

Thomas Bacon Sermon To Negro Slaves 1743

Knowing, that whatsoever good Thing any Man doth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be Bond or Free.

My well-beloved BLACK Brethren and Sisters,

When you were last here, I endeavored to shew you, —That GOD made you and all the World,—and that he made you and all Mankind to serve him;—That it is he who places every Man in the Station or Rank which he holds in the World, making some Kings, some Masters and Mistresses, some Tradesmen and working People, and others Servants and Slaves. That every one of us is obliged to do the Business he hath set us about, in that State or Condition of Life to which he hath been pleased to call us:—And that whoever is doing his Business quietly and honestly in the World, and living as a Christian ought to do, is serving of GOD, though his Condition be ever so low and mean; and will be as much taken Notice of, and as highly favored by GOD at the last Day, as the greatest Prince upon Earth, for GOD, is no Respector of Persons. — I also laid before you, — That you ought to serve GOD for your own Sakes because you have Souls to be saved, and if you should lose them, you are undone forever:—That everyone who dies, and goes into another World, must go either to Heaven or Hell; and that there is no other Way of escaping everlasting Punishment in Hell, or being eternally happy in Heaven, but by serving GOD while he spares us Life upon Earth ...

I then went on to shew you, what Duty you owe to GOD in particular,—That you ought to look upon Him as your great and chief Master, to whom you must one Day answer for every Thing you have done in this Life:—That he is always looking upon you, and taking Notice of your Behaviour, so that if you could deceive all the World, you cannot deceive GOD:—That you ought to love GOD above all Things, or else He will not love you, which would be the most dreadful Thing that could happen to you:—That if you love GOD sincerely, you will be afraid of doing any Thing that is bad, because his Holy Spirit is grieved to see Men destroy their Souls by their Wickedness:—That if the Love of GOD is not strong enough to keep you from doing what is bad, and vexing and offending him thereby, you ought, at least, to dread his terrible Judgments, for that he is able, not only to destroy your Bodies, and strike you dead in a Moment, but also, to cast both Body and Soul into Hell, which will certainly be the Portion of all such, as provoke him to Anger by leading wicked Lives:—That you ought to worship GOD both in Publick and in Private;—in Publick , by coming to Church as often as you have Leave and Opportunity; and in Private, by praying to him for every Thing you want, and giving him Thanks for all his Goodness to you, which you may easily do, when you are Walking , or Working , in the House , or in the Field: —That you ought to reverence and honour Almighty GOD, and keep from all Cursing and Swearing, or making any light, foolish, vain Use of his great and holy Name:—And that you

must keep from all Lying, because GOD hates all such as tell Lies, and will give them over to the Devil, who is the Father of all Lies and Liars.

In the next Place I endeavoured to shew you, how you ought to behave towards your Masters and Mistresses ; and to make it plain to you, that as GOD himself hath set them over you here in the Nature of his Stewards or Overseers , he expects you will do every Thing for them, as you do for himself:—That you must be obedient and subject to them in all Things, and do whatever they order you to do, unless it should be some wicked Thing which you knew that GOD hath forbidden, in which Case you are to refuse, but in no other:—That you must not be Eye-Servants, that is, such as will be very busy in their Masters Presence, but very idle when their Backs are turned: For your head Master, Almighty GOD, is looking on you, and though you may escape being found out, or punished by your Owners for it, yet you cannot deceive GOD, who will punish you severely in the next World for your deceitful Dealing in this:—That you must be faithful and honest to your Masters and Mistresses, not wasting their Substance, or letting any Thing, belonging to them, perish for want of your Care;—because that is as bad as Thievery , for the Master's Loss is the same as if he had been robbed of it:—And that you are to serve your Owners with Cheerfulness , Respect , and Humility , not Grumbling , or giving any saucy Answers, but doing your Work with Readiness , Mildness , and good Nature ; because your Sauciness and Grumbling is not so much against your Owners, as it is against GOD himself, who hath placed you in that Service, and expects you will do the Business of it as he hath commanded you. . . .

