

SHORT MEDITATIONS

ON

ROMANS v. 1—5.

OF THE

SHEDDING ABROAD GOD'S LOVE ON THE HEART BY THE HOLY GHOST.

EXPERIENCE of the want of this effusion of God's love, and some small taste of its sweetness, make me think the thoughts of this very suitable to one expecting death.

The words contain a golden chain of highest blessings on all true Christians.

I. They are supposed to have faith, that is, both a general trust in God's revelations and grace, and a special trust in Jesus Christ, as given by the Father's love to be the Redeemer, to justify, sanctify, and glorify his people. I have oft proved this justifying faith to be no less than our unfeigned taking Christ for our Saviour, and becoming true Christians, according to the tenour of the baptismal covenant. As to the acts, it is formally trust—one in three; the understanding's assenting trust, the will's consenting trust, and the executive power's practical, venturing, obeying trust.

II. All true believers are justified; even all that consent to the baptismal covenant, and choose God to be their God, and Christ to be their Saviour, and the Holy Ghost to be their Sanctifier, and give up themselves to him by true resolution, as their only ruler, hope, and happiness; though this be done with so great weakness, as endeth not all doubts, nor quieteth the mind.

To be justified is not to be accounted such as have no sin, but, 1. To be made such by pardon through Christ's merits, and by true faith, as God will take by special love and favour unto life. 2. To be accounted such by God. 3. To be virtually

sentenced such by the law of grace and faith, and to be just in law sense. 4. At last to be judged such by public sentence. 5. And to be used as such.

Not justified by the law of innocency, or of Moses, but by Christ's law of grace.

Not justified perfectly till the time of perfection. Much punishment on soul and body is yet to be taken off, and more sins daily to be pardoned, and we, before the world, to be sentenced as just to life everlasting.

III. The justified have peace with God. They are reconciled, and in a state of love and friendship. It signifieth mutual peace, but with great inequality. God's love and favour to us is the stable, constant part. Our consent also, and acceptance of his terms of peace, is constant in its truth: but our sense of God's love, which is the peace possessed by the soul, is weak and inconstant, and too oft quite lost or obscured by ignorance, mistake, and fear. But it must be known that this is a diseased state, unnatural to the believer as such; as it is unnatural for a woman married to a faithful husband, to lie in terror, thinking that he will kill her, or doth not love her; or for a child to think the same of a loving father. Faith, of its own nature, tendeth to the soul's peace and joy, in the sense of God's love. And how is Christ offered to us, but as a Saviour, to bring us by grace to glory? And he that accepteth him as such, whereby he is justified, doth sure believe that he is offered as such; for none can accept what he thinks not to be offered. And this implieth some hope, at least, that Christ will be such to us; and did faith work strongly and kindly, its effect would be a constant, joyful state of soul, as pleasant health and mirth is to our natures. All our distrustful fears and griefs, and disquietness of soul, are for want of more faith, as sickness and pain is for the want of vital causes of health.

IV. This peace with God is only "through our Lord Jesus Christ." Though it be a vain dream to think, by justifying faith is meant Christ only, and not faith: yet it is no other faith but the foresaid believing trust on Christ. Therefore, as faith is our part, so it supposeth Christ, and all the works of his office, and righteousness, on his part, as its object. Christ is the purchasing cause; but our trust and acceptance is that which is pleasing to God, and chosen by him to be our part, without innocency, or keeping the Jewish law.

Since man once sinned, God's justice, and man's conscience,

tell us, that we are unfit for God's acceptance or communion immediately, but must have a suitable Mediator. Oh! blessed be God for this suitable Mediator. Without him I dare not pray, I cannot hope, I dare not die; God would else frown me away to misery. All the hope of pardon and salvation that I have; all the access to God, and the mercies and deliverances that I have received, have been by this Author and Finisher of our faith. Into his conducting hands I give my soul; and into his preserving hands both soul and body; and into his receiving hands I commend my departing soul.

