

SERMON XIX.

OR,

THEY THAT HUNGER ARE BLESSED FOR THE PRESENT.

'Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.'—MAT. v. 6.

THERE are two things yet to be opened about blessedness, and then we shall come fully to the application of it.

They are blessed that do hunger and thirst after righteousness. They are blessed for the present.

First, Blessed, because they are so enlightened to see wherein true excellency doth consist. Blessed are they in comparison of others, that see no higher excellency than to eat and drink, and to have contentment to the flesh. Blessed are they whose eyes God hath opened to see into the excellency of this righteousness, to understand what it means. Those whose eyes God hath opened, and minds the Lord hath enlightened but to see the excellency of this righteousness above all things that can be desired, they bless God for this; and account it the greatest blessing under heaven, next the sight of the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that God hath shewn unto them the beauty, the excellency, and the glory of this righteousness.

Secondly, Blessed are they; they have a magnanimous spirit. The Lord hath given to such a spirit of magnanimity beyond other men. Men's desires are according to their spirits. A man of a poor base spirit doth bound his desires to poor base things; as some men, if they might have but so much money as to drink with their companions, they would look no higher for a blessed life. But now, another man's spirit is risen higher with desires after honours, preferments, and great things. According to the greatness of the things any man's or woman's spirit makes after, so is the greatness of their spirits. Now those whose spirits are after righteousness: first, The righteousness of Jesus Christ; and then that righteousness—that is, the divine nature, the image of God, the life of God, nothing will satisfy them but that. It is not the world nor contentments to the flesh that can satisfy them, but the righteousness of God. Here is an argument of a true magnanimous spirit. An Alexander desires great things, to be conqueror of the world, and then would fain have more worlds to conquer. Why? because

he had a great spirit, and therefore his desires are so great. A Christian hath a great spirit in a true, holy, and gracious sense, and therefore desires great things. It is not all the world that can sanctify³ the spirit of a Christian, it must have righteousness.

Thirdly, This desire after righteousness, it is the seed of God, or rather it is a fruit of some righteousness that is in the soul already, and therefore they are blessed. No soul can thus hunger and thirst after righteousness, but it hath got righteousness already. There is some righteousness in the soul, for everything desires after that that is suitable to its nature. What is it that makes the ox desire grass, or the fish desire water, or the bird desire corn? it is because these are suitable to the nature of these creatures. So a covetous man desires riches, a voluptuous man desires pleasure, an ambitious man desires honour, because suitable to them. So where there is such a desire after righteousness, there is a suitableness between righteousness and the soul; and therefore righteousness is begun already in the soul. That soul that hath a suitableness unto righteousness, certainly hath some principles of righteousness within it, and therefore they are blessed.

Fourthly, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst. Though they do not feel the righteousness that they desire, they are blessed, because in the covenant of grace God accepts of the will for the deed. Now they having righteousness manifested by their desire, they have some principles of it, they are therefore within the covenant of grace; and being within the covenant of grace, they have this blessing, that God accepts of the will for the deed. I beseech you consider of this; it is a great point, the understanding how this privilege doth come of accepting the will for the deed. Those that are under the law have no such privilege. The law requires perfect obedience, or else casts away all; and therefore, for men and women that are ignorant and graceless, have nothing of Christ in them, they yet think that God will accept of their desires, of the will for the

* Query, 'satisfy'?—Ed.

deed. But they are mistaken; this is a privilege that belongs to such as are in the covenant of grace; and it is a purchase of Jesus Christ that God should accept of the will for the deed. Now, those who have such a kind of hunger and thirst after righteousness manifested as before, they have some principles of righteousness in them, and so are under the covenant of grace; they have this privilege, that God accepts of the will for the deed, especially if that hunger and thirst after this righteousness of grace be joined with the hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Christ that before hath been opened to you. Many people who say they would fain do better than they do, yet they never understood what it was to hunger after the righteousness of Christ, and so are not acquainted with the covenant of grace, they cannot have the comfort of this blessedness; but such as having hungered and thirsted after the righteousness of Christ, and so manifested that they are acquainted with the covenant of grace, and now hunger and thirst after the righteousness of sanctification, they may hereby assure themselves that the blessing of the covenant of grace belongs to them, and that God accepts of the will for the deed. Now this is a mighty blessing, for it is a help to the soul in the midst of all infirmities. Though I find never such want of righteousness, yet having hungering and thirsting desires after it, I may comfort myself in this, the blessing of the covenant of grace belongs to me; it is accepted as if I had that very righteousness that I so much hunger and thirst for. And that is the fourth blessedness.

