

The Master's Prayer.

O God, whose providence disposes the several ranks and conditions of men in this world, assist me in fulfilling all the duties which belong to my station. Enable me to walk in my house with an upright heart. Make me kind to my servants, and always ready to give unto them that which is just and equal; knowing that I also have a Master in heaven. Make my servants truly to fear thee, and to be governed by thy holy laws in their behaviour both to me and to each other. Enable us all faithfully to serve thee, and to walk in the paths of truth and holiness, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

SERMON XXXII.

DUTY OF SERVANTS.

COLOS. iii. 22.

Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not with eye-service, as men-pleasers; but in singleness of heart, fearing God.

As the ordinary business of the world is carried on by the aid of the many various classes and conditions of men; so, each of the persons, of whom these several classes consist, is called upon by the precepts of religion to *do his duty* in that particular state in which the providence of God has placed him. One of the most numerous of these classes consists of those who have agreed to give their time and their labour for a certain price—for stipulated wages—thus contracting the relation of *servants*. Servants are placed in a situation of great usefulness, which has peculiar duties belonging to it; upon the observance of which, much of their own comfort and respectability, much too of the peace and well being of society in general, is found to depend.

In the plain advice which I wish to offer to those who are servants, I shall endeavour shortly to state, first, the duties which they owe to their masters; secondly, the behaviour which they ought to observe towards their fellow-servants; and, lastly,

the duties which they owe more immediately to God.

The two first of these heads of duty would be sufficiently provided for, by your observance of the great fundamental rule, of doing as you would be done by. If a servant, for instance, would put himself in his master's place, and honestly ask himself what he would then have a fair right to expect, but little farther direction would be necessary to guide him in the performance of his duty. Still it may be useful to dwell upon this relation of life more particularly; in doing which I shall endeavour to keep close to the exhortations of Scripture.

One of the principal duties of servants is obedience. St. Paul requires Titus (and through him the ministers of the Gospel in after ages) to "exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things."^a In the Epistle to the Ephesians, he says, "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh;"^b and again, writing to the Colossians, "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh."^c These precepts, you will observe, are very extensive; "obey in all things:" but still they are to be understood, as in similar cases, with some limitations. If, for instance, a master should order his servant to do any thing contrary to the laws of God, the servant is certainly bound to obey God rather than man. Or, if the master should require any thing contrary to the laws of the land, here again the servant not only may, but ought to disobey him. Again, if the master should order any thing clearly and decidedly contrary to the original agreement between them, to the acknowledged rules and customs by which that relation is governed, or to common justice,

^a Titus ii. 9.

^b Ephes. vi. 5.

^c Col. iii. 22.

here also, it should seem, the servant may lawfully hesitate. In such cases, however, he should be ready to suspect his own judgment, and backward in asserting what may be his right. In matters of small consequence, especially, he will, both as a prudent and as a religious man, bear with many things, rather than resist his master's authority. In all doubtful cases, *obedience* is the safe course, the course prescribed by Christian simplicity and meekness. Generally speaking, his duty is clear, and he is bound implicitly to obey his master, in virtue of that allegiance which he owes to his Saviour—"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters," says St. Paul, "as unto Christ."^d

And this obedience you are to pay, not in a sulken and constrained manner, as if you repined at your lot, and grudged your master every service you do for him, but *willingly* and *cheerfully*. It is natural for a good man to take pleasure in doing his duty, since he feels, that whatever may be his treatment from man, he is doing what he can to please God. You ought to take pleasure in doing yours. "Doing the will of God," as the Apostle speaks, from the *heart*—"with *good will* doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."^e And again, "Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing, that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."^f And this dutiful obedience, you will observe, you are bound to pay, whatever your master's personal character, or whatever his behaviour to you may be. If he is hard to please, and in appearance never satisfied; if he is harsh and rough in his demeanour towards you, and his language expressive of sourness and ill temper rather than of good will; you still must

^d Ephes. vi. 5.

^e Ephes. vi. 6, 7.

