to be our Covenant God, is by Jesus Christ, Joh. 14. 6. *Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life.* God out of Christ is a consuming Fire, Heb. 12. 29. There is no coming at him but by this Mediator; but he is ready to receive all such as come to him by Christ.

5. HENCE by this Command it becomes our duty to seek and secure an Interest in God, by Christ. We formerly observed, that our Obedience being founded in God's rightful Sovereignty, we are therefore under a moral Obligation to obey him in whatsoever he shall at any time reveal to us to be his Will. As also, that whatsoever is requisite for the performing of Obedience to any of his Commands, is required of us by that Command. Now the First Command positively requires us to have God to be our God; nor can this on any terms be dispensed withal, but the want of it is a total violation of the Precept. When God treated with Man in the first Covenant, he had to do with him immediately. He was his God Jehovah; and there needed no more. But when he treats with him in the New Covenant, he looks upon Man in his lapsed state, as at a distance from him; and he can have to do with him only by a middle Person, who is Christ. So that, till he is

his through Christ, he cannot serve him as so: and without this, he is in no posture to keep this Command. It is our Duty to come unto God, but it must be in this way and no other, Eph. 1. 6. 3. 12.

6. HENCE all the Duties required in the Gospel in order to this, are enforced by the Authority of this Precept. That the Gospel is not delivered only in the way of an Offer, but by the Authority of God we are assured. For we are told, Joh. 1. 23. *He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the Prophet Esaias.* Acts 17. 30. *And the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent.* And hence the Gospel Covenant hath its Sanctions, as well as the first had. There are both Promises to compliance therewith, & Threatnings against the refusal of compliance. And whence have these their Authority in the Moral Law, but from this First Command? For they all center in our having God for our God. The design of the Gospel is to tell us how we may come to have him so by Christ, and hath opened those Terms upon which it is to be obtained: Which if we refuse our Conformity unto, we therein manifestly declare that we disclaim him, and will none of him. They therefore betray their ignorance, that cannot tell where to find a place for Faith in Christ, in the whole Duty of Man. But this may be particularly considered afterwards.

III. THEY ought to Worship and Glorify Him accordingly. i. e. We must accommodate all our Worship of him to his Nature as he is God, and to the Relation he stands in to us as our God. The light of Nature saith, that if there be a God, he is to be served & glorified; and that no Service can be offered to him acceptably, but what is agreeable to his Nature and Perfections. And doubtless, such Conceptions as Men have of God, such a manner of Worship they will pay to him. Thus our Saviour Christ argues from his being a Spirit, to spiritual and sincere Worship, Joh. 4. 24. *God is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth.* Thus Paul argueth from some of his Attributes, to his Worship, as to the kind or manner of it, Acts 17. 24. 25. *God that made the world, and all things that are therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands, as tho' he needeth any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.* And there is great reason for it; for in our Worshipping him, we are to pay him Divine Honour: And if we pay him any thing short of that, let our pretences be never so specious, we do not indeed Worship God, but dishonour him. And from this Consideration we may be led to take an Account of these more principal Things, wherein this Natural Worship consists, and ought to be paid to him. In order to our right taking up whereof, let these Two general Rules be observed,

1. THAT

1. *THAT in our Worshipping of God, we can give nothing to him, but what is his own already.* We can contribute nothing to his Essential Glory, by all the Respects which we pay to him, or Service we do for him. He enjoys himself in the fulness of Infinite & Everlasting Perfection, to which nothing can be added by all the Worship of Angels or Men. Hence we find such Challenges made, Job 22. 2, 3, *Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or is it gain to him that thou makest thy ways perfect?* Rom. 11. 35. *Or who hath first given him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?* Nay all the Acknowledgment that we can give to him, is infinitely defective; for we cannot have a perfect knowledge of his innate Glory, Job 11. 7, &c. How then should we ascribe it to him? And it is admirable condescendency in the Great God, that he will accept of such a mutilous Service as our best is. It is then his declarative Glory that we are concerned with, in which we are to ascribe to him, all those Perfections of his, which he hath made himself known to us by in his Word, and in his Works. We are therefore to take a view of these, and ascribe them unto him as his own, and properly belonging to him. So, Psal. 29. 1, 2. *Give unto the Lord (O ye mighty) give unto the Lord glory & strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.* Where by giving, we are not to understand a giving any thing to him that was not his own before, but only an ascribing of these to him, as his right and due. Deut. 32. 3. Psal. 68. 34.