Fifthly, Which is a main thing to be considered of, Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness; because this hunger and thirst of theirs it doth quench sinful and base desires in the soul, it helps to mortify them. There is no such way to mortify sinful desires as by gracious desires, as thus it is so in all other affections. The way to get base, sordid love in the soul to be mortified, it is by love to God and love to Jesus Christ; the way to overcome sinful joy, it is by the joy of the Holy Ghost. So the way for to mortify base, sinful desires in the soul, wandering after this and the other thing, after a thousand vanities and follies in the world, that doth undo the souls of so many thousands, (for certainly the wandering of the desires after vanity and folly is the destruction of thousand of thousands of souls.) is to have their desires right set, to be taken off from vain and base things, and to be set upon righteousness, upon the image of God, and the life of God, and upon the principles of union and communion with God; they are blessed, for here are desires that do quench unlawful desires, sinful, wicked desires, and so doth regulate the soul, so that blessed are they in that respect.

Sixthly, Blessed are they, for this hungering and thirsting after righteousness makes the ordinances of God, and any beginnings of the influences of grace, to be very sweet unto the soul. How sweet is the word to that soul that hungers and thirsts after righteousness! how sweet is any ordinance of God, because all ordinances are the conveyances of grace, appointed so by God, and any influence of grace to such a soul, how sweet is it! When the Lord doth come into the soul in a prayer, or in the word, and doth quicken it a little, or help it with some resolutions against sin, and gives it any power against temptation, how sweet is this to the soul! Blessed is the soul that hath this hunger, for it sweetens all ordinances, all beginnings of influence of grace.

Blessed are those souls that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they have many gracious invitations unto the Lord and unto Christ, to come in to receive mercy. The Lord invites those souls to come to him; and as they therefore said in the Gospel to the poor blind man, Be of good comfort, he calleth thee, so I say to all such as can approve their souls, that though there be much weakness in them, yet if there be this hunger and thirst after righteousness, Be of good comfort, the Lord calls you, you are invited to come. I will give you these scriptures for invitation: in Isaiah lv., (that known scripture), 'Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money,' no worthiness, 'come ye, buy and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money, and without price.' The grace of God is compared to these excellent things, and here is a proclamation to all that hunger and thirst to come unto the waters. These waters are both the righteousness of Jesus Christ and the righteousness of sanctification. And in John vii. 37 is another invitation. It is said, 'That in the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.' Mark, Christ cries unto those that hunger and thirst. They, it may be, are under some discouragements, because they cannot find that righteousness they do desire. Christ calls unto them, 'Come unto me.' Surely they are blessed that Christ doth invite to himself, and that by crying to them that they should come to him; and that place in Rev. xxii. 17, quoted for the righteousness of Christ, and so likewise is an invitation to them that hunger and thirst after this righteousness.

Eighthly, As they are blessed because they are invited, so they are blessed because they are under many promises. There are many promises to the hungering and thirsting soul: I will give you some few; in Ps. x. 17, 'Lord, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart.' The desire of such as are humble thou hast heard it; God hears it, and he prepares their heart. 'Thou wilt cause

thine ear to hear; thou preparest their heart.' These desires that they have, they are of thy preparation; thou dost prepare their heart with these desires, and thou wilt cause thine ear to hear. And then, in Ps. xxii. 26, 'The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek him; your heart shall live for ever.' They shall praise the Lord that seek him; who are they but those that hunger and thirst after him? Here is a promise, they shall praise God. You are now altogether in way of seeking, in hungering and thirsting. Here is a promise that you shall praise, and that your heart shall live for ever. There is a principle of life begun, and your heart shall live for ever. You think that, because of so much corruption that there is in your hearts, that you shall at length fall off, die, vanish, and come to nothing; but they shall praise the Lord that seek him, and your hearts shall live for ever. You shall praise God one day for these desires, for this hungering and thirsting; that is another promise. And then, in Isa. xli. 17, 'When the poor and the needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them, but I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water, &c. And I will set in the desert the fir-tree, the pine, and the box, together.' Mark how God's heart is in this promise to those that thirst. And we are to know that by these expressions of outward things, spiritual things are couched under them, for that was the way in the times of the Old Testament especially, that the Lord promised the graces of the gospel most under outward things, in an external way, but spiritual blessings were couched under them. And there is two things that I would observe in this promise. The first is, how many times God expresseth himself and saith, I will do this for thee; I, I, I will do it. In ver. 17, there you have I, I, twice: 'I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.' Then in ver. 18, 'I will open rivers in high places, and I will make the wilderness a pool of water,' &c. Then there is a fifth and sixth I in ver. 19, 'I will plant in the wilderness the cedar, and I will set in the desert the fig-tree,' &c. I will do these things for such as hunger, as thirst after me; they shall have water. Six times in a very few words of Scripture God saith, I, I, I, I, I, I will do it; as if he should say, Poor hungering, thirsting soul, you cannot see how it can be done; you find your heart so vile, corruption so prevailing, that you are ready to think it impossible it should be done, but I, I, I, I, I, I will do it. The second thing to be opened is, that the Lord takes away the objections that might discourage hungering and thirsting souls. Say they, How shall I come to have this righteous-

