

## SERMON CLXXXVII.

WE have taken a brief Account of the Chief and most Comprehensive Duties, Relative between *Superiours* and *Inferiours*, both *Natural* and *Political*. There are some other Differences in Providence between Men, which tho' they do not give a Civil Power to the one, or require a Civil Distinction from the other, yet, as God doth put a Difference, so should they acknowledge it, and demean themselves each to other accordingly: One of these, *viz.* That of *Age* and *Youth*, (in which the *Light of Nature* speaks so much, and about which the *Word of God* speaks so much,) we took some Account of. There are some others, which I shall but touch at, and pass.

I. *THERE is a Difference in Birth, which God's Providence is pleased to put between some and others.* Tho' all Mankind have one Original, having one First Father, whose Apostacy hath brought Disgrace equally upon all his Posterity, who do equally bear the blot of his Rebellion in their Escutcheon, Eph. 2.2. — *By Nature the children of wrath.* Nevertheless, There is a Civil Distinction made between *Families*, which makes some to be of an *higher*, others of a *lower* Degree, Psal. 62. 9. *God's Pleasure Orders it to be so, and the well-being of Humane Societies requires it: And these must Live together; which intimates, That there should be a mutual Respect and Honour paid each to other in this Regard also.*

And here,

1. *IT is the Duty of those that are well-descended, to endeavour to Commend themselves to others, in a Carriage worthy their Descent.* There is a Civility and Courtesy, which these owe to the *Meanest*, which is the only way for them to retain a Report among Men. Those that would maintain the Respect paid to their Ancestors, must see that they imitate the praiseworthy Vertues, for which they were had in esteem: They ought not to desire such as are *Meaner*, but to set before them an Example of Good Behaviour; which is to express it self, in a Meek, Affable, Humble Conversation; and that is the way to purchase Honour to themselves; and for want of it, they will soon fall into Disgrace among Men. It was the Honour of *Timothy*, not that he sprang of Good Parents, but that he Imitated them in their Vertues, 2 Tim. 1. 5.

2. *IT is the Duty of such as are of a meaner Descent, to acknowledge it by putting a suitable Respect upon the other, according to their Birth.* There is an Honour derived to them; and God requires that it be paid to them, Rom. 12. 7. *Rentler honour to whom honour is due.* And the more worthily they carry themselves of it, the more care there should be to express it. There is a Civil Deference to be paid them, and a Preference to be allowed to them; and that, tho' the Providence of God may bring them into Poverty: The neglect of this is therefore Threat-

ned as a Judgment, Isa. 3.5. — *The child shall behave himself proudly against the ancient, and the base against the honourable.* Not but that such may forfeit this Respect from Men by their vile Carriage; but the Frowns of Providence on them, in the Affairs of this Life, do not procure it.

II. *ANOTHER Inequality, which the Providence of God puts between Men, is that of Riches & Poverty.* And this, in the World's esteem, is greater than it should be, inasmuch as it makes Men neither better nor worse, being an External Thing. Nevertheless, It is to be observed, because it is of the Over-ruling Hand of God: Hence that in Prov. 22. 2. *The rich and poor meet together: the Lord is the maker of them all.* And here,

[1.] *THE Principal Duties of the Rich are,*

1. *TO take heed that they Despise not the Poor, because they are so.* It is a thing too frequent for such, especially if they are raised from the Dunghill, to Scorn, Despise, and look with Contempt upon their Poor Neighbours, as if they were of another Species: But this is to abuse the Favour of God, by whose Blessing they gained their Wealth. To be Rich and Humble, is a desirable, but a very rare Combination. We are told, Prov. 17. 5. *Who mocketh the poor, reproacheth his maker: and he that is glad at calamities, shall not be unpunished.* And such are they, who taunt the Poor with their Poverty, as if it were their shame; and they must not open their Mouths before them: Such should remember, That their Wealth makes them not better Men; Wealth and Folly do too frequently dwell under the same Roof, and a Rich Fool is no better than an *Ass* in Fine Trappings. They should also consider, That they Pride themselves in a thing of nothing, and which may in the Turn of an *Hand* forsake them; and then, their former Pride will expose them to the greater Contempt. Hence that, Prov. 23. 5. *Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not? for riches certainly make themselves wings, they fly away as an eagle towards heaven.*

