

# S E R M O N *CLVIII.*

## QUESTION XLVIII.

**W**HAT are we especially taught, by these Words, [*before Me,*] in the First Commandment?

## A N S W E R.

THESE Words, [*before Me,*] in the First

Commandment, teach us, that GOD, who seeth all things, taketh notice of, and is much displeas'd at the Sin, of having any other God.

BESIDES the Arguments used in the Preface, to enforce the *whole Decalogue*, by which God offers us matter of Conviction, that Obedience to his Law is our Reasonable Service

vice, God hath seen meet to add particular Arguments to the Five first Commands severally: Some whereof are appropriated to the Command, with which they are connected, and others are of a more general Consideration, and applicable to every of the Precepts. Why God hath added Reasons to some, and not to others; and why to these, and not those, is not for us curiously to inquire, but to rest satisfied in his holy Pleasure. It is his Condescendency that he will give us a reason of any of his Commands, besides his holy Pleasure, that we should thus obey him. For him to say, *I am the Lord*, is reason sufficient, to oblige us to receive and observe, all and every of his Commands. The words, *Before me*, or before my Face; are well observed by our Divines, to carry the force of a reason in them. Our Catechism reduceth the matter of Argument contained in it, to three Heads, viz. 1. *God's Omniscience*; He seeth all things. 2. *His curious Observation of Men in this regard*. And these two are of force in every other Precept. 3. *The infinite Displeasure which God conceives at this Sin peculiarly*. All of which are comprehended in it. We may therefore briefly here take a more particular account of this matter, in the following Remarks,

1. *THAT God, as he is the Supream Judge, will reward Men's Obedience or Disobedience*. As God hath given Men a Law, by which they are to regulate themselves, so he hath added Sanctions to it, in which he hath promised Blessedness, to all such as cordially obey it, and denounced misery, against all such as refuse their Obedience to it. And that Men may be encouraged by the one, and duly awed by the other, he hath declared himself to be the Judge to whom all must give an Account, and from whom they shall receive their Reward; and because he is so, he will do that which is right: and gives Men thus to know, what they are to expect. We are therefore told, in Rom. 2. 6. *Who will render to every man according to his deeds*.

2. *THAT because God is Omniscient, it is therefore vain for Men to hope to Sin out of his sight*. When he saith *before Me*, it doth not intend only a forbidding of open and professed Atheism, or Idolatry, or Contempt, but contrary it intends, that Men cannot practise these Sins so secretly, but that they always stand in the open light to him. They can do nothing behind his back, but are always before his face. Sinners think they can act their Sin so privately, that it shall never be known; and confide in their secrecy. And if they were concerned only with Men like themselves, they might have some pretext for it; but when they presume this of God, it is their folly, and indeed no small indication of their Atheism; as was before observed. God therefore hath given Men warning of this, that they might beware, Jer. 23. 24. Heb. 4. 13. Psal. 139. 11, 12. David therefore tells us, Psal. 16. 8. *I have set the Lord always before me*.

3. *THAT because God curiously observes all Men how they carry themselves with respect to his Law, it will be to no purpose, either to deny the fact, or excuse themselves*. That he doth thus observe all Men we are assured. David asserts it concerning him, Psal. 139. 1, 2. *O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known me. Thou hast known my down sitting, and mine up-rising, thou understandest my thoughts afar off*. And Job made it an Article of his Creed, Job 31. 4. *Doth not he see my ways, and count all my steps*. And Solomon Remarks it, Prov. 15. 3. *The eyes of the Lord are in every place, beholding the evil and the good*. And Chap. 5. 21. *For the ways of man are before the eyes of the Lord, and he pondereth all his goings*. And because his knowledge is Infinite, he cannot be mistaken in his Observation, and therefore when he chargeth it upon them, it will be full conviction, and no way availing them to deny. Nor needs there any other proof. God therefore asserts himself to be a Witness, intimating that to be sufficient, Jer. 29. 23. *Even I know, and am a witness, saith the Lord*. It is true, Mens own Consciences are enough, and these are under God's Government, and it is vain for Men to flatter or to bribe them, for, when God summons them to give their evidence, they will speak out, Rom. 2. 15. But, tho' the Conscience is as a Thousand Witnesse, yet God is more than Ten Thousand Consciences, 1 Joh. 3. 20. *For if our heart condemn us, God is greater then our heart, & knoweth all things*. Nor will any excuse be profitable, for he knows, not only the Actions, but the designs, & intents of the Heart.