ness? I live in such a place where we have no means—we have no ministry at all, or to little purpose. I want the means. Let not that discourage thee, 'I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys: I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' Alas! thirsty people that are in the wilderness, what shall become of them? I will make the wilderness pools of water, and the dry land springs of water, saith God. Perhaps you may come to some places and hear the excellency of the gospel displayed before you, and you may think, Had we but the gospel so preached among us—as no question many poor people that have been forced to fly to this place for refuge have had such thoughts—if God would but send the gospel of the preaching of the excellency of Christ among us, how should we be satisfied! But how shall our souls be satisfied when we have not this? Mark this promise and make use of it, 'I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water.' God can bring into your wilderness, and to your dry land, those springs of water that may refresh and satisfy your souls. And then, in Isa. xlv. 3, 'For I will pour water upon him that is thirsty,' saith God, 'and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thine offspring.' Here is an excellent promise, even to you and your seed; for that is a most uncharitable and a very evil opinion, that is much against the covenant of grace, and doth much darken the glory of the covenant of grace, for men to say that the children of believers—of the godly—have no more promise, and are in no sense in covenant with God, no more than any other. These, besides others, that God promises to 'circumcise their hearts, and the heart of their seed;' and here, 'I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground: I will pour my Spirit upon thy seed, and my blessing upon thy offspring;' so that the seed even of the hungerers and thirsters after righteousness, they are blessed. And it may be thou that art now hungering and thirsting, and perhaps all thy lifetime continest so, it may be the Lord will grant these things unto thy seed after thee, that thou hast been praying for thine own soul. Thou shalt have as much as may save thee, and as much as shall satisfy thee, but for the particular of these things that thou hast been praying for, it may be God will grant it to thy seed after thee. But here is a promise that God will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. And how lightly soever a carnal heart may think of the promises of the gospel, yet such as are gracious would not give their portion in them for a thousand worlds. Such a promise as this they would embrace, and make account that their riches consists more in it than the riches of a covetous man in many bonds

and bills that he hath of many hundreds and thousands.

But the main thing wherein they are blessed is in that which Christ saith, 'They shall be satisfied.' And we have many promises for this besides this of Christ. In Prov. x. 24. 'The desire of the righteous shall be granted.' In Ps. cxlv. 19, there is another promise, that 'God will fulfil the desire of them that fear him;' and in Ps. cxiii. 9. 'He satisfieth the longing soul; and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.' They shall be satisfied; how is that? Thus.

First, So far all hungering souls in this world shall be satisfied, if they shall find such contentment in the ways of righteousness, as their hearts shall never turn quite out of those ways, whatever temptations they meet with. Certainly this is some satisfaction; certainly there is some satisfaction in a soul when it is in such a way as no temptation can possibly draw it out of that way. If there be a bee that fastens upon a flower, and is sucking of honey, if it cannot be got off of that flower, certainly the bee finds sweetness and honey there; so all those that have but the least beginnings of true grace, though they be hungering after more, they would fain have more, yet they find so much satisfaction as they will never turn into the ways of unrighteousness again—they will never leave the paths of God. It may be thou art complaining, and sayest, I have been desiring for many years, Oh that I might overcome such a corruption, that I might be enabled to serve God with more freedom of spirit and cheerfulness, but I cannot get anything; I find I do not grow, I get little. Why, then, temptation comes; if you can get nothing, if you strive and labour, and desire, and pray, and can get nothing, leave off all, saith temptation, and go to your former course again. God forbid, saith the gracious soul, I will never turn to my former ways; for though I cannot get what I would, yet I have a thousand thousand times more peace and contentment than ever I had in any former ways, and that is some satisfaction.