V. Ver. 2. "By whom we have access by faith unto this grace wherein we stand;" that is, into this state of blessed Christianity, peace with God, and the following blessings. As it is by marriage that a woman hath right to her husband's estate and honours, and by inheritance that a child comes to his father's maintenance and land. This is no diminution to God's love. To say it is all by Christ, is not to take it as ever the less from God the Father. It is more to give us Christ, and life in him, than to have given us life without a Christ. (John iii. 16; 1 John v. 10—12.) As God is, nevertheless, the giver of light to the earth, for giving it them by the sun. Second causes diminish not the honour of the first.

VI. "And rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Here is, 1. The beatifical object—"the glory of God." 2. The beatifical act—"rejoice." 3. The mediate, causing act—"hope." All presupposing faith and justification.

2. The "glory of God" is that glorious appearance of God to man and angels, which maketh happy, 1. The mind by beholding it. 2. The will by loving it, and receiving the communications of love. 3. The executive powers by joyful praise, &c.

2. Though some foretastes are here, it is yet said to be hoped for; and we hope for that which is not seen. When faith is said to be that which we are justified or saved by, it includeth hope, though, more precisely taken, they are distinct. "We are saved by hope." The same word is oft translated 'trust' and 'hope;' and faith is trust. To trust Christ for salvation, includeth hoping that he will save us. But hope is denominated from the good hoped for, and faith from the cause by which we hope to obtain it.

Hope doth not necessarily imply either certainty or uncertainty. It may stand with both in various degrees.

3. Rejoicing is made by God the very naturally desired state of the soul. It is, when natural, the pleasant efflorescence of the spirits, or their state of health,

It is pleasure that is the spring or poise of all motion sensitive in the world, *Trahit sua quemque, voluptas*. Appetite, or will, is the active principle; and congruous, good, or delectable, is the object. The world is undone by the seduction of false, deceitful pleasure; and though we that made not ourselves are not so made for ourselves as that our pleasure or felicity in God should be so high in our desire as God himself, who is the ultimate object of our love: yet, seeing such an object he is, and the love of him (and received from him) is our felicity, these are never to be separated.

What have I to rejoice in, if this hoped-for glory be not my joy? All things else are dying to me: and God himself is not my felicity, as he afflicts me, nor as he giveth me the transitory gifts of nature, but as he is to be seen in glory. If this be not my joy, it is all but vanity. What, then, should all my thoughts and labour aim at more, as to myself, than to hope for and foretaste this glory. No sin lieth heavier on me than my hopes of glory raise me to no higher joy; and that the great weakness of my faith appeareth by such dull thoughts of glory, or by withdrawing fears. Sure there is enough in the glory of God, soundly believed and hoped for, to make a man rejoice in pain and weakness, and to make him long to be with Christ. I live not according to the nature of Christianity, if I live not as in peace with God, and in the joyful hopes of promised glory.

VII. "Not only so, but we glory in tribulation." Glory is so transcendent, and tribulation so small and short, that an expectant of glory may well rejoice in bodily sufferings. It is tribulation for Christ and righteousness' sake that we are said to glory in: the rest, for our sins, it is well if we can improve and patiently bear. Yet in them we may rejoice, in hope of glory, though we glory not of them. Oh! if all the painful, languid days, and nights, and years that I have had, as the fruit of my sin, had been sufferings for that which I am now hated and hunted for, even for preaching Christ when men forbid me, how joyfully might I undergo it: but yet, even here, approaching glory should be my joy. Alas! my groans and moans are too great, and my joy too little.

VIII. "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience." That

which worketh patience is matter of joy: for patience doth us more good than tribulation can do hurt; why, then, do I groan so much under suffering, and so little study and exercise patience and no more rejoice in the exercise thereof?

