



S E R M O N CLXII.

QUESTION LII.

WHAT are the Reasons annexed to the Second Commandment?

A N S W E R.

THE Reasons annexed to the Second Commandment are, GOD'S Sovereignty over us, His Propriety in us, and the Zeal he hath for his own Worship.

ALL the Commands of God, are highly rational; and because he treats with Men as Reasonable Creatures, he lays matter of Conviction before them, of the Reasonableness of their Obedience. It is true, he hath not subjoyned particular Reasons to every of the Precepts, but only the first Five, viz. all the Four of the First Table, and only the first of the Second; the reason whereof, is to be carried to all that follow. Now these Reasons are, partly from the Authority of him

that Commands, partly from the Consequents of Obedience or Disobedience. As to the Rationality of the Duties themselves which are Commanded, the Precepts themselves do carry it in them, either in *general*, or *particular*, they being accommodated to the Nature of Man; and therefore Witnessed unto in the Consciences of Men by the light of Nature. For the Decalogue given on Mount *Sinai*, was in the Preceptive part of it, a summary of the Law of Nature. It is true, there are Positive Precepts of Instituted Worship, which are to be reduced to the Second Command, which Man's Conscience would never have discovered to be Duties, if God had not so Commanded them, nor indeed, had they otherwise been Duties at all. But yet, the Command it self, which requires us to obey in all these Commands, and to receive Institutions of Worship from none else but him, is Moral, and Natural. The limiting also of the Sabbath to the revolution of such a number of Days, and to this or that Day in particular, is Positive, in the Fourth Command, else

else there could not be a Change of the Day, as there is in Gospel-times; but the keeping of some Time Holy, for Religious Worship, is Moral, and taught by the Light of Nature, and hath in all Ages been practised by the Heathen, not merely by Tradition, but rational Conviction.

THE Reasons subjoyned to this Command before us, are fetch'd from both these Topicks, the first from the former, and the other from the latter; and are in our Catechism gathered up under Three Particulars: Of which we may treat particularly.

1. *HIS Sovereignty over us; I am the Lord, Jehovah.* And how often do we find this to be the only Reason given for particular Precepts in the Levitical Law. And what force there is in the Consideration of the Divine Supremacy, to make us very careful in keeping close to the Duties of this Command, will be evident from these Considerations,

1. *THAT God hath a Supreme Right of Government over all his Creatures.* This Supremacy of his, is indisputable. The Creatures are all his, every way. They are his by the right of Creation: They had their Being intirely from him, and therein they owe themselves wholly to him, Psal. 100. 3. *Know ye that the Lord he is God, it is he that hath made us, and not we our selves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.* Hence that, in Psal. 95. 5, 6. *The sea is his, and he made it: and his hands formed the dry land. O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker.* He who gave the Creature its Being, may well challenge its Homage. He who is their Creator, must necessarily be acknowledged to be their Governour. He hath the right of Preservation: all Beings are maintained and sustained by him, Heb. 1. 3. *Upholding all things by the word of his power.* They live upon his Beneficence; they have nothing but what he gives them. Surely then he may Command them. Act. 17. 25, 28. *He giveth to all life, and breath, and all things. For in him we live, and move, and have our being.* And in respect of his own People, he hath the right of Redemption. The great Price that was laid down to Purchase them, was that they might serve him; and it carries potent Obligation in it, 1 Cor. 6. 19, 20. In a word, He hath the right of the first Cause, whence he must needs be the last End of all things, Rom. 11. 36. *For of him, and through him, and to him are all things: to whom be glory forever.*

2. *GOD asserts this Sovereignty of his, in giving Laws to his Reasonable Creatures.* There is a twofold Government of God, in which he manifests his Supreme Jurisdiction over Second Beings: The one is common, in disposing of them according to his Pleasure, for his holy ends or purposes, Psal. 115. 3. *But our God is in the heavens, he hath done whatsoever he pleaseth.* The other is special, in which he rules them by Laws and Precepts, to which he requires their active Obedience, with promising them Rewards if they obey, and me-

nacing them with Threatnings, in case of their disobedience. Now the right, of giving Laws to them, belongs to him, as he is their Sovereign. Hence Lord and Lawgiver are put together, *Isai. 33. 22.* And that this is his sole Prerogative, we are told, *Jam. 4. 12: There is one law-giver, who is able to save, and to destroy.*

