

Forenoon Sermons, Ettrick, Feb. 13, 1715.

RATIONAL EVIDENCES FOR HEAVEN, ILLUSTRATED.

SERMON III.

2 CORINTHIANS V. 1.

For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THE breach which the Lord made amongst us so suddenly last Sabbath, is a loud call to us all to be making ready, and to be always ready for another world.* We all know that we must die: none of us know how, or when. Let us then be sparing of our judgment, and take the lesson to ourselves. Luke xiii. 1—5.

To pursue this providential call, with the call of the word, I have chosen this text. That persons may go to heaven without clear evidence for heaven, I doubt not. But it has often been a very serious consideration to me, to think, that although there are very few people with whom we can meet on a death bed but have hopes of heaven; yet there are so very few that can give any rational scriptural grounds and evidences of their hope. This determined me some time ago, to urge the seeking of evidences, that whatever God in holy sovereignty may do, yet people may not through mere sloth and laziness, make but a leap in the dark into eternity, if they will be warned.

In the words of the text there are three things.

1. Something supposed. Two things are here supposed.

1. That the body will die and return to the dust. *If our earthly house* of this tabernacle were dissolved. This, if, is not for doubting, but supposes it beyond all doubt. Consider what the body is. It is but a house. And observe who is the inhabitant of this house. It is the soul. The body is *our house*. The soul is the man, and is as much preferable to the body, as the inhabitant is to the cottage in which he dwells. Observe also what kind of a house it is. It is an *earthly house*. A mud wall house patched up of earth. A house merely for the short time we are to be on earth. Nay, it is rather a tabernacle or a tent. It is the tent in which the soul dwells or sojourns, as persons do in a tent. Paul was a tent maker, and he

* A healthy old man fell down dead, a little way from the church. See the Author's memoirs, at the above date.

takes a lesson of his frailty from what used to be among his hands. A house may be weak, but a tent is still weaker.

Consider also what death is. It is a dissolving of the tent, a loosing of the frame of it, and then it falls down. Our bodies are not castles and towers that must be blown up, or battered down by main force: not even ordinary houses that must be pulled down with strength of hand. But tents, where there is nothing more to do but to loose the cords, and pull up the pins, and immediately it lies along.

2. It is supposed that the saints when they die, make an exchange much for the better. When they are turned out of this earthly house they are received into a "building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." Some by this understand the glorified condition of the body, when it shall be spiritual, immortal, and incorruptible. But that cannot be, for that does not take place till the resurrection. This immediately after death, Verse 8, "We are confident, says the apostle, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." It is meant of the glorious state of the saints in another life, even of that glory in which the souls of believers shall dwell, when they depart out of this tabernacle.

3. We have in the text a confident application of this blessed privilege of having a building of God. It is applied with the greatest assurance by the apostle in his own name, and in the name of other saints that walked in the view of heaven. *We know that we have.* Not so much by extraordinary revelation, as by certain signs, and evidences grounded upon the testimony of the word without us, and of our own spirits and God's Spirit within us. For whatever the apostle himself enjoyed of revelation was not common to the saints as this is.

4. There is the blessed influence this had on their suffering patiently intimated in the particle. *For we know.* They bore sufferings *without fainting*, chap. iv. 16. Because they had the glory of heaven in their view. And they knew assuredly, that they would attain it after death. Therefore they were not afraid of suffering.

Doctrine I.—The body is only the house of the soul, and but an earthly house too. As a man lodgeth in his house, so does the soul in the body till death come, and it departs from it. I shall here shew,

I. What kind of a house the body is to the soul.

II. I shall take notice of some of the peculiarities of this house.

I. We are to shew what kind of a house the body is to the soul.

1. It is only a lodging house. The soul is not sent to dwell in it,

but to sojourn and lodge in it, while on the way to another world. "We are strangers and sojourners, as all our fathers were." The body is our lodging house. Heaven or hell is our dwelling house, where we will abide for ever.

2. It is a weak house. The soul in the body is not lodged as in a tower or castle. It is not a fort, but a weak house that is broken soon up by disease and soon broken down by death. The strongest body is such. For the walls are but of mud, a house of clay, Job iv. 19. and cannot stand long nor abide a severe shock.

Let none deceive themselves with respect to their strength. There are no stones in the walls of this house; no brass nor iron in it. It must needs then be a weak house. "Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh brass?" No, only mud refined and tempered by the Creator's hand, but now disordered by sin. We may indeed be fine, but must be weak.

The foundation of it is in the dust. Job iv. 19. Were a house of clay built upon a rock it might stand long. But founded on dust, it must quickly sink with its weight. Man is maintained out of the earth. Some have a greater heap of dust to stand upon than others, but still the earth supports us, and will swallow us up.

The pillars of the house are ready to give way very quickly. The strong men, the legs, bow themselves. Eccles. xii. 3. A day's sickness or two will make them not able to bear up the weight of the house. So the man must lie because he cannot stand. The keepers of the house are but weak. A little thing will set them a trembling.

3. It is a house that is daily in danger. Though a house were very weak, yet if nothing were to touch it, it might stand a long time. But our house is in danger daily and hourly. It is in danger from without. There are storms to blow it down, and a very small blast will sometimes do it. Though we walk not among swords, daggers, and bullets, yet a stumble in the highway may do it; as small a thing as a pear, yea a stone in fruit, has laid the house on the ground. It is in danger also from within. There are disorders to undermine the house. There are the seeds of a thousand deaths in our mortal bodies; which sometimes quickly, sometimes leisurely undermine the house, and make it fall down about our ears ere ever we are aware. The seeds of diseases, when we know not, are digging like moles under the mud walls, and soon destroy the house.

Moreover it is a dark house in which often the danger is never seen till it be past remedy. How many dangers come to the house from without which are never seen from the windows, nor perceived by the eyes till they arrive. But we cannot see what is doing within the house, the dissolution thereof may be going on apace.

II. But it may not be improper to take notice of some of the peculiarities of this house.

1. It is a curious house of brittle materials. "My substance was not hid from thee when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." The body of man is a stupendous piece of workmanship, of admirable curiosity. "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made." The very outworks of the house are admirable. Are there any so dull as not to observe the wisdom of God in that beauty and majesty that are in the face of man, beyond that of other creatures, in the faculty of speech, and in the admirable diversity of features and voices. How God has put the eyes and the ears in the head as in their watch tower; that they may the better serve for seeing and hearing. How the eyes are made rolling, that in a moment they can turn up or down, to one side or to another; covered with lids that we can shut or open as need requires. The ears always open, the tongue shut in with double leaved gates. Two arms to defend ourselves. These are the guardians of the house. Hands distinguished into so many fingers, for the more exquisite kinds of work. Nay, there is not a hair, nor nail in the body, but has its use. The hair on the eye lids to defend the eyes; the nails on our fingers are necessary for the more dexterous handling of any thing. What then must be the curiosity within. Galen admired the wisdom of the Creator in the thigh of a gnat. How much more is this wisdom, to be admired in the structure of the human body, in which there is nothing lacking, nothing superfluous.

But now the more curious, the more easily marred. The greatest beauty is soonest tarnished. The finer the earthen vessel is, it is the more easily broken. So we are exposed to the greatest danger by a small touch.

2. It is a house that needs reparation daily. A good, well built house will need nothing for many years. Your meanest houses once right, need nothing for a year. But this earthly house needs reparation daily. It is reckoned by some that as much matter goes out of our bodies by insensible perspiration, as by the other natural evacuations. Thus a large proportion of our nourishment, perhaps five eighths, goes out by the pores. Thus our bodies are in a continual flux, wasting like the oil of a lamp; so that in this sense we are dying daily. Hence eating and drinking are necessary, the house must be patched up with more mud daily. And some are so taken up with repairing the body, that all the day they do nothing else.

Uses from this Doctrine.

1. Prize your souls above your bodies, as you do the inhabitant above the house. O what madness is it in the hearts of men, who care for the body neglecting the soul. Will you be still looking after the house, and never minding the never dying inhabitant the soul? shall the soul be ruined, starved, and perish, while all the care is about the body.

2. Make not your body a war house against heaven. It is far too weak for that purpose. True, but many do it. While health and strength last, they securely fight against God, trample on his law, despise his Son, little minding how God may block them up in their house by disease, or pull down their house by death.

3. Be tender in the house. Though it is an earthly house it hath a heavenly inhabitant. Take care of the house for the sake of the soul. Such is the perverseness of man's nature, that many use their bodies worse than they do their beasts. Some will see well to their beasts that cannot bestow meat convenient on their own bodies; and work their bodies at a rate at which they would be sorry to work their beasts. The drunkard and the glutton treat their horses better than they treat their own bodies. They take care of their horses, but ruin their own bodies.

4. Never ruin the inhabitant for the house. Would you not think him mad that would strip himself naked to cover his house. Better surely that the house be uncovered than that the inhabitant be left naked. Yes, but this madness has seized the generality of the world. They will pamper their bodies while they will be cruel as the Ostrich to their souls. They will be all anxiety about food and raiment, who will take no more care about their souls than if they were but salt to keep their bodies from putrefaction. They will load their consciences with mountains of guilt, if by that means they can get a little more thick clay to the earthly house.

5. Beware of defiling the house, seeing it has such a noble lodger. "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy: for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Sin defiles the body. When the members of the body, which should be instruments of righteousness, are made instruments of sin; a covetous or wanton eye, a disorderly tongue, given to lying or swearing: hands and feet employed in mischief, make the body a foul lodging for the soul. And these will be stains, which, without repentance, will cleave to the body in the grave and at the resurrection.

6. Take heed to the door of the house. Set a watch, O Lord, be-

fore my mouth; keep the door of my lips. Let the door be duly shut and discreetly opened. Open your mouth with wisdom. When the door stands always open the dweller is in danger; and in the multitude of words there wanteth not folly. They can hardly speak well that speak much. Words, few, select, and seasoned with grace and sobriety are best both for soul and body. But the mouths of many are the dung-gate standing always open, that the devil may drive out at it the filth of the heart in lies, slanders, oaths, and impure language. But surely they will be silent in the grave.

7. Take heed to the windows of the house. The soul got its death wound at first by the window. "When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat." And Satan will still attack where he made the first breach. Therefore Job put the guard of a covenant upon them. I made, says he, a covenant with mine eyes. They are two little rolling members which a splinter of wood may close up altogether; but they are gates of destruction broad enough.

6. Dispatch your business with the stranger that is in the house, always going out and in, that you be not surprised with his departure, before you have done your business with him. I mean your breath. It is going continually out and in, to and from the door of your lips, and you know not what will be the last breath. But when once gone, no more business can be done for time or eternity. His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

Lastly, Provide in time for a better house. You must depart from this. Inquire, then, to what place you are going, for here you cannot stay long. And if you have not your lodging taken up in heaven, you will get a dungeon house for eternity, where the light is as darkness. Awake then, O sluggard, up and be doing. Mind the days of eternity for they shall be many.

