

his justice honoured either upon them or upon a surety.

Thirdly, Know that it would go very ill with Abraham, Isaac, or Jacob, with the most glorious righteous person that ever lived in the world, were

it not for this; yea, we may boldly say. Woe to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets and apostles, were it not for this righteousness. And if these things be so, we had need have our hearts to be making after this righteousness here mentionel.

SERMON XVII.

OR,

COMFORTS TO THOSE THAT HUNGER.

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

FOR those that do find their hearts stirring after this righteousness, I have divers things to speak unto them by way of comfort and consolation. There are many poor souls, which, in the sense and burden of their sins, do hunger and thirst after the righteousness of Jesus Christ, so as there is nothing more that their thoughts and hearts are upon than the righteousness of Jesus Christ, that they may find it applied unto them by faith and made theirs, that they may have the comfort of it. To such I shall only speak these things briefly by way of comfort and encouragement:

First, If thy heart do in truth thirst after this righteousness of Christ that thou hearest preached of in the gospel, and thou dost in thy soul bless those that are able to make it theirs, know that thy thirst and Christ's thirst are the same. Christ thirsts after souls as much as souls thirst after him; and it is as great a satisfaction to Jesus Christ to see his righteousness applied unto souls for their discharge, as it can be any satisfaction to any soul to have the righteousness of Christ applied to it for its discharge. No soul can be more content in the assurance that Christ's righteousness belongs to it, than Christ doth to have his righteousness applied unto souls that do hunger and thirst after it, as hath been spoken of in the text; and for that I will give you only this scripture, Isa. liiii. a clear prophecy concerning Christ: ver. 10, it is said, 'It pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: for by his knowledge shall my righteous servant

justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.' Mark, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied.' What is the travail of the soul of Christ? Surely it is, that after he hath borne the burden of the wrath of the Father, that then there might be souls given to him, and discharged of their sin through his sufferings; this is the travail of Christ's soul. Is thy soul travailing after the righteousness of Jesus Christ? Then art as it were in a travail, and longest after that, as any woman in travail longs to be delivered. Know the soul of Christ is in as much travail for to discharge sinners, as sinners are to be discharged; and saith the text, 'He shall see of the travail of his soul, and he shall be satisfied.' There is nothing in the world can satisfy the soul of Christ as to have poor sinners come in to him, and to communicate his righteousness to them. 'For by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many.' That shall satisfy his soul; as if the Holy Ghost should say, After all that Jesus Christ hath suffered for souls, when any soul shall come in and believe in him, the Lord Jesus shall apply his righteousness to them and justify them; and this is that that Christ shall account worth all his sufferings—shall, as it were, say, I do not grudge, I do not repent for all that I have suffered, seeing I have the fruit of it, that here are poor sinful souls discharged of their sins by my sufferings. This is a great help and comfort to those that are hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of Jesus Christ; you see what the hunger of Christ is, the travail of his soul, and what it is that will satisfy. Surely if this be an object so satisfactory to his soul to justify sinners, then thou mayest have encouragement in this, that when thy soul travails for this, and longest after this righteous-

ness above all things in the world, and nothing can satisfy thee but that, that thou shalt in due time see the travail of thy soul, and shalt be satisfied.

Secondly, The great design that God hath in all the world to glorify himself by, it is by the honouring of the righteousness of his Son in the application of it unto sinful souls for their discharge. Of all things that ever God did, or ever shall be done in the world, the greatest design of God to honour himself is, that the righteousness of his Son may be magnified in working such a course as this is, to deliver souls from the guilt of their sin, and to set them as righteous before the Father. The Lord takes delight in no work like unto this work. Here is the masterpiece, as I may so say, of God, and the glory of God. Now, then, think thus with thyself: Is this the work that, above all things, God glories in? and is it his design to honour himself in the magnifying the righteousness of his Son, in the fruit of that righteousness to discharge sinful and guilty sinners by it? then who are they that God will honour himself in and upon, if not upon such whose souls he hath begun to stir to work after this righteousness, to long after it above all things in the world? It is that that God's heart is in, to honour himself by above all things, and it is that that God hath put into my heart to desire above all things; and I think—yea, I am sure, if I know anything of my heart—that if God would but once witness to my soul that this righteousness of his Son is mine, I should for ever give up myself to honour him. Had I a thousand lives they should all go for the glory of his name. Surely God's heart and thy heart doth meet very near together in this thing, and therefore be comforted and encouraged in thy hungering and thirsting after this thing.