2. *TO Relieve & Succour the Poor, out of their Abundance.* No Man is Lord-Proprietor of his Estate; but is made a Steward of it by God, whose it is. Wealth is one of those Talents which God bestows upon Men, which they are to Occupy for Him, whereof they must give an Account to Him another Day: And He hath made the *Poor* to be the Objects of their Charity; and hath given these Charge concerning them, 1 Tim. 6. 17. 18. *Charge them that are rich in this world, that they be not high-minded, nor trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy: That they do good; that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate.* And if they will lay out all upon gratifying their own Lusts, and mean while shut up their Bowels against such as are in Want, and let them Starve, rather than Deny themselves of their Superfluities, it will expose them to an uncomfortable Reckoning another Day.

[2.] *Thi* Duties of the Poor on the other hand are, principally,

1. *NOT to Envy, but to Rejoice in the Prosperity of their Wealthy Neighbours.* It is too much a Fault among Men, that they can hardly bear to see others Prosper, and themselves in Adversity; and herein not only shew their Discontent at the Providence of God, as unequal, but also to bear a Prejudic'd Spirit against them, & be always fretting at them, and seeking to undermine them: But they ought on the other hand to Rejoyce with them; *Rom.* 12. 15. and to be Thankful to God that He Blesseth them: *Envy* therefore is reckoned among the Works of the Flesh, *Gal.* 5. 21. And hence it is forbidden in respect of another's Prosperity, *Psal.* 37. 7. What if God will give another more in the World, than He will give to us, may He not do with His own, as He sees Good? And shall our Eye be Evil, because He is Good.

2. *TO pay them a due Acknowledgement for all the Kindness they receive from them.* There is a sort of Subjection due from the Poor to the Rich, inasmuch as they have a subordinate Dependence on them: We are therefore told, *Prov.* 22. 7. *The rich ruleth over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.* When therefore God inclines their Hearts to Improve their Estates, either for the Publick Benefit, or for their Private Support and Supply, they ought not only to Bless God for it, but also for them; and acknowledge them in it, for which they should Love and Commend them, and Cordially Pray for God's Blessing to be upon them.

III. *ANOTHER Inequality which God makes between Men, is in regard of Gifts, whether Natural or Acquired.* There are Diversities of these, which God Distributes among Men, according to His Pleasure. Some have large Natural Abilities, and these also advantag'd with great Attainments of Skill, Knowledge and Prudence; whereas others are low in both regards: These Gifts also are diversly distributed, *1 Cor.* 12. *begin.* And these are conferred by God, to render Men Publickly Serviceable, and the better fitted to Profit others. Now,

1. *THOSE that do Excell in Gifts, ought to improve them readily for the Benefit of others, who need the Help of them.* God hath bestow'd them for that end; and made them the Stewards thereof, *1 Pet.* 4. 10. And if they do not thus Improve them, they hide their Talent in a Napkin. This should keep them Humble, and make them not to despise those that are Weaker than themselves, but acknowledge God's Kindness, in making this difference, and thus using them to His Glory by being Profitable: And this is to use them to the End for which they were Conferred, *1 Cor.* 12. 7. And this will be the way to Honour themselves, and do Good in their Generation.

2. *THOSE that are Inferiour in Gifts, should highly Value the others, and thankfully make Improvement of them.* Man was made a

Sociable Creature; and God hath seen meet that one should need the help of another: When therefore God makes any Useful by those Abilities which He confers upon them, and disposing of them to Serve others with them, they are not to be despised or malign'd, but prized; doubtless herein they really Excell. We are told, *Ecl.* 8. 1. *Who is as the wise man? and who knoweth the interpretation of a thing? a man's wisdom maketh his face to shine, and the boldness of his face shall be changed.* And we ought to account them Blessings; to be willing to Learn of them, and take Opportunities of Conversing with them, & enquiring of them; for we are told, *Prov.* 20. 5. *Counsel in the heart of man, is like deep water; but a man of understanding will draw it out.* And since God hath divided these Gifts, there should be a mutual Preference accordingly; which seems to be the mind of, *Phil.* 2. 3. *Let nothing be done through strife, or vainglory, but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves.*

AND this may suffice to have been spoken concerning those Orders, between which there is a Superiority and Inferiourity.

