

SERMON XXXIV.

OR,

PRINCIPLES FOR SUFFERING.

'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'—MAT. v. 10.

I SHALL not look back to anything; there are these things further in the text. First, I shall endeavour to give unto you some principles for suffering—that is, some considerations that may help the people of God to be willing and able to suffer for righteousness' sake. Second, We shall open the blessedness of this—what a blessed thing it is to suffer for righteousness' sake. Thirdly, Conclude the verse with some application.

For the first, then: To lay down some suffering principles—that is, some considerations whereby the people of God may be fitted and prepared for sufferings; for we know not what God may call us to, and there is none but in some degree or other are some time or other called to sufferings, (I mean, that are godly.)

Wherefore the first principle to enable Christians to suffer for righteousness is, that we should look on ourselves as sent into the world for this end, especially to bear witness to the truth. That is the first principle; as a great end for which we were born, for which we live, that we might be witnesses of God to his truth. Surely, if it were Christ's end, he accounted it the end for which he was sent into the world, we have cause to account it ours too. That scripture in John xviii. 37 plainly shews it, 'To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth.' It is a notable scripture, and certainly all those that profess themselves to be the disciples of Christ should make much use of this scripture, 'For this end came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth.' Bear witness any way. Christ did not bear witness in an active way only, but in a passive also; and he speaks of this when he was called to suffer before Pilate. Oh that Christians were well principled in this, that every one that professes himself a Christian would think thus: Wherefore was I born, wherefore came I into the world? Surely not that I should eat and drink and live bravely in the world; that was not the end for which I was born; I was born for a higher, a more noble end, that I should be a witness of God to bear witness to his truth. And if this

were the end for which I was born, then it is fit that God should call me to witness any way whatsoever, by doing or suffering; that I should be willing to do it, for I attain my end for which I was born in it, and, above all, witness for the truth. The witness by way of suffering is the most glorious witness. Saith Cyprian, concerning the martyrs that were persecuted, 'They confessed with a glorious voice.' When men confess the truth by words, from the truth in their hearts, God accepts it; but when they come to witness to the truth by sufferings, this is a glorious profession of the truth, and unto it; and herein doth a Christian attain the end for which he was born. That is the first suffering principle.

The second suffering principle is this, It is better to lose for God than to enjoy for ourselves. Let Christians but throughly principle themselves in these things, and you will find it an easy matter to suffer anything for Christ. It is better for a man that hath an estate to lose it for God than to enjoy it for himself; better to lose our liberties for God than to enjoy them for ourselves; better to lose our credit, our honour, for God than to enjoy them for ourselves; our pleasures and delights for God than to enjoy them for ourselves. Yea, I remember that Pliny, in his Epistle Dedicatory to Vespasian, he speaks of a heathen, Cato, that did profess he did more rejoice in the estate that he parted withal for justice, that he would not receive in way of bribes, than he did in what estate he did enjoy himself. Shall a heathen profess to rejoice more in what he parts withal for the maintenance of justice than in what he enjoyed, and shall not Christians account it better to part with anything in way of honouring of God, and doing service for him, than in enjoying of it to themselves? When any are called to suffer, for them to look upon what they are like to part with—Why, I have an estate, I may live comfortably, and shall I lose this now in this way? Why, friend, do not account it loss if thou dost part with it for God; it is the best part of thy estate. If a man loses but a limb for his country, why, that man is accounted

more beautiful in that part of his body than elsewhere. I remember ecclesiastical histories tells us of Constantine, when he came in the council, and saw one that had lost his eye for the profession of religion, he presently falls upon him, and kisses that place, as accounting that to be the most beautiful place of his face; and so certainly Christians should account it so, and never bless God more that they have an estate or credit and esteem and liberty, or a life, than when they are called to part with these things for God. I am now a happier man in the loss of these things for God than ever I was in my life in the enjoyment of them. But this, I confess, is a mystery and a riddle to carnal hearts. Only those that are truly gracious and godly, they know what this principle means.