3. *THAT the Divine Will is the Supreme reason of our Obedience.* The distinction which some use, that some things are willed by God because they are just, and other things are just because he wills them, sound harsh: For tho' it be true, that God hath accommodated the moral Law to Man's Nature, and yet reserved to himself a liberty of adding Positive Precepts as he sees meet, to let Men know that he hath a Lordship over them; yet both the Nature that he put into Man, and the Law by which he governs them, are the resultancy of his Infinite Wisdom and Will. And for this reason, the whole Rule is called his Will, 1 Pet. 4. 2. For tho' he be Holy and Wise, and therefore will not Command any thing but what is just and good, yet he expects that because He Commands, therefore We should Obey.

4. *THAT hence God's Will must be known by us, in order to our right serving him.* Knowledge is necessarily requisite to the Obedience of a Reasonable Creature. For God is served in nothing by Man as such; but in conformity to the Precept; for which it is necessary that he understand it. That therefore is supposed, *Joh. 13. 17. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.* If we do not do his Will, we do not please him; nor honour, but dishonour him; and if we know it not, we cannot do it.

5. *THAT God hath in his Word declared his Will to be, that we attend his Institutions, and conform to no other but his.* This hath already been proved; and the Scripture is abundant in the Testimony of it. God herein proves his People's Fidelity: And whatsoever subtrefuges and pretences Men may use, to put off the dint of these Precepts, yet it will stand a Truth impregnable to the end of the World, that the appointing of, or conforming to any Ordinances of Worship, besides those which God himself hath appointed, is a direct breach of this Command, and violation of the Authority of it.

6. *HENCE every Transgression in this kind, is a proper withstanding of the Sovereignty of God.* His Prerogative is here not only disputed, but denied. God saith, *I am the Lord, and require that you acknowledge Me to be so; and for that end, I command you to do these things & to avoid those, I reserve to my self the Power of making Ordinances of Worship; and if you acknowledge Me your King, do not dare to make or observe any other.* So that when Men transgress here, upon any pretence, they reflect upon God's Crown, and go about to pluck the most Orient Gem out of it: They cast off his Authority, and say that

he shall not reign over them. And if it be thus, surely then there is the highest reason, that we be very circumspect to our selves in this Affair.

II. *HIS Propriety in us.* This is the second Reason given for the Establishment of this Command. This is express in that Word, *thy God.* And this properly respects the Covenant into which God hath taken them. And in the renovation of the Law to Israel, it points to the New-Covenant, which is opened to fallen Man. For altho' it had its force upon Man in Innocency, while he stood nearly related to God in the Covenant of Works, yet by the Apostasy, there was a separation made; and now God was not his God, but his Enemy. And tho' an indissoluble Duty of Obedience lay upon him, as he was a Creature under the Law, yet the motive from God being his Portion, which is intimated in this expression, now ceased; nor did the Covenant give him any hope, or shew him any way of recovering that Priviledge again. And tho' God had a Propriety in all Creatures, as they intirely derive from, & depend upon him, yet it is another manner of Propriety which is here intended, and is mutual. He is their God, and they are his People. Now the New Covenant may be considered, either as to the External, or Internal Dispensation of it, in both whereof there is an Obligation lying upon Men, to observe and keep this Command: As will appear by the following Considerations,

1. *THAT God hath opened a New Covenant to fallen Man, in which he offers to restore to Life and Happiness, upon Terms.* Man was become every way miserable by Sin. The Covenant under which he had his standing, could not relieve him, but left him to despair; for it spake nothing but Curses to him. But the New Covenant brought in a better hope. God in it tells Man, that he hath found out a way, how to save the honour of the Justice of the Law, and yet extend Mercy, to the saving those who stood condemned to die by it, Rom. 3. 26. *To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.* But this Covenant partakes in the nature of all Covenants, viz. it hath its Terms, on which the Benefits of it are to be come at. And it is so, not only in the External Dispensation of it, but also in the Nature of it. For the Benefits engaged in it are conveyed in no other way to any, but by their being conformed to these Terms; nor doth God save any of the Children of Adam in any other way. The notion of an absolute Covenant, is neither sense in it self, nor agreeable to the whole tenure of the Gospel. For God hath therein assured us, that we shall stand or fall, according to these. Hence we read, Mar. 16. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized, shall be saved; but he that believeth not, shall be damned.* Rom. 8. 13. *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