Thirdly, There is nothing offered more freely than the righteousness of Christ is. Of all mercies that God doth bestow upon sinners, the mercies of Jesus Christ are bestowed the most freely. There are many mercies that God bestowed in the time of the law, upon legal obedience; but Jesus Christ and his righteousness was never given to any soul, but freely, upon mere free grace—nothing but free grace hath given him—he is the gift of God! And, together with the freedom, there is an invitation to souls to come and take it. Thou that art thirsting after this righteousness, consider of that scripture in Rev. xxii. 17, 'The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' Thou thirstest after this righteousness, as the water of life, that would be life to thy soul. Now mark what invitation is here, 'the Spirit,' 'the bride,' that is, the church, they say, 'Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And he that is athirst come.'

Here is four times in one verse 'come.' 'And whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely.' There is nothing more free than this water of life. God sells it not to any; but whosoever he gives it to, he gives it freely. And now, is this the way of God in the dispensing of this great mercy, that whosoever hath had it, or ever shall have it, it must be given freely to them, that any former unrighteousness shall be no hindrance? Whatsoever unrighteousness there hath been before, that is no hindrance; for if it were, then it were not given freely. There is no unworthiness, then, that can hinder; and if so, why may not I have my portion in it as well as another? why may not I be blessed by it as well as any? It is true, I am vile, I am an unrighteous wretch, I am unworthy; but the Lord gives this water of life freely, Isa. lv. 1.

Fourthly, I will add a fourth consideration for thy further comfort; that there is nothing can give any right to any soul to apply the righteousness of Jesus Christ, but merely this free offer, and the soul's believing, the soul's casting itself upon it. There is nothing before that that gives any right to this righteousness of Christ.

You will say, I could apply it, and believe it, and cast myself upon it, but that I fear I have no right in it. Now this is as certain a truth as any we have in the gospel, that there is nothing gives any soul a right to Jesus Christ but believing in him—the venturing of the soul upon this perfect, glorious righteousness. It is this that gives right unto the soul; and therefore do not fear, but come, then, thou hungering and thirsting soul after this righteousness, and open thy mouth and thy heart wide, that it may be filled, and cast thy soul here upon this righteousness, venture thy soul and thy eternal estate—that is the best way, and the soonest way, to have the comfort of it.

Those that are hungering and thirsting after this righteousness, take these cautions:—

The first caution I shall give you, Take heed, you that are seeking after your part in this, and to have your souls to be justified through this righteousness—take heed that you do not satisfy yourselves with any righteousness beneath this, with any under-righteousness: for the devil will be ready to come in here, and he doth prevail with many, when their sins do lie upon their consciences, and they see they stand as guilty before the great God as those that are bound over unto eternal death, and they hear that there is no way of salvation but by Christ, and they seek after Christ. Now the devil seeks to put them off with some other righteousness besides this. Oh take heed that nothing satisfies you but this righteousness! It is true, through God's mercy I have broken off many of my sinful courses; and I find this in my heart, that I would not for all the world commit any

one known sin against conscience, though in secret. This is well; but do not rest in this, but know there is a righteousness beyond this. Do not think this is enough to satisfy your consciences, that you are brought to this. No; nothing shall satisfy my conscience but the application of the blood of Christ and his righteousness to my soul.