Thirdly, Whosoever suffers anything for God, in the midst of all their sufferings they are in a better case than their persecutors. As now, when you read of any of the martyrs that were called before their persecutors, they came in all their bravery, and sat upon the bench, and glistened in their silks and satins, and spake what they list, and enjoyed themselves to the full, and had reverence and respect of all the people—they seemed to be brave; but a company of poor Christians come before them out of the prison, tattered and ragged, and stand at the bar, and answer for their lives. Now you shall have many poor people, they think these poor creatures that stand in such a miserable condition to the eye of flesh, that they are in the worst condition, but the others are happy. Oh but a Christian's eye sees quite otherwise, that looks upon the persecutors as the most miserable, wretched, forlorn, undone creatures, and look upon the saints as the most glorious creatures. It is a notable scripture that you have in Heb. xi. latter part, 'Others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings; yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheep-skins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Were not these miserable creatures? Though flesh and blood would count them miserable creatures, yet mark what the Holy Ghost's judgment is of them: ver 38, 'Of whom the world was not worthy.' They were so happy when they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins that the world was not worthy of them. It is not so of their persecutors. They were vile; as I remember it is said of Antiochus Epiphanes, 'And in his estate shall stand up a vile person.' Though he was a mighty prince, yet, being a persecutor of the saints, he is called a vile person; and these who are thus persecuted are said, by the Spirit of God, to be such as the world was not worthy of them.

Fourthly, That it is a great deal better to suffer for Christ than to suffer for sin. Why, now, this consi-

deration hath a great deal of power in it; for when thou art called to suffer anything in the cause of Christ, thou mayest think thus: Why, the Lord might have left me to myself, that I might have suffered as much for my sin, for my wickedness, as now I am called to suffer for Jesus Christ. I am called, it may be, to suffer the loss of some part of my estate: why, I might have been converted for my sin, and by the hand of justice I might have had my estate taken from me. I am in prison; I might have been in prison for my wickedness. I am in danger of my life; God might have given me up to such a sin as I might, by the hand of justice, have had my life taken from me. Now, how much better is this, when I do stand here to lose for Christ, that might have lost for my sin. I that am in danger of my life that I may testify my respect to Christ, I might have been in danger by my sin. Oh what a blessed thing is this rather than the other: this consideration hath a mighty deal of power in it.

Fifthly, That God may make me suffer in spite of my heart. If I find a reluctance in me to come off to suffer for Christ, I may be forced in spite of my heart to do it; and what comfort shall I then have in it? How much better is it to suffer freely and willingly for Jesus Christ than to be forced to suffer? and then there will be no exercise of grace in it, but I shall be merely passive. As I remember, the 'Book of Martyrs' hath such a story of one that was a smith, that was a means, in King Edward's time, to convert and turn another to the truth. Now, in Queen Mary's time the persecutors did seize upon him that was converted by him, and he was cast into prison, and stood out in his sufferings in witnessing for Christ. Now this man sends for him that was the means of his conversion, and wondered how he escaped all the while; for you, saith he, was the man that told me these things. Now this man sends word back to him again: I confess those things that I told you are truth, but I cannot burn, saith he. But yet this man, though he would not burn for Christ, afterwards his house was set on fire by some accident, and he was burned in his own house; and so Christ made him burn whether he would or no. Now, how much better had it been for this man to have burned for Christ. If you will not suffer any loss of your estate for Christ, Christ can make you suffer; he can set fire on your houses, and take away your estates by some providence or other. Christ can lay afflictions upon you, and diseases upon you. You are loath to venture yourselves for him; he can lay those things upon you that will be greater evils than those things that he called you to suffer for his name sake. Consider of this, that God can make you suffer whether you will or no. Oh it is better, therefore, freely and readily to give up ourselves to suffer for Jesus Christ!