2. *THAT we owe unto God this Worship, with our whole Man.* Man consists of two essential constituent Parts, Soul and Body. We owe both of these unto God, and both are to be employed in our Worshipping of him. And tho' the Soul be firstly and principally concerned; According to Prov. 23. 26. *My son, give me thine heart.* Yet the other is not excluded; for he made both, and the Body was appointed to be the Soul's Organ, or Instrument in serving of him. God is to be Worshipped with our Hearts, and with our Lips, and with our Bodily Services: And as Bodily exercise profiteth little if alone, it is a dead Sacrifice without the Heart; whereas we owe to him a living one: So Heart Service alone, when the outward Man is concerned to take its part, is imperfect, & short of what God requires of us. We are therefore advised, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. *What, know ye not that your body is the temple of the holy Ghost, which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are Gods.* Accordingly, we find David engaging of his whole Man in this affair, Psal. 103. 1. 57. 7, 8. To this purpose is that laid down by the Apostle, in Rom. 10. 10. *For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is*

made unto salvation. We are therefore bound to be ever in a readiness to confess him, in times that are most perillous, 1 Pet. 3. 15. These things premised, we may descend to take a more particular Account, of those Duties there required. And here I shall not go about to make a critical Distinction, between that Worship which is due to him under the consideration of his being God, and that which belongs to him considered as our God; in as much as these are inseparable in Practice: Particularly then,

1. *WE are to Worship God, by placing & exercising our Faith in him.* Faith is the first great Grace that belongs to Natural Worship, and it must run through all, and enliven it; else it will be vain. There is a general truth contained in that assertion, Heb. 11. 6. *But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* It is not only true since the Apostasy, but it was so when Man stood in his Integrity. Faith considered as it hath God for its Object, and is accordingly called a Divine Faith, may be generally described, a Confidence grounded on Knowledge, whereby God is trusted in for Life. And with such a Faith Man was to Worship God before the Fall, and it is his Duty to do so still. Though there is a great difference in the way and manner of the exercise of it then and now. The ground whereof we may observe in two or three Things,

1. *THAT God alone is the ultimate Object of a Divine Faith.* It flows from his very Nature that he should be so, nor can any other be such an Object, but he who is God: for no other can do that for us, which such a Faith hath a Dependance upon. And that is given as the Reason why we should not trust in Idols, Jer. 10. 5. And why we ought to trust in God, Isai. 26. 4. The Expectation of this Faith from its Object is Life, that is all Good and Blessedness, and this is in God to confer upon us, Psal. 36. 9.

2. *THAT God was the next and immediate Object of Man's Faith, in his State of Integrity.* Not only was Man's Faith then to terminate on God, for so is ours also now, but it was to ascend directly unto him. Man then stood next to God, God was his in Covenant, held familiar fellowship with him, he needed none to bring him into his Presence. There was nothing then to obstruct his Trust in God, or discourage him from placing his entire Reliance upon him. God and he were Friends, and God had promised him Life, if he obeyed, Rom. 10. 5.

3. *THAT Sin hath cut Man off from this immediate Communion with God, and now there is no coming at him but by a Mediator.* And that there is one, is the great Consolation afforded us in the Gospel, 1 Tim. 2. 5. *For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.* And we are to come to God by him, Heb. 7. 25. That therefore was

the Complaint of him in his Distress, *Job. 9. 32, 33.* If it had not been for this Mediator, our Case had been desperate, nor would it have been less than Destruction for us Sinners, to have trusted in God for Life.