Secondly, Take heed that you be not put off and satisfied with comfort. It may be you shall have mighty flashes of comfort given you. When you are at prayer, perhaps you shall have such flashes of comfort and joy as are more than ever you have had; some may, and have had it so, and yet afterwards it hath come to nothing. Therefore you must not satisfy yourselves in that, but think thus: Is this the fruit of Christ's righteousness, yea or no? Have I the righteousness of Christ? Do I feel the work of the Holy Ghost carrying my soul to Christ, and so enabling me to rest upon his righteousness? and then is the Holy Ghost a comforter unto me as a fruit of this? Then it is good, if thy comfort comes as a fruit of the act of thy faith, casting thyself upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ; otherwise thy comfort may be but to please thee, and satisfy thee a while, and so take thee off from further pursuit after this righteousness. That is the only thing will hold, and make thee to stand with peace before the judgment-seat of God.

A third caution is this: In seeking after this righteousness of Christ, take heed of reasoning with flesh and blood. Take heed of carnal reasonings, and arguing. How can this thing be, that such a one, so vile and wretched as I am, and so ungodly as I have been, that ever God should have such love and such regard as to send his Son to be made a curse, to die, and to work out a perfect righteousness to clothe my soul with. I have heard of the glory of this righteousness, and how can it be that ever my soul should be partaker of it? This is to reason with flesh and blood; thou must in thy pursuit after this have that reasoning of flesh and blood to be swallowed up, and faith alone must be advanced in it. If faith be not put to this great point, there will never be any good done of it. If reason come in, reason will spoil all; for it is above all reason—it is infinitely supernatural. 'Reason,' saith Luther, 'is a most terrible enemy to faith;' and it is a great mystery of godliness that the angels themselves desire to pry into, and to wonder at; and therefore Christians must even, as it were, shut the eye of reason, and exercise faith upon it: it is only that that can bring peace unto thy soul.

Fourthly, And then the last thing is, Oh take heed, above all, of turning this grace of God into wantonness! look to that. You have heard this righteousness of the Son of God opened, and the glorious properties of it, the excellency of it, the desirableness

of it; it is that that very few hearts can bear; they cannot bear it. We find it by experience, that men and women that come to have any little glimmering about the righteousness of Christ, they run away with it, and draw most wretched and vile conclusions from it. Then you say, What need we look after anything further—Christ hath done all; and so grow loose in their conversations. Take heed of wantonness. There is a very wanton generation among us; and I verily believe that, if ever since Christ's time the grace of God hath been turned into wantonness, it hath been this four or five years; only I find in the story of Germany, that when Luther began first to preach Jesus Christ, there were the very same wantons in his time, abusing what he said. When the gospel began to break forth, men's bleared eyes were not able to bear the glorious light that God did cause to shine through the ministry of Luther, but did extremely abuse it; and Luther himself was much perplexed and troubled with those wantons that abused the doctrine of free grace and justification by the righteousness of Christ. And as we find that men, through their weak and corrupt spirits, are ready to abuse this, so, above all sins, it is that that goes most to the heart of God, that the heart of God doth most hate; and it is made, in the Epistle of Jude, a dreadful brand of those that are even appointed to condemnation, that do turn the grace of God into wantonness. This grace of God in the righteousness of his Son, the Lord expects that all that come to know it should even fall down upon their faces and adore and magnify him for it, and spend their days in adoring and magnifying of him, and not to make this as a means to nourish sin, to nourish unrighteousness and looseness; as we find it in many, that since such times as they have spoken most of free grace, of the righteousness of Christ, their conversations have been more loose than formerly. This is abominable wickedness, that the Spirit of God hates; and if there could be any one sign given of a man or woman that were never like to have any part or portion in this righteousness, that sign would be the most probable, that should turn this rich and glorious grace of God into wantonness. But thus much concerning this great point of hungering after the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Now to proceed to the next point, the hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of sanctification, or inherent righteousness. I shall give you the method in the same way as we went in the former.

First, What is this righteousness that now we are speaking of?

Secondly, What is the true hunger and thirst of the soul after this righteousness?

Thirdly, What the desirableness of this righteousness is.

Fourthly, Why they are blessed that hunger and thirst after this.

Fifthly, That even these also shall be satisfied with this righteousness.

Lastly, The application of all.

For the first then, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.' You will say, What is this righteousness that here you are now speaking of?