Sixthly, No creature hath any good in it any further than it is enjoyed in God, and improved for God. That is a sixth suffering principle. When God gives me the use of a creature, and I enjoy it in God, in the love and favour of God, then there is some good in it; or if I can in any way make use of it to improve it for the honour and praise of God, then there is comfort in it indeed. But now take away these two things in any creature that any man in the world enjoys, and there is no good at all in it—it is but a mere empty shell. As thus: thou hast such and such comforts in the creature, but dost thou enjoy anything of God in them, or dost thou enjoy them for God? Then they are good; but without this they are nothing but emptiness—there is nothing but wind in them. Now, then, if I be called to suffer in the cause of Christ, this is, as it were, to me a loud voice from heaven. This creature that now you are called to part withal in witness to my truth, you can enjoy me no further in it, nor you can improve it no further in the enjoyment of it, but in the parting with it. Now that that had a goodness in it before in the enjoyment of it, hath now the goodness in it in parting from it. That is a sixth principle; and were we principled aright in this, how easy were it to part with any creature-comfort in the cause of Christ.

Seventhly, The seventh suffering principle is this, There is no sufferings of any of the saints that they are called unto at any time, but they are ordered by God, for the time of the suffering, for the kind of the suffering, the continuance of the suffering, the instruments of the suffering. Everything in every suffering, it is ordered by God beforehand, determined by him how it shall be; that at such a time such a man shall suffer, and not such a man, and by such means and not other means, and in such a kind, and so long to continue, and no longer. You know that in the Revelation, Satan shall cast some of you into prison for ten days. He shall cast but some of you, not all; and he shall but cast you into prison, and not take away your lives; and this shall be but ten days neither. Now this consideration is a mighty strengthening consideration to the sufferings of the saints, as it was to Christ, that all his sufferings were determined beforehand. It was a strengthening to him; so certainly it is to the saints, to consider that all their sufferings are determined beforehand and ordered by God. Therefore you know what Christ saith, 'Shall I not drink the cup that my Father hath given me to drink?' He spake it of his sufferings; and so should every one that is called to suffer for the truth reason thus with themselves, and beat down any risings of their spirits against those sufferings. 'Shall I not drink the cup that my Father hath given me to drink?' It is a

bitter cup indeed that my friends should hate me, that I should prejudice my estate, and prejudice my liberty, and all these outward comforts, and live a miserable life for outwards in this world. Ay, but 'shall I not drink the cup that my Father hath given me to drink?' That is the seventh principle.

Eighthly, That whenever we suffer for Christ, Christ suffers with us; we are partakers of his sufferings, and he is partaker of our sufferings: in Isa. lxiii. 9, 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted.' Why, it is a great support and comfort to one to think, Why, my friends do sympathise with me, and are affected with my sufferings. Know now that Jesus Christ doth sympathise with you in your sufferings; yea, he suffers as much as you, ay, and more than you, in all your sufferings; and therefore it is said of Moses, 'that he accounted the reproach of Christ greater riches.' The consideration now that they are Christ's sufferings, is many ways useful to help the soul in sufferings; for not only that Christ will pity them, and compassionate them, but certainly Christ suffering with them, he will help them to bear them too. Why? because they are his own sufferings, and therefore he will order thy sufferings, and moderate them. Thou canst never suffer in the cause of Christ, but Christ doth bear the weightiest end of the staff; this now is a mighty help against sufferings, and support in it.

Ninthly, There is more evil in sufferings before they come, in imagination, than when they are come. How many that have been imprisoned for a good cause, have professed they never thought imprisonment was so easy to bear as now they find it; and so loss of estate and loss of friends, they are indeed terrible before they come, but usually when they are upon the saints they find them not so hard and grievous to them.