Motives.—1. This house will tumble down about your ears, whatever you do to hold it up. Fix one foot then, before the other be loosed, lest you get such a fall as you will never rise again. This body is but a lodging house, it cannot stand very long. Look for another.

2. There are but two places, heaven and hell, in one of which you must dwell for ever. In heaven there are many mansions of glory, and yet there is room for you. In hell every person will get their own place of torment and misery unspeakable. The saints departed, are gone home to their mansions; the wicked departed, are gone to their place. We are upon the road. What way will you turn your

face? Take what way you please, you will soon be at the end of it.

3. You have no security of your house, you know not how soon you may be turned out of doors. Now for a house to the body, you will not readily want it; as much room as will serve you, you will certainly get in the grave, the house appointed for all living. That will be the body's long home. But where think you will be your eternal home? When the soul is turned out at death, to what place will it next go? I hope to heaven. Then what evidence have you from *this Bible* for that hope? I do not know. How comes that? Are you busy seeking evidences, but cannot come to light? May the Lord clear up your darkness! But I fear many know nothing about this work. You are careless whether you land in heaven or hell. You know not but you may be in hell the next moment. The brittle thread of life is not to be depended upon; therefore "whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might; for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest."

Doctrine II. Man's body is a Tabernacle, or Tent for his soul. Paul was a tent-maker, and he takes a lesson of his frailty from what was among his hands, teaching us to do the same. It is so called,

1. Because it is easily taken down. Whatever force may be necessary to pull down a house, it is easy to pull down a tent. There needs no more but to loose the cords, and pull out the pins, and the tent lies along. So easily is man's body taken down by death. Having its foundation in the dust, *it is crushed before the moth*. A very little thing indeed may rob man of his mortal life.

2. A Tent is a moveable house that stands not always in one place, but is carried from place to place. So while we are in the body, we are not come to the place of our rest, or settled habitation. Heaven ever moves, yet is it the place of our rest, earth ever stands still, yet it is not a place of rest. While we are in the body, our case is changeable, but when once out of it, is unalterable for ever, whether in happiness or misery.

3. Tents, though mean without, may be precious within. However mean outwardly the tabernacle of the body be, it has a precious soul within, of more worth than ten thousand worlds. It is a rich tent in that respect, because of the precious soul, redeemed by the precious blood of Christ, capable of enjoying God for ever.

4. Our state in the world in this body is like that of those who dwell in tents. Our body is as the shepherd's tent. Our souls are those we have to feed while we are in the body. And the shepherd's tent must not stand long in one place, but must soon be

removed. So must our bodies into the grave. The body is a soldier's tent. We are set down in the world, to fight the good fight of faith, and we must lay our account with hardships and of being conquerors, otherwise we will be surprized in our tents, and ruined. It is a pilgrim's tent. We are in our way to another world; and the lodging the soul has in the body, is but a lodging as in a tent by the way.

Uses of this Doctrine.

1. We need not wonder then at sudden death. It has often been seen that a tent has fallen down when not a hand touched it. It is a weak thing, but man's body is as weak before the king of terrors, that can dispatch it in a moment.

2. Let us lay our accounts with hardships while we are in the body. They that dwell in tents do not expect the ease and conveniences which a house affords. And why should we wonder at the troubles with which we meet while in the body. The ease is coming, if we come to the building of God. But, for a tent to be beaten black with wind and weather, nothing more common.

3. Let us confess we are pilgrims and strangers on earth, and live like those who are quickly to remove. Let us not expect to fix our dwelling here but prepare for our removal. We come into the world to go out again; and within a little our tent shall be removed and our place know us no more.

Lastly, Let us be preparing for a more excellent and abiding mansion. There is a city that is continuing, let us seek after it. A house of God's building, in which there are many mansions, let us be careful to secure our title to it. There is a kingdom that cannot be moved, let us run, as we may obtain that noble prize.

Doctrine III. The earthly house of the tabernacle of our body will be dissolved by death. That is what we look for, and we are provided for it if we have a building with God.

I. Here I shall shew in what respects death is a dissolution.

II. That this body shall be dissolved. I am then

I. To shew in what respects death is a dissolution.

1. Death dissolves the union betwixt soul and body. When it comes, the silver cord that unites the soul and body together is loosed. Eccl. xii. 6. No wonder it dissolve relations betwixt persons, when it dissolves that union. The man is made up of two parts, a soul and a body, united by an invisible bond; death looses the knot, and then the parts fall asunder. The earthly part goes to the earth, and the spiritual part to God that gave it, to be sent to its eternal home.

2. Death dissolves the body itself. It consists of many parts curiously set together by the Creator, but then the beautiful frame is dashed in pieces and is resolved into its primitive dust. The tabernacle then is taken down, the earthly house is demolished, and lies in rubbish till the resurrection.

Death dissolves the vital flame that kept the body in life. It quenches that flame and puts out that candle. Sometimes it dissolves it suddenly as a burning candle when it is blown out, sometimes it works it out by degrees, like a candle burnt to the socket, which is dissolved at length and vanisheth away.

Death dissolves the communion betwixt the parts of the body. The flame being extinguished, the communication betwixt the parts which ceased not for many years, is then broken up. No more blood flows from the heart, no more flows to it from the other parts, so the last pulse beats. No more spirits from the brain. Then all falls down together. Then the body grows cold, and stiff, and pale. The eyes see no more, and the ears hear no more.

Death dissolves the joints and bands with which the body was united. While it feeds on the carcase in the grave, it looses the head from the body and the skull lies by itself. Then the strongest arms fall from the shoulder blade; and then the joints of the thighs are loosed, and every bone lies by itself. Finally, the most minute particles of the body are separated. How soon are the flashes of flesh so dissolved and separated, that they are no more visible to the eye of him that looks into the grave, they cannot be discerned from common dust. And though the bones last longer, yet their solidity is not proof against the power of death, but they also moulder into dust at length. Let us now,

II. Shew that this body shall be dissolved.

1. There is an unalterable statute of death under which men are concluded. "It is appointed unto men once to die." There is no peradventure in it but *we must needs die*. Though some will not fear death, every man must see it. "What man is he that liveth and shall not see death? Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave?" Death is a champion, with whom all must grapple. An inexorable messenger, who cannot be diverted from executing his orders, by the power of the mighty.

2. Daily observation tells us we must die. "For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others." There is room enough for us, notwithstanding all the multitudes that were on earth before us. It is long since death began to transport men into another world. It is daily carrying away vast numbers, and none hear the grave say

it is enough. The world is like a great fair, some entering, others going away. Men, like travellers, enter at one port and go out by another.

3. All men consist of perishing materials. "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The strongest are but brittle earthen vessels. The soul is but meanly housed while in this body. A small spark falling on the train of these perishing principles will blow up the house. There is something more astonishing in our life than in our death. Diseases are death's harbingers.

4. We have sinful souls, therefore dying bodies. The wicked must die by virtue of the threatening. "For in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." The godly also must die, that as death entered by sin, so sin may go out by death. The leprosy is in the wall of the house, therefore it must be pulled down.

Finally, we are hasting to a dissolution. "Man cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down: he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not. Our days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle. They are passed as the swift ships, as the eagle that hasteth to the prey."

All the improvement I shall make of this, is to exhort you to prepare for your dissolution.

Motives—1. Your eternal state will be according to the state in which you die. Heaven and hell depend upon it. As to you, death will open the door of the one or the other. As the tree falls so it must lie.

2. Consider what it will be to go into another world, a world of spirits, with which we have very little acquaintance. How terrible is intercourse with spirits now to poor mortals. Acquaint thyself then, with the Lord of that other world.

3. It is but a short time which we have to prepare for death. Now or never. The work is great—and the time allowed for it is short.

4. Much of our short time is already past. None can say they have as much to come. Our life here is but a short preface to a long eternity.

5. The time we have is flying away. Time past has taken an eternal farewell. There is no rekindling of the candle that is burnt to ashes. The stream of time is the most rapid current.

Lastly, If once death carry us away there is no coming back to mend matters. "If a man die, shall he live again?" If death were a thing upon which we could be allowed to try our hand, it would not be so dangerous. But it is only once to die, right or wrong. "We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

By this building and house, we are to understand the glorified state of the saints after this life, that is, their heavenly house of God's own making not by the hands of men, but by the fingers of God.

Doctrine. When the tabernacle of the saint's body is dissolved by death, they have a house of glory in heaven ready for them. Man when he is dead, is not done; though the body dies, the soul doth not. Death is but a departure or change, to some it is a miserable, to others a happy change. So it is to the saints. Their souls depart from the earthly house, to a house of glory. I design not to handle at large this great subject, but only to glean a few things to shew what sort of a house the glory of heaven is.

1. It is a dwelling house, not an house in which to lodge, but to dwell and abide. "Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?" The body is but a tabernacle, in which the believing soul lodges for a little time, like a shepherd, a soldier, or a pilgrim in his tent. But at death the soul comes home to the house in which it shall abide for ever, and go no more out. The believer's dwelling house is in heaven.

2. It is a royal house, a palace. "They shall enter into the king's palace." Christ calls his saints to a kingdom, and their house is suitable to their dignity. It is the house of the kingdom, in which the great King keeps his court, in which he hath placed his throne, and displays his glory in a peculiar manner, beyond what mortals can conceive. No beggar's cottage is so far inferior to the best palace, as it is to the house to which the gracious soul goes at death, though it departs from the poorest cottage.

3. It is a holy house, a temple. "He that overcometh, will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out." The Jews reckon four or five things that were wanting in the second temple. In this nothing shall be wanting. In it they shall have the cloud of glory in the divine presence—Christ, the ark in which the fiery law is for ever hid—the mercy seat, from which nothing breathes but eternal peace—the Cherubim in the society of angels!—the golden candlestick with its seven lamps; "for the glory of God doth lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." The altar of incense, in the everlasting intercession of Christ,—and the table of shew bread, in the perpetual feast of the enjoyment of God.