IX. "And patience, experience." It is manifold and profitable experience, which patient suffering brings. It giveth us experience, as of nature's weakness, and the great need of faith; so of the truth of God's promises, the love and tenderness of Christ, the acceptance of our prayers; and the power of the Spirit's aid and grace. O what abundance of experiences of God and ourselves, and the vanity of creatures, had we wanted, if we had not waited in a suffering state; alas! how many experiences have I forgotten.

X. "And experience, hope." A bare promise should give us hope; but we are still distrustful of ourselves, and of all the clearest evidences, till experience help us, and set all home. Oh, what an advantage hath a Christian of great and long experience for his hope and joy! And yet when notable experiences of God's providence are past and gone, an unbelieving heart is ready to question, whether the things came not by mere natural course; and, like the Israelites in the wilderness, dangers and fears bear down even long and great experiences. This is my sin.

XI. "And hope maketh not ashamed." That is, true hope of what God hath promised, shall never be disappointed. They that trust on deceitful creatures are deceived, and ashamed of their hope: for all men are liars, that is, untrusty; but God is true, and ever faithful: O what a comfort is it that God commandeth me to trust him! Sure such a command is a virtual promise, from him that cannot fail that trust which he commandeth. Lord, help me to trust thee in greatest dangers, and there to rest.

XII. "Because the love of God is shed abroad upon our hearts, by the Holy Ghost which is given to us." It is the love of God shed abroad on our hearts by the Holy Ghost which must make us rejoice in hope of the glory of God, even in tribulation.

Here I must consider, I. What is meant by the love of God. II. Why, and how, it is shed abroad on the heart by the Holy Ghost.

I. By the love of God is meant the effects of his love. 1. His special grace. 2. The pleasant gust or sense of it.

II. God's love thus shed on the heart, presupposeth it expressed in the gospel and providence, and contains all these particulars.

1. The sanctifying of the soul by renewing grace. This is the giving of the Spirit, as he is given all true Christians.

2. Herein the Holy Ghost makes us perceive the exceeding desirableness of the love of God, and maketh us most desire it.

3. He giveth the soul some easing hope of the love of God.

4. He quieteth the doubts, and fears, and trouble of the soul.

5. He raiseth our hopes, by degrees, to confident assurance.

6. Then the thoughts of God's love are pleasant to the soul, and give it such delight as we feel in the love and fruition of our most valued and beloved friends.

7. The soul in this state is as unapt to be jealous of God, or to question his love, as a good child or wife to question the love of a parent or husband, or to hear any that speak evil of them.

8. This, then, becomes the habitual state of the soul, in all changes, to live in the delightful sense of the love of God, as we do live in pleasure with our dearest friends.

O blessed state, and first fruits of heaven! and happy are they that do attain it. And though lower degrees have their degree of happiness, yet how far short are such, in goodness, amiableness, and comfort, of those that are thus rich in grace.

This presupposeth, 1. Knowledge of God and the gospel. 2. True belief, and hope. 3. A sincere and fruitful life. 4. Mortification as to idol worldly vanities. 5. A conviction of our sincerity in all this. 6. A conclusion that God doth love.

But yet it is somewhat above all this. A man may have all this in his mind and mouth, and yet want this gust of effused love upon his heart. These are the way to it, but not itself.

This is the greatest good on this side heaven; to which all wealth and honour, all fleshly pleasure and long life, all learning and knowledge, are unworthy to be once compared: briefly,

1. It is the flower and highest part of God's image on man.

2. It is the soul's true communion with God, and fruition of him, which carnal men deride: even as our eye hath communion with the sun, and the flourishing earth enjoys its reviving heats.

3. It is that which all lower grace doth tend to, as childhood doth to manhood: and what is a world of infants, comparatively, good for?

4. It is that which most properly answereth the design of

redemption, and the wonders of God's love therein ; and all the tenour of the gospel.

It is that which is most fully called the Spirit of God, or Christ in us : he hath lower works, but this is his great work, by which he possesseth us, as God's most pleasant habitation : " For we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of power and love, and a sound mind." (2Tim.i.7.)