Tenthly, That there is more evil in the least sin than in the greatest afflictions. It is an ill choice to choose the least sin rather than the greatest affliction. If sufferings be presented to thee, and thou art afraid of them, thou thinkest them terrible, why, the least vain thought of thy mind is a greater evil than all the torments that all the persecutors in the world can inflict upon you. You will say, this is hard. This is a riddle indeed to carnal hearts. A riddle! why, my text itself is a riddle; and therefore no marvel though we speak things that carnal hearts cannot understand. But certainly those to whom God hath ever made known the dreadful evil that there is in sin, they cannot but be, and are in some measure sensible of it, that there is more evil in any one sin than in any afflictions whatsoever; and therefore they had rather to endure the greatest sufferings, than willingly to commit the least known sin. It may be some of you account

light of sin, and can upon every little temptation be drawn to the commission of it. Well, but how lightly soever you make of sin, those that are the saints of God, that know what sin means, they had rather endure all the torments that can be devised in the world than to commit any one known sin wilfully. Certainly there is a great deal of difference between thy apprehension and theirs. I beseech you, brethren, lay up this tenth suffering principle, (for so I call them;) lay up as many as you can remember, and desire those that do remember or take them to help you with them, that you may lay them to your hearts, and lay them up by you against the time that God may call you to suffer for his truths.

But that in the text hath much in it: 'Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake.' There is a great blessing in suffering: that we may add as an eleventh, That suffering for Christ is a great blessing; and that is the point in the text—it is a gift of God; 'it is given to you, not only to believe, but to suffer.' It is a greater gift to be enabled to suffer for Christ, than to be enabled to do anything in the world for him. If Christ should enable you to work miracles, it were not so great a gift, if you were enabled to raise the dead out of their graves, as for Christ to give you a suffering heart. Whosoever Christ gives a suffering heart to, let such a one know he hath received a great gift from Jesus Christ. You think it an excellency to be able to pray; to be able to suffer is more. I remember we read of one of the martyrs, that when he was called to argue for the truth, I cannot dispute for it, saith he, but I can die for it, that is more. It is more to be able to suffer for the truth than to preach of it; yea, to practise the truth, it is a blessed thing. Now the Scripture is very plentiful in this argument, to shew the blessedness that there is in suffering. In Acts v. 41, 'They went away rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer shame for his name.' Read Luke vi. 22, 23: Christ would have his disciples rejoice and leap for joy when they came to suffer anything. Read 2 Cor. xi. 23: when the apostle would glory in that that he accounted his excellency, observe what it is he glories in. Saith he, 'Are they ministers of Christ? I speak as a fool; I am more.' He falls a-glorying because he was disparaged by the false teachers. More, how? 'In labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep. In journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren,' &c. Now the scope of the apostle was to shew his glory. He

did not glory in this so much, I have parts more than they, or I have learning more than they, or I have honours. No; but I suffer more for Christ than they. Oh, it is a blessed thing to suffer for Christ; and so in chap. xii. 10, 'Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake.' I take pleasure; it is a delightful, a pleasant thing to me. Oh, I account it a most blessed thing in suffering anything for Christ's sake. Saith Tertullian, in the primitive times, 'Your cruelty is our glory, our blessedness, our happiness.' 'I desire to know nothing,' saith Paul, 'but Christ'—ay, there is a great deal of excellency in him—'but Christ and him crucified.' Christ and his cross; I glory in that above all—that I know Christ, and that I know him practically.

Now for the blessedness that there is in suffering, many things might be said, but I shall but present before you some short view of what blessedness there is in suffering persecution.

First, If God gives thee a heart to suffer for him, thou hast in this a full evidence of the truth of thy graces, yea, and of the strength and the eminency of thy graces. Thou givest witness to all the world that thou art one that lovest Christ in sincerity, and that thy graces are strong and powerful; that thou art not as an hypocrite that will fall off in the time of trial; that thou art not as a rotten bough of a tree, that when it hath a weight upon it breaks presently. No; but that thou hast the Spirit of Christ and the strength of Christ with thee, that thy graces are of the right stamp. This thou dost declare to all the world; and it is a blessed thing to give evidence before men and angels, before the world, and before thine own conscience, that indeed thy heart is upright with Christ, and that thy graces are stronger than thou thoughtest thyself, it may be, they were. Many that are afraid of sufferings before they are called, yet when they are called to it, they find ability to go through more than ever they did imagine; and this is a blessed thing.