If you ask where this house stands? I answer for the country, it is in a better country, *even a heavenly one*. Their house is in a better country than the best of this world. It is in the heavenly Canaan, Immanuel's land, in which nothing is wanting to complete

the happiness of the inhabitants. This is the happy country, blessed with a perpetual spring, which yieldeth all things for necessity, conveniency, and delight. There men eat angel's food, "even the hidden manna." They are fed to the full with the product of the land falling into their mouths. That land enjoys an everlasting day, "for there shall be no night there." An eternal sunshine beautifies it. No cold, no scorching heat.—No clouds, yet no land of drought. It is the country from which Christ came, to which he hath returned, and in which he will for ever dwell.—As for the city, this house stands "in that great city, the holy Jerusalem." In that city the inhabitants tread on gold, the very thing on which the men of this world set their hearts; "for the street of the city is of pure gold as it were transparent glass." A city this, which shall stand and flourish when all the cities below are in ashes. A city that never changeth its inhabitants. Life and immortality reign in it. Blessed with perfect peace, nothing from any quarter can ever annoy it. In it there can be no want of provision, no discord.

If you ask concerning the pleasantness of the situation of this house? I answer it is a palace, and paradise is the palace garden. "To-day shalt thou be with me in paradise," said our Lord to the dying thief. Heaven is a paradise for pleasure and delight. Eden was the most pleasant spot of the uncorrupted earth, and paradise was the most pleasant spot of Eden. But what is earth in comparison of heaven. The glorified saints are advanced to the heavenly paradise where they will be satisfied with those purest and sweetest pleasures which Immanuel's land affords, and swim in an ocean of delights for ever. There they shall enjoy every thing in abundance, "On either side of the river stands the tree of life, which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month." No flaming sword there to keep them from it.

If you ask concerning the inhabitants of this house? I answer, there dwell "the general assembly of the church of the first born." The whole congregation of spotless saints, there dwell also the holy angels. There is Christ the Lamb. There shall they be ever with the Lord.

4. It is a Father's house. What a kindly word! It is Christ's Father's house, and therefore no strange house to the gracious soul. "In my Father's house," says he, "are many mansions, I go to prepare a place for you." The Father loveth the Son, and the Son hath loved the gracious soul to die for it. Why should the saints then be afraid of their welcome at that house which is their Father's. It is our Father's house. For his Father is our Father. "I ascend," said he, unto my Father, and your Father, and to my God, and your

God." Is not the believing soul espoused to the Son of God? Is not the gracious person begotten of God and adopted of God. So he is their Father and that makes heaven home to them.

5. It is a spacious house. This clay body is a narrow house, where the soul is caged up for a time. But in that house there will be room enough for the soul to expatiate, for it hath *many mansions*. For as broad as the earth is, many a saint has not a foot of ground in it which he can call his own; yea often there is not room for them at all to remain upon it; but they will all have the most ample accommodation in Immanuel's land.

6. It is a most convenient house. In it no conveniency will be wanting. There are many mansions in it, and every saint shall find his own mansion prepared and furnished with every conveniency for him. They will find every thing that can be desired.

O believer, art thou in poverty and straits? There is an incorruptible treasure in that house. Is thine honour in the dust? A crown for thy head and a sceptre for thy hand await thee there. Art thou shut up in solitude? There you shall enjoy eternal converse with God, the angels, and the saints. Is your life full of bitterness? You will find rivers of pleasures there. Are you weak and sickly? There grows the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Are you groaning under the tyranny of sin? There you shall walk in the glorious liberty of the sons of God. Are defiled garments making you hang down your heads? You shall there shine in spotless robes of holiness. Is fighting hard work? In that house ye shall for ever triumph. Are you weary and almost fainting under the labours of the Christian life? There you shall have perpetual rest. Is your communion with God here frequently interrupted? There will be no interruptions there. Are you in darkness? There is no night there. Are you in fear of death? There you shall enjoy eternal life.

7. It is a safe house. The gates "are not shut at all by day," for there is no danger there. Adam in the earthly paradise was not out of danger. The serpent got access to it. But no unclean thing can enter there. None in the house are placed on the watch. The sentinels are all recalled from their posts, and walk at large without fear of being annoyed, or of falling upon any forbidden fruit.

8. It is a glorious house. The visible heavens, in which the sun, that globe of light, is placed, and that are bespangled with stars, are but the porch of the seat of the blessed. How glorious then must that house be, whose avenues and entries are so splendid and rich. We know very little of this house. But it must needs be a very glorious house. For it is the house in which the king's son is

to dwell with the bride, the Lamb's wife, for ever. Solomon built a glorious house for Pharaoh's daughter. This is of the true Solomon's building for his elect, whom he loved before the world was.

Besides it must be a glorious house, for it was purchased at a vast expence, even the blood of the Son of God, an expence which eternity will be too short to reckon. He was wise who paid the price, just who received it, and also a Father who would not put his Son to needless cost. What an unspeakably glorious purchase must the house then be?

The indispensable necessity for washing and purifying, to fit persons for dwelling in the house, shews it to be glorious. There will be spots and uncleanness in the fairest palace on earth; but "there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination or maketh a lie." Those who are to be inhabitants, must first be washed in the laver of regeneration; every day they must wash their feet from their daily infirmities; and at death they must be washed every whit clean; and all in the clean water of Christ's blood and Spirit.

Lastly, It is an everlasting house. It is eternal in the heavens. This lodging house of the body goes quickly to the dust; the lower house of this earth will go up in purple flames; but that house in the heavens will endure for ever.

For Improvement.

1. Behold and admire the happiness of the saints. Though they knew not where to lay their heads on earth, yet if this tabernacle were dissolved they have a glorious house ready for them. Others may know of a house under ground, a grave, a vault for the body. But the saints have a house above the earth, yea above the clouds, a happy and glorious receptacle for the soul.

2. Is it not surprising that the saints should be alarmed at death, the way to their own house? What the worse was Mordecai that it was Haman that brought him the king's horse, and led his bridle through the street of the city. A child of God is not ill situated in the very valley of the shadow of death, for his Lord is with him. When persons are near their own house, though they have a few rugged steps and the night be dark and stormy, yet they are not easily discouraged, because they know they will soon be home. Alas for our carnality and want of faith.

Lastly, Seek a house now, into which you may be received when your earthly house is dissolved. There is such a house, and you may have it. O set to work now for this house. It is a house of

which you may obtain a lease, not for the term of life, for there is no dying there, but an everlasting lease, for this house changes no tenants. It is a house which you will get rent free, except the singing of glory, glory and praise to God the builder and owner, and to the Lamb, the purchaser of the house.

SERMON IV.

2 CORINTHIANS. V. 1.

For we know, that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

THERE are three ways by which we may know a thing, first by sense, thus we know the fire to be hot, and ice to be cold. Secondly, by rational evidence, thus when we see a house, we know that there has been a builder; and a beautiful world, we know that there is a God, because none of them could make themselves. Thirdly, by the testimony of others, by human testimony, as by history we know what was done before we were in the world; and by divine testimony, or revelation, we know the truths of the gospel. The first of these cannot be pretended in the present case, for heaven and the glory to come fall not now under our bodily senses. As for the inward spiritual sense and feeling of what is heavenly it falls in with rational evidence. As for the third, that of testimony, there can no human testimony make us know this. As for divine testimony in the scripture, it comes not so low as to the case of particular persons by name, saying to such and such a saint heaven is thine. As to extraordinary revelation, Paul speaks here of other believers as well as himself, of whom we have no ground to think they had extraordinary revelation. As to the ordinary testimony of the Spirit, it proceeds upon rational evidence. "The Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the sons of God." Therefore I conclude this knowledge in the text, is upon rational evidence, from the marks and signs of a gracious state of which the believer may be conscious, being founded on the word of God.

Doctrine. They who look for heaven when they die, should have rational evidence of their title to it, while they live.

There is great need of this doctrine, for presumption in the wicked, and slothfulness in the saints, make hopes of heaven whereof men can give no rational account, very plentiful. Do you

hope, do you know that heaven will be your landing place? Then I would ask you, how do you know this, upon what grounds? You have not been wrapt up to the third heavens, and read your title there. You will not pretend, I hope, extraordinary revelation sent down to you. Beware of that, "we have a more sure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed." But whatever you may pretend that way, if your title cannot be made good by the word, it is but a delusion. "To the law, and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Well then, what rational evidence according to the scripture, have you for it? How can you make good your title by the word, which contains the laws of the kingdom? If you cannot do that, and yet hope and think you know it, it seems you have dreamed it. And take heed, lest it be no more but a dream. Therefore they who look for heaven when they die, should have rational evidence of their title to it while they live. Here I shall,

I. Shew of what we should have rational scriptural evidences.

II. What it is to have rational evidences for heaven.

III. I will shew that the saints may have such evidences.

IV. I will give the reasons of the doctrine. I am according to this plan,

1. To shew of what we should have rational scriptural evidences. What is it we should know.

The text tells us, it is that we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. If we prepare aright for eternity, we will not be content with less than this. Sure I am we will not be content with less in a matter of far inferior importance. The term of Whitsunday is drawing near, and among those of us that have tack, there will be riding and running till they know, that if the term were come, they have a house and land to remain upon, or another place to which they can go. And why less diligence in this affair? The apostle does not say, *perhaps* we will get a building—no, eternity is too great a matter to venture upon a perhaps, or a may be, if it be within the compass of our power to carry it farther. Nay, what is more, he says not, that we know we will have it, we will get it, *but we have it already*. Eternity is too great a matter to be uncertain about for the shortest time.

Here is a mystery, the saints have the house of glory already; though they be still on earth, and have not an inch of ground which they can call their own. I will unriddle this to you in two things.

1. The saints have heaven in right and title, as the young heir has the land, into possession of which he is not yet entered. 2. They have the hold of heaven already, like a man that has had some pre-

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D

cious thing fallen into a well, and searching for it with an instrument, whenever he finds the thing upon it, he cries out with joy, I have it, I have it.

I. The saints have heaven in right and title.

1. God from eternity designed heaven for them, and them for heaven, "For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ? The lines have fallen in pleasant places for them, even in the pleasant land. The lot of electing love hath given them their inheritance there. Eternal love puts its everlasting arms underneath them, and that lifts them up in time from the pit, "Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: for thou hast cast all my sins behind thy back." This is a sure foundation of right. It cannot be overturned, for it is of God's own laying, "The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his." And when they are solemnly admitted into their house, the Judge will recognize this title of theirs, saying, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." For God does with the heavenly, as he did with the earthly Canaan. "When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel."

2. Christ has purchased it for them. "God hath appointed us to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him. The first Adam forfeited the house of glory for himself and all his posterity, the fallen angels forfeited their part too, and now they have no right to it. But O happy saints, they had a near kinsman, that was mighty, and he redeemed the mortgaged inheritance. Job xix. 25—27. The house of heaven was a mighty purchase indeed! The united stock of men and angels would no more have redeemed it, and fixed our title to it, than a barley corn would have redeemed an estate. But there is infinite value in the precious blood of the Son of God.

3. God is theirs and Christ is theirs. The saints' *maker is their husband*. And heaven of course is their dowry house. A house suitable to the quality of their husband. "God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath provided for them a city." They are by regeneration and adoption, sons of the house, therefore heirs, heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ." And now may each of them say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his." And therefore all is theirs. The house and all its pertinents. Yea "all things are theirs and they are Christ's." If the Lord of the house be their

husband, who can question their right to the house. Is not the body more than meat, and the builder, and purchaser, and owner, more than the house.

4. Christ has taken possession of heaven in their name. "Whether the forerunner is for us entered even Jesus." He is keeping their room for them till they come. I go, said he, to prepare a place for you. Thus their title is fixed, their place is secured for them. At death they will enter into actual possession of what they have already got infetment in Christ their head. Christ was a public person, representing all the heirs of glory. In their name and stead, he obeyed, died, rose again, ascended, and sat down in glory. So that the apostle makes no doubt to tell us, that believers on earth "are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Lastly, God has promised it to them. "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie, promised before the world began." This is their charter for heaven registered in the Bible; to which the King has appended his broad seal, the holy sacraments, a red bloody seal, with this inscription, *Remember me*. Though he be no debtor to them, he is debtor to his own faithfulness. Though they could never purchase the house, yet our Lord could dispoise it to them freely, being his own purchase. "Fear not little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." And to make sure work, the promise is made to Christ. "He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." And O the comfort of this dispensation! Unbelief will not stand to blaspheme and say, will God ever make out the promise to thee? But will it dare question if God will make good his promise to his own Son, especially when the thing promised was purchased with his own blood.

II. The saints have the hold of heaven already.

1. They have it in the covenant. "He hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure; for this is all my salvation and all my desire." Now if all the believers' salvation and desire be in it, surely heaven is in it; for how low soever the desire of others may be, the desire of the saints is no less. Hast thou heard and believed, that thou hadst lost heaven and exposed thyself to hell by sin, and thou wast going about mourning without the sun for the loss, and seeking to get it repaired, and thou hearest of the covenant and laid hold upon it for time and eternity; then know thou, that that moment heaven was found, and thou mightest have cried out, I have it, I have it. The covenant is the chariot in which Christ carries his saints to glory; and as we use to say of people, that they are gone to such a place, when the coach in which

they are has set off for it: so we may say the believer is gone to heaven, for the chariot of the covenant will not stop by the way, so that they who are in it shall arrive there as surely as if they were there already. Then if you would have the house, come into the covenant.—Close with Christ. Deliberately make up the match between him and your souls, in the way of the marriage covenant. “Let him take hold of my strength, that he may make peace with me; and he shall make peace with me.”

You must also break your covenant with your lust.—Many pretend to covenant with Christ, but it plainly appears that they are in a chariot which the devil drives. “That they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive at his will.” No wonder then such persons make haste after another God. We must then part with our lusts, or give up pretences to the covenant, and as to heaven.

2. They have it in faith. They have the hold of it by believing. Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. The possession by faith is a sure possession. When faith lays hold upon and embraces Christ, it enfolds heaven also in its arms, for *he is eternal life*. He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life. The whole of heaven and glory is in Christ, virtually, they who have him cannot fail of all that is in heaven. The best part of heaven is in Christ formally, for the fulness of the Godhead dwells in him. Christ is the fairest flower in the heavenly country, the most precious jewel of all the treasures of the upper house. If one had the sun to be ever with them, they would have a lasting day, and would need neither moon nor star light. So the saints having Christ, have everlasting light. Their heaven is begun, and if once there were no more clouds to intercept the light of that sun, which now ever shines above their horizon, then they will have heaven in its largest extent.

Faith also embraceth the promise, in which heaven is wrapt up. It is said of the Patriarchs, “These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.” *Embraced them*, that is, the things promised. An allusion to mariners who having been long at sea, joyfully salute the land, and as it were embrace it when they first see it. God’s word is as good security as possession. And as men may be possessed of land, which they never saw, by infestment and seisin, so may the believer be of the land that is afar off by embracing the promise of it.

3. They have it in hope well grounded, even hope on the word. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul; both sure and

stedfast, and which entereth into that within the vail." Therefore salvation is attributed to hope. "For we are saved by hope." By faith the Christian fights and overcomes, and by hope he gathers the spoil. Ask those who have been plunged into despair, and they will tell you, that they have been in hell while on earth. Despair brings up hell into the soul, and true hope brings down heaven into it. Hope is enjoyment antedated, and excites the same joy, delight, and complacency, that enjoyment doth; as you may see in the hope of worldly things. But with this difference, that earthly things are commonly sweeter in expectation than enjoyment, but spiritual things quite otherwise.

Lastly, They have it in the first fruits of it. "We have the first fruits of the Spirit." And these are the earnest of our inheritance." Thus they are entered on possession already. They have got a cluster of the first ripe grapes of the heavenly Canaan. They have "the earnest of the Spirit." Now the earnest is both a part of the price, and a pledge of the whole. What is grace but glory in the bud; or glory but grace come to perfection. "We all with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We now proceed,

II. To shew what it is to have rational evidence of heaven. If a man pretend a right to houses or lands, and there be any to question his right, he looks out his evidences, brings forth his papers, and witnesses, to evince that that house or land is his, which will be sustained, so far as they are agreeable to the laws of the land, where the house or land is situated. Now, brethren, we all pretend to the house of heaven, to Canaan's land. It is unreasonable and absurd to pretend to possession, if we do not pretend to a right of possession, for there can be no violent possessors of heaven. Now if you pretend a right to heaven, it is highly reasonable you have something to evidence that right. Now your right is or will be questioned.

1. Ministers in the name of the Lord question your right. They have reason to do it, because there are so many who deceive themselves in this matter, and because deception in it is an eternal loss. You are told that there is a generation pure in their own eyes, yet not cleansed from their iniquities—we read of foolish virgins who perished by trusting to an empty profession of religion, and therefore we call you to compare in the court of your own conscience to clear up this matter. "Examine yourselves whether you be in the faith; prove your own selves; know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates." "Wherefore

the rather, brethren, give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." And upon that occasion, you ought to produce some rational evidence; "and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."

2. Does not your own conscience sometimes question your right? Do not doubts and fears sometimes at least arise in your minds, like a pain in the side? If they do not now it is very strange, you must be very fast asleep. But conscience will do it afterwards, when it comes to be enlightened, and it may be when there is no remedy. You should have something provided for such a time.

3. Satan will question your right when he sees his opportunity. If thou be a child of God, Satan, when he has thee at an advantage, will assuredly question your right. He questioned Christ's sonship. "If thou be the Son of God." And he will do his utmost to raise his black band of doubts and fears to attack thee; and how wilt thou fight against them but by the sword of the Spirit, rational scriptural evidences.

If thou be a deceiver of thyself, it is like Satan will not much trouble thee that way, till the time come that thou canst hardly expect to get a right, and then thou mayest come to know to the torment of thy soul, that thou hast none and never had.

Lastly, Our right to heaven will be sifted before the tribunal of God, and no pretences will do there that cannot be made good by the word which contains the laws of the kingdom. Fraudulent pretenders to heaven there may be now, but no fraudulent possessors will be there. And if thy right then be judged null, there is no mending the matter through eternity. Who then would venture such a business on such a final decision, without first canvassing their right in their own minds.

Now, a right to heaven is made out to a man that has it by evidences. And evidence for heaven is the gracious work of the Spirit of God upon a person felt or discerned by him that has it, to be a gracious work. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? For clearing of this,

1. As the right to heaven is given to every soul upon the account of Christ's purchase, so soon as they are in Christ by faith; so the word of God, the laws of the kingdom of heaven, secure it to such by promise.—"There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus."

2. Every soul in Christ has a gracious work wrought on it by the Spirit of Christ. Heaven is begun in them by the gracious change by which they are fitted for it. Their faith is not idle, but *purifieth*

the heart, and establisheth the law. The Spirit dwelling in them, works in them gracious qualifications peculiar to the heirs of glory. "Giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

3. Though these qualifications be wrought in a man, yet if he do not discern them, they are not evidences, and he has not the comfort of them. He is in the dark, he knows not whither he is going; "he walketh in darkness, and hath no light." And because so many deceive themselves in this weighty matter it is a frightful case.

Lastly, Evidence for heaven, then, is the gracious work of the Spirit, to which the promise of heaven is annexed, and discovered to be in the soul particularly that has it. So that here two things concur to make it up.

1. Light into the Lord's promise and word in the Bible, so that the soul believeth and is persuaded, that such and such have a right to heaven and shall have it. For example, those that are truly poor in spirit, Matt. v. 3. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." Those that have a supreme transcendent love to the Lord above all. Proverbs viii. 17. "I love them that love me." Those that have an universal love to the law. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." These are some of the laws of the kingdom, by which men's right to it is determined. Now if the word be not believed, there can be no evidence, for in that case there is no foundation for evidence.

2. Light into the Lord's work on the heart and life, by which a man sees in himself those things to which the promise of heaven is annexed. For example, that he is poor in spirit, loves the Lord supremely and loves his law universally; and therefore concludes according to the word, that his is the kingdom of heaven. The Lord loves him and he shall not be ashamed. The man that hath this, hath evidence; and so can give a rational account of the hope that is in him.

This evidence is more or less clear according to the light that shines upon the Spirit's work in the heart. Grace has a light with itself, and he that believes, loves the Lord and loves his law, may be conscious of his own actions in these things, as well as in other cases. Thus the saints have the testimony of their own spirits. The Spirit of the Lord also shines upon his own work, and discovers it, sometimes with such a degree of light that the man's spirit is helped to perceive it clearly, yet all doubt is not removed. Sometimes he irradiates the soul with a light so clear, that they can no more doubt of it than of the sun's shining, when it is glaring in their eyes. "Thus the Spirit beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God." Let us now,

III. Endeavour to shew that the saints may have such evidence.

1. A believer may know that he has relative grace, that he is justified, adopted, &c. Though he cannot go up to heaven, and at first hand read his name in the book of God's decrees; yet by opening the Book of the word, and the Book of his own soul, and comparing the two together, he may know that he is called and elected. We are "to give all diligence to make our calling and election sure." And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end." In this way a believer may know that he is a child of God, and that Christ loved him and died for him.

2. A believer may know that he hath inherent grace. He may know that he believes, as sure as that he breathes. "I know," says Paul, "whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." He may know that he hath love to Christ, and can appeal to God's omniscience upon the matter. "Lord," said Peter to his Master, "thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." And thus believing that such persons have a right to heaven, he may know he is the man. And being persuaded of the certainty of the perseverance of the saints, knowing that he has grace, and that so he shall never lose it, he may be persuaded, he shall go to that house, whenever his earthly tabernacle is dissolved.