6. It is only that which all men, in general, desire, I mean, the only satisfying content and pleasure that man is capable of on earth. All men would have quieting and constant pleasure ; and it is to be found in nothing else but the effused love of God.

7. It is that which will make every burden light, and all affliction easy : when the sense of God's love is still upon the soul, all pain and crosses will be but as blood-letting by the kindest physician, to save the patient's life. God will not be suspected, or grudged at, in suffering ; his love will sweeten all.

8. It will overcome abundance of temptations, which no men's wit, or learning, or knowledge of the words of Scripture, will overcome. No arguments will draw a loving child, or wife, from the parents, or husband, that they know doth love them. Love is the the most powerful disputant.

9. It puts a mellow, pleasant sweetness into all our duties. When we hear the word, or receive the sacrament, it is to such a soul as pleasant food to the most healthful man ; when we pray, or praise God, it comes from a comforted heart, and excites and increaseth the comfort it comes from. Oh, who can be backward to draw near to God in prayer or meditation, who tasteth the sweetness of his love ! This is religion indeed, and tells us what its life, and use, and glory is. This is true walking with God in the best degree. When the soul liveth in the taste of his love, the heart will be still with him, and that will be its pleasure. And God most delights in such a soul.

10. This is it that putteth the sweetest relish on all our mercies. Deny God's love, and you deny them all. If you taste not his love in them, you taste little more than a beast may taste ; poor food and raiment is sweet, with the sense of the love of God. Had I more of this, I should lie down, and rise, and walk in pleasure and content. I could bear the loss of other things ; and though nature will feel pains, I should have pleasure and peace in the midst of all my pains and groans. This is the white stone, the new name ; no man well knoweth it who never felt it in himself.

1. There is no dying comfortably without this experienced taste of the love of God. This will draw up the desires of the soul; love tasted, casteth out fear: though God be holy and just, and judgment terrible, and hell intolerable, and the soul hath no distinct idea of its future state out of the body, and though we see not whither it is that we must go, the taste of God's love will make it go joyfully, as trusting him; as a child will go any whither in his father's power and hand.

But all the knowledge in the world without this quiets not a departing soul. A man may write as many books, and preach as many sermons of heaven, as I have done, and speak of it, and think of almost nothing else, and yet till the soul be sweetened and comforted with the love of God shed abroad on it by the Holy Ghost, death and the next life will be rather a man's fear than his desire. And the common fear of death which we see in the far greater part even of godly persons doth tell us, that though they may have saving desires and hopes, yet this sense of God's love on the heart is rare.

What wonder, then, if our language, our converse, our prayers, have too little savour of it, and in comparison of joyful believers' duties, be but like green apples to the mellow ones.

My God, I feel what it is that I want, and I perceive what it is that is most desirable: Oh, let not guilt be so far unpardoned as to deprive my soul of this greatest good, which thou hast commended to me, and commanded, and which in my languishing and pains I so much need! Did I beg for wealth or honour, I might have it to the loss of others. But thy love will make me more useful to all, and none will have the less for my enjoyment; for thou, Lord, art enough for all; even as none hath the less of the sunlight for my enjoying it. The least well-grounded hope of thy love is better than all the pleasures of the flesh; but without some pleasant sense of it, alas! what a withered, languishing thing is a soul! Thy loving-kindness is better than life; but if I taste it not, how shall I here rejoice in God, or bear my heavy burdens?

O, let me not be a dishonour to thy family, where all have so great cause to honour thy bounty by their joy and hopes; nor, by a sad and fearful heart, tempt men to think that thy love is not real and satisfactory. I can easily believe and admire thy greatness, and thy knowledge. Let it not be so hard to me to believe and taste thy goodness and thy love, which is as necessary to me.