Secondly, There is a great deal of honour in suffering. It is a speech of Ignatius, 'I had rather be a martyr than a monarch;' and so you know Moses chose 'rather to suffer with the people of God, than to enjoy all the pleasures and riches of Egypt.'

But above others, this is very remarkable. Chrysostom, speaking of the commendations of Paul, and in the setting out of his praises, he doth especially insist upon his sufferings, and professes if it were given to him either to hear him speak out of heaven or the prison, he had rather hear him speaking out of the prison than out of heaven. And in another place, saith he, Paul was lifted up to the highest heavens, and there he heard words that were unutterable. Ay, but Paul in the prison, saith he, was a great deal more

glorious than when he was lift up to the highest heavens. When he was cast into prison, there he was more glorious than when he heard those words that were unutterable, and such kind of expressions he hath further about him. I remember, in the primitive times, reading of Tertullian, when he was to speak to those that suffered for Christ, It is not for me—I am not great enough to be able to speak to such glorious creatures as you are. Yea, and they were bound, in honour to the martyrs, to go creeping to their very chains, and kiss them in honour to them. When Chrysostom was speaking of Tabeus, a martyr, he speaks, If it be lawful to call him a man; so far they did honour those that suffered for Christ. Oh, it is honourable before men and angels, before God himself, before the churches, before all the saints. Saith Basil, speaking in his oration about the forty martyrs, 'Blessed are those tongues that shall confess Christ. They do, as it were, sanctify the air while they are speaking in the confession of Christ in their sufferings.'

Thirdly, It is a blessed thing to suffer for righteousness' sake, for it is the highest and greatest improvement of men's abilities, graces, comforts, whatsoever they enjoy. It is the highest improvement that can be for them to suffer. Never are men's graces so improved as in times of suffering. 'The people of God were never so eminent in grace as in persecuting times.' The church of God smelt sweeter when they were, as it were, roses cast into the still, and had the fire of persecution put under them, than when they grew flourishing upon the stalk. As the spices have a more fragrant smell when they are beaten to powder than when they are whole; and so the saints' graces are more fragrant in the nostrils of God, and do grow up more in the time of suffering than ever. Oh what breathings of holiness was there, and heaven upon earth, that the saints enjoyed in the times of suffering, through the eminency of grace in the primitive times. Certainly the church was never more fruitful than when it was watered with her own blood; then it brought forth more fruit to Jesus Christ. It is the highest improvement of the graces of the Spirit of God and of all your comforts—then you improve them to purpose wheras you make use of them to suffer for Christ.

Fourthly, It is blessed, for those that suffer are under many blessed promises. Why, 'If you suffer with him, you shall be glorified with him.' Read 2 Tim. ii. 12, and in Rom. viii., there you have divers excellent expressions wherein there are most excellent promises to such as suffer in the cause of Christ. Mat. xix. 29, 'Every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands for my name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life. In James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth

temptation; for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.' It were easy to spend hours in the recollecting the many promises that are made to suffering Christians, and there are blessed comforts which they have that suffer. One James Bainan, a martyr, when they kindled the fire at his feet, 'Methinks they strew roses at my feet,' saith he. And Mr Sanders professed that he found abundance of joy flowing to his heart from all the parts of his body, that he never felt before in all his life. But above all, for the joy that there is in suffering, that place in 1 Pet. iv. 14, and which is one of the most excellent promises, saith he, 'Rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.' But what for the present? Why, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye: for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you;' that is, the glorious Spirit of God. All the saints have the Spirit of God; but every believer hath not the Spirit of God and of glory—that is, hath not the Spirit of God in that glorious manner as those that suffer for Christ have. And rest upon them—that is, to comfort you, to quicken you, to do good unto you, to enlighten you, 'The Spirit of God and of glory.' Would you have a glorious Spirit rest and abide upon you, not to have some flashes of it? Sometimes the saints have some flashes of the Holy Ghost, and they apprehend glory. Oh but when they come to suffer, they have the Spirit of God and of glory resting upon them!