^f Col. iii. 23, 24.

never treat him with disrespect, or neglect his service. In cases where the law allows it, you may seek indeed another place; but as long as you continue in his service, you are bound, by the duty which you owe to God, to obey your master diligently and respectfully. Such is the injunction of the Apostle—"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward"—*the froward*, those who are harsh and rough in their manner—"for this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully."^s

You should attend particularly to another feature in the character of a Christian servant, which consists in *not answering again*. There are, I believe, many servants, who need to be reminded of the scriptural direction *not to answer again*; servants, I mean, who make a point of disputing with their employers the propriety of almost every command or direction; and who, if their masters speak to them in the language of reproof or of anger, seem to think that to retort upon them, and to answer them again with ill language and abuse, is a mark of spirit and independence of mind. It is incumbent upon all Christians, if they meet with rough and improper language, even from their equals, to bear with it in the spirit of meekness—but this is doubly the duty of servants, who, not only by the general precepts of religion, but by the situation of life in which they are placed, are bound to bear such language patiently, not to answer again,^b upon no account to render "railing for railing."ⁱ Nothing in their master's conduct can ever excuse such language in them.

There is perhaps no apostolical precept relating to the duty of servants more comprehensive than

^s 1 Peter ii. 13, 19.

^b Titus ii. 9.

ⁱ 1 Peter iii. 9.

that, which is twice given by St. Paul, to serve "not with eye-service, as men-pleasers, but in singleness of heart, fearing God."^k *To serve with eye-service*, is, when servants or labourers put on an appearance of activity and diligence while a master's eye is upon them, and seem then to be hard at work; but, as soon as his back is turned, indulge themselves in idleness. Those, who act thus, act as if they regarded men only, and had none of the fear of God before their eyes. They ought to remember, though their master on earth be absent and unable to watch them, yet that they have a Master in heaven whose eye is unceasingly upon them. They should remember, that their time belongs to him who pays them for it. If they are idle, or waste their time, they rob their master of his due, and are guilty of positive dishonesty.

Against another kind of dishonesty they are warned by the Apostle, when he cautions them against "purloining."^l To purloin is secretly to make away with, secretly to steal their master's property, either for their own use or for some other person. A servant often has many articles belonging to his master within his reach, which he may possibly make away with without being discovered. If he *purloins* them, if, without his master's consent, he takes any thing and converts it to his own use, he is doubly criminal. He is guilty, not only of breaking the eighth commandment by stealing, but also of a breach of trust, which, according to the laws both of God and man, greatly aggravates his offence. His guilt is much the same whether he applies to his own use what he takes, or gives it to some other person. By giving away what does not belong to him, he may, from unthinking or designing people, gain the praise of good nature and

^k Col. iii. 22, and Ephes. vi. 5, 6.

^l Titus ii. 10.

generosity; in reality however, he is guilty of gross dishonesty—is guilty of *purloining*—and of betraying the trust reposed in him. In short, a servant should never take or give away any thing in his master's absence, which he would not equally take or give away if he were present and looking on.

The Apostle's caution against purloining is followed by an exhortation to show "all good fidelity," or faithfulness. A really *faithful* servant, a servant disposed to show "all good fidelity," will not only be diligent, and industrious, and scrupulously honest, but will be desirous of promoting his master's welfare by all the means in his power. Most particularly will he be careful never to tell what he hears in his master's house; never to reveal the secrets of the family, or to indulge in idle talk respecting his master's affairs. His master's property, his master's honour, and his master's secrets, must be all objects of his care and attention.

With regard to your behaviour towards your fellow servants, I should advise you, in the first place, to cultivate a general spirit of *harmony and goodwill*. I should say, nearly in the language of the Prophet, Seek the peace of the family where ye dwell, for in the peace thereof ye shall have peace.^m No one can be ignorant how much the condition of a servant is embittered by domestic quarrels and disagreements, where the servants in one house are divided against each other, three against two, and two against three: where there is such quarrelling and strife, "there is confusion and every evil work."ⁿ Such a state is not only irksome and painful in a temporal point of view, but most dangerous to the safety of the soul. All the exhortations to Christians in general—"to love as brethren;" to "be at peace among" them-

^m Jer. xxix. 7.