4. *THAT because all things are open and manifest to God, it is a desperate impudence in any to have any other God*. Affronts that are offered to any openly, and to their face, are look'd upon as a discovery of the greatest Contempt and Scorn: yea, when Men dare to commit any lewdness in the sight of the Sun, it argueth that they are grown shameless, especially when they dare to do it in the presence of wise and good Men. And can it be less so, if Men know, and they cannot but know, unless they wilfully shut their Eyes, that God stands by and looks on; that he is intimately present with them; and yet give his Glory to another, and exalt a stranger upon his Throne, and without remorse do those things, that are derogatory to his Glory. Yea, what greater dishonour can Men do to him, than to do those things under his Eye, which they would not dare to do, if they thought any sober Man observed them? It argues, either that they believe not that there is a God, or that he is like themselves, Psal. 50. 21.

5. *IT is therefore folly, yea madness, for such to nourish hope in themselves, that for all they shall escape his Vengeance*. Carnal security, nourished in the Hearts of Men that fear not God, argues that they do not know him to be holy and just; and not to believe & acknowledge that, is as much as to deny that he is God. If God sees, he will certainly punish such

such Sinners; he stands upon his Honour, and will not part with it, *Iſa. 42: 8*. What hope then can they have to escape his righteous Judgment? His Holiness makes him to hate Sin, his Justice engageth him to punish it; his Power enableth him to do so; and there is none that can deliver them out of his Hand. And his eyes that run to and fro through the Earth, will espy them; so that there is no darkness nor shadow of Death, that can hide them out of his sight.

6. *THAT because God sees and observes to Reward, therefore all that truly fear him, have abundant Encouragement.* There is a glorious Recompence of Reward, secured in the Promise of the New Covenant, to those that know and acknowledge God aright, and accordingly glorify him. Now it is agreeable to the Nature of a reasonable Creature, to pursue a work cheerfully, when he considers that it will be profitable for him. This therefore is used as an Argument, to animate Christians in their business, *1 Cor. 15: ult.* And herein is a Child of God assured that he shall not miss of it, because not only is he faithful that hath promised, and will perform, but also he looks on and observes, and keeps a Record of all the faithful Service done for him; nor are the most secret Duties done by him overlook'd by God, or lie out of his sight. Hence Christ said to Nathaniel, *Joh. 1: 48. B fore that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee.* And he hath assured us, *Mat. 10: 42. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.* And there is a time coming, when all the secret Duties of God's People, shall be published before the World, and their Judge shall say to them, *well done*, and declare them Blessed, *Mat. 25: 34, 35, 36.*

7. *THIS also affords matter of Caution to the People of God to make them very circumspect in their whole Life.* Eye service, done to Men, is indeed condemned in the Word of God for Hypocrisy. But Eye-service performed to God, is there both commended and required. It is a Duty required of us, *Eph. 5: 15. See then that ye walk circumspectly.* And what can more cogently, engage us to the practice of it, than ever to have this Thought in our mind, *I am before God; His Eye is upon me, He who is my Judge views and weighs all my Actions.* The best of us have remaining Concupiscence in us, which is ready to prompt us to Sin, and in nothing doth it more impose on us, than by perswading us, that we may Sin out of sight, and so escape shame and punishment. Whereas, now to consider and believe, there is a God who looks on, and cannot be mocked, what an impression must this make upon our Hearts? And how careful will it cause us to be at all times? Yea, not only to watch our outward Actions, but our very Hearts & Thoughts, to see that they be right?

WOULD we then worship God as God, and pay all that Service to him, which we owe him, as our God? Labour we to have the Impression of this Consideration always fresh in our Minds; and let it influence all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions. This will maintain an holy Awe and Reverence of God in our Hearts, and powerfully influence our whole Lives. Whereas the Forgetfulness of this, will expose us to Temptations, and give Lust and Satan advantage against us, to draw us into Sin. But I pass to,

## QUESTION XLIX.

*WHICH is the Second Commandment*

## ANSWER

THE Second Commandment is, *Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in Heaven above, or that is in the Earth beneath, or that is in the Water under the Earth, Thou shalt not bow down thy self to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me: and shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my Commandments.*

WE have before observed, that all the four Commands in the first Table, do properly respect the Worship of God; and that in the two former we are directed unto, and instructed about the kinds of Worship, which are ranked under two Heads, viz. *Natural and Instituted.* Of the *Natural Worship*, and the several Duties comprehended under it, and the diverse Ways wherein we may be guilty of sinning against it, we have taken a brief Account, under the first Command; it follows that we now pass over to the second, in which we are instructed about *Instituted Worship.* And because there is a very great difference between these two, and they come under a far diverse Consideration, this and the former Command, ought not to be confounded, and made but one, which is done by the Papists and Lutherans, hoping thereby the better to defend, or excuse their Image Worship. Now the main difference between these two lies in this, viz. *Natural Worship is that which the very Light of Nature will teach Men*, inasmuch as, the Duties of it, and the Obligation laid on us to perform these Duties, derive from the *Nature and Being of God*, and the Relation which he stands in to us; whereas *the Duties of Instituted Worship, depends upon God's revealed Will.* And the Obligation lying upon us to perform these Duties, flows from the *Sovereignty of God*, and our absolute Subjection to him. This Command is, as the

