

## SERMON CLXXXIII.

(III.) **T**HEY ought to take utmost care for the *Peace* and *Safety* of the Subject. This therefore is one thing on account whereof we are to Pray for Rulers; *1 Tim. 2. 2.* The Civil Peace and Tranquillity of a People, is, next to the true Religion, the greatest Blessing they can enjoy in this Life. Now it peculiarly belongs to Civil Rulers, to take Care for the upholding of this, by ordering and governing all Affairs which refer to it. It is none of the least Mischiefs brought in by Man's Fall, that Mankind are filled with a Spirit of Discord, whereupon they are ready upon all occasions to Quarrel; and their Contention to break out into open Hostility, which brings in all manner of Miseries. Now these Controversies are either *Personal & Private*, for the remedying or preventing whereof, the Two former Rules do serve; or more *Publick*, in which a People may be involved and exposed to War, in which Oppression and Ruin are threatened. So that the matter under our present consideration, refers to the management of the Affairs of *War* and *Peace*; which being an Affair that requires the most prudent Conduct, must needs come under the Regulation of Civil Authority.

NOW there are Two sorts of Wars, by which the Tranquillity of a People may be undermined, *Intestine* and *Foreign*; for the preventing, or well-composing whereof, great endeavours are to be used, in which the sincere Affection of the Rulers to their Subjects will be proved.

AND here, that Question about the *Lawfulness of War*, is proper to be handled, rather than under the *Eighth* Command, inasmuch as the thing it self belongs to Civil Government, and is under the Regulation of Rulers; but it is a thing so unreasonable to deny it, or so much as to doubt of it, that it is hardly worth the while to dispute of it.

*WAR* is usually distinguished into *Defensive* and *Offensive*. As to the former, viz. *Defensive*, when we are to stand on our own Guard, to save our selves from an injurious Invader, and to repel Force with Force. *Self-Preservation* is a Principle so closely rivetted into the Nature of the Creatures, that it is unnatural to doubt of the Lawfulness of it; and to chuse rather to suffer all manner of Violence and Oppression, than to stand on our Defence, and resist an injurious Adversary, is to forego Reason it self: Nor can such a People expect long to enjoy the Liberties, which God hath bestowed on them a Right unto; but must look to be made a Prey by others, and enslaved by them. It is true, the actual Necessity of this is brought in by Man's Sin; but as the Case stands, since the Apostacy, there is no Living in such a World as this is without it; nor will those Scriptures which Caution us against private Revenge, make ought against it.

NOR can a *Defensive* War be managed without that which is in a sense *Offensive*; for we

cannot save our selves in it, unless we offer Violence to those that Assail us.

BUT as to that which is peculiarly called *Offensive*, i. e. When we are the Aggressors, there may be a more seeming pretence for the *Unlawfulness* of it; tho' it is but seeming, inasmuch as there may be such Affronts and Provocations offered by an Adversary, before he breaks forth into open Hostility, as may necessitate it; and the Safety and Tranquillity of a Government, cannot be secured without it; which, what they are, may after be considered: And tho' Vengeance belongs to God; yet in such Cases, God hath entrusted Magistrates to Act in His Authority; and hence they are called *Revengeers*, Rom. 13. 4. And for this Reason they are called the *Shields of the Earth*, Psal. 47. 9.

WE may here then consider their Duty, in regard of the sorts of War first mentioned.

AND that,

(1.) WITH respect to the Tranquillity of the Subject, against the mischief of *Intestine Wars*, i. e. Such as breed in the Bowels of the Government, and are most pernicious; and their Duty in this Affair, comes under Two Heads.

1. THEY ought to use all prudent Endeavours to prevent such Troubles. And that is to be done, by Antedating the Causes of them; and these Causes are rooted in the discontents entertained by the Subjects, against the Administration of the Government, in which wise Rulers will take Care, as far as they can, that there be no such Occasions offered; or if there be, seasonably to remove them. All Oppression will raise disquiet in Men's minds, *Ecc. 7. 7.* Now the Subject may be oppressed, either in their Liberties, or Estates, or by the Injustice of Ministers; and when either of these Call them, they will wince: Rulers therefore ought in Prudence as well as Conscience, to take effectual Care, that the People's just Liberties be defended; that no heavy & unreasonable Taxes be imposed on them, and that all publick Officers be kept within due bounds. And if at any Time Discontents arise and spread, they should carefully endeavour to lay them; and if there have been any thing justly grievous offered to their People, to remove it out of the way, and by gentle Treatments to compose them, before they break out. It was a piece of Wise Counsel the Old Men gave to Rehoboam, *1 Kings 12. 7.* Which if he had hearkned to, he might have prevented the Rupture which followed upon his forsaking of it.