ⁿ James iii. 16.

selves; to "follow after the things which make for peace;" showing all meekness "unto all men;"^o—are particularly to be borne in mind by servants. United together in one house, you are in that point of view, as well as in the higher sense, to look upon yourselves as members of one body, and are peculiarly bound to cultivate peace and good-will, and that spirit of charity which is the bond of perfectness. You must endeavour to love your fellow-servants as yourselves, and in all your behaviour towards them, to do as you would be done by; strive, in compliance with the exhortation of the Apostle, to put away from you "all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil-speaking, with all malice; and be kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."^p Be careful never to give or to take offence. Be watchful over your own hearts and tempers, and never give way to those emotions of ill humour, peevishness, or anger, which oftentimes become a root of bitterness, and lead on to variance and strife. Instead of giving way to such bad tempers, it is both your interest and your duty to be kind and obliging in your behaviour, ready to perform mutual good offices, willing to assist your fellow-servants in their work, and in every way to promote their comfort and happiness. Never say, either to them or to your master, that *it is not your place* to do this or that, but be ready to assist in any way that you can. Towards both, cultivate an humble temper and behaviour. Humility is the parent of many Christian graces, while pride is the source of much and great evil. "Only by pride cometh contention,"^q says the wise man. It is from pride and self-conceit

^o 1 Peter iii. 8; 1 Thess. v. 13; Rom. xiv. 19; Titus iii. 1.
^p Ephes. iv. 31, 32.

^q Prov. xiii. 10.

that most of the quarrelling and ill humour, the angry and reproachful language, the impatience and discontent, which sometimes are found in servants, have their origin. The lesson which our blessed Lord was most anxious to teach both by precept and his own example, was the lesson of being *meek and lowly in heart*.

Above all, be willing and anxious, as you have opportunity, to set forward the salvation of the souls of those who are united with you in the same service. If they are ignorant, instruct them; if they are careless and inconsiderate, admonish and check them, where you can do it without offence. In every way be desirous of impressing on their minds a serious conviction of the awful and engaging truths of religion.

Where there are servants of different sexes—in other words, young men and young women—in a family, let them remember that they can hardly be too guarded in their behaviour towards each other. You must, almost of necessity, be much thrown in each other's way. Take heed lest your state of life be unto you, in this respect, an occasion of falling. Never allow yourselves in any lightness of behaviour. Never utter with your lips any immodest language, any of that foolish talking and jesting,* against which St. Paul warns you. The consequence of allowing or indulging in any improper liberties may be most dreadful. If they lead on, as they too frequently do, to the deadly sin of fornication, the young woman brings a stain on her name which is scarcely ever washed away. She exposes herself to contempt and reproach, and to numberless distresses and vexations. The partner of her guilt has not only the bitter thought that he has ruined a fellow-creature, but often brings upon

* Ephes. v. 4.

himself a variety of troubles, and perhaps an expense which he is unable to pay, and which may tempt him to fly from his country and his friends. And, what is of far more consequence, they have both exposed themselves to the wrath of God, and to the punishment of eternal fire; for they have committed that sin, of which it is expressly said, that "they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God." It is true that this sin, as well as other offences, will be forgiven to those who repent, through the atonement of Christ—but their repentance must be deep and bitter; and whether they will repent at all is uncertain. And even though one party should, by the grace of God, be brought to repentance, yet the other may continue hardened; and how dreadful will be the reflection, that you have, for the gratification of your appetite, contributed to the ruin of an immortal soul!