I *N the next place,* Our Catechism informs us, *That the Relation between Equals, doth also come under the Comprehension of this Command.* That all Mankind do, in some way or other, stand related each to other, is certain; and wheresoever there is a Relation, there is an Obligation which follows from it, and is accommodated to it.

NOW there are some Considerations upon which Men stand upon *Even Ground*, and there is no Superiority in them: And this Consideration may be there, where in other respects there may be a distance in Degree, as is evident.

NOW this Equality may come under a double Consideration, *viz.* Either *Common* or *Special*:

1. *THERE is a Common Equality, which there is between one Neighbour and another, considered as Neighbours.* Neighbour and Neighbour come under the same Denomination, and in that Regard stand upon one Ground; and such especially are those who stand upon a *Level*, and their Degrees are *Equal*. This also comprehends under it, Men that bear the same Breadth in the Place which they are in: And so are some Men in *Authority* alike, as well as Men of the *Common* sort. Now there is a Love which these owe each to other; for the Comprehension of the Second Table is express'd by Christ, *Marth.* 22. 39. *Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thy self.* And this Love hath a Respect, not only to the *Five* following Precepts, but also to *this*, in Paying Honour one to another.

AND the more Special Duties here are,

1. *TO maintain a due Respect each for other, by acknowledging each others Worth & Excellency.* And this is supposed to be mainly intended in the forcited, *Phil.* 2. 3. There is an Emulation which such are apt to entertain, by which they seek to *depreciate* their Neighbour,

hour, & elevate themselves above them. Whereas this Command requires the contrary. There is hardly any Neighbour, but we may see (if we look with Charitable Eyes) something in him for which he is to be Commended, and wherein he out-doeth us; and we should readily give him the Preference in it, and be always ready to Commend him for it: Hence that in Rom. 12. 10. *Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love, in honour preferring one another.* And when we hear them Commended for such things, we ought to be glad of it; and be so far from Detracting from it, as to give our ready and cheerful Assent to it: Yea, if they should be Preferred before us, not to Malign them, but to be well-satisfied in it.

2. *TO maintain a Civil, Courteous and Neighbourly Conversation, one with another;* To avoid Estrangedness, Scorn & Morosity: As in the fore-cited, Rom. 12. 10. Which is to be expressed in their mutual Behaviour. Neighbours should Live together as Neighbours, and not as Enemies; giving one another good Words, & not snarling & snapping; and ought to be ready to do one another good Turns, when occasion offers, as well as to receive them: This is the way to uphold the Ends of Civil Society, and preserve the Happiness of it; which, for want of this, will be very much impeded. Yea, They should account it an Honour rather to Serve than be Served; rather to Give, than Receive; rather to pay Respect to others than receive it from them: And indeed this is the most Rational way to be Respected, Honoured and Served by our Neighbour, and be well-esteemed by all that we Live among.

II. *THERE is a Special Equality made between some, which doth not arise from Nature, but Combination;* and this is that which is called *Friendship*: which is Recommended to us, not only by *Moral Philosophy*, but also by the *Word of God.* And the Truth is, The Necessity of Mankind, for their Well-being, calls for it; & there is no Living well in this World without it: He that hath not a Friend to whom he may open his Secrets, unburden his Grievances, & of whom he may ask and receive Advice and Help at all Times, is Miserable. And true Friendship wisely laid, and duely maintained, is the greatest outward Felicity that can be here enjoyed: This therefore the Psalmist aggravates his Affliction by, Psal. 88. *ult. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness.* Now whatsoever Disparity there may be between Friends, in their Condition here; yet as they are Friends, so there must be a *Parity.* I shall not here speak all that might be, of this Noble Subject: only observe the *Special Duties* lying upon Men in this Relation.