Secondly, again. Those that hunger and thirst after righteousness, they shall have grace growing. There shall be more and more grace; grace shall be always coming in. Perhaps they shall not be always sensible of it, but they shall have grace coming in to uphold them at least, if so be not so fully as to comfort them so as they desire, yet grace is coming in. And so their spirits are kept still a-working after grace, and they find something to uphold their hearts, though not so fully to comfort them as they would.

Thirdly, there is certainly a time when all these hungering souls shall be in a sensible way satisfied to the full—that is, there is a time coming wherein thou shalt never sin more, wherein thou shalt never be troubled with that wretched heart of thine, with that

proud, stubborn, carnal, distrustful heart of thine; there is a time coming wherein thou shalt serve God as much as thou wilt, as much as thou dost desire; thou shalt do God as much service as thou canst desire to do him; thou shalt have as much grace as thou canst desire to have. Certainly that is a blessed time, and that will satisfy the souls of any that are gracious, that there is a time coming that they shall serve God as much as they can. Thou shalt have, as it were, thy belly full; thou art now a vessel of mercy, and shalt be filled full with the grace of God in thee; and the very thoughts of this, that there is such a time a-coming, doth in a great measure satisfy the soul for the present; how will the soul then be satisfied when that time is come? 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness: they shall be satisfied.'

Now, for application, here is a use of comfort and encouragement to those that hunger and thirst after righteousness.

This hunger and thirst of thine after righteousness, be comforted in it; it is a sign of life. If the child cry for the breast, surely it is alive: 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that they may grow thereby.' It is a sign that thou art a new-born babe at least; that is the expression of the apostle in 1 Pet. ii. 2. 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' Here is an argument of a new-born babe. Wherefore is it that thy soul doth desire so much after the word? Is it not that thou mightest grow thereby? What is that? thou mayest have more power over thy corruptions, and be more enabled to serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness all the days of thy life; thou art a new-born babe, there is life.

Secondly, It is a good sign of a thriving Christian; not only of a living Christian, but of a thriving Christian. As you find it by experience in the body, when a man or woman begins to have a good appetite to their meat, to be hungry, we say, then they mend. A man that begins to have a stomach, to be hungry, and to taste his beer, he begins now to thrive; so it is with the soul. Thou hast not that growth that thy soul desires, but hast thou a stomach to thy meat, canst thou taste thy drink, canst thou taste the waters of life, canst thou say, These are sweet, oh that I might have more, I am athirst and desire after more? When thou comest to the word, thou gettest some milk to nourish thee, and thou hungerest after more. It is an argument that thou art in a thriving condition, it is a sign of health, that thy soul is hale, that thou hast not those distempers and corruptions that other men have. Other men whose souls are clogged with the lusts of the flesh and the desires of the world, the preferments, hon-

ours, riches, pleasures of it, they could be without the word if it were for a whole twelvemonth together, but only through custom they come and hear, whereas the poor hungry soul, when it hath been at the word but one day, it longs for the time to have another meal's meat, and for another meal's meat, and cannot tell how to spare one meal's meat. Now that is a sign that such a soul is in a thriving condition; be then encouraged from this.

Thirdly, There is an infinite fountain of grace that is set open for poor souls. Thou that hungerest and thirstest after righteousness, there is an infinite fountain of grace, and there is bread enough in thy Father's house. Thou needest not seek to satisfy thy soul with busks, there is bread enough: 'My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed.' Jesus Christ is an infinite fountain of all grace; he is filled with all the fulness of God, and to that end, that from him hungering and thirsting souls might be satisfied, therefore Christ is thus filled: John i. 16, 'Of his fulness have all we received grace for grace.' There is grace answerable unto the grace of Christ, to be received from his fulness; and though it is true there is emptiness in thy own heart, and emptiness in all ordinances any further than Christ is in them, yet there is a fountain of grace for thy satisfying—an infinite fountain, that hath been the fountain from whence all hungering souls since the world began have been satisfied; and it is open for thee, and thou mayest come as freely for it as ever any soul did, to take that that may satisfy thy soul.

Fourthly, These hungering desires of thine are raised by no other than the Holy Ghost himself. In Rom. viii. it is the Holy Ghost that teaches us how to pray and send up groans and sighs unutterable; it is the Spirit of God that helps our infirmities. Now, in these hungerings and thirstings of thine, hast not thou been in the presence of God sending up groans and sighs unutterable? Surely thy petitions are like to be heard, that are indited by the Holy Ghost himself. When thou art crying for this bread of life to overcome thy sin, to enable thee to walk before God in holy duties, these sighs and groans unutterable are from the Holy Ghost. It may be thou canst not express these desires of thine, as a man that is hunger-starved he is not able to express the fulness of his desires after bread or drink, but though this be thy case, yet know, the Lord having stirred up those unutterable desires by his Spirit, he knows the meaning of his Spirit.