2. THEY ought to consult the common Good of the People, in the suppressing of such Insurrections. They cannot always be prevented; there are for the most part, some turbulent Spirits that love to Fish in troubled Waters, who are ready to blow up a spark of Discontent into a flame, and so raise Civil Wars in the heart of a Government; and it is incumbent on the Rulers to withstand them, and the Welfare of the Subject is concerned in it. But there is great Caution and Moderation to be used in the Application: Severity ought at such

a time, to be restrained to the Ringleaders of such Factions, and all gentle offers and treatments made to the rest, remembering, that the wasting of the Subjects is a weakening of the Government; and extreme Rigour will but strengthen the Rebellion, whereas a general Pardon and Amnesty, will tend to make the Cement the stronger and more durable. It was a noble Speech and Carriage of *Joab*, in that Civil Rupture, 2 Sam. 20. 21. *A man of mount Ephraim (Sheba the son of Bichri by name) hath lift up his hand against the king, even against David: deliver him only, and I will depart from the city.* And an imitable Policy in *David* to quiet the People, after *Absalom's* Rebellion, Chap. 19. 14. &c.

(2.) WITH respect to the Tranquillity of the Subject against the evil of *Foreign War*. It is a thing too frequent for Neighbouring Governments to fall out, and come to open Hostility one with another, whereon not a little Misery ensues. And this proceeds either from the Pride and Ambition of Rulers, or the unjust Carriages of the Subject; and usually both of these meet, in order to an Eruption. Here also is a great Duty lying on Rulers, who would consult the Civil Happiness of their People, which is upheld by Peace, and interrupted by War.

HERE then,

1. THEY ought to use all due endeavours to preserve the Subject from the Misery of War: To do what in them lies, to maintain the Peace of their Government. He said too much, who thought that the most Unjust Peace is preferable to the most Just War: There are Times when God calls his People to take up the Sword; nor doth the Gospel-Day discharge them from it: However, War is not to be taken up for every slight occasion; hence that, Prov. 20 18. *With good advice make war.* For this reason they ought to avoid the giving of Provocation to their Neighbours, or take occasion from every Punctilio or Circumstance, to pick Quarrels. It is a miserable thing for a People to be laid open to all the Infelicities of War, only for the Humour or Pride of a few Men; they ought to be content with their own, and not injuriously to invade the Dominion of others.

2. THEY ought in Times of Peace, to make good Preparation for War. They should not, upon a vain Presumption, *Loist* like, live at rest, in a turpid Security and Neglect; this is to provoke Men, whose Covetousness and Ambition is ready for such an Enterprize, to make inroads upon them; whereas to be always in a readiness, is a Rational way to prevent it, and preserve quietness, as well as to be provided for the worst, if it should fall out. It was a prudent Advice of *Asa* to his People, and well becoming a Father of his Country, 2 Chron. 14. 6, 7, 8. It is a presumptuous thing for any to say, our Defence is in God, and upon it, to do nothing in the use of Means, to provide for their own Safety; for true Faith directs to the use of proper Means, to obtain the End desired.

3. THEY ought to vindicate the Affronts and Injuries offered their Persons or Subjects. Not

that every slight Injury should be improved to the height; but when they are Insolent, it is Lawful and a Duty, so far to curb them, as any Advantage is offered them. Doubtless *David* had a just Quarrel with the *Ammonites*, for their abuse they offered his Ambassadors, 2 Sam. 10. 7. And when Neighbouring People Rob, or Pillage, and make inroads upon them, it is their Duty to take up Arms to repel them: For they cannot do it in a course of Civil Justice, but it requires such a way as this; and therefore the Course which *Jephtah* took against the *Amorites*, Judg. 11. was Just and Warrantable.

4. THEY ought in Offensive War, first to offer the fair Terms for Peace. Such War cannot lawfully be made, but upon Provocation given; for without it, the Aggressor must needs be Guilty: But the common Love to Mankind, the Mischief which the Subject will be exposed to the hazard of, the uncertainty of the Issue, do all of them require, that it should be the last Essay. God himself therefore, (tho' for a special Reason He exempted the Seven Nations of *Canaan*, yet in regard of others. He) gave that Law to *Israel*, Deut. 20. 10, &c. *When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.*— And herein *Jephtah* payed Obedience to that Law, when he went forth against the Children of *Ammon*, in that he first Expostulated with them, Judg. 11. 10, &c.