former, declared *negatively*; as indeed, all the rest are, except the Fourth, which is laid down both *negatively* and *affirmatively*, and the Fifth which is express only *affirmatively*. But it hath been laid down as a Rule from the Word of God, and right Reason, that there are both these Parts to be observed in every of them. So that here also, we are to consider what is *Duty*, and what is *Sin*, according as they relate to this *Precept*. Only let me in the first place remove out of the way, or at least clear our Distribution of these two Commands from another, which some use, and looks fair, viz. that the First Command directs us to the *Object* of Worship, and the Second to the *Medium* of it, which doth not truly lay out the proper bounds between the one and the other. For, besides that God is the *Object* of Worship directed to in both, so there are the *Media* of Worship, which properly belong to the *First* as well as to the *Second* Commandment. Such are all the *Duties* therein required of us, of which we have formerly taken the Account, but we shall have a further discovery of the difference between these two, in laying open the Command itself. And here, let us begin with the *Affirmative Part*. Hence,

#### QUESTION L.

*WHAT is Required in the Second Commandment?*

ANSWER.

THE Second Commandment Required the receiving, observing, and keeping pure and entire, all such Religious Worship and Ordinances, as GOD hath appointed in his Word.

IN this Answer we may observe two Things, under which is comprized all that belongs to this Head of Instituted Worship, viz. 1. Here is the *Subject Matter* about which our Obedience is here to be employed. *All such Religious Worship and Ordinances, as God hath appointed in his Word.* 2. The *Things wherein* this Worship is to be performed, *in receiving, observing, and keeping them pure and entire.* Each of these may be briefly laid open.

1. *HERE is the Subject Matter about which our Obedience is here to be employed, viz. All such Religious Worship and Ordinances, as God hath appointed in his Word.* In the laying out of this, two Things may come under our Inquiry, viz. First, We may in general take an Account of the *Nature, Reason, and Bounds* of Instituted Worship. Secondly, We may in particular, take Notice of the more *Special Duties* which belong to this kind of Worship. Of these in Order,

1. LET us in general take an Account, of the *Nature, Reason, and Bounds* of Instituted Worship. For which let me offer these Conclusions.

Conclu. 1. *THAT the End of Instituted Worship is to help us in the Exercise of the Natural.* The Second Command is in this respect subservient to the First. This will appear if we consider,

(1.) *THAT* the direct design of all Worship is, that we love and glory God, as our *last End* and *chief Good*. God hath discovered himself to be *such* to the Creature, and requires our practical Acknowledgement of him as *such*, in our Worshipping of him. When therefore our Saviour Christ would give us the Sum of the whole first Table, which respects our Worship, he thus expresseth it, Mat. 22. 37. *Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.* Hence all these Commands, points us to one and the same *Object*, which is God, and no other, Mat. 4. 10: *It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* And the Reason why we are so to Worship him, is because he is the last End of all Things, all being made for his Glory, Prov. 16. 4. And because we are to expect our whole Happiness entirely from him. And this dependence we do practically profess, by our so Worshipping of him.

(2.) *THAT* our thus knowing, acknowledging, and glorifying of God, *is the proper Scope of the First Command.* The whole *Object* in Religious Worship is recommended to us in this Precept, and the other three refer to it, as thus prescribed to us. And in this respect every other Command in the first Table hath a necessary Reference to the first, and that this is the proper Aim of this Precept, we have already observed, and made to appear, in the opening of it.

(3.) *THAT all the Ordinances or Institutions of God are given and intended to guide us to and in our right closing with God as our last End, and objective Happiness.* This is sufficiently evident, from the Consideration, that they belong to Worship, and that this is the very design of all Worship; as hath already been made to appear, and will be further plain to us, if we observe, that God himself hath declared this to be the Reason, of the Laws and Ordinances which he gave to his People Israel. Thus we have it represented in, Deut. 10. 12, 13. They are to shew us how we are to serve our God, and therein to pay him the Honour and Homage that is his due; these therefore are given as a test to try their Obedience, and their acknowledging of him therein, and themselves to be an holy People devoted to his Glory, Deut. 26. 17, 18, 19.

Conclu. 2. *THE Morality of the Second Command, doth not properly consist in the things Instituted, but in the Authority of the Instituter, and the Reason of the Institution.* That we may take this up right, let us observe,

1. THERE are two sorts of Duties which come under this Commandment, viz. First, Such as are *in themselves purely Moral* and *Natural*. Such are Prayer, and Praising of him, hearkening to his Voice, and endeavouring

ing to acquaint ourselves with his Will. Secondly, Such as are in themselves merely *Positive and Arbitrary*. Such were all the Rites, Ceremonies, and Sacrifices of the Old Law Ceremonial, and many of the Statutes of the Judicial Law. Such also are the Sacraments of the New Testament which are ordained by Christ, in his Gospel Church.