It is those gracious dispositions that God works in the soul by the Holy Ghost, or the principle of holiness that God puts into the soul by the Holy Ghost, whereby the soul is enabled to work unto God as its chief good, as it were in a right line, and therefore called righteousness. It is the same thing that is called holiness, or righteousness, or grace sometimes we have it, because it is given freely by God. When a soul that lay dead in sin before, hath the Holy Ghost come and breathe upon it, and puts into it gracious principles, that enables it to act and to work unto God as the last end of all, and the highest good, as it were, in a right line. In a right line; therefore sometimes it is called uprightness—that is, when a soul that is convinced of the duty it owes unto God, and that it ought to work thus and thus unto God, whatsoever should come between God and the soul to hinder the gracious workings of it, the soul doth not fetch a compass, but goes through all difficulties; that is going in a right line—goes through all kind of difficulties that it may work itself to God. This is righteousness in the heart, inherent righteousness, when thou hast received this work of the Holy Ghost upon thee that thou findest such acting and working principles, that works up thy soul to God as the last end; and whatsoever there is between God and thy soul, thy soul will work through it; and work still, and never leave working till it works through it, that thou mayest get at God, and so come to enjoy him as thy God.

Or thus, It is the levelling and acting of the heart according to a right rule, the rule of righteousness set in the word; this is the righteousness that we are now speaking of.

Or thus more fully, It is an impression of God's righteousness upon the soul, whereby the soul comes to be enabled to act according to his measure as God himself doth act.

According to his measure. You will say, how is that? Act as God acts. That is, look, as God himself loves himself as the highest end of all things; and all other things the Lord loves in order to himself, and works for himself as the last end of all; and doth work all other things in a suitable way to the attaining of himself as the last end; so the soul who hath the impression of this upon it, comes to be enabled to work for God as the last end, and to love God for himself, and all things in order unto God,

and to act for God as the highest end, and to act all things that it hath to do with in order unto God as this last end; so that hereby the soul comes to act, even as God himself doth act, according to its measure and proportion. God be makes himself the last end; the soul makes God the last end too. God loves himself as the highest good, and all things in order to himself; the soul doth so too. God in all his workings works towards himself, and orders all things so as he may come to enjoy himself as the last end; so doth this righteous soul do, it works towards God, and so as he may enjoy all things in order unto God as the last end. This is the righteousness here to be spoken of: blessed are they that do hunger and thirst after this righteousness. Oh that it were so with me, saith this hungering and thirsting soul. I feel abundance of corruption that is in me, that keeps me from acting to God; I am convinced that the Lord is worthy. Oh, the infinite glorious first-being of all things! he is worthy of all praise and honour from all his creatures. I was made for him that I might live unto him; and how happy should I be if I could make him to be my highest end, and my heart could be taken off from all other things, and enjoy him alone to be my portion; and be acting to him, and working to him, and to make his will to be the rule of my life; then happy should I be. Oh that it were thus in my soul!

For the second thing, Know that this hungering and thirsting proceeds first from this ground, that the soul comes to understand the great good that there is in this righteousness; it looks upon itself as one that should be a most happy creature if it were enabled to do so, to work so towards God. I were made if I could feel the Holy Ghost thus in my heart, working my heart thus after the Lord.

Secondly, It doth thirst after this righteousness in a spiritual manner for itself, not only because I am convinced in my conscience I cannot go to heaven, or I must go to hell if I have it not, but I see this righteousness lovely and excellent in itself, and therefore I long after it, because of the excellency there is in itself. A hypocrite may desire to overcome his sins, and to be enabled to do duties; but mark it, it is in order to his or her peace; because I cannot have quiet and peace in conscience, therefore I would be glad if such a corruption were overcome, or I could have ability to do such and such duties that God requires. It is not because of any excellency that the soul doth see in this righteousness, but merely because it cannot have peace without it. But this blessed hunger and thirst that is here spoken of, it is that that makes the soul hunger after righteousness as for itself—my righteousness consists in it. What can be better to my soul than that I should live to God as the last end, that I should have my heart

working to God, and make his will to be my will; what can be better to my soul than this?