If there be any thing (as surely there is) in which the divine nature and spirit of adoption consisteth, as above all the art and notions of religion, which are but like to other acquired knowledge, sure it must be this holy appetite and habitual inclination of the soul to God, by way of love, which is bred by an internal sense of his loveliness, and loving inclination to man; which differenceth a Christian from other men, as a child differs towards his father, from strangers, or from common neighbours. Till the love of God be the very state and nature of the soul, (working here towards his honour, interests, word, and servants,) no man can say that he is God's habitation by the Spirit; and how the heart will ever be thus habited, without believing God's love to us, it is hard to conceive.

Experience tells the world how strongly it constraineth persons to love one another, if they do but think that they are strongly beloved by one another. In the love that tends to marriage, if one that is inferior do but know that a person of far greater worth doth fervently love them, it almost puts a necessity and constraint on them for returns of love: nature can scarce choose but love in such a case. Love is the loadstone of love. A real taste of the love of God in saving souls by Christ and grace, is it that constraineth them to be holy; that is, to be devoted to that God in love.

III. But this must as necessarily be the work of the Holy Ghost, and can be no more done without him than the earth can be illuminated, and the vegetables live, without the sun. But all the approaches of the Holy Spirit suffice not to produce this great effect, and give us the divine, holy nature.

The same sunshine hath three different effects on its objects.

1. On most things, as houses, stones, earth, it causeth nothing but accidents of heat, colour, and motion.

2. On some things it causeth a seminal disposition to vegetable life, but not life itself.

3. In this disposed matter it causeth vegetable life itself.

So doth the Spirit of God, 1. operate on millions but lifeless accidents, as the sun on a stone wall. 2. On others dispose and prepare them to divine life. 3. On others so disposed it effecteth the divine life itself, when holy love is turned into a habit like to nature.

That none but the Holy Ghost doth make this holy change is evident; for the effect cannot transcend the causes. 1. Nature alone is dark, and knoweth not the attractive amiableness

of God, till illuminated ; nor can give us a satisfactory notice of God's special love to us.

2. Nature is guilty, and guilt breedeth fears of justice, and fear makes us become wild, and fly from God, lest he should hurt us.

3. Nature is under penal sufferings already; and feeleth pain, fear, and many hurts, and foreseeth death; and under this is undisposed of itself, to feel the pleasure of God's love.

4. Nature is corrupted and diverted to creature vanity, and its appetite goeth another way, and cannot cure itself, and make itself suitable to the amiableness of God.

5. God hateth wickedness, and wicked men; and mere nature cannot secure us that we are saved from that enmity.

Diligence may do much to get religious knowledge, and words, and all that which I call the art of religion; and God may bless this as a preparation to holy life and love. But till the soul's appetite incline, with desire, to God and holiness, divine things will not sweetly relish.

And this is a great comfort to the thoughts of the sanctified, that certainly their holy appetite, desire, and complacency, is the work of the Holy Ghost. For, 1. this secureth them of the love of God, of which it is the proper token. 2. And it assureth them of their union with Christ, when they live because he liveth, even by the Spirit, which is his seal and pledge. 3. And it proveth both a future life and their title to it: for God maketh not all this preparation for it by his Spirit in vain.

But, alas! if it were not a work that hath great impediment, it would not be so rare in the world. What is it in us that keepeth the sun of love from so shining on us as to revive our souls into holy contentments, and delight?

It must be supposed, 1. that all God's gifts are free, and that he giveth not to all alike; the wonderful variety of creatures proveth this. 2. The reasons of his differencing works are his own will, and inferior reasons are mostly unknown to us, of which he is not bound to give us an account.

3. But yet we see that God doth his works in a casual order, and one work prepareth for another; and he maketh variety of capacities, which occasion variety of receptions and of gifts; and he useth to give every thing that to which he hath brought it into the next capacity and disposition.

And therefore, in general, we may conclude that we feel not

God's love shed abroad upon the heart, because the heart is undisposed, and is not in the next disposition thereto: and abused free-will hath been the cause of that. That we have grace, is to be ascribed to God: that we are without it, is to be ascribed to ourselves.