1. *THE Love & Kindness between Friends, ought not to be Common, but Special.* They mistake, who think that we ought to Love all alike; for we have observed, That the Love is to be Calculated according to the Relation: Now this is a *peculiar Relation*, and calls for the most intense Affection. The Wise Man tells us, Prov. 18. 24. *A man that hath friends, must*

*show himself friendly: and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.* And it is a Commendation which David gives to Jonathan, 2 Sam. 1. 26. *I am distressed for thee, my brother Jonathan: very pleasurable hast thou been unto me: thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women.* And the reason of this will further appear, when we come to consider the things wherein this Friendship is to be employed. A Man should Love and Honour all Men; but True Friendship is a *contracted* thing, and extendible to but a very few. He who seeks to make *many* Friends, doth therein practically say, that he indeed seeks *none* at all; but is willing to rest contented in a *common Love.* The Scripture usually mentions a *Friend*, in the *singular Number.*

2. *EVERY Prudent Man ought to be very Cautious in the Choice of a Friend.* We observed, That this Relation is purely *Elective*; and therefore it calls for Deliberation, and is not to be taken up Rashly, and enter'd upon Inconsiderately. Every Man that may be fit for Human, nay Christian Conversation, is not qualified for being our Close Companion. It is true, We may be mistaken in Men; and our Friendship may be betrayed by them, whose *Hearts* are false, whilst their *Words* and *Carriages* are most smooth and obliging: this David proved to his sorrow in *Achitophel*, Psal. 55. 13, 14. But for all this, He that strikes up a Friendship in *Haste*, is likely to repent of it at *Leisure*; for there are special Qualities to be sought in a Person, whom we may expect to be able to make use of as a *Friend* on all occasions. And tho' there is often a sort of Natural Aptitude between such & such, for this Close Combination; yet there are those things, which are further to be enquired after, the want whereof will unfit them for it.

3. *THERE can be no true Christian Friendship, where there is not the Fear of God.* It is His Glory, that ought to be the last End of it; and all other Desires in it, ought to bear a due Subordination to *that*: so that tho' this Godliness be not all that is to be sought in it, yet it ought to be the Basis of all the rest. A Combination between Persons, separate from *that*, is not a *Friendship*, but a *Conspiracy*, and will not tend to the *Good*, but the real *Hurt* of those that are engaged in it. It was a close Reprimand given by the Prophet to him, 2 Chron. 19. 2. *And Jehu the son of Hanani the seer, went out to meet him, and said to king Jehoshaphat, Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the Lord? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the Lord.*

4. *THE Special Duties between Friends, are such as these:*

1. *THEY must make great Allowances for Human Frailties.* There are none to be found in this World without them, and if Friendship be broken on account of these, it must be very short-lived. This is necessary in all Relations, and peculiarly in this, else Jealousies will be easily raised and fomented; whereas Candour calls for Charitable Constructions, and the best

Interpretations : And it is the nature of Love to cover many Frailties ; and the more intense it is, the greater Allowances it will be willing to make.

2. *THEY ought to stick by each other, in Times of the greatest Adversity.* It is the Wise Man's Observation, Prov. 17. 17. *A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.* In Times of Prosperity, many will seek Friendship with a Man, and pretend to the greatest Respect, and readiness to Serve him : But he that will keep fast at all Times, and when the Man is reduced to Distress, and all Men withdraw and forsake him, will be the same that he ever was, this is a Friend indeed ; and such an one was *Jonathan* to *David*. The Wise Man observes, Prov. 19. 4. *Wealth maketh many friends.* But one that will not be ashamed of or afraid to stand by us, in our deepest Troubles, is more worth than all of them, though they were as many more.

3. *THEY should readily open their Souls into each others Bosom.* Here is the great Benefit of having a Friend : to him we may freely and without fear disclose our Minds, in things which it would be our folly to publish to the World. A Friend is called a *second Self* ; and there are those things that are Secret, which we either greatly need Counsel about ; or which oppress our Hearts, as long as they are kept pent up. And he that is now shy of his Friend, doth herein say, That he counts him not to be a Friend : Hence that, 2 Sam. 13. 4. *And he said unto him, Why art thou, being the Kings son, lean from day to day ? wilt thou not tell me ?*

4. *THEY ought to keep each others Secrets Faithfully.* And this necessarily follows from the former ; else it would be Frenzy to impart our Secrets to another, if we could not Confide in him, that they were as safe, as if we had kept them lock'd in the Cabinet of our own Bosom. He that cannot keep Counsel, is incapable of being a Friend indeed : Hence that, Prov. 11. 13. *A tale-bearer revealeth secrets : but he that is of a faithful spirit concealeth the matter.* A Man lays his Credit and Safety to Pawn, when he trusts another with his inward Thoughts ; and if he Betrays them, he is not fit for Humane Society, much less for Intimate Familiarity.