2. *THAT in these Terms, God requires of Men Obedience to his revealed Will.* True, he doth not require this Obedience under that Sanction, that he shall die, if his personal conformity be not perfectly adequate to the Command, for he hath provided another foundation of Justification. However, he hath so required hearty compliance with his Command, that none of those who deny it, shall obtain Salvation by Christ. For not only the Law, but the Gospel Threatning is out against all such. We are therefore told, in Heb. 12. 14. *Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.* 1 *Job.* 2. 3. 2 *Thes.* 1. 8. And tho' God can and will, pity and pardon the infirmities and follies of his Children, yet if they be not upright and cordial in their subjection to him, he will reject them; if they be workers of Iniquity, they must expect to hear that fearful Word, *Depart, Mat.* 7. 28.

3. *THAT all that own Subjection to this Covenant, do therein professedly devote themselves to the Service of God.* There is an outward Dispensation of the Covenant, under the Gospel, in which God treats with Man, about this great Concern. To which End, he sends the Gospel to them, makes the Offers of Salvation to them, invites them to comply with these Offers, according as they are proposed; and Men do give an Entertainment thereto, so far as to subject themselves professedly to the Covenant, & bring themselves under a declared Obligation to it; by Virtue whereof, they become the People of God, by an outward Denomination, and are Subjects of the Gospel Covenant. Now all such do declare their Subjection to God, and promise Obedience unto his Precepts; for this belongs to the Essentials of the Gospel Covenant, in which they give themselves up to God to be for him, and for no other. Yea, this is one thing that is sealed in Baptism, in which we are consecrated to God, to be his Servants, and to do his Will. This therefore is required of all such as so acknowledge God, 2 *Tim.* 2. 19. *Let every one that nameth the Name of Christ, depart from iniquity.*

4. *THAT all their Hope of enjoying God as their God in this Covenant, is upon their complying with these Terms.* There are great and precious Promises, contained in the new Covenant, and they that are Owners of them indeed, shall be happy forever. These Promises are set before all to whom the Gospel comes, and those who profess the Faith, do in some respects stand related to these Promises. It is therefore said of Israel, Rom. 9. 4. *Who are Israelites: to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God; and the promises.* But still, these Promises are made to them, on this Hypothesis, viz. that they come up to the things there demanded of all such as are so related to the Covenant; so that, till they come up to these Terms, they cannot challenge the good promised, to be their

own, and if they never do so, they will not only miss of it, but bring more and greater Guilt upon themselves. There is indeed, a good Hope set before them, and they enjoy all the Advantages of the Means for obtaining, but if they remain in their Sins, and do not yield all Obedience to the Command, according to Truth and Sincerity, they will lose their Hopes, and come into greater Condemnation. Hence that, Joh. 3. 19. *And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.*

5. **THAT** when God hath given to Men, the Grace necessary for this Obedience, he doth it for this Design. Man by his Fall, lost not only his Fidelity, but his Ability too, being stripped of all those sanctifying Graces, in which his Power lay. Now God, in the internal Application of the new Covenant, which is done in Conversion restores those Powers to the Man, by renewing him in the Image of his Mind; by putting his Spirit upon him, and reimprinting on his Heart, those Graces which he had lost, and which are necessary to all such as serve God acceptably. Thus therefore the Tenor of the new Covenant is expressed, *Jer. 31. 32, &c.* Now there must be some Aim or Design in this Work of the Spirit, for God doth nothing in Vain; and this was that they might be enabled to comply with the Terms of the Covenant, and serve God in newness of Life. God himself hath said on this Account, *Isa. 43. 21. This people have I formed for myself, they shall shew forth my praise.* And it is expressed in, *Luk. 1. 74, 75. That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the bands of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.* This he aimed at in the Redemption wrought by Christ. So that if these do not thus live, they would have received the Grace of God in Vain.

