

Religion. There were therefore a Moral Reason in that Law given by *Moses*, Deut. 7. 3, 4. *Neither shalt thou make Marriages with them; thy Daughter thou shalt not give unto his Son, nor his Daughter shalt thou take unto thy Son, for they will turn away thy Son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.* And to one of the fore-cited Heads, may be reduced, whatever particular Precepts are given in the word of God, on this account.

U S E. AND to quicken Parents to these Duties. Let us consider that God requires it of our hands, and will call us to an account for the Children so put under our Charge: Their well-being in this World, and another, hath no little Turn in it; and our own Comfort or Sorrow in them. God is wont ordinarily to bless faithfulness in this regard with good success, and we may hope to live in them honourably when we are gone, and to meet them again with Joy, in the Great Day.

[JUNE, 1. 1703.]

SERMON CLXXVII.

II. **T**HERE is an Honour which Children do owe to their Parents, which God requires of them, and the bonds of Nature do oblige them to pay. And the same reasons that prove and confirm the Superiority of Parents, equally ratify the Duty of Subjection lying upon Children, and that because the Reason of the Duties is founded in the Relation, and therefore they are adapted to it. Now the Duties of Honour due from Children to their Parents, will come under Two general Heads, viz. 1. A due Subjection to their Authority. 2. Affording them needful Succour in their Necessity. And to one of these are all the particular Duties to be referred.

[1.] *A due Subjection to their Authority.* That Parents have an Authority over their Children, was observed in the former, and if these are not to pay Subjection thereto, that would be in vain and frustrated. Now the general and comprehensive Duty here is, that they yield Obedience to all their Lawful Commands. And here it may be enquired,

Q. *HOW far Children are bound to Obey the Commands of their Parents?*

AND this nextly concerns Active Obedience, by performing of the things so Commanded them. As to that which is Passive, it will be spoken of afterwards. Here then we may take these Assertions;

1. **T**HAT the Authority of Parents over their Children is Limited. It is so by the Command of God, who hath not left them a boundless Authority; but hath told them how they shall, and how they shall not exercise their power over them, Eph. 6. 4. *And ye Fathers, provoke not your Children to wrath: but bring them up in admonition of the Lord.* Yea, they themselves

are accountable to the Civil Powers for their injuring their Children; and in some cases to repair to them, for Justice against Rebellicious and Contumacious Children, as God appointed in Israel: and every well ordered Government allows unto Children a relief against the Unreasonable Treatments of Unnatural Parents.

2. **T**HAT God hath a Supreme Power over both Parents and Children. They are equally under His Government, & obliged to Obey His Commands; He having and using Authority to prescribe Duties, and give Laws to them. Though the reason of the Authority of Parents, and Subjection of Children, is laid in the Relation itself, yet God himself is the Law-giver unto both; and He alone is the absolute Sovereign over the whole Creation: Tho' Parents have a Command over their Children, yet God Commands them both, and one as well as the other, is to seek the Law at His Mouth.

3. **T**HAT hence Children are bound equally with their Parents to Obey God, and must be called to an Account before Him for it. They labour of a mistake, who think that God hath so subjected Children to their Parents, that they are not to enquire further into their Duty, than the Pleasure of their Parents; and that if these lay, any sinful Commands on their Children, they are without further enquiry to perform them; and that not They, but only their Parents are accountable to God for it; as if these and not the other, were guilty of sin. For tho' Men in Authority, are partakers in other Mens sins, by Commanding them to do that which God hath forbidden; yet they bring guilt upon themselves, by compliance with such Commands: for every person is firstly subject to the Law of God, and by vertue of that Law is subject to his Superiours, and must be called to give an Account of all his Actions to God, Rom. 14. 12. And if they be not careful to Obey God, they will never Obey their Parents from a right Principle. Hence that, Eph. 6. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord: for this is right.* The meaning whereof is not only because God hath Commanded, but also it sets bounds to the Obedience; and hence that in, Col. 3. 20. *Children, obey your Parents in all things: for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord.* Is thus to be limited, viz. *All things which God requires.*