2. THERE is a diverse Consideration to be had of these with respect unto this Precept, their Relation to it is different, as will be evident. For,

1. CONCERNING *such Precepts* as are of themselves *purely Moral and Natural*, two Things are to be considered.

(1.) THAT *as they are so, they belong not to the Second, but to the First Command.* And it is a Rule, that though a Duty may belong to several of the Commands, yet in the same respect, it can belong to but one. Now whatsoever belongs to natural Worship as such, is appropriated to the first, and must be enquired after there. Prayer therefore, and Praising, and Hearing, as they are enjoined on all Men by the Law of Nature, do only refer hither; for the Reason of them, naturally results from our knowing and acknowledging God to be our God.

(2.) BUT *as they are appointed by God, to be observed in this or that Ordinance, so they belong to Instituted Worship.* There are the Ordinances, which God hath appointed, to be attended by his professing People, which he hath given them according to his Wisdom and Pleasure. In these Ordinances he hath commanded these and those moral Duties of Natural Worship to be attended, as Praying in Assemblies of his People, the Preaching of the Word, &c. Now under this Consideration of their being so performed, they belong to Instituted Worship, and so to this Second Command.

2. CONCERNING *those Precepts which are merely Positive and Arbitrary*, Four Observations may be made,

(1.) THAT *they do not as such belong to the First Command.* Tho' as they are means and helps to promote Natural Worship, they may so have a respect to that; yet in their own Nature they do not, and the reason is in their Nature, viz. because they are Positive, and the light of Nature could never have discovered them; and tho' they are made serviceable to our glorifying of God, yet this Serviceableness and Usefulness, is not in the things themselves, but in the Arbitrement of God, who appointed them for this end, which is evident in all Ceremonies and Sacraments.

(2.) HENCE *they had never been Duties, if God had not thus Instituted them.* It is true, the revealed Will of God, is the Supreme Cause of all moral Duty. But some Duties God revealed in Man, at first, by writing his Law on their Hearts, and those Duties are perpetual, and belonged to Mankind, as soon as made with the Image of God upon him. But those Duties had their first rise from

God's Positive appointing them, and for that reason took their rise from that Appointment. Thus, Circumcision was no Duty, till God gave Abraham a positive Law for it.

(3.) HENCE *none are under the Obligation of them, but such to whom they are revealed.* For Men who enjoy the Oracles of God, wherein his Statutes and Judgments are shewn them, and yet neglect their Attendance on them, will be charged as Sin on them; but they to whom they were never discovered, will not be thus Guilty. As for the Heathen therefore, their want of these Institutions is their misery, but if they never heard of them, nor had the Offer of them, it is not their Sin, as it is for them to neglect Duties of Natural Worship, Jer. 10. 25.

(4.) HENCE *they are Arbitrary and Mutable in their own Nature.* The Duties of Natural Worship continue the same unalterably from the beginning, whereas Instituted Worship hath been changed. God made known his mind to his Church of Old by degrees; the Law of Sacrifices soon after the Fall, Circumcision to Abraham, the Passover after the coming out of Egypt, &c. And after Christ's coming he put an end to the Mosaical Pedagogy, and introduced the Evangelical; which is therefore to abide, because he intended it to be the last. Heb. 12. 28. *Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us &c.*

3. THERE are two Things wherein the *Morality of the Second Command doth consist,*

(1.) IN regard of the *Authority, by which all the Precepts of it are enjoined: which is Divine.* It is a moral Truth, and written in the Law of Nature, that God is Supreme, and for that reason, that he hath an indisputable right to Command his Creature, according to his holy Pleasure; and that when he doth so Command it, it owes him a free Obedience, and rebels against his lawful Government, if it refuse or neglect to comply therewithal, Deut. 12. 32. *What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.* And this is grounded in the relation we bear to God, as we are his Creatures, Psal. 100. 2, 3. And on this account he is our Lord and Lawgiver, Isai. 43. 22. On this account is God pleased often to give no other reason for these Commands, but, *I am the Lord.*

(2.) IN regard of the *reason and end of their Institution.* Although God is Sovereign, yet he is infinitely Wise, and suits his Institutions, as for his own Glory, so for our Good. He hath therefore appointed them to be the *Media* for the advancing of this design. So that they are the way, in which we may glorify him, and enjoy Communion with him, which is our *Happiness*, which is the last end of the Reasonable Creature, to which he is, by the Law of Nature bound to serve, Deut. 10. 12. *To keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes which I command thee this day for thy good.*