5. THEY ought to make War, with a regard to Peace. It is their Duty to maintain a placable Spirit; then, when they are put upon it to shew the most severe expressions of Hostility. There is necessarily a great deal of Severity to be shewn in bloody Battles, and Depopulations, which are the unavoidable Effects of War; but it ought ever to be tempered with Humanity. It was the Charge which the Prophet laid to *Israel*, when they had the better of the *Yeruz*, 2 Chron. 28. 9. *Behold, because the Lord God of your fathers was wroth with Judah, he hath delivered into your hand, and ye have slain them in a rage that reacheth up unto heaven.* It looks like a bloody Disposition, to draw the Sword, and throw the Scabbard away, (as one words it,) i. e. To resolve the utmost Cruelty: To slay Women and Children in cool Blood, is a thing which ordinarily will admit of no excuse. The End of War is to subdue an insulting Adversary, and to procure for themselves Safety from their Oppressions; and not to lay the World waste, and to fill Places with nothing but images of Horror and Desolation.

AND these are the principal things which ly upon Civil Rulers in respect to War.

(IV.) THEY ought to take Care to promote the outward Prosperity of their People. This indeed is one thing that belongs to, or comes under the Making of Good Laws, and seeing to the just Execution of them; but it hath a peculiar Consideration in it, and may therefore come under a distinct Head: And if they are *Fathers* indeed, they will desire, consult, and take delight in the Wealth of their Subjects; and indeed, in so doing, they do provide for

their own Grandeur. And for this end, it is their Duty to encourage all Honest Callings, which are the way to Prosperity; and to remove such Blocks and discouragements as are wont to give Check thereto. And here,

1. BY *maintaining of Men's Properties*: By all means securing and preserving of Men's Rights from being invaded, and being disposed of Arbitrarily without Law. Not but that every Man, according to his Ability, owes a due Proportion to the Support of the Government, whereof he is a Member, (as will afterwards be considered;) but it is fitting, that every Man should be able to call his Estate his own, and have the disposal of it according to Equity. This is the way to promote Industry, which is the readiest course to get Wealth, in the Ordinary Providence of God, (*Prov. 10. 4.*) for every Man naturally seeks Advantage by what he doth, the Prospect whereof stimulates him to use Industry.

2. BY *taking effectual Courses, that Idleness be prevented*. It is God's Command, that every Man should have a Lawful Calling, and be Diligent in it; and it is incumbent on Rulers to take Care that Men so do: It is the Precept in, *2 Thes. 3. 10. That if any would not work, neither should he eat.* Idle Persons are Drones, that Live upon the Honey, but make none, and should be driven from the Hive, *i. e.* They are duly to be Punished: Where Idle Vagrants abound, Poverty will come on such Places as an armed Man. It is true, some God Providentially disableth from Labour; and for such, Care ought to be taken; but when Men can, and will not Labour, they should be constrained to it. Hitherto belongs the Care that is to be used, that Children be seasonably put out to Learn some honest Calling, and not suffered to go about the Streets, from Door to Door, Begging or Scolding; and if Parents are so Brutish as to neglect them, the Civil Authority ought to dispose of them. Hitherto also belongs the preventing or suppressing of such things as are the occasions of Idleness, and needless Expence, *viz.* Private Houses of Entertainment, where Persons spend their Time and Money; and learn all manner of Immoralities; as also, the unnecessary and imprudent multiplying of Publick Houses, where so much of precious Time is spent, to no profit, but loss; where Drinking and Gaming exhaults Men's Substance, and brings ill Habits upon them; and to allow this, under pretence of giving decayed Persons an Opportunity to Support themselves, is the way to Ruin a great many for the Maintenance of one; and is therefore a thing cried out of, in all well ordered Governments.

3. BY *a due Witness born against Thefts and Robberies*. Where these abound, a People are Impoverished, and Men disheartned in their Employments. Care ought therefore to be used to prevent them; and when they are detected, there ought a Terror be put upon others, as well as a Testimony born against them.

AS to that Case, *whether Thefts may be punished with Death?* I shall only observe, that we considered before, that Penalties are to be suited to the Publick Safety: And therefore the Judicial Law of *mafes* doth not ty up Lawgivers in this, but the Publick Necessity is to determine: Nevertheless, there ought to be a difference made, in the kind and degree of Theft; and *Necessity* is not to be pretended *Unnecessarity*; and it looks in itself, as if there were a disproportion between Life, and the outward things of it: Besides, that is an Observation which some have made, *viz.* That it is experienced, that there are fewer Robberies committed in such Places, where some more easy Punishments are inflicted, than where Theft is punished with Death; and that it hath rather hardened than terrified such as have fallen into this unhappy Course, and rendred them desperate: However, it is certain, that such are intollerable in a Civil State; and the Prosperity and Safety of the whole, requires, that they be vigorously suppressed.