1. Heinous guilt of former sin may keep a soul much without the delights of divine love; and the heinousness is not only in the greatness of the evil done materially, but oft in our long and wilful committing of smaller sins, against knowledge, and conscience, and consideration. The Spirit thus grieved by hardened hearts, and wilful repulses, is not quickly and easily a Comforter to such a soul; and when the sinner doth repent, it leaveth him more in uncertainty of his sincerity when he thinks, 'I do but repent, purpose, and promise now; and so I oft did, and yet returned the next temptation to my sin: and how can I tell that my heart is not the same, and I should sin again if I had the same temptations.' O what doubts and perplexities doth oft wilful sinning prepare for!

2. And sins of omission have here a great part. The sweetness of God's love is a reward which slothful servants are unmeet for. It follows a "Well done, good and faithful servant." There is needful a close attendance upon God, and devotedness to him, and improvement of gospel grace, and revelation, to make a soul fit for amicable, sweet communion with God; all that will save a soul from hell will not do this.

He that will taste these divine love tokens must, 1. Be no stranger to holy meditation and prayer, nor unconstant, cold, and cursory in them: but must dwell and walk above with God. 2. And he must be wholly addicted to improve his Master's talents in the world, and make it his design and trade on earth to do all the good in the world he can; and to keep his soul clean from the flesh, and worldly vanity. And to such a soul God will make known his love.

3. And alas! how ordinarily doth some carnal affection corrupt the appetite of the soul; when we grow too much in love with men's esteem, or with earthly riches, or when our throats or fancies can master us into obedience, or vain desires of meat, drink, recreation, dwelling, &c., the soul loseth its appetite to things divine; and nothing relisheth where appetite is gone or sick. We cannot serve God and Mammon, and we cannot at once taste much pleasure both in God and Mammon. The old,

austere Christians found the mortification of the fleshly lusts a great advantage to the soul's delight in God.

4. And many errors about God's nature and works much hinder us from feasting on his love.

5. And especially the slight and ignorant thoughts of Christ, and the wondrous workings of God's love in him.

6. And especially if our belief itself once shake, or be not well and firmly founded.

7. And our slight thoughts of the office and work of the Holy Ghost on souls, and our necessity of it, and our not begging and waiting for the Spirit's special help.

8. And lastly, our unfaithful forgetfulness of manifold experiences and testimonies of his love, which should still be as fresh before us.

Alas! my soul, thou feelest thy defect, and knowest the hinderance, but what hope is there of remedy? Will God ever raise so low, so dull, so guilty a heart, to such a foretaste of glory, as is this effusion of his love by the Holy Ghost? The lightsome days in spring and summer, when the sun reviveth the late naked earth, and clothes it with delectable beauties, differs not more from night and winter, than a soul thus revived with the love of God doth differ from an unbelieving, formal soul.

Though this great change be above my power, the Spirit of God is not impotent, backward, barren, or inexorable. He hath appointed us means for so high a state; and he appointeth no means in vain. Were my own heart obedient to my commands, all these following I would lay upon it; yea, I will do it, and beg the help of God.

I. I charge thee, think not of God's goodness and love, as unproportionable to his greatness and his knowledge; nor overlook, in the whole frame of heaven and earth, the manifestation of one any more than of the other.

II. Therefore let not the wickedness and misery of the world tempt thee to think basely of all God's mercies to the world; nor the peculiar privileges of the churches draw thee to deny or contemn God's common mercies unto all.

III. I charge thee to make the study of Christ, and the great work of man's redemption by him, thy chiefest learning, and most serious and constant work; and in that wonderful glass to see the face of divine love, and to hear what is said of it by the Son from heaven; and to come boldly, as reconciled to God by him.