4. *THAT* hence Christ is the next and immediate Object of fallen Man's Faith. God is the ultimate still, but there is to be a Faith in him intermediate, in order to our trusting in God for Life and Good. And the Reason is, because God comes to be our God again, only in this way. Hence Christ gave that direction to them, *Joh. 14. 1. Ye believe in God, believe also in me.* It is true, if Christ were not God, we might not believe in him. But Christ as God-Man-Mediator, is a middle Person, who interposeth between an Offended God, and Sinning Man, who hath satisfied Justice, and purchased Life for us. And God hath required of us to believe on his Son, that we may live, because the Dispensation of all is in his Hand, and he must be trusted in for it. And thus God will have the Person of Christ, who is his own Son, to have a Divine Honour paid unto him; according to *Job. 5. 22, 23.* And on the account of this difference, the former is by way of distinction called Faith in God, & this latter Faith in Christ; not because it is not Faith in God, but because it nextly goes to Christ, & through him unto God. Now there are two Things to be considered in this Faith, viz. 1. *That we firmly believe God to be such an Object as is thus to be trusted in and relied on.* 2. *That hereupon we place our whole recumbency on him as such an one, for all the Good that we stand in need of, and practically make it appear that we so do.* The former of these was considered under our Acknowledging him as God; and this latter is the Application of that, in our Worshipping and Glorifying of him accordingly. And here we consider two Things, viz. 1. *How God was to be Worshipped by the exercise of this Faith at first?* 2. *How fallen Man is to exercise this Faith in his Worshipping of God?*

1. *HOW* God was to be Worshipped by the exercise of this Faith at the first?

Ans. IN General, By a filial Dependence on him for all Good. And this follows from the Nature of God, and the Nature of Man compared together. It is a standing Truth, which can never alter, that God is infinitely Good: He is Goodness itself, and the Fountain of all Good to the Creature. So that all Good is in him Originally, and must derive from him unto other Beings. And it is with respect to this, that Christ so said, in *Mat. 19. 17. There is none good but one, that is God.* And it is no less true, that Man is by Nature a deenerate Creature: Nor hath Sin only made him to be so, tho' that hath increased his want, but he was so in his Creation, and state of Integrity. Independency is a Divine Prerogative, and God cannot make an Independent Creature, it being a Contradiction. All that goodness which was in him, he received from God, and all that good whereby

he may be made happy, must come from the same Hand. It was therefore Man's Duty from the first to acknowledge this Dependence, and accordingly to fetch in all the supply of this good from God, by the exercise of his Faith. *Psal. 62. 5, 6.* And here it is supposed, that Man did believe that God is the Fountain of all Good, and the Creature can want nothing, but what there is an infinite Fulness of in him, able to outdo all our wants and cravings, *Eph. 3. 20.* And that this Goodness of his is Communicable: That he is not only All-sufficient in himself, but also that he is the Efficient of all to his Creature; and there is a way of participation in this Good, according to the tenour of the Covenant into which Man was received. Accordingly this Faith was to apply itself nextly in two Things.

(1.) *IN an absolute Choice of God, to be his alone Portion, and a compleat acquiescence in him as such.* He was to take God as his Inheritance, and account it enough for his compleat Blessedness to enjoy him. And this necessarily includes in it, an utter renouncing & rejecting all alliance in any other Object whatsoever, as being utterly inconsistent with such a Choice. According to that, *Psal. 73. 25. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.* And this declares the difference between God's People and other Men, *Psal. 20. 7. Some trust in chariots; and some in horses: but we will remember the Name of the Lord our God.* And in nothing more could Man at first have glorified God, than in making such an absolute, fixed, and firm choice of him: And this must be for all Good that we can need. And that comprehended in it, all that Man could possibly want, both for Soul and Body, for Time and Eternity; all Bodily Good, and all Spiritual Good; all Supplies and all Protection. This is comprehensively expressed, *Psal. 84. 11. For the Lord God is a sun & shield: the Lord will give grace & glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.*

(2.) *IN an entire Consulence in him, by resting on his Promise, for the Enjoyment of this Good.* The ground of that Faith of recumbency is the Promise. For though Faith hath the power and sufficiency of God, as the Foundation of its trust in him, yet the immediate reason of its trusting in God, is the Promise which he hath made to Man to be his God; and according to the tenour of that Promise, so it is to act. Faith takes God at his Word. And God at first engaged to Man to be his Portion, if he kept close to his Obedience to him: and it was his Duty to have believed in the Power, Goodness, Truth, and Fidelity of God to his Word, and accordingly to have kept close to his Duty, confiding that he would be to him, as good as his Word. And doubtless it was a wound in this Faith of his, that was the first step of his Apostasy & Departure from God at the first. He doubted of God's Veracity, and so adventured to transgress his Command.