(V) *THEY* ought in all things, to set an Example of Righteousness and Holiness before their People. We observed, that the great End of Civil Government, is to preserve both the Tables of the Moral Law, which God hath entrusted all these withal, to whom Civil Authority is committed: And the Reason is, because they are ordained of God for this End, and Rule for him; as he said, *2 Chron. 19. 6. Take heed what ye do: for ye judge not for man but for the Lord.* And altho' they are set over Men, yet are they God's Servants, and as much under the obligation of Obedience to Him, as the meanest Subject; upon which account, they have no more Liberty to clear themselves to transgress the good and righteous Laws of God, which ought to be the Pattern of all their Laws, than any other; and are equally obnoxious to God's Displeasure: Nay, Their Transgression is in many respects aggravated on account of the high Station which they are advanced unto; they are guilty of greater Ingratitude to God, who hath Honoured them with Preferment, and put on them an Image of His Authority, which is hereby despised; and the Name of God suffers more eminently from them, if they violate His Precepts, inasmuch as they are more in the light and observed. *David's Sin* is so aggravated, *2 Sam. 12. 14. By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme.* And their Example is more conspicuous and influential. The Poet could say, *Regis ad Exemplum, &c.* The Practice of Rulers is like to be a Pattern which many will lay before themselves, and will more readily follow it, than the Laws. It will be vain therefore to make Laws, and put severe Sanctions to them, if they prove Cob-webs, and great ones, or Men in Power, can break them when they please: Nor indeed will Rulers have the Courage to see that good Laws be duly Executed upon Offenders, if they themselves

elves do live in the violation of them; and will expose themselves to the greater Contempt, if they should essay to put them in Execution, inasmuch, as they herein make it to appear, that they do not pay a real respect to the Laws themselves.

WHEREAS, on the other hand, If they set a good Example, and do practically pay a deference to their wholesome Edicts, by a carefull Conformity of themselves thereunto, they will greatly encourage those that are Honest and Good, and gain great Love and Respect from them; and will put a greater Terror upon those that are Vicious, and have no good Principle of Obedience in them, as expecting not to Escape the suffering of the Civil Censures, in case they come under their Cognizance: And this will also encourage them with the greater Confidence in all their Administration, and make them the more impartial, and stop the Mouths of all that would otherwise be apt to Censure them. It was to Men in Authority that the Apostle is supposed to give that Reprimand, Rom. 2. 22. *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?* Whereas, It was a good Argument of Conviction, that *Nehemiah* used with them, *Neh. 5. 10.* It was for this reason that God commanded, that the King himself should write a Copy of the Law, and keep it by him, *Deut. 17. 18, 19.* It is therefore a token of God's Kindness and good Will to a People, when He bestows such upon them in the Magistracy; and faith, that because he loved His People, He gave them such to bear Rule over them, who are Wise & Faithful, and study by all means to advance the Glory of God, and the Welfare of the Subject in all things. And God is to be acknowledged in it, and praised for it; for it is by Him that Men are set up, whosoever be the Instruments of it. As on the other hand, it is an Argument of His Wrath, when there are those given to them, who regard not Righteousness, but are themselves Wicked, and Oppressors, and do either by Example or Connivance encourage Leud Men, and suffer Leudness and Violence to prevail; it being both it self a Judgment, and opens a door to let in more and more fearful Fruits of God's holy Revenge.

LET us then pray hard to Him, who is the God of the Spirits of all flesh, that he would always set over the Congregation of His People, such Men to go out and come in before them, who shall, like *David*, lead them with the Integrity of their hearts, and Skilfullness of their hands; who shall Judge uprightly, and walk in their Integrity; that so Justice may go down our Streets as a Flood, and Righteousness as a River. And let us Bless God for such, as the precious Tokens of His Benignity to us; and this be humbly Recommended to such as are vested with Civil Authority, as that which will be their Honour and Happiness: God will thus testify to His Acceptance and Approbation of them, and all good Men will Love and Honour them; and thus will they be the repairers of our Brea-

ches, and restorers of Paths to dwell in; and their Names shall be had in precious remembrance, when they are dead and gone; and after Generations will have cause to speak of them with an honourable mention, and erect Monuments for them in their hearts, which shall outlast Marble it self.

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