3. Consider the office and work of the Spirit given to all the saints. He is given them for a teacher to lead them into all the truth, and particularly to discover the grace of God in them, by a heavenly light on his own work. "Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." He is given for a witness, to be a "joint witness with our own spirits that we are the sons of God," Rom. viii. 16. To be a seal, which properly is to ensure an evidence. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." And as an earnest, which is both a part of the price and a pledge of the whole, "God hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit."

4. The operations and effects of faith in the soul clear this point. Such as boldness and confidence with God, which cannot be without some evidence of a relation to him as our Father. "In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God which necessarily requires rational evidence of that hope, Rom. v. 2. This is the more to be regarded, as it is sometimes *joy unspeakable*, 1 Peter i. 8. To such joy, plain, yea speaking evidences are absolutely necessary. It is a joy which none

can take from them, though they should take all that they have in the world. John xvi. 22. Surely in that case, they see that they have the treasure, of which no man, no devil can rob them. And all this makes them cheerfully endure sufferings, "knowing in themselves, that they have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

Lastly, Many of the saints have had such evidence for heaven, Job xix. 25—27. David also could say, and I "will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." And says Paul, "henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge shall give me that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing." And not only scriptural saints, but others of an inferior rank, who have been capable to give an account of their hope, satisfying to their own tender consciences and also to others. It now remains,

IV. To give the reason of the doctrine.

1. It is the command of God. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure." God calls every man to bring his state to the touchstone and to see what it is. "Examine yourselves, whether you are in the faith; prove your own selves." He commands even his enemies to see their state and to lay aside their deluding hopes. And he has not only made heaven sure to his people, but he would have them to be assured of it, for their greater comfort.

2. Because God has shewn us the way, how we may come to a clearness and certainty as to our state. The scripture every where abounds with trying evidences, particularly the first epistle of John is written for that very end. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life." How can we then quietly continue in the dark, not knowing how it is, and how it will be with us, when the Lord has compassed us about with so much spiritual light for that purpose. How can we pretend to tenderness, and yet slight a duty for which he hath so fully provided?

3. Because salvation is a matter so important, it is unaccountable stupidity not to be concerned for evidences. Who but a fool or a madman would slight the business of removing to another house on earth, as men do that of the house of heaven? Now, every person, masters and servants, must know what comes of them at the term; only we are not enquiring what comes of us at death, whether we shall go to the house above or the house below.

4. It is necessary for the honour of God, the good and edification of others, and that both in life and death. "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts; and be ready always to give an answer to every

one that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear." It is little that we glorify God in our lives, and alas! the most are in hazard of dying as they live. They live in hopes of heaven, of which they can give no good account and may even come to die in the same way. It is but an obscure death little to the honour of God, or the edification of others; when persons pass away without clear evidences, or struggles to recover brangled evidences.

Use of Exhortation.

To those who have never been at pains to get a right to heaven. Why should I bid them seek evidence for a thing, which they were never at pains to get. Alas as to many, whatever be their hopes for heaven, evidences of hell are written on their foreheads. Such as,

1. Hardness of heart and blindness of mind constant and habitual, which create in them a deep security in their soul ruining courses. A stone is fitted to go downward, and so are they for the pit. "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost."

2. God's giving up with them, saying "Ephraim is joined to his idols, let him alone." Some have had conscience as God's deputy struggling long with them, but at length they have got their consciences seared. There is none now to peep, or mutter within their breast, to disturb their rest in sin. Saul was near being cut off, when he was cast off.

3. Profanity of life, which cannot fail to have a miserable end, as long as dogs and swine are debarred from heaven. Those that have nothing but the form of religion may go to hell, but none that want a form will ever see heaven.

4. Unfruitfulness under the means of grace. A total unfruitfulness, when neither heart nor life is made better, but the leprosy of sin continues spreading, what can be expected but destruction.

I would exhort you who have not yet made it your work to get a right to heaven, now to begin that work in earnest; by your closing with Christ offered in the gospel, taking him in all his offices, marrying the heir that the dowry house may be yours.

Motives. 1. While you have no right to heaven, you are heirs of wrath and hell. "You are children of wrath." And it is a fearful case to live bound over to the wrath of God. Such is your case while without Christ, and without a title to heaven. You are under the curse, and condemned already. "For he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him."

2. This is the great work of time to be securing your happiness for eternity. What should a malefactor do in the time of a reprieve, but be seeking a remission if it may be obtained. He that dwells in an old ruinous house should be looking out for another. Now you are like a man standing on a spot of ground encompassed with the sea, which the tide will soon cover. It is not time to sleep in such a situation; so time ere long will be swallowed up in eternity.

3. We have some hopes of heaven, because we are yet within the line of mercy. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, but eternal disappointment will kill the heart and pierce the heart with ten thousand sorrows. Hell will be sad to them that know nothing of heaven, but much worse for them, who, by its flames, are awakened out of their pleasant dreams of heaven.

4. All of us have heaven in our offer. The marriage of the King's Son is offered to us and heaven with him, for our dowry house. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation." To fall short of an offered heaven will be a double hell.

Lastly, It will not always be so. The day will come that the doors will be shut and once shut will never more be opened. When once time is gone, God will bar them so, that for the ages of eternity, there shall be access no more. Then shall that oath have its full effect, "Unto whom I swore in my wrath, that they should not enter into my rest."

There are several, I hope, who have been careful about securing a right to heaven; who have been labouring to lay hold on the Covenant and Christ in it. I exhort you to try what has been the issue of all your pains that way, to try your state, and make out your title for heaven by evidences.

I. I will urge this upon you with some motives.

II. I will point out the hindrances of evidences for heaven.

III. I shall give you some directions in order to your obtaining evidences for heaven. I am then,

I. To urge you with some motives; to try what has been the issue of all your pains to obtain a right to heaven.

1. This is a troublesome world. Every person has his cross for every day. And the design of each of these is to tell you, your rest is not here. It is hope that supports the soul, and this hope must be raised not upon the prospect of ease in this life, of which we may soon be disappointed, but upon evidences of a better life. "For if in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." And these hopes of a better life may last, though the clouds return after the rain.

2. Many deceive themselves in that matter, and will meet with an eternal disappointment, as the foolish virgins did, Matth. xxv. There are two things clear as the sun in this matter. First, that there are few comparatively that will be saved. "Strait is the gate and narrow is the way that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it." Christ's flock is a *little flock*. The second thing is, that the far greater part entertain hopes of heaven. There are very few that do not expect, that they shall be the persons that shall be saved. Hence it follows many will be deceived and disappointed.— There are two sorts of self-deceivers that much abound in the world. First, formal hypocrites unacquainted with regeneration and the life of faith, yet acquainted with the external duties of religion. These build their hopes on some things that look like grace and holiness in heart and life, but they do not examine them narrowly, by the touchstone of God's word, hence they are deceived by counterfeit instead of current coin. This is the more to be regarded, that there is no grace but a hypocrite may have the counterfeit of it. The second class are the ignorant and the profane, who also hope that all will be well in the end. These trouble not themselves to search for satisfaction as evidence of their interest in Christ, but please themselves with the hopes which they rear up upon the general offers of the gospel, the mercy of God, and the death of Christ; without any evidence of their being in the Covenant, or having had the virtue of the blood of Christ applied to them. While thus so many deceive themselves, it is a loud call to us to make out our evidences.

3. The consideration of the time in which we live should engage us to this. Though the Lord has done wonders for us, yet there are sure symptoms of the Lord's anger against us, as call aloud to us to seek evidences.

It is a time of divisions, and these appear to be still increasing. Now while there is such reeling and staggering, some saying this, some that the other is the way, let us to take special heed to be right in the main. While some are saying, I am of Paul, and I am of Apollos; let us put it to the trial till we be able, each for himself to say, I am of Christ. Division has a sad influence on practical godliness; for the corrupt heart is apt to lay much weight on what side the man takes in such a time, and a mighty stress is laid upon being found in good company, as each alleges for himself that he is. The controversies and disputes about these things are apt to wear out soul exercise. But let us remember, that into how many parts soever the world and the church be now divided, the time comes when there will be but two parties, those that are in, and those that are out of Christ. The regenerated and the unregenerated.

It is a time in which, though strokes are delayed, yet there is no such repentance and reformation as may give us ground to think, that the bitterness of death is past. But be it as it will, every one ought to lay his account with sufferings. None are saved but those who have as much faith and love to Christ as will make him cleave to him, come what will. "If any man, saith Jesus, come to me, and hate not his father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple." Now should a time of public calamity come, how comfortless is the condition of men without evidences for heaven.

4. Death is approaching. We must die, and it is horrible to think of looking the grim messenger in the face, without evidence of eternal life. We must then enter into an unalterable state for ever, and must we venture into it as by a leap in the dark, not knowing where we may land? Are heaven and hell such light things, that it is a matter indifferent to us, which of them be our portion? O consider that last moment that will for ever determine our state, when we shall be lying on a dying bed, either holy angels, or devils waiting on to carry us to our eternal abode.

5. We know not when this may be our lot, or how we may be brought to death. We may pass away in a moment in a surprising manner when we are not looking for it. We may die in such a case, that we may be incapable of doing any thing for eternity. Or the pain and tossing may be such, that it will be difficult to get a composed thought. Do now then in proper time, what you would then wish to have done.

Lastly, Evidences for heaven are excellent means for a holy life. Some say that assurance is hurtful to piety, and inclines men to looseness, but the contrary is evident from the word, which enforceth holiness from assurance. "Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God." The scripture expressly asserts the tendency of assurance to holiness. "And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." And experience testifies that those who had the clearest evidences have been the most holy of all the saints, as Abraham, David, Paul. And this distinguishes well grounded evidence of the Lord's love from delusion which can never sanctify the soul. But to come to particulars:

1. A man's having evidences for heaven, inflames the soul with love to the Lord. One flame begets another, so the love of God to the soul clearly discerned, will increase the soul's love to the Lord. "We love him because he first loved us." He sits in the warm sun-

shine who sits under evidences of the Lord's love, and this cannot fail to melt the heart. The soul will be filled with admiration of God's goodness and grace.

2. It humbles the soul. None are more vile in their own eyes, than those who are most highly lifted up in the manifestations of the Lord's love. Abraham is but dust and ashes, while God is speaking to him as a friend. When David's honours were conferred upon him, he exclaimed, "Who am I, O Lord God? and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?" In 2 Cor. xii. you will find Paul as high as he could be raised, ver. 4. *Caught up into paradise*. And yet as low as he could lay himself, *though*, says he, ver. 11. *I be nothing*. For always the nearer a soul comes to God, God appears the greater, and the creature the less.