Fifthly, And then that you have in the text, 'For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

That is, first, The blessing of the gospel that is upon them here, and the kingdom of glory in heaven is theirs. This kingdom hath these three things in it:—

First, The blessing of the gospel is theirs in an eminent special manner; for that is called the kingdom of heaven. But that I opened at large unto you in the first beatitude: 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Now, as that is promised to the poor in spirit, so here to those that suffer persecution; they shall have the righteousness of that kingdom, 'The Kingdom of God is righteousness, and peace, and joy.' All the good and blessing of the gospel, in all the administrations of Jesus Christ in the gospel, they shall be partakers of it in a most eminent manner. That is the first.

But then, secondly, The kingdom of heaven—that is, what part of the kingdom that Christ shall have before the time when he gives up the kingdom to the Father; they shall be sure to have an eminent share in that blessing. Now to me there is nothing more clear in Scripture than this, that there is a kingdom that Christ is to have before his giving up the king-

dom to the Father. For, so speaking of the last day, 1 Cor. xv., it is said that then 'Christ shall give up the kingdom unto the Father, and God shall be all in all.' But now the Scripture speaks of the kingdom of Christ, as it shall be here, as a promise unto the saints before that of the kingdom of the Father. Rev. iii. 21, 'To him that overcometh'—that is, notwithstanding all his sufferings—'will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame and am set down with my Father in his throne.' Observe this scripture. This plainly shews that at that time there was a throne of Christ that the saints should sit on after their overcoming. Now for the throne of Christ, as he rules all the world, and in his church by the sceptre of his word and Spirit, certainly that throne of Christ they were in at that time when Christ spake to them. But now he speaks of another time as a reward of all their sufferings and overcoming; in that time they should sit upon his throne, as he sits upon his Father's throne. You will say, That shall be in heaven. Nay, there it is plain that he gives up the kingdom to the Father, and God shall be all in all. But now there is another kingdom of Christ that is promised to those that overcome, and that such as suffer shall have a special share and part in, as in the Revelation, for that book is written for the encouragement of the saints in sufferings in the anti-christian times. There you shall find that Christ promises that they should reign on the earth. And if you read chap. xx., where Christ speaks of a kingdom that he shall have for a long time; and especially it is said in ver. 4, of those that were beheaded, and that did not worship the beast, nor receive his mark upon their foreheads nor hands, either openly or secretly, they were the people that Christ especially aimed at when he came to his kingdom. And in the Gospel by St Luke, Christ, encouraging his disciples in the way of suffering for him, saith he, 'Ye are they which have continued with me in my temptation.' What then? 'And I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me.' And that fore-named place in 1 Peter iv. 13, 'Rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.' Now you are sorrowful, contemned, despised, and trodden as dirt under feet; but when Christ shall appear in his glory to take the kingdom to himself—for it is apparent that there is a time that Christ shall reign otherwise than now he doth; for, saith the voice from heaven in Rev. xi., 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ, and he shall reign for evermore.' So that, I say, the Scripture is clear that there is a time for Jesus Christ to have honour and glory in the kingdoms of this world; and these may well be called the kingdom of

