

OF BENEFITS AT THE RESURRECTION.

HEB. XI. 35.—*That they might obtain a better resurrection.*

IN this chapter the apostle brings in a cloud of witnesses to the truth and excellency of religion, and the power of faith, shewing the great things faith can do, and also can suffer. In this verse we have an instance of each kind. (1.) Faith got back the dead, in the case of Elijah and the widow of Serapta's dead son, 1 Kings xvii. 22, 23. and of Elisha and the Shunamite's son, 2 Kings iv. 35, 36. Herein the faith of the prophets, and the faith of the women too, was active, though the former was more strong than the latter. (2.) Faith made constant martyrs, helped them to bear most cruel tortures even to death, refusing deliverance on sinful terms; which seems to respect the martyrs of the Jewish church under Antiochus Epiphanes. What carried them up was the faith of a better resurrection. Hence two things they had the faith of.

2. Of a resurrection, that there would be a resurrection of the body; that they and their enemies, and all mankind, after death, would rise again.

2. Of a resurrection for themselves, better than that deliverance from death which their enemies offered them.—They saw by an eye of faith a glorious resurrection abiding them and all the people of God, attended with so many glorious benefits as might counterbalance their heaviest sufferings.

The text affords this doctrine, viz.

Doct. 'Believers shall obtain a resurrection from the dead, attended with such glorious benefits, as the faith of the same may animate them to endure the most cruel sufferings for Christ.'

Here I shall,

I. Touch a little on the doctrine of the resurrection in general.

II. Consider the resurrection of believers, that better and glorious resurrection.

III. Apply.

I. I shall touch a little on the doctrine of the resurrection in general. And I shall shew,

1. That there shall be a resurrection of the dead.
2. Who shall be raised.
3. What shall be raised.
4. The Author of the resurrection.

First, I am to shew, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead. This is a fundamental article of the Christian faith, the denying

of which is subversive of the foundation of Christianity, 1 Cor. xv. 13, 14. 'But if there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain.' It is a point of faith which we owe to revelation, that reason must assent to as highly reasonable when proposed, Acts xxvi. 3. Two things are the causes of men's disbelieving it, ignorance of the scriptures, and the power of God, Matt. xxii. 29. Accordingly there are two things that will clear it.

1. God is able to raise the dead; the resurrection is within the compass of the almighty arm. Man dying, his soul does not die; and though his body be dissolved, it is not reduced to nothing; if it were, God could make it over again. But the particles which make up the body do remain. And,

(1.) Omniscience knows what they are, and where they are. If the dust of a thousand generations were jumbled together, Omniscience can separate them. An expert gardener having a hundred different seeds in his hand, can distinguish betwixt seed and seed; and why not an omniscient God betwixt dust and dust?

(2.) Infinite power can join them altogether which belong to one man's body, and so make it up what it was, and join the soul again to the body raised up, Luke i. 37. He made the world of nothing, and he can reform man's body of pre-existent matter. As the watchmaker takes down the watch, and sets every piece in its proper place, so can God man's body.

3. God has positively told us, that he will do it, John v. 28, 29. vii. 39.

Secondly, I proceed to shew, who shall be raised. Here two things are to be observed.

1. Those who shall be alive at the coming of Christ, as they shall not die, so they cannot rise from the dead. They shall undergo a sudden change, whereby the qualities of their bodies shall be altered, so as it shall be to them instead of death and resurrection, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52.

2. All that ever had life and died, men and women, old and young, godly and ungodly, shall rise again, Acts xxiv. 15; Rev. xx. 12. If they once had a soul united to their body, though the belly was their grave, they shall partake of this resurrection. The sea and the earth are God's stewards, which shall then be called to give back what they got a-keeping.

Thirdly, I shall shew, what shall be raised. The self-same bodies for substance that died, shall be raised again, though with very different qualities; yet it shall be the very same body that was laid in the grave, and not another. For,

1. The scripture is very plain for this. It is 'this corruptible *that* puts on incorruption, and this mortal *that* puts on immortality,' Cor. xv. 53. 'Though after my skin (says Job), worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God,' Job xix. 26.