3. It produces tenderness of heart and life, great care to please God in all things, and watchfulness against every sin that may disturb the soul's rest in God. The empty traveller walks at random, fearing nothing, because he has nothing to lose. But he that hath full pockets will look well to himself. The solid hope of heaven, makes the soul study to be heavenly, and the hope of the marriage day makes the spouse of Christ to prepare for it.

4. It gives strength against corruption. "Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure, for if ye do these things ye shall never fall." The heavenly light within the soul, cleared as to its eternal interest, dispels the darkness that strengthens the work of corruption, and fits a man for every duty of a holy life. Faith is the provider for all our other graces. It brings in oil to the lamp, and the more evidence faith hath, it can do its office the better. A doubting Christian will always be a weak Christian, even as the soldier who has little hopes of victory, will be readily faint-hearted.

5. Assurance is the best support under sufferings and afflictions, as the connection of the text shews. It is a storehouse of patience and contentment under the rod, for it shews them things will have a happy issue; and under the want of all things, it shews them, that they shall inherit all things. It makes a man despise the frowns of the world, and the threats of enemies. Why should they fear the falling of their tabernacle, who know that they have an house not made with hands eternal in the heavens? They need not fear death, when to them it is an inlet to eternal life.

6. It fills a man with contempt of the world. If one know that his treasure is in heaven, his heart will be there also. "God forbid," says the apostle, "that I should glory save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which I am crucified unto the world, and the world unto me." If you gaze on the shining sun for a time,

you will scarcely discern the beauty of the earth for some time after. And he that can solace himself, in the contemplation of heaven as his, this will much sink the value of created things with him. It sets a man above the earth, so that it must needs appear a very little thing.

Finally, To sum up all in one word, it makes a man fit either to live or die. Alas ! how often are even good people unfit for either ? Unfit to live, because of the weakness of grace, in the midst of temptations and trials. Unfit to die, for want of evidence of grace.—Whereas the man that has solid evidence for heaven, he has what can bear him through trials, support him under temptations, and even in the hour of death. We now proceed,

II. To point out the hinderances of evidences for heaven. There are very few have a right to heaven, and those that have no right can have no evidence ; yet there are far fewer that have evidences of that right, of which they can give any rational account. The causes of this are these,

1. The great hindrance is a loose and irregular life. For as troubled water will not reflect the image of the sun, as clear standing water will do, so an irregular walk, will not afford that evidence of grace which a strict holy life will do. “He that hath my commandments,” saith Jesus, “and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.” While violent temptations and passions disturb the soul, it is as the troubled sea, dark and muddy. The outbreakings of corruption are as the mists and fogs that darken the air.

2. Weakness of knowledge in matters of religion.—This has been very evident in some, who when they have once got their judgments informed from the Lord’s word, they have then got their troubled consciences eased.

There are four things have a very bad influence here.

First, Some weak persons have a notion that assurance of an interest in Christ and clear discerning of grace in the heart, is an extraordinary thing, at least that it is a business of insuperable difficulty, that they never have courage to attempt it. But pray, will you consider that God calls all Christians to it, weak and strong. “Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure.” He has appointed ordinary means for it. “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. How then can it be looked on as an extraordinary thing ? And is it a business of insuperable difficulty to

a man that understands the nature of grace, to reflect upon and discern the motions of his own soul within him, and compare them with the word? Is it such a very hard business for a man's own spirit to discern itself and its own actings and motions? "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him?"

Secondly, Mistakes as to the nature of evidences for heaven. It is surprising to find the weakness of some, in other respects not ignorant, who being asked the grounds of their hope for heaven and evidences for eternal life, will tell you that they build on such scriptures as these, "Him that cometh unto me, I will by no means cast out," "Christ died to save sinners."—These, and such declarations as these, are a foundation for the direct act of faith; but still the question returns, How know you that you have come to Christ? or that Christ died for you? and the only answer to these questions must be brought from some parts of the saving change which the man finds to be wrought in him.

Ignorance of the nature of true grace in general is a third thing that hath bad effects here. If in a time in which much counterfeit money is in circulation, a person receives a purse of good money, who yet does not know money, and cannot discern betwixt real and counterfeit coin, that man cannot be easy. So how is it possible that a man can have solid evidence for heaven, who knows not how to distinguish between true grace and that which is counterfeit. It is a great defect in many, who in other respects are knowing, that in this matter they are at a loss. Perhaps they can tell you, that love to God, and a real desire after righteousness, are marks of grace, but their loss is they cannot circumstantiate that love and desire, so as to distinguish them from hypocritical love and desire.

The fourth thing is the razing of foundations still upon every new prevailing of iniquity, so that by this means some are still kept fluctuating and unsettled. For, say they, if it be so, why am I thus? But why do they think that grace will get so soon free of its ill neighbour. This is surely your weakness. *Iniquities prevail against you.* If you labour to watch, and upon your frequent failures flee anew to the blood of sprinkling, and look to Christ for his Spirit to subdue sin, and be more sensible of your own weakness, and your need of Christ and imputed righteousness, you may even draw evidence from this, "That by two immutable things in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us."

3. Sloth and laziness are a great hinderance. Under their influence persons cannot be at the trouble to call the soul to an account. Alas! how sad is it that many who dare not knowingly neglect

other duties, live nevertheless in the habitual neglect of self-examination, and enquiring by scripture marks into the state of their souls. They do not make it their business to observe the way of God towards them, nor the way of their spirits towards God. They never set themselves to seek evidences for heaven, till God in his anger lets them be tossed with violent doubts and fears. And it is not to be expected that evidences for heaven, will just fall down into the bosom of indolent unobserving Christians.

4. Indistinctness in closing with Christ and accepting of the covenant. If a bargain be huddled up in a haste, no wonder the man be not very clear about it. The not making the work of believing more clear and distinct causes such confusion in the review of it, as also an unclearness and uncertainty in pleading the benefit of it. Therefore labour to be very distinct in the renunciation of idols, particularly that which is the idol of jealousy, in closing with Christ in all his offices, and for all the glorious ends for which the Father has given him to poor sinners, for sanctification particularly as well as justification.

Lastly, The violence of temptations. God for the trial of his own permits it, and then Satan tosseth them so as they can hardly find where to fasten their feet. They stand as it were in a quagmire and find hard work to dispute their sincerity against the tempter. As it is the great work of Satan to blow up graceless persons in their presumptuous hopes, so it is his grand design, to rob the gracious of their peace and the comfort of their grace. For this purpose he raiseth darkness about them, and then orders the poor soul to read its evidences. And he has carried his point far, when he gets the soul over to his own side to dispute itself out of Christ. "In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord; my sore ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted."

Sometimes Satan gives the hopes of the saints a side stroke, inferring their naughtiness from the way of the Lord's dealing with them in afflictions. He gets them first possessed with jealousies of the Lord's love, and unkindly thoughts of an afflicting God, and then carries them forward to conclude that their stroke is not the stroke of the Lord's children, and therefore their spot is not the spot of his people. "Call now, if there be any that will answer thee; and to which of the saints wilt thou turn?" In this case it is good to use the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in which it is very like you will find the like case in which the saints have been. And if you cannot find the parallel of your own case yourselves, you should take advice of others, who may be better acquainted with the Scriptures. But cases are like faces, though for

substance the same, yet possibly some circumstances may differ ; and it is a needless rack to please Satan, on which persons put themselves when nothing will satisfy them, but the case of a scripture saint, exactly like their own in every circumstance. To dismount the devil's cannon mounted upon this ground, you need no more but to observe these scriptures, Eccles. xi. 1, 2. 1 Corinth. iv. 9. Psalm lxxi. 7. and lxxvii. 19.

But again, Satan sometimes gives their hopes a foundation stroke, overturning to their view the very foundations of their peace, in their first turning to God, and closing with Christ, persuading them all was naught, *because* the law work was not deep enough, and their repentance was not complete. Often have the saints themselves to blame for this. They lay much of the weight of their peace, upon the depth of their convictions and terrors, and the bitterness of their repentance. Whereas the weight of it is to lie entirely on the blood of Christ, for nothing else can shelter us from the wrath of God. "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. For he is our peace. And his blood alone can purge our consciences from dead works, to serve the living God." And if people will lay on a plaster that cannot cover the sore, they need not wonder, if being once skinned over, it should break out again. I know no need of a farther depth of the law work than to convince a sinner of his absolute need of Christ for justification and sanctification. And there is no depth at all of true repentance less or more but what flows from faith. So that if your peace and hope of heaven, have been built on the depth of the law work, or repentance, lay them not there again, but upon the blood of Christ entirely, as apprehended by faith. If you have seen the absolute need of Christ for sanctification as well as justification, this was sufficient to reach the end, namely your closing with Christ for all his salvation. And whatever be the defects in your repentance you must not stand off from believing till you have repented more deeply. If you do, you are egregious fools. But believe that you may repent. And the more evidence and confidence your faith in the promise hath your repentance will succeed the better. "They shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his first born."

Satan also sometimes gives their hopes an universal shock, by plying their corruptions hard, and stirring up the muddy pool of the heart, till there is not one drop of clear water to be seen in it ; but whatever of heaven be in the heart, hell is uppermost. This is the heaviest case of all. I will not advise a person in this case to ex-

ert himself in seeking evidences for heaven. No, it were cruelty indeed to order such a person to read his evidences, before the smoke of hell be got out of the house and he gets his candle lighted. The man's proper work in such a case is to believe, hope against hope, to close with Christ anew for all his salvation, from the guilt and power of sin; and to hold by the promise of justification and sanctification also, in direct opposition to all the noise that corruption makes: till the power of sin being subdued, by faith, his darkness be removed, so that he may behold his evidences again.

The cause of this, as of the rest, ordinarily is, the soul's falling secure and grieving the Spirit, for which cause they are left to fall like Samson before the Philistines. And the proper expedient is to renew their faith and repentance before the Lord, because they have sinned, to wrestle by faith through the temptation, till they get their feet fixed upon a rock. It now remains,

III. That I give you some directions, in order to your obtaining evidences for heaven.

1. Labour to frame your conversation in such a manner as may be most conducive to this end. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me; and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God." A careless way of walking with God, will keep the soul in a state of confusion. Evidences for heaven are not to be got at random. Solid and lasting evidences are ordinarily the product of a watchful and tender course of life. "The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord." For this end quench not the Spirit; but cherish his motions, and kindly entertain his suggestions. "And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." Those that slight his convictions, cannot expect his sealings. Sins against knowledge waste the conscience, and much darken evidences for heaven. These grieve the Spirit in a special manner, and when he is grieved he departs at least as to comforting influences. And there ordinarily follows such sins, deadness, and darkness, as bring distress to the soul. A wound to the Spirit of Christ, presageth a wound to our spirit.