4. **C**HILDREN therefore, as they grow capable, ought to know what is their Duty in all things. There are other Commands besides the Fifth, and they are given Universally, and all Men are bound by them, without any respect to the Orders that God hath placed Men in. *Thou shalt not*, &c. is an Injunction upon every Individual person. And altho' Children in their Infant, and Ignorant Age, depend much upon their Parents Instruction to teach them what is Duty, and what is Sin; and it will be an horrible Crime in Parents, that neglect so to instruct them: yet every Child hath in him a Natural Conscience, and besides the common Principles which are engraven on it, there are advantages of acquainting themselves with the Will of God; and it is their Duty to inform themselves by

them; and it is his Commendation, 2 Tim. 3. 15. *And that from a Child thou hast known the holy Scriptures.* Children have Souls to save or lose as well as Parents, and therefore should acquaint themselves with the way of Salvation, how else should they live and please God.

5. **THIS** rightly informed Conscience, is to govern their Obedience to their Parents Commands. For Man is a Cause by Counsel, and the Word of God is the Rule to direct his Counsel in all that he doth, and he may not lawfully do any thing that is contrary to it, so far as he is, or may be informed by it. And tho' Children ought to learn of their Parents, yet when they have learned, they ought to practice accordingly, else in Obeying their Parents, they disobey God: and from these Premises, we may gather these few Conclusions,

1. **I F** Parents Command their Children that which is contrary to the Divine Precept, they are bound with Modesty to refuse Obedience. I say with Modesty, for tho' they may not dare to do the thing; yet they ought to carry themselves as Children, who bear an high respect to their Parents, and make it appear, that it is not from a contempt of them, but from an awe of God, that they withhold their Active Obedience: However, that is a plea to be made against all the unlawful Commands of any *Superiour* in the World, in whatsoever he is placed. Act. 5. 29. *We ought to obey God rather than man.* And doubtless, where God's and Men's Commands do interfere, God must be obeyed. For no Authority upon Earth can possibly make void any one of God's Commands, for He is the One Law-giver.

2. **THEY** ought to Obey them in all that is Just and Good. When their Commands are according to the Word of God, they ought to believe, that now God Commands them by their Parents, and therefore they ought not to do it as of constraint, but with a willing Mind, and with all Alacrity. For no Obedience but what is voluntary, is acceptable to God. Hence that Commendation, Phil. 2. 22. *As a Son with the Father, he hath served with me in the Gospel.* For Children to do what they are bidden is better than to refuse; but to do it with reluctance, and tokens of displeasure, and murmuring is unworthy of the Relation. Children should study thus to please them, and take the greatest content, when they find their Obedience to give content to their Parents. Nor ought they to be displeas'd, because their Lusts are crossed, and sinful Courses checked by such Commands; but on the other hand to Thank God for such Parents, as carefully use their Authority, to keep them from the path of the destroyer.

3. **I N** things that are not in themselves Sins, nor in their Circumstances, they ought to Obey without disputing, so long as they are under their Parents Care & Charge. Doubtless when they come to be for themselves, they have a liberty to use their own Prudence in ordering their Affairs, tho' with a due deference to the Advice of their Parents; but as long as under their Wing, their lawful Commands are to be

complied withal. As to their Duty in things indifferent, I debate not, till Men are agreed what these things are: But if by them is intended such things as are in themselves neither Sins nor Duties, but may be either one or other, according to Circumstances; doubtless Parents Commands will make them a Duty in Children, who are not at their own dispose; unless it be evident that in the Circumstances, God would be dishonoured and disobey'd. And tho' it may be lawful for Children who have discretion, humbly and submissively to plead with their Parents about the inconvenience apparent in the thing, yet without to testify a readiness to acknowledge Parental Authority, if they persist in their pleasure: And doubtless this is comprehended in the *all things* directed in, Col. 3. 20.