Now, to suit this Rule to your particular Circumstances;—Suppose you were Masters and Mistresses, and had Servants under you, — would you not desire that your Servants should do their business faithfully and honestly, as well when your Back was turned, as while you were looking over them?—Would you not expect that they should take Notice of what you said to them?—That they should behave themselves with Respect towards you and yours, and be as careful of every Thing belonging to you as you would be yourselves? — You are Servants,—do therefore as you would wish to be done by, and you will both be good Servants to your Masters, and good Servants to GOD, who requires this of you, and will reward you well for it, if you do it for the Sake of Conscience in Obedience to his Command.

Again,—suppose that you were People of some Substance, and had something of your own in the World,—would you not desire to keep what you had? — And that nobody should take it from you, without your own Consent, or hurt anything belonging to you? — If, then, you love your neighbor as yourself, or would do by others, as you could wish they would do by you, you will learn to be honest and just towards all Mankind, as well as to your Masters and Mistresses, and not steal, or take away any Thing from anyone, without his Knowledge or Consent:—You will be as careful not to hurt any Thing belonging to a Neighbour, or to do any Harm to his Goods, his Cattle, or his Plantation, or to see it done by others, as you would be to hurt yourself, or any

Thing you had of your own:—And will behave yourselves towards all Mankind with the same Honesty and good Will, as you could wish they would do to you in the like Case.

Your Fellow Servants are more particularly to be looked upon as your Brethren:—Your common Station, as Slaves, your Complexion, and your Marriages one among another, in different Families, make you nearer to each other than all the rest of the World, except your Owners.—And, poor and ignorant as you are, you may do much good, and prevent much Harm, by behaving one towards another as Brothers and Sisters ought to do, and as GOD requires of you.—And, considering all Things, you must be miserable Creatures indeed, if you will not be loving and affectionate, kind and honest among yourselves.—But for Fear, you should mistake my Meaning, I will first describe to you, what true Love and Affection is,—and then, endeavor to shew you in particular, how you ought to behave one towards another. ...

Suppose any of you to have been wicked Creatures,— idle, drunken, swearing, thievish, leud People;—and being at length overtaken by the Hand of GOD, and laid down on a painful, sick Bed, without any Hopes of Recovery, with all the Terrors of Conscience about you, and nothing before you but Death, and the fearful Apprehensions of being miserable forever,—what a dreadful State of Mind must you then be in! And what would you then give, that you had been blessed with a true Friend in your former Days, one that had so much real Love for you, as to have warned you of your Danger, and have hindered you, by his kind Advice, from running such Lengths of Wickedness as you had done?—And would you not then think, that such a Friend would have been of more Value to you, than the whole World?—You have it in your Power to be such true Friends and Lovers one to another:—And though you can give but little bodily Help, you can do what is far better,— you can help each other on in the Way towards Heaven .—You can, nay, you ought to check one another, when you see any Thing doing amiss:—You can encourage each other in doing what is right and good:—You can pray together, and you can pray for one another:—You can, on a Sunday Evening , talk about the good Advice you have heard in Church, and by telling it to such as could not be there, may do them much Good, and, at the same Time, by thus repeating these Things, they will be the stronger fixed in your own Memory, so as to be of lasting Service to yourselves:—You can, by a good Example, prevent a great deal of Wickedness and Indecency, in your Meetings and Conversations one among another: And where you find that your sober, friendly Advice will do no good with them, you may terrify your Companions from doing bad Things, by threatening to complain of them; and by such Means as these, you may help to save their Souls, and get a Blessing upon yourselves and Families.—But, Oh, my Brethren! I am grieved to say it, you are so far from doing this, that I fear many of you rather encourage and help one another on in Wickedness, and go Hand in Hand towards Destruction, rather than strive to assist one another in the Way to Heaven! ...

Quelle:

Bacon, Thomas,

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