Fifthly, Your desires and God's meet. There is nothing in the world that God doth more feely bestow than righteousness. The Lord is more free and willing to bestow the righteousness of his Son (that was spoke to before) and the righteousness of his Spirit, than he is willing to bestow a piece of

bread. Thou mayest as soon have one from God as the other, for his heart is in one more than in the other. Thou desirest that thou mightest overcome sin, that thou mightest serve the Lord in holiness and righteousness, and God desires the same thing. God's heart and thy heart meet together in one.

Sixthly, If God will fill vacuities in nature, and will hear the ravens when they cry unto him, will he not fill the emptiness of thy soul? God hath so ordered things in nature that there shall be no vacuity. Philosophers say 'that the world will sooner fall to nothing than there should be the least emptiness in the world,' but it must be filled with something or other. Now hath the Lord so appointed that there must not be the least vacuity in nature, but there must be something to fill it, surely the Lord will not suffer a vacuity in an immortal soul; but he hath something to fill that soul of thine that is empty for the present, and the Scripture tells us that the Lord fills every living thing with his blessing, and shall not a soul that hungers after righteousness, and the image of God, and the grace of the Spirit of God, shall it not be satisfied? shall God regard to satisfy the hunger of a raven, and give water to a raven that cries, and shall he not satisfy an immortal soul that hungers after that that is his own image, that he might overcome sin, and serve him in holiness and righteousness? Certainly the Lord will satisfy thee.

Seventhly, Yet further the Lord bids us, that if our enemy hunger, we should give him meat, and if he thirst, we should give him drink, Rom. xii. 20. This is the charge of God. Will the Lord give a charge to us poor creatures, that when our enemy hungers, we must give our enemy meat, and when our enemy thirsts, give him drink, and shall not God himself, the infinite fountain of all mercy, when a child hungers, give meat, and when a child thirsts, give drink? Saith Christ, 'If you that are evil know how to give good things to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father,' &c. Certainly, if so be thou hungerest and thirstest after righteousness, God will not deny thee when thou hungerest after that. He will give thee bread, he will give thee drink, for the satisfying of thy soul. We must do it to our enemies. The Lord will much more do it to the soul that desires above all things in the world to be reconciled to him.

Eighthly, Be of comfort in this, you that are hungerers and thirsters, these hungerings and thirstings of yours will make you to be praying Christians. They are mighty ingredients in prayer; and it is a very great blessing to be a praying Christian, especially in these times. There are no such praying Christians as your hungering and thirsting Christians, that find the want of the righteousness, both of the Son of God and the Spirit of God. These are great

prayers in Israel. We have many that will enlarge themselves to God in prayer; but for a prayer to come from a hungering and thirsting soul, it is a prayer worth a hundred of those prayers that come from parts and memory.

Ninthly, Know further, that the ordinances of Jesus Christ are appointed to thee. There is a time when Jesus Christ will satisfy thy soul immediately; till that time comes he hath appointed his ordinances, his word, and sacraments, for the satisfying these hungering and thirsting souls. And comfort thyself in this, O blessed Saviour, I hope to have full communion with thee hereafter; but for the present thou hast not left me destitute, and I will take what thou hast left me thankfully for the present, expecting a more immediate satisfaction from thee hereafter. Now as I have laboured to encourage those that are hungry and thirsty,

Secondly, I desire to propound some considerations to quicken our appetites after these desires of righteousness. You that have hungered and thirsted, take heed that you lose not your appetite and stomach. There was a time that you had a strong stomach after righteousness; have you so still? Take heed of losing it. When you come home, and find not yourself well, and have no stomach to your meat, your wife and children about you begin to be afraid, and you are troubled, saying, I have lost my stomach to my meat. It is many times a forerunner of death, and so it may be of the death of the soul. Lose not your appetites, but labour to quicken them. Now these considerations will serve to quicken your appetites after this righteousness that we are speaking of; I speak to those I suppose have grace. Do not think thus: I hope God hath wrought some beginnings of grace, and that may serve my turn. No; but hunger and thirst after much. Lord, more, more grace! Thou hast begun somewhat; oh that I might have more!