4. **W H E N** they are Married, tho' they owe a reverence to their Parents, yet they are more at their own dispose. They now set up for themselves, and make a distinct Family, whereof they have the charge upon them; and are not under such Servitude as before: Nevertheless there are things in which they ought to testify a due regard to their Parents, and that not only in respect of the solemn Instructions given them to fear God, but in other things of greater liberty. It is therefore a commendation that God gives the *Rebabitcs*, That they Obeyed their Father in a matter which otherwise had not obliged them, Jer. 35. 15, 16.

5. **I N** the discharge of Publick Trust they are bound to the Law. Children are sometimes called to Civil or Ecclesiastical Offices, during their Parents Lives; and though this doth not discharge them from a Reverential respect to them, (on which account *Solomon* is commended for this to his Mother, 1 Kings 2. 19. And if they are capable of giving them light into their Duty, it is very proper for them to consult with them, and take their advice, so far as is for their help,) yet they are not to obey them in any thing, which is contrary to the Rule of their administration; nor to avoid the doing of that which is right, for fear of displeasing them. It is therefore charged on *Ahabaziah*, as his Sin, 2 Chron. 22. 3. *His Mother was his Counsellour to do wickedly.*

BUT we may proceed to the more particular Duties, incumbent on Children, during their Minority, to testify their Subjection to their Parents in; and these are more especially,

(1.) **A N** endeavour to get and keep a deep impression upon their hearts, of the Just & Right Authority of their Parents over them. All Obedience to God must proceed from a right Principle; now the Principle of this Obedience, is because they are their Parents: And this is to sway them against whatsoever Corruption in them might improve to weaken their Obedience to them. The word, *Thy Father, and thy Mother*, must carry weight in it, to over-balance other things: Nor should any thing that cannot remove this Relation subvert their Obedience. Tho' they are poor in the World, and cannot do so much for them as others can

for theirs; tho' they are of mean Port in the World, and are possibly despised by their Neighbours among whom they live: tho' they are Morose, and do not carry it so obliging to their Children as becomes the love of such a Relation: Nay, tho' they are wicked & fear not God, but lead in their lives; when it should humble them, yet they are to remember, that God hath made them their Parents, and given them Authority over them. And this Relation is as strong, and the Obligation as forcible, on such whose Parents are the Poorest and most Ignoble, as if they were the greatest Princes on Earth.

(2) FROM this Principle they must carefully comply with such things as these: viz.

1. **THEY** must hearken to their Counsels which are Good. True, if they advise them to do a wicked thing, they are to avoid it, as before; but if they tell them their Duty, and call upon them to attend it, or warn them against any thing that is evil, and charge them to abstain from it; not only are they to comply with it, because it is in itself just and right; but the Authority which it comes withal, ought to bear upon them, and have a deep impression on their Minds. There is therefore Emphasis in that, Prov. 4. 1. *Hear, ye Children, the Instruction of a Father.* And 31. 1. *The prophecy that his Mother taught him.* To remember, this I had from my Father and Mother, who loved me, and sought my good, and shall I not be careful to obey it? So he, Prov. 4. 3, 4.

2. **TO** receive their Rebukes with great Submission. Children are too apt to forget themselves, and do things that are worthy of a reproof. And Parents, who love their Souls, cannot but chide them for it, tell them of their fault, shew them how they have Sinned against God, hurt their own Souls, grieved them, and accordingly to discover their just displeasure at them: Now it is the Duty of such to bear them Patiently, and not reply upon them; tho' if innocent, they may meekly plead it, and Parents ought to hearken to them, for they ought to do so to their very Slaves, Job 21. 13, 14. Yea they should take reproofs kindly, and take warning by them, and be more heedful to themselves for the time forward, not to displease or grieve them; nay, to be Thankful to God for the faithfulness of their Parents.