heaven, though it be here in the world. As the ministry of the gospel is called the kingdom, so the rule of Christ in this extraordinary way; and when Christ shall come to take this kingdom to himself, oh, how will he own those that have suffered for him! That shall be his first work, to own and honour them in the eyes of all the world. You suffered hard things indeed in the kingdom of the world; ay, but there is another kingdom, in which you shall be honoured. In Rev. vii. 14, 'And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said unto me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.' 'These they are;' there shall be a glorying in them. As I remember I have read of Carus the emperor, that, hearing Agrippa suffered in his cause before he came to be emperor, the first thing that he did it was this: he called for the chain that Agrippa was chained withal for speaking in his behalf, and gave him a chain of gold that weighed just as much as that chain did. And so certainly the first work that Christ will do when he comes to take his kingdom shall be to call for all that hath suffered for his sake, and to proportion out a proportionable measure of glory. Saith Tertullian, The greatest reward follows the greatest contest, strife, and suffering for Jesus Christ. Therefore I remember I have read of Gordius, a martyr, that when he was to suffer, he told his persecutors that if they did but abate any suffering that they intended towards him, he should be a loser. When, therefore, the general judgment shall be, oh, the embracements then of Jesus Christ embracing those that have suffered for him! and then he shall set them, with white robes, upon his throne, and they shall be judges of their judges. They shall judge the twelve tribes of Israel—not only the apostles, but all the saints. They now stand before the wicked, and are judged by them. They shall sit with Christ, and judge the wicked and ungodly at that day, and so ascend with Christ in glory, and there enjoy the fruit of their sufferings. 'Blessed are those that die in the Lord,' (it may be as well read, Blessed are those that die for the Lord,) 'for they rest from their labours, and their works follow them.' Now this the apostles and others, they saw clearly: 2 Cor. iv., latter end, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' It is one of the most elegant expressions that ever was in any author in the world. The exceeding, excessive, eternal weight of glory; and but our 'light afflictions' that are but for a 'moment.'

But you will say, Is not this a legal way, to be encouraged, either in duty or suffering, in hope of heaven?

Truly those men that will think they have risen to

such a height of grace as they can do all out of mere love to God, so as not to have any respect to their own good in heaven, they have attained to that grace, that for my part I do not know the Scripture holds forth unto them. But the Scripture would have such as are the most eminent in grace yet to encourage themselves in hope of heaven in what they do or suffer for Jesus Christ.

You will say, It is true, we may lawfully do it; but were it not better that we might do it without such an encouragement?

Truly no; for I find Christ himself was encouraged in this; and there was no grace better than Christ's. See what is said concerning Christ himself. He is set before you as a pattern that you should make use of: 'For consider him that endured such contradictions of sinners against himself, lest you be wearied and faint in your minds,' Heb. xii. 3. But now in the verse before saith he, 'Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him'—mark it—'endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.' Christ endured the cross, and despised the shame. What did help Christ to do this, and encourage him? Why, the joy that was set before him. Christ he had the joy of sitting at the right hand of the Father set before him. And it is made one fruit of the sufferings of Christ, that he is set at the right hand of the throne of God. And Christ in the midst of his sufferings

saw this: I shall after my enduring some sufferings here, within a while sit at the right hand of the throne of my Father; and it is this that helps me to carry me through my sufferings. And now if Christ will make use of this, surely it is a vanity and pride of men's spirits, to think that they have no need of it!

But now having opened these things, I had thought to have spoken but very little in way of application to you.

Only you may see, by what hath been said, how the stumbling-block of the cross is taken away. Oh, lay up these things that are presented to you, that are spoken to you this day in the name of Christ. You know not what use you may have of them. Lay them up in your hearts against the time of suffering, that you may have them ready. As men that are subject to fainting fits, they have their *agua vite* bottles, and such kind of things, to help them against their fainting fits. Oh, so lay up these truths, that may help you against all fainting fits—that it may be indifferent to you whether you enjoy times of prosperity or times of persecution—that, let the world go which way it will, a Christian should go on in his way, and make all his care to do his duty, and let become of him what will. The worst that can come is this, for to be persecuted; but that will add to your glory, and help to further your future happiness. 'Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake.'