6. **THAT** all the Promises of this Covenant, are given to be the Encouragements of this Obedience. There are great and precious Promises made in the Gospel to all the Children of God, and they are sealed to them upon their cordial closing in, with the Terms on which they are offered. Now, though it be true, that all these Promises are free, and made for the discovery of the Riches of God's Grace to miserable Man; yet as they are connected by the preceptive Part of the Covenant, and inseparable from it, so they are those Cords of Love, with which God draws us to his Service: as they are to let us know that we serve a good Master, so they are to stimulate us to serve him cheerfully and faithfully. The Apostle therefore builds his Exhortation upon this, *2 Cor. 7. 1. Having therefore these promises (dearly beloved) let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* And it is used as an Argument, to animate Christians to Fidelity and Constancy, in their serving of God, *Gal. 6. 9. And let us not be weary in well doing:*

for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. *Rev. 2. 10.* There are a great many Temptations and Discouragements which God's People encounter, in the way of new Obedience; but they are corroborated by those Promises against them all. This carried *Moses* thro' all, *Heb. 11. 26. Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.* And this is recorded in his Commendation. And indeed, this is the only way wherein we can testify our Gratitude to God, for all the kindness he hath shewn us in the Covenant, and all that he requires of us. As he told them, *Deut. 20. 19, 20. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him.*

7. **THAT** God's Glory is specially concerned, in their faithful keeping of this Command. We formerly observed, that several of the Reasons given to particular Commands, are in themselves general, and applicable to them all, as enforcing of Universal Obedience; and such is this under our Consideration. But there is some speciality intended, in affixing it to this particular; and that is, that God is more peculiarly honoured or dishonoured, according as this Command is observed or neglected. Instituted Worship is a main distinguishing note between the true & false Church. Israel were therein to be distinguished from all the Nations, by their standing fast to the Laws and Ordinances given them by God. This is the great trial of our Obedience, and wherein we make it appear that we do acknowledge him to be the Lord our God, when we dare not to turn away from the Command, to the right hand, or to the left. This was his commendation, *2 Kin. 22. 2. And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the way of David his father, and turned not to the right hand or to the left.*

III. **THE** Zeal which he hath for his own Worship. Which is first asserted, *I am a jealous God;* and commorated upon, both in his just revenge on the breakers of this Command, *visiting, &c.* and in the rich Mercy which he hath in store for such as keep it, *showing Mercy, &c.* Men may think it a light matter to neglect Instituted Worship, or to obey & practice humane Institutions in Worship, but God assures us; that he hath another esteem of it. The word translated *jealous*, signifies both to be zealous, and jealous, and there is a propinquity in them; for the more Zeal that a Person hath for a thing, the more jealous will he be apt to be, of being opposed in it. But this Word hath a special use, to set forth the jealousy between Husband and Wife, in respect of Conjugal Fidelity; and therefore it is connected with the mention of the relation between them, *I thy God, am jealous.* It intends, that

God looks on the Covenant between him and them, as a Marriage Covenant; and that he expected they would be true to him; and look'd upon it as a most horrible abuse offered to him, to be otherwise; and therefore it would be a grievous provocation to him for them so to do. For this reason, all the Idolatrous and Superstitious practices of Israel are so often in Prophetical Scriptures, represented under the title of Adultery, because in them they plaid false with God, as an Adulteress doth with her Husband. And the reason why this is peculiarly mentioned under the Second Command, is because God's Ordinances are the *Media* of Special & Conjugal Communion between him and his People, in which he applies his peculiar Favours to them, and bestows his Loves upon them; and they by their Fidelity to them, give testimony of their Chastity, that their Love is set upon him alone, that they are satisfy'd in Communion with him, and that they are for him and no other. Whereas, when they go from God's Institutions, and follow Men's Inventions, they go a Whoring from him, and seek after other Lovers, which must needs stir up his jealousy. Now God sets forth this Zeal of his, in *two Particulars*. The one for our Caution, to take heed how we tamper in matters of Worship, the other to encourage us in our Fidelity.

1. *HE threatens remarkable Revenge upon those that bring themselves under the Guilt of false Worship. Visiting, &c.* Where by the way observe, he doth not say of those that make graven Images, but of those that hate Me, thereby intimating, that false Worship proceeds from, and is an indication of, Men's hatred of God. The special Penalty here mentioned is, his leaving some notable mark of his displeasure upon the Posterity of such. Tho' he also limits it to *the third or fourth Generation*; thereby to shew his pity; yet he lets such know, that he will make some Monuments of his jealous Revenge on them. Touching the equity of God's doing this, there are many Disputes. I shall only here briefly observe; That no Man suffers Eternal Punishments for the Sins of any of his Progenitors, excepting the first Transgression of our first Parents, in whom all sinned, Rom. 5. 12. *Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin: so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.* But Men suffer that for their own Sins. That God sometimes leaves the Children of such Apostates to follow their Fathers Steps, as a witness against them, tho' yet these Children have Sin enough on them, to justify God's so leaving them. That God often, in the dispensation of temporary Providences, leaves some awful marks of his Severity upon the Children of false Worshipers. Sometimes he cuts off whole Families for that reason. So he did by the Family of *Jereboam*, for his setting up the Calves: And tho' he had one godly Son, yet he must dye too, tho' favoured to die in his Bed. Thus also he dealt with *Baalsha*, and