3. **TO** receive their Corrections, with an Obediential Frame and Carriage. Children are not to think that their Parents hate them, because they Correct them for their faults, but ascribe it to their tender love to, and care for them, and to prevent a greater evil from befalling them: And the Parents ought so prudently to manage this, as to leave sufficient Conviction of this love, in the manner of it; yet Children ought not to rise up against their Parents in it, tho' they may think themselves innocent, or that they use over severe discipline to them, but to use Obedience to them in the thing, tho' they use great Arbitrariness in it. Hence that, Heb. 9. 12. *We have had Fathers of our flesh, who corrected us after their own pleasure, and we gave them reverence.*

4. **THEY** should study to please, and fear to

offend them. That there is a Fear included in this Honour, is evident by, Lev. 19. 3. *Ye shall fear every man his Mother and his Father.* And without this reverential fear, it is not possible that Children should discharge the Duties they owe to their Parents; there is therefore an high respect they must entertain for them; and accordingly account it their interest to give them content, as far as may be, and no small infelicity to have them displeased at them at all; much more by their sinful provocation, or doing any thing which they know will be grievous to them: So that tho' they think such a thing lawful in itself, yet if it will provoke them, they are to deny their own desires in it, when they are under no Obligation of Duty to do it. And if they know that they have grieved them at any time, they should seek all lawful courses, to obtain their reconciliation.

5. **THEY** ought to depend on them to be directed in their Employment of their Time, and Manner of Occupying themselves in it. Children are not to come and go, and do as they please, but to take their direction from their Parents about it; and therefore they are to do nothing of Weight, but by their advice and direction; and accordingly to ask it of them, and be always ready to give them a true Account of what they have done; and if they have a desire to any lawful liberty or diversion, to ask their leave, and restrain themselves to their Approbation, and not exceed the limits which they set them. Christ himself paid such subjection to his Parents, tho' one of them was but supposed to be so, Luk. 2. 51.

6. **THEY** ought to be content with the Supports, which their Parents are capable of Allowing them. They must adore the Governing Providence of God, and be satisfied to Live accordingly: And tho' they cannot do for them as others who abound more, yet, to accept thankfully of their love and kindness in that little which they do cheerfully allow them out of what they have; yea, to think their Parents better know what is convenient for them, than they themselves do.

7. **THEY** ought to hide their Parents Infirmities, and not to despise them, on account thereof, or reproach them for them. And that whether Natural Infirmities, or Sinful, or those that grow upon them by the decays that accompany Old Age; and all these are included in that, Prov. 23. 22. *Hearken unto thy Father that begat thee, and despise not thy Mother when she is old.*

8. **THEY** ought to take their Advice and Consent, in changing their Condition by Marriage. I need say no more in this matter, than, if Parents have an Authoritative influence into this Affair, which was formerly proved, then Children must needs owe their Obedience in it. We have therefore that put as one brand upon Esau, to augment his ill Character, Gen 26. 34, 35. *He took to wife Jewish the Daughter of Beeri the Hittite, and Basemath the Daughter of Elon the Hittite: Which were a grief of mind unto Isaac and to Rebekah.*

[2.] THE other thing in which Children are to Honour their Parents, is, by *Affording them needful Succours in their Necessity*. It is here supposed, that Parents may in Providence be reduced to such Necessity; and it is very frequently so, especially with such as Live to Old Age, and pass their Labour. And here these things are observable,

1. **CHILDREN** ought to get their hearts deeply possessed, with the great Obligations they are under to their Parents. And here, besides that they were the Instruments of their Being, which is a Natural tie; all the care, pains, patience, labour and expence laid out upon them, ought to be thought of by them, and leave Conviction on them, that they can never sufficiently compensate it to them, nor do any thing too much to testify their gratitude to them. And very often, there is this particularly to consider, *viz.* That Parents have been Necessitated to Labour hard, and lay out their Earnings for the Support & Education of their Children, till they were capable of doing Service for their own Support. Now this leaves matter of Conviction on Children, that it is a due debt which they owe to them, to retaliate when they are become helpless to themselves. And hence,