IV. O see that thy repentance for former sins against knowledge, and conscience, and the motions of God's Spirit, be sound, and thoroughly lamented and abhorred, how small soever the matter was in itself; that so the doubt of thy sincerity keep not up doubts of God's acceptance.

V. Let thy dependence on the Holy Ghost, as given from Christ, be henceforth as serious and constant to thee as is the dependence of the eye on the light of the sun, and of natural life upon its heat and motion. Beg hard for the Holy Spirit, and gladly entertain it.

VI. Oh, never forget the many and great experiences thou hast had, these almost sixty years observed, of marvellous favour and providence of God, for soul and body, in every time, place, condition, relation, company, or change, thou hast been in! Lose not all these love tokens of thy Father, while thou art begging more.

VII. Hearken not too much to pained flesh, and look not too much into the grave; but look out at thy prison windows to the Jerusalem above, and the heavenly society that triumph in glory.

VIII. Let all thy sure notices of a future life, and of the communion we have here with those above, draw thee to think that the great number of holy souls that are gone before thee, must needs be better than they were here; and that they had the same mind, and heart, and way; the same Saviour, Sanctifier, and promise, that thou hast; and therefore they are as pledges of felicity to thee. Thou hast joyfully lived with many of them here; and is it not better to be with them there? It is only the state of glory foreseen by faith, which most fully showeth us the greatness of God's love.

IX. Exercise thyself in psalms of praise, and daily magnify the love of God, that the due mention of it may warm and raise thy love to him.

X. Receive all temptations against divine love with hatred and repulse; especially temptations to unbelief: and as thou wouldest abhor a temptation to murder, or perjury, or any other heinous sin, as much abhor all temptations which would hide God's goodness, or represent him to thee as an enemy, or unlovely.

Thus God hath set the glass before us, in which we may see his amiable face. But alas! souls in flesh are in great obscurity, and, conscious of their own weakness, are still distrustful of

themselves, and doubt of all their apprehensions, till overpowering objects and influences satisfy and fix them. For this my soul with daily longings doth seek to thee, my God and Father: O pardon the sin that forfeits grace: I am ready to say, 'Draw nearer to me;' but it is meet to say, 'Open thou my eyes and heart, and remove all impediments, and undisposedness, that I may believe, and feel how near thou art, and hast been to me, while I perceived it not.'

XIII. It is God's love shed abroad on the heart by the Holy Ghost, which must make us "rejoice in hope of the glory of God:" this will do it, and without this it will not be done.

This would turn the fears of death into joyful hopes of future life. If my God will thus warm my heart with his love, it will have these following effects in this matter.

I. Love longeth for union, or nearness, and fruition; and it would make my soul long after God in glorious presence.

II. This would make it much easier to me to believe that there is certainly a future blessed life for souls; while I even tasted how God loveth them. It is no hard thing to believe that the sun will give light and heat, and revive the frozen earth: nor that a father will show kindness to his son, or give him an inheritance. Why should it be hard to believe that God will glorify the souls whom he loveth, and that he will take them near himself; and that thus it shall be done to those whom he delights to honour?

III. This effusion of divine love would answer my doubts of the pardon of sin: I should not find it hard to believe that love itself, which hath given us a Saviour, will forgive a soul that truly repenteth, and hates his sin, and giveth up himself to Christ for justification. It is hard to believe that a tyrant will forgive, but not that a father will pardon a returning prodigal son.

IV. This effusion of divine love will answer my fears, which arise from mere weakness of grace and duty: indeed, it will give no other comfort to an unconverted soul, but that he may be accepted if he come to God by Christ, with true faith and repentance; and that this is possible. But it should be easy to believe, that a tender father will not kill or cast out a child for weakness, crying, or uncleanness: divine love will accept and cherish even weak faith, weak prayer, and weak obedience and patience, which are sincere.