5. *THEY ought to bear each others Burdens, and be at all Times ready to Comfort & Counsel one the other.* A Friend should make his Friends Condition his own ; and Resent it as if he were himself in the same. *David* herein shews the Vileness of his Adversaries, by telling how he carried it to them in their Trouble, in which he shews the Character of a Friend Psal. 35. 13, 14, 15. *But as for me, when they were sick,--- I humbled my soul with Fasting : --- I behaved my self as though he had been my Friend or Brother.--- But in mine Adversity they rejoiced ---.* He is not worthy of the Title of a Friend, that hath not a tender Compassion upon us, & will readily express it when he sees us in Distress, and bowed down under

Troubles : Hence that in Job 6. 14. *To him that is afflicted pity should be shewed from his friend.* And how Parthetical is that Expostulation, Chap. 19. 21. *Have pity upon me, have pity upon me, O ye my friends, for the hand of God hath touched me.*

6. *THEY ought to deal Plainly & Faithfully one with another.* Nor can Friendship be better Improved, or more kindly Applied than by this, which is one principal Benefit of it. A Man cannot possibly be a *Flatterer* and a *Friend* too ; and he that cannot bear a Rebuke from a Friend, is altogether unworthy of one : *David* reckoned it the greatest Kindness to be thus smitten, Psal. 141. 5. *Let the Righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness ; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oyl, which shall not break my head : for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.* And the Wise Man hath such a Remark, Prov. 27. 6. *Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.* And saith, Ver. 14. *He that bleaseth his friend with a loud voice, rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.* Though we should not Betray our Friend to Disgrace, yet we ought to give him Warning of his Danger : And if it be Hatred to a *Neighbour*, to suffer Sin upon him, for want of giving him a seasonable Rebuke, ( *Lev. 19. 17.* ) much more is it to a *Friend*, who confides in us on this Account.

7. *THEY should Delight in each others frequent Converso.* There must be the greatest Freedom between Friends ; and they should be often Refreshing each other, by familiar and open hearted Communion : hence that, Prov. 27. 9. & 17. *Ornament and perfume rejoice the heart : so doth the sweetness of a mans friend by hearty counsel.* *Iron sharpeneth iron, so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.* It is of the nature of Love, to seek much Intimacy with the *Beloved*, and accordingly to be as often as they can together ; and a Neglect in this regard, will both hinder the Ends of this Relation, and tend to Distance and Alienation, which will in a little Time break the Bond asunder : They should therefore avoid all that would tend to breed Strangeness, especially *Whisperers* and *Tale-bearers*, who often separate chief Friends, Prov. 16. 28.

8. *THEY should maintain each others Reputation.* He is not worthy the Name of a Friend, that will not stand up for his Friend when he hears him Reproached, Reviled, Slandered ; and will not as deeply Resent it, as if done to himself. It is true, He ought not to Lye for his Friend, or do any Sinful thing in his behalf ; but when he is wronged in his Name, and exposed by the Malevolent Tongues of others, he should shew himself, by taking his part, defending his Innocence, and excusing his Imperfections ; such was *Jonathan*, 1 Sam. 19. 4. & 20. 32.

9. *THEY must Nourish this Friendship with all good Offices.* We are advised, Prov. 18. 24. *A man that hath friends, must shew himself friendly.* There are the Testimonials of singular

*Singular* Kindness, which must be often repeated to Nourish the Ardours of their Love, and these must be mutual. There are in the Nature of Fallen Man, Jealousies too easily kindled, which are as Water cast upon the Fire of Love; and every Slight, or seeming Unkindness, is apt to foment them: The best way to prevent these, is to take all Advantages, to continue New Tokens of our Constant and unshaken Friendship. And having such a Friend, let us not be given to Change; but endeavour to keep it firm to the end; taking his Advice, Prov. 27. 10.

*Thine own friend and thy fathers friend forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbour that is near, than a brother far off.*

THUS have we briefly considered the *Affirmative* part of this Command; which well thought of, will serve to Humble us for our short-comings; and drive us to CHRIST for His Grace to help, and Righteousness to cover the Imperfection of our own.

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S E R M O N CLXXXVIII.