2. **IN General**, it is the Duty of Children, to take care of their Parents, to their Ability, that they be not a Publick Charge. And it is a dishonour that they do to them, if, when they are able to do it for them, they turn them over to the Alms of the People: And this is manifestly intended in 1 Tim. 5. 3, 4. *Honour widows that are widows indeed. But if any widow have children or nephews, let them learn first to shew piety at home, and to requite their Parents: for that is good and acceptable before God.* v. 16. *If any man or woman that believeth, have widows, let them relieve them, and let not the Church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.* And he mentions the Church, because in Times of Persecution, Christians were often Out-lawed; whereas the support of the Indigent & Impotent, belings not properly & ordinarily, to the Ecclesiastical, but Civil Constitution: however it tells us, that none is to be reckoned Indigent of common Support, that hath Children or Grand-Children, that are able to relieve him.

3. **MORE** Particularly there are two things, in which this care is to be exerted by them,

1. **DURING** their Abode with them, in a cheerful laying out their labour & endeavour, that their Lives may be comfortable. Children that have been the Charge of their Parents, to bring them up to be capable of doing something, should not presently, in hope of doing better for themselves, desert their helpless Parents, as thinking it now time to look to themselves, and let them shift as they can: they ought not to now to leave them so long as they stand in need of them, till such time as they are called by God's Providence to set up Families of their own; but think their labour & earnings well laid out, if their Parents Lives may be made any way comfortable by it; and more Credibly than if it were expended for the adorning of their own Bodies with Superfluities.

2. **WHEN** they are gone Abroad, and set up Families by themselves, they are still to take care of them, according to their Abilities. They are not to throw off the care of them, under a pretence of a Charge of their own. It is true, that every Man's own business is to see to the welfare of his own Family; but still, it is a great Obligation, not to forsake their Aged and Poor Parents; and therefore according to the Portion of the World, which God affords them to make them sharers of it; yea, to deny themselves and theirs of many conveniences, rather than their own Parents should suffer for want. Eminent is the Example of *Joseph*, in providing honourably for his good and aged Father, in a time of great straits; and no less commendable that of *Ruth*, in labouring to Support her Mother-in-law, who was past her labour, and under Poverty. And the Providence of God, hath very frequently in this World requited the tender care of such Children, to observation; and peculiarly is this tenderness to be shewn in the time of Sicknefs, by seeing that they want neither for due tence, or any other relief, which their Condition calls for; and readily bearing with their Infirmities, and studiously avoiding any thing, which may any way grieve them; and also to take care for their decent Burial, according to their Condition and Ability. These are the Principal heads, to which Children's Duties are referred.

USE. AND let Children be hereby Admonished of their Duty, and advised to be careful in the practice of it, and humbled under the Conviction of their many short comings in it. Remember, this is the way to please God, Col. 3. 20. And what greater & more forcible Argument can be used with such as do believe that it is our happiness to please God? And on the other hand, the neglect of paying them this Honour, and casting contempt upon them, either by Disobedience, or by Neglecting of them, will highly displease God, and provoke His holy Anger, to pour out signal Effects of his wrath upon them. Hence that, Prov. 30. 17. *The eye that mocketh at his Father, and despiseth to obey his Mother, the ravens of the valley shall pick it out, and the young eagles shall eat it.* And remember; you that are Children, either are, or may be Parents; and God is wont very often to testify his Acceptance or dislike of our Carriage to our Parents, by an Answerable Carriage of our Children to us, which will afford Occasion of Comfort or Sorrow to us afterwards.

[JUNE, 29. 1703.]

SERMON CLXXVIII.

Secondly. **W**E have Considered the Order of Superiority, which is purely *Natural*, *viz.* of *Parents* and *Children*: It follows that we take an Account of that which is *Political*: The former is called *Natural*, because the Relation itself is made by Natural Generation; whereas those that follow, are not so.