In the last place, I wish to offer you some advice respecting the duties which you owe peculiarly to God. And here I most earnestly exhort you, however much your attention may and ought to be occupied by the service of your earthly master, never to forget that you have a Master in heaven, who is entitled to the *first* place in your thoughts and affections. Never forget for a moment that you *must*—and you know not how soon—be called to stand before the judgment-seat of Christ—that you are hastening on to an eternal state, either of happiness or misery; and that, consequently, the care of your soul is the one thing needful, is a concern of inexpressibly greater importance than any thing else. Some servants, it is too probable, are ignorant of the fundamental truths of religion. At your age, and in this country, such ignorance is disgraceful and criminal. In some cases it may, in

‡ Gal. v. 21, and Ephes. v. 5.

part, be chargeable upon your friends. Might you not, however, have done much towards removing it yourselves? However this may be, endeavour to remove it now. Diligently seize and improve every opportunity of procuring religious information. If your masters or mistresses are disposed to instruct you, be thankful to them, and let not the pains they take be thrown away upon you. In short, seek religious knowledge from your fellow-servants, from your friends, and by regular attendance at church. If you can read, often take opportunities of reading the Scriptures, and religious books. If you can not read, endeavour to learn; not so much with a view to the advantage which you may derive from it in this life, as from a desire to advance in the knowledge and practice of true religion. Above all, be regular and fervent in private prayer. Never rise in the morning, nor go to rest at night, without addressing yourselves to God for grace and help. Implore him to give you all Christian virtues, and to guard you against all temptations—those virtues especially which you particularly need; and those temptations to which your state of life is peculiarly exposed. Some of you perhaps will tell me that you have not time for these things. I certainly mean nothing that I have said to make you in any way neglect your master's business, or interfere with the duties of the calling. Make the most, however, of the time and opportunities which you have; and especially let as large a portion as possible of the Lord's day be given to the performance of religious duties, to devout attendance in church, to private prayer and meditation, and to the acquiring of religious knowledge. Those who are most busily occupied during the week may often, while at their work, raise their thoughts to heavenly subjects, and offer short ejaculations of prayer and praise to the Giver of all good things.

Finally, be ever on your guard against pride and self-conceit; according to the advice of St. Peter, "be clothed with humility," and willing to "be subject one to another." Be obedient and faithful to your masters. Be kind to your fellow-servants; always ready to help them, and never consenting to lead or to follow them into sin. Be humble and pious towards God, and continually mindful of that solemn account which you must one day give before the tribunal of Christ.

May he who is the Maker of us all, in whose sight all men are equal, keep you in the paths of true religion, and prepare you, through the merits of your Redeemer, to hear the gracious invitation, Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!

A Prayer for Servants.

Abridged from the New Manual.

O Lord my God, the great Creator and Preserver of all mankind, I bless and praise thee for all thy mercies to my soul and body.

I humbly beseech thee, for the sake of Jesus Christ, to pardon all my sins.

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me: give me a true faith, and grant that I may delight in thy commandments, and walk before thee in faithfulness and honesty.

Enable me to do the duty of my place, not with eye-service, but with singleness of heart. Keep me from all reproachful and immodest language, from lying and slandering, and from all dishonest

actions; make me always humble, thankful, and contented both towards thee and towards man.

Bless this whole family to which I belong, and sow in all our hearts the seeds of unfeigned charity; that we may enjoy the comfort of mutual affection, and of mutual help in our several places.

And grant, that being protected by thy providence, directed by thy word, and assisted by thy Holy Spirit, we may be admitted into thy kingdom in heaven, through Jesus Christ our Lord; in whose holy name and words I continue to pray,

Our Father, &c.

SERMON XXXIII.

DUTY OF SUBJECTS.

ROM. xiii. 1.

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

It is one of the excellencies of our holy religion, that it extends to every part of our temper and conduct. Not only does it inculcate piety towards God, and the acknowledged virtues of humility, temperance, justice, and charity, but it enters into the various relations of social life, and points out the peculiar duties which belong to each of them.

Among the several duties which it thus enforces upon us as members of society, is that of obedience to civil government—the duty of quiet submission to the established laws and constitution of the country, in which the providence of God has placed us. This duty is inculcated in many parts of the holy Scriptures, but most strongly and remarkably in the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans.

At the time when St. Paul wrote this Epistle, there was peculiar necessity for insisting on this subject. Many of the Jews, of whom there were considerable numbers residing at Rome, appear to have entertained the idea, that having received