You must also endeavour to keep grace in exercise, and labour to be growing Christians. The flaming fire is easily discerned, when a fire not blown cannot be perceived. It is the decay of grace that puts it out of sight, as plants in harvest go back and back till they are out of sight, their roots only remaining in the earth. Were we exercising grace in a way suitable to every condition of our life, and so keeping up communion with God in providence, and ordinances,

it would reflect a comfortable light upon our state. 2 Peter i. 5.—10.

You should be strict, holy, and regular in your walk. "Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments." Were that our daily exercise to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men, it would be no great difficulty to gather evidences. He that takes a sinful liberty to himself in either table of the law, does so far darken the evidence of his love to God, and furnish suspicions of hypocrisy against himself. "He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me." And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. An uniform walk is the high way to comfort, whereas an inequality of conversation, when people hold a short time right, and a long time wrong, must needs make short lived joys, and long lasting darkness.

Again, Labour to keep up a relish of spiritual things by a heavenly frame. "For our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." It is no wonder people want evidences, when their hearts, clogged with a carnal earthly frame, cannot relish the things of God. "I have written unto him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing." It is observed by some, that dogs cannot hunt well in the spring, because the sweet odours of the flowers and herbs, hinder them much from smelling the hare. Surely the less people are dead to the world, the less they are alive to God, and the more carnal and earthly they are in the frame of their spirits, they are the unfitter to gather evidences.

It is also necessary to acquaint yourselves with the scriptures. "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God, that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." Want of a proper acquaintance with the scriptures is one great reason of the darkness in which many walk. A Christian that would enjoy clear evidence, should much study two books, the book of God, and the book of his own heart. Look without him into the Bible, and within him to his own heart. The attentive believing study of the Bible, would make him the better understand his own heart, both as to the good and evil of it; and the due observation of his heart, would be an excellent help to understand the Bible. Whom the Bible justifies God will never condemn, and whom it condemns he will not justify; for it is his own word. Read it for your own case.

You must also be much in prayer. "Hitherto ye have asked nothing in my name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be

full." Prayer in faith, is an useful exercise, in which the sails of the soul being spread out, lie fair for a gale of the Spirit. It is a notable mean to gather the heart, and this is the proper place of the rendezvous of the graces of the Spirit.—There sorrow for, and hatred of sin, is stirred up: there love to God exerts itself, and there the spices that gave not their smell before are beaten, which sometimes give the soul a fulness of joy.

Finally, Be daily making application of the blood of Christ. This is to wash your feet, that is to wash off the guilt of daily infirmities. John xiii. 10. As we contract new defilement, we should be dipping daily, and that keeps the accounts clear, and a good conscience.

Direction 2.—Make use of the means, by which evidences for heaven are immediately procured. Here you are called,

To set yourselves to solemn stated self-examination. Evidences for heaven often lie hid till they be searched out by this exercise, 2 Cor. xiii. 5. And they that would do this to purpose, for lasting comfort, would not satisfy themselves with those answers of peace, which their consciences give them at a sermon, or a prayer, or some occasional meditation. These comforts are too soon taken up to be permanent. They would even set some time apart for this work. They would do with their hearts, as men do with one with whom they have long accounts. A passing word will not do it. But they will set a time to make up their accounts and go through the particulars. And here I would advise, first of all, to take a back look of your ways, to see your sins in order to humiliation, and then to go and confess your sins to God as particularly as may be; and then to examine yourselves as to your willingness to receive Christ as he offers himself, and that being found, then to renew your closing with Christ by faith, and covenanting with God in him as distinctly and explicitly as you can. After which you may consider of your evidences for heaven. And there is a threefold evidence may be gained here.

1. An evidence in the act of faith, or closing with Jesus Christ. This is more or less clear according to the strength of faith. In all faith of adherence there is some evidence. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him. He also shall be my salvation: for an hypocrite shall not come before him. My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me." For a sensible soul will never lay its weight on that which it does not believe will bear it, though it may be accompanied with doubts which is the weakness of the evidence. And that there is some evidence in the nature of faith, is plain from the Old Testament names

of it, *trusting, staying*, and the like; and from the New Testament names, *Confidence, full assurance of faith*, and the like. This evidence is founded on the promise of the gospel, upon which the person is to believe that Christ is ready to give himself to him, and that the soul accepting the offer, Christ is his, without any regard to any qualification distinct from this acceptance. Just as if a man should hold out a loaf of bread to a great company, saying whosoever will, shall have it. Were there a starving hungry creature there, what would he do, but presently reach out his hand, and reaching out to it would say, then it is mine, and catch hold of it while he is speaking these words. Wherefore seeing God allows you this evidence, carry it as far as you can, the farther always the better. Only this evidence cannot satisfy others, but only the man himself. Therefore,

2. There is another evidence may be obtained here, and that is an evidence *from* the act of faith, and this is obtained by reflection upon the direct act of faith or closing with Christ. Such evidence had the Eunuch when he said, "I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God." And Paul when he said, "for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day." Even as by the light of a candle, we see the candle itself as well as other things, so believing we may know that we do believe, and that therefore Christ is ours, and heaven ours, though we can see no other gracious qualifications in us, but what are included in the act of faith. For this evidence it is necessary that we know well what faith is, and what the scripture makes over to it. So the reasoning runs thus, whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whosoever renouncing their own wisdom and all other guides, give up themselves to Christ, receiving and resting upon him as their teacher, guide, and leader for ever; and renouncing their own righteousness, all confidence and worth in themselves, their doing or suffering, and receive and rest on Christ alone for righteousness and the atonement, and heartily giving up with all their idols, resign themselves wholly to Christ's government: They believe and shall be saved. But I; (may a person on the act of believing and closing with Christ say) do renounce all these, and do receive Christ, therefore I believe I shall be saved. Now this is good evidence, not only to satisfy ourselves, but to give a rational ground of our hope to others. But because all true faith is effectual to sanctify the soul, "for God purifies the hearts of his people by faith," and there is no true faith without the fruits of holiness accompanying it, therefore the best and strongest evidence is when to the two former is joined.

3. An evidence from the fruits of faith. And this evidence is as

manifold as there are fruits of faith, or other graces of the Spirit besides faith. These fruits of faith are what we principally mean by evidences for heaven and these are to be gathered up in self-examination in which three things are to be done.

1. The word which contains the laws of the kingdom of heaven, by which our title to it must be decided, is to be produced, and the characters and marks of the state of grace are from that word to be fairly laid out as the touchstone by which we are to examine our state. Isaiah viii. 20. And here special heed must be taken to fix the mark according to the word, that it neither be too low and wide, to take in those that are still creeping on the earth, and formal hypocrites; nor yet too high and narrow above the reach of babes in Christ and excluding weak believers.

2. The scripture mark being laid out, the man is impartially as in the sight of God to bring his case to the touchstone, and see whether it be to be found in him.—Let him search and see if there be in him a work of God answering to that word of God. And here he must beware of either self-love on the one hand, causing him to believe that to be in him, which conscience after an impartial search cannot find, or of weakness in denying that to be in him to which his conscience bears witness, notwithstanding many infirmities.

3. The mark being found in him, he is thereupon to conclude, that according to the scripture he has a title to heaven, and assure himself of it upon the evidence of the word of God in the scriptures, and of the work of God in the heart. And thus evidences for heaven are gathered in the way of self-examination.

To make this plain by an example. A person examining himself pitches on the love of God as a mark of one in the state of grace, because the word says, *I love them that love me*. But seeing a hypocrite may have a sort of love to God, therefore it must be duly circumstantiated; as, 1. The true love of God is a love to him, not for his benefits only, but for himself, "My beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand." All that is in God is God, for he is no compound being, therefore he that loves God for himself, loves all his perfections, his holiness, justice, goodness, truth, and omniscience. 2. True love to God is supreme transcendent love; it is a love to him above all other objects, lawful as well as unlawful. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none in all the earth that I desire besides thee." 3. Such persons love the whole image of God expressed in the whole law, even where it crosseth their corrupt inclinations, "For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man." No hypocrite can thus love God. Thus the word is produced, and the mark from it is fixed.

In the next place, the man is to bring his case to this touchstone, and he is as in the sight of God to examine himself by these or the like questions. Do I love God? Do I love him not only for what he is to me, but for what he is in himself? Are his glorious perfections, his exact justice, his spotless holiness, his inviolable truth and all seeing eye, are these hateful to me, are they lovely and amiable perfections in my sight? Do I love him above all persons, and all things? Would I be content to part with what is dearest to me for him, and rather than to part with him, even though without him I were secured from hell and earth? His holy law, that transcript of his nature, which is so contrary to my corrupt nature, do I love it though it crosseth my corrupt nature, is it holy, just and good in my eyes, even that part of it which condemns and forbids those most beloved lusts of mine? If conscience answers yea to these questions as in the sight of God, then the man has an evidence for heaven, namely, love to God, therefore he is a son and an heir of God.

Finally, He ought upon that scriptural evidence to conclude, therefore God loves me, because he loves them that love him, and my conscience bears me witness that I truly love him. Thus evidences may be gathered on other marks in the way of self-examination. And those that can write would do well to write them.

Now the business of evidences being thus begun, in solemn stated self-examination, they may be increased by daily observation. And there are here two things jointly to be observed.

1. The way of the Lord's dealing with us. This we should carefully notice that we may perceive whether he deals with us as with children or not. "And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever." But it is to little purpose to notice it, if it be not withal compared with the scripture. For from thence only we can learn the way of the Lord's dealing with his own.

2. The way of our souls towards God. This we should also carefully observe that we may perceive whether our way be the way of the Lord's children. And this we cannot know, unless we first notice the way, dispositions and motions of our own souls, and then compare them with the scripture. Thus some have gathered evidences in reading some portion of the Lord's word, as particularly a psalm containing the breathings of a gracious soul towards God, while, in the meantime, they have seen and felt the same breathings in their own spirits, though they could not pretend to the same degree of them. For if one reading such a portion of the Lord's word, do withal read his own heart and soul in the words of the inspired

penman, he may very well conclude he has the same spirit which he had, though not in the same measure.

But because the Lord's way of dealing with a man, as with his own children, does produce in that man that disposition and motion of soul that is in his children, they cannot well be separated, but should be jointly considered, for in this lies the soul's communion with God, which is always a mutual intercourse betwixt the Lord and the soul. Now there are four things I would recommend to the daily observation of Christians, that would add to and increase their evidences procured and fixed in the way of solemn stated self-examination, which I do think ought to proceed as a foundation to all that would have lasting comfort by evidences.