Abab: And sometimes he brings the Families to beggary and contempt; as he did that of *Eli*, for his suffering his Sons to abuse God's Instituted Worship. However, God useth his Sovereignty here. Thus we find, that notwithstanding *Abaz* had been wofully guilty, in defiling the House of God with Superstitions, yet *Hezekiah* his Son was a great Reformer, and a glorious Prince. Nevertheless, this is that which such may and ought to expect from God; and they that regard it not, lay in ill for their Children, and discover that they are more cruel to them than the Ostriches. And surely, did Men believe the Truth of this Threatning, they would be more heedful to themselves in this regard.

2. *HE Promiseth signal Blessing to those that uphold the purity of his Worship. And shewing Mercy, &c.* When he saith, *that keep his Commandments*, it respects all the Precepts of God: but it is mentioned in this, to let us know, that they who are not careful in this, will not regard the other Commands of God. These are further indigitated, by the Principle from which their Obedience flows, viz. Love to God, *that Love Me*; signifying, that External conformity without cordial respect to God, will not be acceptable to him. And he further adds the Spring from which this Blessing derives, viz. the *Mercy* of God. The Word signifies a free and undeserved benignity bestowed. Noting, that our best Service cannot merit the blessing, but it is a fruit of God's meer good will, and that he here also acts his Sovereignty. And to make it appear, he hath sometimes left the Children of holy Men, to bring remarkable Judgments on themselves: As the two Sons of *Aaron*, God's Saint; and *Manasseh* the Son of holy *Hezekiah*. We may finally observe, the difference between the Threatning and Promise; that is limited to the third and fourth Generation, this is extended to a *thousand*, i.e. Generations, as it is expounded, Psal. 105. 8. *He hath remembered his covenant for ever: the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.* Which, tho' Hyperbolical, yet carries great emphasis in it. And it hath been remarkable, how God hath blessed the Posterity of such as have been Zealous for his Worship, and careful Reformers of it. So that love to our Posterity should influence us with this care. And it is observable, that when any of God's Servants have been faithful in looking after the pure Worship of God, tho' they have failed in many things, yet God hath born that Testimony for them, that they did that which was *right in his sight*: Whereas, if they have but so much as tolerated high Places, tho' to offer Sacrifice only to the true God, he hath set a note upon that, as diminutive of their glory.

U s e. *LET the Consideration of these things, make us very cautious to our selves, how we entertain the Ordinances of Worship: That we keep exact to those of Divine Institution, and neither neglect, nor go beyond them. And there is enough*

enough in the reasons laid down to enforce the Exhortation. And for our help I shall only offer these Rules,

1. *LET the Fear of God rule in our Hearts.* This is that which only will keep us in awe. Let us count his favour better than Life, and his frowns worse than Death. Believe, that he is an holy God, and jealous for his great Name, and this Fear maintained, will curb in our wantonness.

2. *LET us maintain an high and venerable esteem of God's Wisdom & Fidelity.* All false Worship is introduced, under a supposition, that Christ hath not done sufficient in his Gospel, for the carrying on of Positive Worship, and therefore Men must do something in their Prudence that may help it. But if we can resolve, as we ought, that Christ Loves his Church, and is infinitely Wise, and knows

what it needs for it's Edification; and is Faithful in his House; this will curb in our Curiosity, and restrain our Luxuriancy, and make us abundantly satisfy'd in his Ordinances.

3. *LET us acknowledge the intire dependance of the Efficacy of all Ordinances in Worship, upon his Blessing.* Remember, that Means will do nothing of themselves; that all our Encouragement to attend on them, is our hope that he will bless them for our profiting: That he hath promised this blessing to the due attendance on his Appointments; that he hath not engaged it to any of Men's devising; but threatned them that observe them. So that we cannot in Faith wait on any other, but those which are his own.

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S E R M O N CLXIII.

QUESTION LIII.

the Holy and Reverend Use of God's