2. The equity of the Judge requires it. An equitable judge does not suffer one to fight and another to get the reward; and therefore he will make those bodies which are the temples of grace, the temples of glory. Nay, they are Christ's members, and so cannot perish. Neither can it be that one body sin, and another suffer in hell.

3. The nature of resurrection requires it; for that would not be a rising again, but a new creation. Death is sleep to the godly, the resurrection an awaking, a change of the vile body, Phil. iii. 21.

Fourthly, I come now to shew, who is the author of the resurrection. It is the work of God alone, and above the power of any creature whatsoever. It is one of those works that are common to the Trinity. To the Father, 1 Cor. vi. 14. 'God hath both raised up the Lord, and will also raise up us by his own power;' The Son, John v. 28. 'The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his [*Christ's*] voice.' The Holy Spirit, Rom. viii. 11. 'If the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead, dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead, shall also quicken your mortal bodies, by his Spirit that dwelleth in you.'

II. The second general head is, to consider the resurrection of believers, that better and glorious resurrection. And this I shall do, 1. In itself. 2. In its consequents.

FIRST, I shall consider the resurrection of believers in itself, and here I shall shew,

1. Some things that ensure the blessed resurrection of believers.
2. How they shall be raised.
3. In what case they shall rise.
4. The particular qualities of their bodies at the resurrection.

First, I shall take notice of some things that ensure the blessed resurrection of believers.

1. God's covenant with believers, which is with their whole man, comprehending their bodies as well as their souls, which by virtue thereof are temples of the Holy Ghost, Matth. xxii. 32. 'God is not the God of the dead but of the living.'

2. The end of Christ's death, which was to destroy death, Hos. xiii. 14. 'O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction.' How else would be accomplished his swallowing up death in victory, if death kept those that are his for ever? No; this is the last enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 25, 26. And when the resurrection comes, and not till then, will that victory be complete, ver. 54.

3. The resurrection of Christ. He was the first-fruits from death. his people the harvest that must follow, 1 Cor. xv. 22, 23. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits, afterward they that are Christ's at his coming.' He rose as a public person, and so has got up above death in their name, Eph. ii. 6. 'Hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'

4. Their union with Christ, Rom. viii. 11. forecited. He has redeemed their bodies as well as their souls, and therefore they expect the redemption of their bodies, Rom. viii. 23; and has united them to himself, Eph. v. 30. Now, since the head liveth, the members shall live too; as when the head gets above the waters, the members follow.

Secondly, I am to shew, how believers shall be raised. The wicked shall be raised by the power of Christ as a just Judge. The divine power that shut them up in the grave as in a prison, will bring them out, in order to their receiving the last sentence, to enter into the prison of hell.

But the godly shall be raised by virtue of the Spirit of Christ, that bond of union betwixt Christ and those blessed bodies; so that it shall be to them as a pleasant awakening out of sleep. As an awakening man draws his limbs to him, so will their raised head draw them to him out of their graves, Rom. viii. 11.

Thirdly, I shall shew, in what case they shall rise.

2. Happily, as rising to life, eternal life, when others rise to their eternal ruin, Dan. xii. 2. That will be the happiest day that ever their eyes saw. The day of their death was better than that of their birth; but they of their resurrection will be the best of all.

2. Joyfully, Isa. xxvi. 19. 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust.' That is the way wherein Christ's bride rises out of her bed for the marriage. Jonah had a joyful outgoing from the whale's belly, Daniel out of the den, and Pharaoh's butler out of the prison: but what are all these to the joys at the resurrection of believers? Their doubts and fears died, and lay down with them, but they shall not rise with them. When the soul comes out of heaven, and the body out of the grave, what a joyful meeting will there be of the blessed couple!

3. Gloriously, being made like unto Christ's glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. However mean they were while in the world, or ignominiously treated in life or in death, they shall have a glorious resurrection.

Fourthly, I shall shew, what shall be the particular qualities of

the bodies of believers at the resurrection. The bodies of the saints shall be raised.