First, Consider, Thou dost not know what work God may call thee to before thou diest; and therefore it is not for Christians to have a little grace, but they should desire after much. You may be called to a great deal of work. A little grace will help thee to do a little work, a great deal of grace will but help to do much work. These are times that God calls all his people to do much work. And it may be thou mayest live to such times as thou mayest be called to do more work than ever thou wert called to, and therefore be hungering after more. Lord, strengthen me with more grace, that I may be enabled to do all the service that thou shalt call me to.

Secondly, Others who have begun since you in the profession of religion, they have outgone you, they have got a great deal more than you. Perhaps thou hast been a kind of professor these twenty or thirty

years, or more. Now, how many young ones that have begun since thou, though abundance of them vanish away in disputes and errors, yet some are very gracious and godly, and oh how much of Christ, of God, of heavenliness, of savouriness, of wisdom, of holiness, have they got within a few years, more than thou hast got for this twenty or thirty years! Then hadst not thou need to be hungering and thirsting after more?

Thirdly, By this means, the more grace thou hast, the more good thou shalt do to others. It is not enough to have grace merely to carry thee to heaven, but that thou mayest be useful in the place where God hath set thee. Weak Christians may make shift to uphold themselves here in this world, and to get to heaven with much ado; but strong Christians are useful to others, and do abundance of good to others. Oh that I might have grace, then, to do good to others!

Fourthly, Consider what strong hungerings and thirstings you have had heretofore after the things of the world. Lord, I remember that in former times my heart was carnal, and what strong desires I had after the world. How did my thoughts run about my business, in my calling, that so I might thrive and prosper, and have good comings in. Lord, thou knowest that many times after base sinful lusts my soul hath been strong in the desires of them; and shall not now my soul be strong in the desires after thy righteousness?

Fifthly, Know it is impossible for thee to have a heaven upon earth. All Christians may come to have a heaven upon earth, here in this world. There is such a condition wherein our hearts may be filled with joy unspeakable and glorious, in believing, in the ways of godliness; but now this cannot be by weak grace. There must be strength of grace, whereby the soul of a Christian may be in heaven while they are upon the earth, and converse with God, his angels, and saints here in this world, as if they were in heaven. This may be had, and therefore hunger still, and thirst after further degrees of righteousness.

Sixthly, It is the only way to help thee against temptations, to grow strong in grace. Thou that hast but a little grace, thou art liable to temptations on every hand, and the devil is ready to foil thee in this and the other thing; but by strength of grace thou mayest be able to resist temptations—and it is a great mercy in this dangerous time wherein we live to resist temptations. A weak, sickly man or woman, they had need of a staff, they are ready to stumble at every stone; and so a weak Christian is ready to stumble at every offence. But a man that hath got strength, he can go steadily; and so strong Christians they are able to do it; and therefore you find that St. Peter, when he would give a rule how men

should come to be steadfast, in the Second Epistle, iii. 17, 18, he saith, 'Beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace,' &c. As if the Christian should say, How should we take heed that we fall not from our steadfastness! Notwithstanding the many errors there are in the times wherein we live, saith he, 'Grow in grace.' There is in these days a deluge of errors in the world, and they catch young ones, weak people, and women, and so they come to fall from their own steadfastness; but the way to prevent this is to grow in grace, hunger after more, keep your appetites after more, and let your prayers and your endeavours be after increase of righteousness, that so you may keep your steadfastness.

Seventhly, By the increase of grace you will be able to have a more abundant entrance into heaven when you die: you will die with more peace, and have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. It is not by having a little grace: though you may get to heaven, yet you cannot have that abundant entrance into heaven, as in 2 Pet. i. 5, 'And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity; for if these things be in you and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor

unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. 'Wherefore,' saith he in the 10th verse, 'the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, ye shall never fall; for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' The apostle would have us add one grace to another. Have you got one grace? then labour for, and add more and more thereby you shall make your calling and election sure thereby you shall never fall, but be helped against your many doubts and fears, and the power which the devil hath had over you; the way to help against them is, by adding one grace to another, and growing up still in the ways of godliness; and by that means, saith he, 'an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' As if he should say, The broad gates of heaven shall be set open to you. As you know in great men's houses ordinarily you have the wicket, the little gate, opened; but if great men, earls, and princes should come, the broad gates are set open; so it is true God will admit to heaven where there is the least grace; but they are fain to crowd in with many discouragements, but those that have got a great deal of grace, an abundant entrance is made open for them. Oh, you Christians that have any beginnings of grace, still, still be hungering and thirsting to get more, more righteousness; for it will help you to an abundant entrance into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ!