

SERMON CXCIX.

Quest. 3. **W**HAT is requisite, to the honest Exercise of a lawful Calling?

Ans. WE are here to observe, That if the Calling it self be not Lawful, it is impossible for us to follow it Honestly, but it must be avoided: But on the other hand, the Calling it self may be both Lawful in it self, and Lawful for us; and yet, if we have not a Care to our selves, we follow it Unlawfully, and so Sin, and procure a Blast of Heaven upon it. For the Word of God hath not only directed us about the Callings themselves, but also the manner of our Employing our selves in them; for these also come under the Regulation of the Moral Law, and we are to serve God in them.

I shall not here point at all the Rules which are given by Divines on this Account, but only such as properly refer to the Man himself, considered as he is more immediately concerned to procure an honest Livelihood; for, as to the Honesty to be used in his Transaction with others, it will come under an after Consideration. And there are Four Duties here mainly to be observed:

1. GOD requires of every Man *Diligence in his Calling*. He is to make it his Business, and lay himself out in the pursuit of it. The Word of God every where commends this *Diligence*, as that which God both expects and approves: Hence those Passages, Prov. 27. 23. *Be thou diligent to know the state of thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.* And, 12. 24. *The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.* 27. *The slothful man roastereth not that which he took in wanting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.* And that is one thing intended in, Gen. 3. 19. *In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.* Now this *Diligence* is his making of his Calling his Business, and his Improving of his Time about it; and it contains in it, both his Contriving of his Work for the best Advantage, and his pursuing of it with Sedulity; so that both the Labour of the *Head* and the *Hands* is included in it. This is not so to be understood, as if it were Unlawful for a Man to Divert from his Work, and solace himself with necessary Refreshment under it. God hath allowed to Man a Time to Eat and Drink, else his Spirits would be Tired, and he incapacitated for his Business. And He hath allowed him a Time for his natural Rest with Sleep, without which he cannot Subsist, (Psal. 104. 23.) And one next end of Man's Labour is, to Support his Body, and that implies that he must have a suitable Time for his ordinary Repose: Hence that, Eccl. 5. 18. *Behold that which I have seen: it is good and comely for one to eat and to drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labour that he taketh under the*

sun, all the days of his life, which God giveth him: for it is his portion. There is also a Relaxation which God allows Men, for the moderate use of Recreation, for the Recruiting of his tired Spirits, that with fresh Vigour he may attend his Employment; which is a Moderation of the Curse. But it intends a careful Attendance on the Work which God calls the Man to, in all the proper Seasons of it; and this, as it refers to the Man's serving to the designs of the present Life, properly belong to this Command.

2. IT requires a *prudent Observation & Improvement of the proper Seasons & Advantages for his doing the Work of his Calling*. We read of the good Man, Psal. 112. 5. *He will guide his Affairs with Discretion.* And we are assured, that God hath appointed to every Work under the Sun, it's Season, Eccl. 3. beg. The Providence of God over rules and orders the Affairs of Men; and there are some stated Seasons laid out by his Providence, which when slipt by, are irrecoverable. Hence that, Prov. 20. 4. *The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.* And there are other Seasons not stated, but are emergent Opportunities, which are to be observed from the Circumstances of things, wherein great Advantage is offered, which if neglected, may not come any more: Hence that, Eccl. 8. 6. *To every purpose there is time, and judgment.* Now the taking Notice of, and carefully Improving such Seasons, belongs to that Prudence which God hath made our Duty to exercise in our outward Affairs; and it is a Sin as well as a Punishment to be void of it, and not to practice it: Hence that, Isa. 28. 26. *For his God doth instruct him to discretion, and doth teach him.*

3. IT must be followed with a *due Dependence on the Governing Providence of God, as to the Success*. We are indeed to Labour that we may Live in the World; but this is a subordinate End, and must be Regulated by one that is beyond it, which is the Glory of God; 1 Cor. 10. 31. *Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.* The great End of all Callings is, that we may serve God in them, and therein testify our Obedience to Him, who calls us to it. And tho' it is Lawful to hope to speed, and a Duty to Pray to God, that we may do so; yet it must be with a submitting of our Labours, to His alwise Disposal: Hence that in, Eccl. 11. 6. *In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good.* The Scripture every where condemns *Covetousness*, and that not only intends all Sins which proceed from original Concupiscence, (as, Isa. 57. 17.) but as it is an Inordinate Craving after the good things of this Life; as, Luke 12. 15. *And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth*

eth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth. And we have the Nature of it well Characterized, together with the Danger of it in, 1 Tim. 6. 10. *The love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many ferrows.* Now that which is contrary to this, and a due Compartment with this Precept, is a Cheerful following of our Business, and a ready submitting of the Success of it to the all-governing Will of God. And hence we have such a Direction given us in this regard, Jam. 4. 13, 15. *Go to now, ye that say, To day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy, and sell, and get gain. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that.*

4. A due allowance of a suitable proportion of Time, for the Duties of our General Calling, is here also required. That every Calling is to be followed, flows from the very Nature of a Calling, as it is laid upon the Man. That every Man hath a General, as well as a Particular Calling, hath before been observed, and is irrefragably argued from Man's Frame or Constitution, which consists of *Soul* and *Body*. As there is Work to be done for the supplying of the *Body*, so there is a Work incumbent on us for the Salvation of our *Souls*; hence that, Phil. 2. 12. *Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.* Now all humane Actions or Works require Time for the doing of them; and a sequestration of some Time, for a Work of such Infinite Importance, as this is: But tho' there is no Contradiction between these two Callings, yet there is a *Difference* and a *Subordination*. A Man may serve to his great End, in following his outward Employment, whilst he doth it for God, and according to His Precept; and every gracious Person doth so: Yet there are the distinct Duties of this general Calling which must be attended, else we cannot truly serve God in following of the other. There is a stated Sabbath in which God hath made it our Duty, to sequester the Time and our selves in it, to attend Religious Worship, and intermit our own Work, or servile Labour; as hath been observed under the *Fourth* Command. And there are the Calls in Providence, which invite us to set apart Days for Fasting and Prayer; and these ought not to be neglected: And there are times for our daily Reading the Scriptures, and Prayer, in our Closets, and our Families, which the Word of God abundantly informs us of. And it is the Duty of all to pay to God this tribute of Time, if they expect to have His Blessing upon their Worldly Concerns.

II. IT now follows that we proceed to the other way in which an Estate is gotten more *mediately* by *Others*. Not that the *former* was absolutely *immediate*, but purely *mediate*, as to the Providence of God; but that it was so with respect unto Men, more than the *other*. And there are here also diverse ways in which this may be compassed.

As,

1. A Man may obtain an Estate by Patrimony, or Inheritance. That there is an equitable Descent of Estates from the *Predecessors* to their *Successors*, is indisputable; the Light of Nature Dictates it, and the Laws of Civilized Nations have confirmed it, and the Word of God assures us of it: But how or after what manner they are to Derive, is matter of Dispute. In the Judicial Laws of *Moses* about this, there was something *Ceremonial* or *Typical*, and something *Moral*, which too many, for want of distinguishing have confounded. There was a Law for preserving Inheritances in their Tribes, and that the *First Born* should have the *double* Portion; and that all Real Estates should revert to the First Owners, or their proper heirs, in the Year of *Jubilee*; but these things were *Positive*, and had a *Mystical* meaning in them, and were tied to that Nation; but the *Morality* of them, is hard to make evident. The Laws of Nations have also provided for the *Disposure* of the Estates of Men Deceased, who have not provided for it during their Lives, but left them *Undisposed* at their Death. And there is a Necessity for this, to prevent endless Controversies which would otherwise arise from pretenders to a Title: But the *Righteousness* or *Equity* of these, depends upon their agreeableness to the *Moral Law*, which is the Rule of Justice. That every Man hath a power of Disposing whatsoever Estate he holds in his own Right, according to the Rules of Discretion, is agreeable to that known Maxim, *A Man may do with his own, according to his Prudence.* Hence the Disposure of Men's Estates, by their last Will and Testament, hath been acknowledged by all Men; and such Testaments have been accounted *Sacred*, and if they did it in their right Minds *Inviolable*, according to Gal. 3. 15. Only it is here to be observed, that the Light of Nature teacheth us, that *Children* have a Right in a convenient part of the Estates of their *Parents*; and it would be Unnatural for them to give what they have, away to *Strangers* or to *Publick Uses*; for that is a Scripture Truth, 1 Tim. 5. 8. *If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.* 2 Cor. 12. 14. *Children ought not to lay up for the Parents, but the Parents for the Children.* So that such an Estate so descending, is lawfully Possessed; and cannot with Justice be detained from these to whom it is so Conveyed: Only, Reason and Equity requires that it be freed from Incumbrances; for no doubt, whatsoever a Man Possesseth in his own Right, ought to be liable to defray his honest Debts.

2. A Person may come by a true Right to an Estate, by Gift or Donation. We are wont to say, *What is freer than Gift?* A Man either in his Life time, or by his last Testament, may introduce a *Stranger* into a lawful Title to a Portion of these things, which he could otherwise have laid no Claim unto: Hence there is a Right by *Adoption* usual among Men, who having no near Kindred to Bequeath their Substance unto, do make Choice of a Person, whom

they are pleased to introduce either by a Deed of Gift, or by their last Will. Thus we find that the Queen of *Sheba* made a rich Present to *Solomon*, *1 Kings* 10. 10. And the Wife *Man* tells us, *Prov.* 19. 6. *Every man is a friend to him that giveth gifts.* Only this Rule is here to be observed, that he who gives, must give of that which is his *Own*, and what he hath come by *Honestly*, else he cannot make a just Conveyance of it over to *another*: And if the Person to whom the Donation is made, be convinced in his own Conscience, that it was *Unjustly* gained, he cannot with safety to himself receive it, but may expect a Blast of Heaven upon it; for doubtless, the Curse of God is out against all that is *ill* gotten.

3. A Man may come by a just Title to, and Possession of an Estate, in the way of Commerce. And under this Title of Commerce, I understand all such lawful ways in which Men Transact one with another, in way of Exchange; which comes under the general name of *Tricks*; and the design of it is, that by this Course Men get honest Gain, and advance their Estates by it. And here the Rules of *Commutative* Justice are more peculiarly to be considered, because in the way of Commerce, there is a Contract made between Persons, in which one thing is *Exchanged* for another, which comes under the Regulation of the Rules of Righteousness.

NOW there are several ways, in which this Commerce between Men may be considered, and we may take a distinct Account of them; in all of which there is a respect had to the *Gain* of the Persons concerned, so far as it hath a respect to this Precept; and is therefore here to be no further Considered.

AND here in general, let these two things be observed;

1. THAT mutual Commerce, in some way or other, between Mankind, is Lawful & Necessary. And it is therefore Lawful, because it is Necessary, & there is no other upholding of human Society: No Man is in himself sufficient for his own comfortable Support, with such things as are requisite for his convenient Living in the World; which it would be *superfluous* to prove, since daily Experience gives us the Proof of it. There are so many things requisite for Food and Raiment, and the other Conveniencies of Life, that one Man cannot provide them all for himself, but must have supply from others; and because God hath given every Man a Property in his own, it must become *another's* either by Gift or Exchange: Nor is a Man bound to give away his own to another, unless there be special Reasons for it, which will be considered hereafter: We therefore read, that *Abraham purchased a Field*; and *Jacob a piece of Land to pitch his Tents*; and *sent down into Egypt to buy Corn*; so that the thing it self is indisputable: Tho' what sorts of Commerce are so, must be looked into in the sequel.

2. THAT there is a Lawful Gain to be aimed at, and made, in the way of Commerce That there may be Unlawful Gain, if Men do not follow the Rule, is undeniable: We therefore

read of the *Gain of Oppressions*, *Isa.* 33. 15. and *Dishonest Gain*, *Ezek.* 22. 13. which implies, that there is an *Honest Gain*; and also, that unless Men do regulate themselves by the Rules of Honesty, they may easily transcend the Bounds, and render themselves guilty in this regard. And that there are such Rules, is hence necessarily inferred, else there would be no difference between *Honest* and *Dishonest*.

BUT we may proceed to the Consideration, of the several ways, in which there may be a Lawful Commerce between Man and Man.

AND here,

(I) THERE is a Righteousness required in the Commerce between Persons Hiring & Hired; or the Labourer, and him who Employs him. There is nothing more common or necessary, than for one Man to Employ another in Business upon Hire; and sometimes Men are Hired by the Day, Week, Month, Year; and sometimes they agree to do such a piece of Work by the Lump: And there is a Rule of Justice to be observed by these on either hand, in Obedience to this Command, to which Conscience is obliged.

(1.) IN respect of the Labourer, or him who is Hired. There are three things which peculiarly concern him.

1. NO Man ought to undertake any Work, but such as he is Skilful in. The Reason of this is manifest, because he must needs *Wrong* the Person for whom he doth it, by spoiling the thing which he undertakes, for want of insight into it; and by this way, the Man is disappointed of his just Expectation: Besides that, we formerly observed, that it properly belongs to a Person's engaging in any Calling, that he be *Skilled* in it: And it is certain, that no Man ought to seek his own Gain, to *another's* necessary Damage, as this Man doth.

2. HE ought to use Conscience in his Demands of Hire, for his Labour. There is doubtless a proportion between *Work* and *Wages*; and it is not left at every Man's Liberty to take all Advantages to make his Gain upon another, or to make a Prey of his Neighbour's Necessity; which is a thing too much practised. Every Man ought to endeavour after an *Honest* Livelihood by his Labour; but the *Poor* are not to turn *Oppressors*, to make themselves *Rich*; or to seek Gain to nourish their Lusts, by *wronging* others whom they have to deal withal, by asking *Unconscionable Wages*: It is true, *The Labourer is worthy of his Hire*, (*Luk.* 10. 7.) But then his *Hire* must bear proportion to his *Labour*, else it will not bear: And when *Tradesmen*, and *Day Labourers* serve up their Wages to the height, it is not only a *Wrong* done to those that make use of them, but in reality a *Publick Nuisance*, and usually serves only to nourish *Pride* and *Luxury*.

3. THEY are to exercise Faithfulness in their Labour. They are in a sense *Servants* to them that Employ them; and *Fidelity* is a necessary Qualification in such as do Service to others. And there are divers respects in which this *Faithfulness* is to be used on this Account.

THEY

THEY ought to be Faithful in Husbanding of their Time, for the Use and Benefit of such as Hire them; the Time is not their own, but his who Employs them, and they should improve it to the best Advantage: They should come seasonably to it, and follow it diligently whilst they are at it; and keep to it till it is seasonable to break off. He that receives Wages for a Day's Labour, ought to give a Day's Labour for it; and not spend any part of it by *Idleness*, or Diversions to other matters.

THEY ought also to be Faithful in a frugal improvement of the Substance of him who Employs them, to the best Advantage, and not prodigally Waste it; for want of which Care, too often doth the Owner suffer more than the Wages of the Person comes to: He ought therefore in this, to *do as he would be done by*, and be as Frugal for his Employer, as he would be for himself in the same Case.

THEY ought also to use Fidelity in the Work it self they do; they must do it *Well*, and so as may answer the end and design of it, and not fraudulently: And though this ought to be observed in all their Labour, yet especially in Work taken by the *Great*, as they call it, when they Bargain to do such a piece of Work, at such a Price; they ought not to fluber it over, and do it Deceitfully, that so they may make the greater Gain by it, whilst he for whom they do it, is a great Sufferer by it: They must not only *Do the Work*, but they must do it *Well*, that it may answer the end of it, else it is a meer Cheat.

Finally, THEY must be Faithful in their Time, and stand to their Word on that account: If they know that they cannot do their Work in the Time agreed upon, they ought not to *Promise*; and if they *Promise*, when they are assured they cannot *Perform*, they Transgress the *Ninth* Command; and if thus they fail, and so disappoint the just Expectation of the Person, they break *this* Command, doing him *Wrong* in his Estate.

(2.) THERE is also Righteousness to be observed by such as *Hire and Employ others in Labour* for them. As the *former* ought to deal justly by *them*, so ought *they* to be just to *these*: And there is no less danger of Injury on *this* hand, than there is on the *other*.

AND here, there are these Rules to be observed;

1. THEY ought to agree with them upon fair and honest Stipends. Men's Labour is for their *Livelihood*; and tho' there is no reason to Comply with them for their Maintenance in *Riot and Drunkenness*, and living in as good a *Garb and Port* as the Rich; yet, that they may have *Food and Raiment*, suitable to the Order which God's Providence hath put them in. Tho' the *levelling* Spirit, which the World prompts Men to, is not to be indulged; yet certainly it ought to be such as that they may with *Frugality*, be able to Support themselves withal. Not as tho', because one hath a greater Charge to maintain, he may ask,

and the other is bound to indent, for greater Wages than another should have, for the *same* Labour; for common *Equity* saith, that the *same* Labour deserves the *same* Hire; and if the Person cannot Support his Charge with it, he is the Object of a Publick *Charity*: And if the Employer give him *more*, it should not be for his *Work*, but for his *Poverty*; not as *Wages*, but as an *Alms* of Liberality; that he may be able to say as *Matth. 20. 15. Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? is thine eye evil because I am good?* Nevertheless, there is an Equity to be observed, and he who Employs another, ought not to take Advantage of him, and beat him down so as to enjoy his Labour *underfoot*, and for that which is next to *nothing*: And when he Indents for Work by the *Whole*, he ought to consider what is Convenient, and so as that he may not be a real Loser by it, but may be Encouraged to do his Work cheerfully, in expectation of his Wages; and if thro' Mistake he hath brought his Neighbour under Obligations, which he is convinced that he hath done his Work honestly, and is an unavoidable Loser by it; tho' he cannot right himself in a Course of *Civil Law*, yet *Conscience* obligeth him to Consider him, and make him a *Compensation*; and this comes under that general Rule, *Deut. 24. 14. Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates.*

2. THEY ought to deal *Honestly* with them in the payment of their Wages. And here great Care is to be used; Hence that Precept, *Lev. 19. 13. Thou shalt not defraud thy neighbour, neither rob him.* And for this end, he is not only to Pay him, but according to honest Agreement; and that in *Specie*, if the Bargain be so made, unless he can satisfy him in that which is as good. He is not to put him off with that, which is no way answerable to his *Necessity*, nor will Succour him in his needful Occasions, for so is he frustrated of the End of his Labour: Nor is he so to put him off with that which is *Corrupt* and will do him no good; but give him that which is *Current*, and *Passable* between Man and Man: Nor yet is he to Scruce upon him in the Price of what he Pays him for his Wages; but he ought to have it as *Good, Cheap*, as he would part with it to another; for, as we shall afterwards more particularly Consider, there ought to be one fixed Price of all things which pass between Man and Man; and if the Man is to Pay more for what he receives for Wages, than he might have for ready Money, he is *Defrauded*. Nor can there be any Excuse brought that will justify it, as may in it's proper Place be weighed.

3. THEY ought to defray the Wages of the Labourer in it's due and proper Season. Not that there may not be Agreements for Time, as is usually, and may lawfully be practised; and if the Labourer be so fore-handed, as to be able to stay for his Wages till such a piece

of Work be done, and chufeth and agreeth fo to do, there is no wrong done him in it; but it is too frequent that the Labourer hath daily dependance for his Hire; and to be delayed in it, is an Injury done to him, and his Family: Now it is not fufficient, to Pay him in any time, but it muft be in the proper time: Hence we have that joynd to the former, Lev. 19. 13. — *The wages of him that is hired fhall not abide with thee all night until the morning.* As therefore there is a Wo againft them that deny Wages for Work, (*Jer.* 22. 13.) fo to fuch as keep it back by Fraud, (*Jam.* 5. 4.) So that thefe things are not a matter of indifferency, but belong to that Love which God requires of us one to another; and of what moment it is, we are told, *1 Job.* 4. 20.

(II.) THERE is a *Righteoufnefs between Perfons, on the account of Borrowing & Lending.* That this belongs to *Commerce* in the general Notion of it, is not to be questioned; for in it, that which is one Man's *Right*, paffeth to be for another Man's *Ufe*; and that cannot Lawfully be, without the Confent of the proper Owner, either Actual or Implicite. That there is *Neffeffy of Borrowing and Lending*, for the maintaining of Civil Commerce between Men, no Man who Converfath among Men, can deny, unlefs he will contradict his own Experience: And tho' fome Men are fo fore-handed in the World, that they rarely have occafion for it, being furnifhed with that in hand, by which they may Purchase whatfoever their Occafions call for; yet there are but a few, who are always in fuch a Condition, but that they do frequently need thus to be fupplied by their Neighbours; and that when their Poverty is not fuch as calls for an Alms; but their Affairs are fo involved, that without it they may fuffer greatly, and by this means they may be advantaged in their Affairs. Now, tho' there may be, and is, fuch a *Borrowing and Lending*, as is meerly Neighbourly, and common Civility and Courtefy requires it, and without which Men cannot Live together, as becomes *Humanity*, much lefs *Chriftianity*; one being fupplied with that which another hath not; and there being many things, which our Poor Neighbour cannot furnifh himfelf withal, and it would be Unkind to deny him, and it would be Cruelty to Exaët upon him for the Loan: Only here it is to be obferved, that as it is a Duty of *Charity* to Lend freely in many Cafes, fo it is *Justice* that the *Borrower* be *Honeft*, and *Reftore* the thing *Borrowed* in the Seafon of it; and the want of Care in doing, becomes a Lofs to the *Lender*, and is many times a difcouragement to him.

NOW under this Head are to be confidered whatfoever things are Lent to another, not only for his *prefent* and *transcient* Ufe to be prefently Returned again; but alfo fuch things as are Lent to another, for his more *continued* Ufe and Improvement: And he hath a power, by vertue of this Loan, to make ufe

of it, as his *Own*, for his Occafions; only under the Obligation of returning it again in the fet time either in *Specie*, or to the Satisfaction of the Lender. Now the great Queftion here is, *Whether the Lender may Lawfully Contratt with the Borrower, for Gain by the thing fo Lent?* But that muft be adjourned for a more deliberate Confideration.

[MAY I. 1705.]

SERMON CC.