1. *Incorruptible*, 1 Cor. xv. 42. Now the members of their living bodies, are liable to corruption, when they die all putrefying together; but then they will never more be liable to putrefaction; never more liable to sickness, death, nor the least pain, to wearing or wearying. There will then be no outward violence, no inward cause of uneasiness.

2. *Glorious*, ver. 43. The most hard favoured saint will outstrip the now greatest beauty. The seat of that beauty will not be the face but the whole body, Matt. xiii. 43. There shall be no defects nor deformities in those bodies; Isaac shall no more be blind, nor Jacob halt; Leah shall not be tender eyed, nor Mephibosheth lame of his legs.

As the artificer melts down the misshapen vessel, and casts it over again in a new mould; so doth the Lord with the bodies of the saints.

3. *Powerful and strong*, ib. There will be no more feebleness and weakness. The weak shall be as David, and the house of David, shall be as God. They shall be able to bear out in continual exercise without wearying, and to bear the weight of glory, for which the flesh and blood of a giant would now be too weak.

4. *Lastly, Spiritual*, ver. 44. That is, like spirits. (1.) In that they shall need none of the now necessary supplies of nature, meat, drink, &c, Matt. xxii. 30. full without meat warm without cloaths, healthful without physic. (2.) Active and nimble like spirits. So they shall meet the Lord in the air, and like so many eagles gather together, where the carcase is.

Inf. 1. Fearful will the doom of persecutors be. (2.) The saints may be encouragad to suffer for Christ. (3.) Faith and holiness is the best way to beauty. (4.) Let this allay the believer's fear of death, Gen. xlvi. 3, 4. (5.) Let this comfort him against sickliness of body; (6.) and under the death of godly relations. (7.) Rise from sin, and glorify God with your bodies and souls.

SECONDLY, We are now to consider that better resurrection in the consequents thereof, or what shall follow thereupon, the which the martyrs in this case had in their view.

Here I shall shew,

1. The consequents thereof before the judgment.
2. At the judgment.
3. After the judgment.

First, I shall shew the consequents of this better resurrection before the judgment. There are two benefits which believers have

from Christ betwixt the resurrection and the judgment. We left them raised up out of their graves in glory. Now,

1. They shall be gathered together from all corners of the earth by the ministry of angels, Mat. xxiv. 31. By the glorious gospel having its efficacy on them, they were separated from the world in respect of their state and manner of life, but still abode among them as to their bodily presence, and some of them at a great distance from the rest: but then they shall not only be visibly distinguished from the reprobate by the shining glory upon them, while the faces of the rest are covered with blackness; but these fair ones shall all be gathered into one glorious company, out from among the wicked, by the ministry of the holy angels, Matth. xiii. 48, 49.

2. While the wicked are left on the earth, they shall be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, 1 Thess. iv. 17. Those who are found alive, and those who are raised out of their graves, shall ascend in one glorious body; by what means, the Lord himself knows; but he who made Peter walk on the water, can cause them make their way like eagles through the air. And they shall meet the Lord there to welcome him at his second coming, while others shall be filled with dread of the Judge and also to attend him for his honour, as the angels also do.

Who can sufficiently conceive the glory of these benefits, by which their happiness is so far carried on?

Secondly. We shall view the consequents of this resurrection at the judgment.

The throne being erected, and the glorious man, Christ, the Judge of the world, being set down upon it, and the parties sisted before him to be judged, the wicked as well as the godly.

1. The glorious company of believers, being separated from the black howling company of the wicked in that day, shall be set on the right hand of the Judge, while the wicked shall be set on his left hand, Matt. xxv, 32, 33. They shall then have the most honourable place; and then will there be a mighty turn; many of the right hand-men of the world will get the left hand, and contrariwise.

2. They shall be openly acknowledged by Jesus Christ, their Lord and Judge, Mat. x. 39. Consider,

1st, What it is for Christ to acknowledge them. It is to own them for his own, to acknowledge the relations they stand in to him, Mal. iii. 17. 'They shall be mine,' i. e. owned to be so. To the wicked he will say, he 'knows them not:' he will reject all their pretensions to him: but as for believers, he will own and acknowledge them in all the relations wherewith faith invested them; he

will acknowledge the fair company for his contracted spouse, his children, his members, even them, and every one of them.

2dly, How he will acknowledge them then. He will do it openly, most publicly and openly. Consider here,

(1.) Our Lord Jesus acknowledges all that are his, even now in this life, not only in his own breast, by looking on them as his; but before his Father, in whose presence he appears making intercession for them as his own, John xvii. 9, 10. He does it also by the testimony of his Spirit to their sonship, Rom. viii. 16; by the seal of his own image set upon them, and by many signal appearances of his providence for them.

(2.) He will then acknowledge them in a quite other and open manner, before many witnesses, so as men and devils shall be obliged to understand, that these are they whom the King on the throne delights to honour. He will do it before his Father, and the angels of heaven, Rev. iii. 5. in effect saying to his Father, 'Behold me, and the children thou hast given me.' He will acknowledge them in their own hearing, and the hearing of all the world, Matth xxv. 34.

3. They shall be openly acquitted by the Lord in that day, by the sentence solemnly passed in their favour, whereby also they are adjudged to life, Matth. xxv. 34. 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' Consider here,

1st. What they shall be acquitted from. They shall be acquitted from all the guilt of all their sins, and for ever discharged from all punishment for them, Acts iii. 19. The mouths of all accusers shall be finally stopt, and the white stone shall then be given in a way of eminency.

2dly, Are they not acquitted now? Yes, they are in the first moment of believing acquitted of the guilt of eternal wrath for ever, Rom. viii. 1; and on their fresh application to the blood of Christ for their after sins, they likewise are blotted out, 'Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.' And at death they get their acquittance too, Heb. ix. 27. Yet at the general judgment they are acquitted likewise.

3dly, Wherein doth their acquittance now and at that day agree and differ.

(1.) They agree, [1.] In the substance of the acquittance, which is the same now and hereafter, from the guilt of sin, and punishment thereof. [2.] In the ground of it: it proceeds in both upon the merits of Christ, Eph. i. 7. and not on works, which are brought in at the last day as evidences of their faith, not as causes of their justification.

(2.) They differ, [1.] In respect of openness. Now they are acquitted in the world, Rom. viii. 1. where yet they have much ado to read it sometimes; in their own consciences, 1 John iii. 21. which they themselves only can understand; but then from the throne, in the presence of angels and men. [2.] In respect of assurance and comfort. Of the former a believer may doubt, but not of the latter. [3.] In respect of fulness. In the last day they are acquitted from all effects of sin whatsoever, their bodies being, never to die more: and joined to their souls, never to be separated more; but not so in the former.

4thly, Why shall they be openly acknowledged and acquitted at the last day? He will do it,

(2.) To wipe off, with his own fair hand, all the foul aspersions which the hypocrites and profane did cast upon them in this world, Isa. lxvi. 5. Many a time the Lord's dearest children are made to lie among the pots, blackened with ill names, reproaches, &c. But then they shall be 'like doves whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold.'

(2.) To give them a reward of grace, for their confessing him before the world, cleaving to his truths and ways, in the midst of an adulterous generation, and their not denying him on whatever temptations, Matth. x. 32. 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.' Compare 2 Tim. ii. 12, 'If we deny him, he will also deny us.' The prospect of this made the martyrs cleave to him in the face of cruel deaths.

(3.) To seal the end of all their own doubts, jealousies, and fears, 1 Cor. iv. 4. Many a time it is a question with the believer, whether he belongs to Christ or not: even when he has in all sincerity embraced the covenant, yet these like so many ghosts haunt him. No doubt by that time they will all be gone, but by this acknowledgement their departure will be sealed.

(4.) For the increase of their joy, and the shame of their enemies, Isa. lxvi. v.

4. They shall be adjudged to everlasting life, and solemnly invited to enter into possession of the kingdom, Matth. xxv. 34. 'Come ye,' &c. in which every word has a weight of glory.