V. This effused love would confute temptations that are

drawn from thy afflictions ; and make thee believe that they are not so bad as flesh representeth them : it would understand that every son that God loveth he chasteneth, that he may not be condemned with the world, and that he may be partaker of his holiness, and the end may be the quiet fruit of righteousness ; it would teach us to believe that God in very faithfulness doth afflict us ; and that it is a good sign that the God of Love intendeth a better life for his beloved, when he trieth them with so many tribulations here : and though Lazarus be not saved for his suffering, it signified that God, who loved him, had a life of comfort for him, when he had his evil things on earth. When pangs are greatest, the birth is nearest.

VI. Were love thus shed on the heart by the Holy Ghost, it would give me a livelier apprehension of the state of blessedness which all the faithful now enjoy : I should delightfully think of them as living in the joyful love of God, and ever fully replenished therewith. It pleaseth us to see the earth flourish in the spring ; and to see how pleasantly the lambs, and other young things, will skip and play : much more to see societies of holy Christians loving each other, and provoking one another to delight in God. O then what a pleasant thought should it be, to think how all our deceased, godly friends, and all that have so died since the creation, are now together in a world of divine, perfect love ! How they are all continually wrapped up in the love of God, and live in the delight of perfect love to one another !

O my soul, when thou art with them, thou wilt dwell in love, and feast on love, and rest in love ; for thou wilt more fully dwell in God, and God in thee : and thou wilt dwell with none but perfect lovers : they would not silence thee from praising God in their assembly : tyrants, malignants, and persecutors, are more strange there (or far from thence) than toads, and snakes, and crocodiles, are from the bed or bedchamber of the king. Love is the air, the region, the world, they live in : love is their nature, their pulse, their breath, their constitution, their complexion, and their work : it is their life, and even themselves and all. Full loth would one of those spirits be to dwell again among blind Sodomites, and mad, self-damning malignants upon earth.

VII. Yea, this effused love will teach us to gather the glory of the blessed from the common mercies of this life : doth God give his distracted, malignant enemies, health, wealth, plenty

pleasure, yea, lordships, dominions, crowns, and kingdoms ; and hath he not much better for beloved holy souls ?

Yea, doth he give the brutes life, sense, delight, and beauty ; and hath he not better things for men ; for saints ?

There are some so blind as to think that man shall have no better hereafter, because brutes have not, but perish. But they know not how erroneously they think. The sensible souls of brutes are substance, and therefore are not annihilated at death : but God put them under us, and made them for us, and us more nearly for himself. Brutes have not faculties to know and love God, to meditate on him, or praise him, or, by moral agency, to obey his precepts : they desire not any higher felicity than they have : God will have us use their service, yea, their lives and flesh, to tell us they were made for us. He tells us not what he doth with them after death : but whatever it is, it is not annihilation, and it is like they are in a state still of service unto man : whether united, or how individuate, we know not : nor yet whether those philosophers are in the right, that think that this earth is but a small image of the vast superior regions, where there are kingdoms answerable to these here, where the spirits of brutes are in the like subjection in ærial bodies, to those low, rational spirits that inhabit the ærial regions, as in flesh they were to man in flesh. But it is enough for us that God hath given us faculties to know, love, praise, and obey him, and trust him for glory, which he never gave to them, because they were not made for things so high. Every creature's faculties are suited to their use and ends.

And love tells me, that the blessed God, who giveth to brutes that life, health, and pleasure, which they are made and fitted for, will give his servants that heavenly delight in the fulness of his love and praise, and mutual, joyful love to one another, which nature fundamentally, and grace more immediately, hath made them fit for.

Blessed Jehovah ! for what tastes of this effused love thou hast given me, my soul doth bless thee, with some degree of gratitude and joy : and for those further measures which I want, and long for, and which my pained, languid state much needs, and would raise my joyful hopes of glory, I wait, I beg, from day to day. O give me now, at the door of heaven, some fuller taste of the heavenly felicity : shed more abroad upon my heart, by the Holy Ghost, that love of thine, which will draw up my longing soul to thee, rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God.