1. The Lord Jesus Christ executing his offices in them. As the child is nourished by the mother in whose womb it is conceived; so those that are brought into the state of grace by closing with Christ in all his offices are preserved and nourished in it, by his executing these offices in them. So far then as you can discern in yourself Christ executing these offices in you, so far you have solid evidence of your faith in, and union with Christ.

If then upon your dependence on the Lord Jesus for light and teaching, you find your souls let into a sanctifying view of spiritual things; for example, of your own sinfulness and nothingness which make you vile, and Christ precious in your eyes; of the evil of sin, to hate it more; of God's majesty and greatness, to fear and love him more; of Christ's excellency, fulness and suitableness so as to prize him, rest in him, and trust in him more; the world's vanity so as to draw your heart more from it unto the Lord. If you find an enlivening light into the holy word conveyed into your hearts, or have any difficulty to be cleared in your way at any time, which you have tabled before the Lord, left with him, and depended on him for clearing it, and have got seasonable light into it: these are plain indications of Christ's exercising his prophetic office in you: I call it a sanctifying view, for all such light from the Lord has a tendency to holiness, which is next to the glory of God, the great scope of all Christ's offices. "I am, said Jesus, the light of the world, he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life." "Did not our heart burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the scriptures."

Again, If at any time your consciences are tried by the fiery law touching upon guilt lying on you, and all your righteousness of doing and suffering, confessing, praying, and repenting, gives way like quick-sand under your feet, so that there is no standing before

the angry God upon them, or any of them, you then feel your sinking soul fixed as on a rock upon the blood of Christ. If you shelter yourself under the covert of his righteousness alone, and by application of that blood recover your peace and confidence with God; and make use of that blood alone as the only refuge against wrath, and lay it as the only foundation of your peace with God, and the only procuring cause of God's favour to you, and in one word, rest under the covert of that blood: that is Christ exercising his priestly office in you.—“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

Finally, If you find that Lord to whom you have given up yourself by providences and ordinances, more and more subduing you to himself in a cordial resignation, and more ready and cheerful obedience to his will: if you find the sovereign authority of his holy laws, because they are his laws, swaying your hearts to his ways; and being sensible of your inability to mortify your corruptions, you depend upon him for this strength, in the use of means appointed by him, and so get your feet upon the necks of them or any of them in some measure. This is Christ executing his kingly office in you, “For the Lord is our Judge, the Lord is our Lawgiver, the Lord is our King; he will save us. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God.”

2. Answers of prayer in the fulfilling of promises depended upon before the Lord. Every answer of prayer is not an evidence for heaven. “And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.” Nor yet every receiving of a thing contained in a promise, as deliverance from trouble; for every thing contained in a promise, that comes to a man, does not come by virtue of the promise, it may come by common providence. But when the mercy contained in a promise is desired of God in prayer, and is drawn out by dependence on the promise through Christ, so that the prayer is answered and the promise fulfilled, that is an evidence for heaven, or of the Lord's love. “Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.” For there is a real communion betwixt God and the soul, the soul depending on God by faith in his word, and God giving to the soul according to his word. And thus the mercy comes in the channel of the covenant, so it is an evidence of the Lord's love; though in itself it be but an ordinary thing, as it were the reconciling and pacifying of an offended neighbour or brother, of which we have a remarkable instance in Jacob and Esau, Gen. xxxiii. 10. And such answers of prayer, as they come in the channel of the holy covenant, so they advance holiness in the heart,

and they bind the soul more to holy obedience. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity ; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping." They also enlarge the heart with thankfulness to the Lord, and make the receiver rejoice more in the giver, than in the gift. "Hannah prayed and said, my heart rejoiceth in the Lord ; mine horn is exalted in the Lord ; my mouth is enlarged over mine enemies ; because I rejoice in thy salvation."

3. The outlettings of the Lord's Spirit into the heart in religious duties. I do the rather take notice of this, that several do give this for their experience in religion and lay weight on it ; namely, That they find that they are not always alike in duties, but sometimes bound up, and sometimes much enlarged. But I fear all that feel this, cannot duly circumstantiate it ; but some way deceive themselves. Know then, nature has its own enlargements as well as grace. The stony ground hearers receive the word with joy. Esau is in a flood of tears when he is seeking the lost blessing. A man may at a time get another heart, like Saul, 1 Sam. x. 9. and yet never get a new heart. But to describe these outlettings that you may see whether they be gracious influences and may pass for evidences. Consider,

1. If they be gracious influences they will be humbling, "Then said I, woe is me ! for I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips : for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." And the more such influences come upon us, the more they will humble the soul. Witness Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 4—11. For the influences of the Spirit are like the waters of the deluge, which the more that they increased, they carried the ark the nearer heaven, and the nearer that the soul comes to God, who is light and in whom is no darkness at all ; the more its sinfulness, weakness, wants, and nothingness must needs appear. But there is a kind of humiliation, which, because it is not deep enough, becomes the foundation of pride of heart. Peter had a touch of it when he said, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." And the humblings which some persons have got, such as they were, have indeed been grounds of lifting them up, like a young beggar that lifts up himself among his neighbours, because he is newly furnished with implements for the trade of begging. Therefore,

2. Gracious influences gradually work out self, and the more they increase, the more they kill self, that great competitor with Christ. "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort ? For all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee." They more and more remove

the rotten grounds of confidence with God, namely, our imperfect performances of duties, meltings of heart, mournings, humiliations, and the like ; that the soul has nothing left it to depend upon, but the blood of Christ ; but his obedience to the law of sufferings unto death. Thus they are brought to rejoice in Christ Jesus and to have no confidence in the flesh. So that the more and the better the Christian does his duty, the less he sees of his own to depend upon.

3. They are sanctifying. They promote holiness in the heart. " And I will pour upon the house of David, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplication ; and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his first born." They are like John Baptist, a burning as well as a shining light. They excite a man to the performance of moral duties required in the ten commandments, making him more conscientious in his duty to God and in his duty to his neighbour also. If a man has been in duties taken into the temple of God, the air of it will appear about him in the substantial duties of morality, when he comes abroad into the world. And whatsoever is without this, is but counterfeit or delusion. For the moral law of love to God and our neighbour, with all the moral duties belonging to it, (as they have been explained to you on the commandments) are the eternal indispensable rules of righteousness, to reduce men to the obedience of which Christ died, and the Spirit is given, and instituted worship is required.

4. The way of providence towards them in common things. " Who is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord." It is in the world as in a family, where the father of the family provides both for children and servants ; but there is something in his way peculiar for the children. I believe there is a speciality in God's way of dispensing common things to his people, which it were worth enquiring into, though perhaps not so easy to find out. But I judge, if a person can observe it to be the ordinary way of providence with him, not to let him come too easily by common mercies, but to put impediments in the way of them, so as to oblige him to carry the matter before God in prayer, and to withhold it from him even then, till he see himself absolutely unworthy of it, and be brought to an entire resignation to the will of God in it, to give it or withhold it ; and even to drive it to the very point of hopelessness, in respect of second causes, that he may have nothing but God himself to trust for it ; and then, even then, seasonably to bring it to his hand ; that man may think that God takes

the way with him that he takes with his own, and it may be a good additional evidence. See the rule, Psal x. 17. "Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble : thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear." And the example in the case of Jacob, Gen. xxxii. See also 2 Cor. i. 8, 9.

3. Use and improve the sacrament of the Lord's supper for this end, because it is appointed, that the Lord's people may be assured that Christ is theirs and with him all things. "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?" In it Jesus Christ condescends to preach his love and good-will to the very eyes of poor doubting Christians, who, sensible of their own vileness and unworthiness, though they desire Christ above all, yet cannot think his desire is towards them. Therefore, that they may not wrong his love any more, by thinking that it can never pitch upon the despicable object, that has nothing with which to hire it, he goes farther with them in the sacrament, than in the word preached. The word brings the report of his love to their ears, the sacrament brings it to their eyes, and what we see affects us more than what we hear. The word speaks only in the general, the sacrament points at every communicant whose soul opens to receive Christ and his love, and says to every one, *broken for you*. It is the profanity among those of the common rabble, and the want of soul exercise among professors, that makes so few communicants while there are so many spectators. A deep sense of personal vileness, and an ardent desire of evidence of the Lord's love, would lay their jay-feathers, that for the faults of others, real or pretended, keep them from the communion table, where the institution of Christ is observed and the sacrament dispensed by ministers sent in his own way.

Question. How may I improve the sacrament for evidence? *Answer,* I have already directed you to self-examination, forget not that in the first place. That being done, Then,

Before you come to the Lord's table, renew your covenant with God and closing with Christ as solemnly, particularly, and diligently, as you are capable ; and take the stones of the place (if you please) where you do it, witnesses to the transaction. And when you are at the table, remember that you receive and close with Christ anew, that you may be the more capable to perceive the real bargain which the sacrament is to seal.

Having thus closed with Christ, look on the bread and wine as seals of the covenant ; and do Christ the honour, when he speaks by his sacramental word, *This is my body broken for you*, to believe him.

—That is, believe Christ is indeed yours, and that his body was really broken for you; and look on that bread and wine as God's seal to it, which he will not deny his own institution, and administered in his name by his messengers called for that effect. If you have no mind to believe it, why will you sit down at that table? If you have, then see you do it. This will honour Christ, and advance your evidence and sanctification. And keep up the belief of it afterwards, and recal to mind the sealed bargain when doubts arise.

Lastly, Pray for the testimony of the Spirit. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirits, that we are the children of God." This is that which may quite raze all doubts and fears. He attests the truth of the scriptures and the truth of grace in the heart. Of the one he says, this is my word; of the other, this is my work. And so lets the soul see without hesitation its title to heaven.

To conclude, This is the way to prepare you for the sacrament, to help you to a holy life, to a safe and comfortable death, and to glorify God and edify others in your death, being capable to give a reason of the hope that is in you. Remember you are warned, stirred up, and directed to this so much neglected, though most necessary duty. Cast not the counsels of God behind your back in your life, lest you hear of it bitterly in your death. "But if you know these things, happy are you if you do them." Amen.

Penpont Communion, May 24, 1716.

THE BLESSEDNESS OF NOT BEING OFFENDED IN CHRIST.

SERMON V.

MATTHEW xi. 6.

And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.

THESE words are the conclusion of our Lord's answer to the question upon which John's disciples came to him. John himself had no doubt of Christ's being the Messiah, for he was his forerunner to point him out to the world; he had baptized him, seen the Spirit descending, and had given testimony to him as the Lamb of God, John i. 29—35. But it seems his disciples were not so firm in the faith, and therefore he sends them to Christ to be from himself fully satisfied in that grand point. And indeed, nothing less than a di-