5. *Lastly*, They being themselves absolved, shall be honoured to be Christ's assessors in judging the wicked, 1 Cor. vi. 1. 'Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world?' They shall judge them by way of communion with Christ their head, this work being a part of the Mediator's honour redounding to all his members: By way of approbation of the Judge's sentence against them, saying

Amen to the doom of the wicked, even the godly parent to that of the wicked child, the holy husband to that of the unholy wife, &c. Rev. xix. 1, 3. See Rev. iii. 21.

Thirdly, We shall consider the consequents of the resurrection after the judgment. Believers shall be made perfectly blessed in the full enjoyment of God to all eternity. Here I shall shew,

1. Wherein perfect blessedness lies.

2. What shall make believers perfectly blessed.

1. I am to shew wherein perfect blessedness lies. It lies in two things.

1st, Perfect freedom from all evil whatsoever, whether of sin or misery. Thus blessed shall believers be then, perfectly free from sin, Eph. v. 27. and free from suffering any manner of way, Rev. xxi. 4.

2dly, Full satisfaction to all the desires of the soul, Phil. xvi. 11. Their desires shall be fully satisfied; they shall have that beyond which they can crave no more. For where there is any want, there can be no perfect blessedness.

2. I am to shew what shall make them thus perfectly blessed. It is the enjoyment of God. They shall have his glorious presence with them, Rev. xxi. 3. They shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2. the man Christ with their bodily eyes, and the invisible God with the eyes of their minds, called the beatific vision, the most perfect knowledge of God which the creature is capable of. They shall be knit to him gloriously, Rev. xxi. 3. just quoted. Love then will be at its height. And they shall enjoy him to their full happiness.

(1.) Immediately; not in the use of means and ordinances, but there they sit down at the fountain-head, Rev. xxi. 22.

(2.) Fully; God will with-hold nothing of himself from them: they shall be stinted to no measure but what their own capacity makes; and in him they shall have what will satisfy all their desires.

3. *Lastly*, Eternally, 1 Thess. iv. 17. 'So shall we ever be with the Lord.'

I conclude this subject with a few inferences.

Inf. 1. Come out now from among the wicked world. A separation there will be betwixt the godly and the wicked. If it be in your favour, it will begin now. Leave them now, if ye would not be left with them after the resurrection.

2. Beware of rash judging those that have any lineaments of Christ's image upon them. Ye may judge and condemn the evil actions of the best of men, if ye be sure from the word that they are evil. But, O my soul! enter not into the secret of those who pre-

sumptuously take upon them to judge men's state, hearts, and consciences, upon slips of human infirmity and weakness.

3. Let none be ashamed to own Christ and his truths and ways before the world, remembering that the day cometh in which he will confess those that confess him, and deny those that deny him.

4. Though the day of judgment be an awful thought, it will be a happy day to believers, as they will then be for ever delivered from all moral and penal evils, and admitted into the greatest felicity in the enjoyment of their God and Redeemer for ever.

5. That there is no true happiness till we come to the enjoyment of God, nor full happiness till we arrive at the full enjoyment of him.

6. *Lastly*, Miserable is now, and at the resurrection will be, the state of the wicked, where the reverse of all the happiness of the saints will be found, and that in the most dreadful manner. Let us then all seek to be found among those who shall be partakers of the better and glorious resurrection.



OF THE DUTY WHICH GOD REQUIRETH OF MAN.

1 SAM. XV. 22.—*And Samuel said, Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?*

THIS text is a reproof given to one that wore a crown, teaching him, that though he was Israel's sovereign, he was God's subject. Saul had been sent, by God's express command, on an expedition against the Amalekites, with a solemn charge utterly to 'destroy all that they had, and spare them not; but to slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass,' ver. 3. The expedition was crowned with success. Saul having destroyed all the people, took Agag their king prisoner, and saved the best of the cattle; and when quarrelled by Samuel for this his partial obedience to the heavenly mandate, he pretended that the people had spared the sheep and oxen, which had been devoted to destruction as well as the people, to sacrifice unto the Lord in Gilgal. The words of the text contain Samuel's answer to this silly apology: *Hath the Lord* (says he) *as great delight in burnt-offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord?* importing, that obedience to the voice and will of God is more acceptable to him than all the sacrifices in the world.

In the words we may notice,