Thirdly, This hungering and thirsting it is illimitable; by that I mean this, the soul never stints itself what measure of holiness it would have, but would have it in the highest degree that it is possible for any creature to have it. And still, if the Lord doth enable such a soul to overcome some corruptions, and to walk towards God in a better and more gracious manner than formerly it hath done, it would have still more and more, the desires are still enlarged; whereas a hypocrite may have a desire to overcome corruption and to perform some duty, but he desires only so much as he thinks may serve his turn to keep him from dangers that he doth apprehend; and that is an evident argument that he desires it not for itself. As thus: there be two men that would have learning; there is one man that is sent to the university, but it is only to give his father content, and therefore he would fain have learning; or thus, he would fain have learning that he might get some preferment—that is his end, and if he can but get so much as he may attain his end, then he loiters after that. But there is another that desires learning for itself; he sees an excellency that there is in learning, he sees that it doth raise a rational creature, and upon that he is never satisfied, but he would have more and more, and so studies to his dying day. Whether he have preferment or no, whether he hath employment or no, yet still he will be studious; whereas many wonder why such a man should be so studious; he hath not so much employment as another hath, but the very love he hath to it makes him do so, because he loves learning for itself. So one that doth desire grace to some inferior end, if he may have but so much as may serve the turn for his end, that quiets him; but whosoever desires righteousness for itself, he is never quieted, but yet would have more and more grace, even as long as he lives. That is the third thing in this desire.

Fourthly, It is a ruling desire—that is, all desires are ordered by the desire after this righteousness. Whatsoever desires there are in the soul, saith the soul, Well, but let my desire after the furtherance of grace and righteousness, let that desire rule and order these desires. So far, therefore, as my other desires shall further this my desire unto this righteousness, so far I will nourish them, so far I will follow after them. But now if any desire that I have in my soul to anything else, if I find that it is rather a hindrance to me in this my great desire of righteousness than a furtherance, I will abandon that desire, I will rather oppose it, and I will bless God if God will cross me in that desire. This is the right desire after this righteousness, when it is a ruling desire. It rules in the soul, it is the chief desire; and no desire can be cherished in the soul but such a desire as may be some

way serviceable to this great desire of the soul in the hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Fifthly, The desires of the soul in hungering and thirsting after this righteousness, it is a desire that pain goes with. As was shewed in the other hungering and thirsting after the righteousness of Christ there was a pain; as in natural hunger there is a pain, so in that. The guilt of sin was painful to the soul; and so here, the unly corruptions of the heart how grievous are they to it! When did you ever hear of Paul crying out for any of his sufferings, 'Oh wretched man that I am'? When he was buffeted, when he was imprisoned, he did not wring his hands and cry, I am undone because of imprisonment; when he was scourged he did not cry out; he could sing when he was in the stocks; but when he found his corruptions to be stirring in him, and the want of some degree of this righteousness, he gives a dreadful shriek, and cries out, 'Oh wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?' how shall I come to get power over these corruptions, and be enabled to walk after God? Oh that I could have but this! then I were a happy man. And therefore you find that this hungering and thirsting after righteousness follows upon mourning: 'Blessed are they that mourn,' and then, 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness'—that is, those that first are affected with mourning for the corruptions of their hearts, and then upon this mourning there follows this hungering and thirsting after righteousness.

Sixthly, This desire likewise must be very earnest; it is not a wishing and a woulding, but a mighty earnest desire. A divine of ours saith, The desires of a hypocrite, they are faint desires; but the sincere desires of the soul are such as make the soul faint—that is, they are so earnest as makes the soul even pant again. We have such expressions in Ps. cxix. 5, 'Oh that my ways,' saith David, 'were directed to keep thy statutes!' David had grace before to direct him, but he would have more: Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! David that was a king, and had great contentment in the world, and yet the thing that makes him, with such a sigh, send up his desires to heaven, it was for the want of grace in his heart, and therefore he cries out, Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! as if he should say, Lord, thou that knowest all things, knowest there is nothing in the world that would be a greater contentment to my soul than if I could find my heart directed to keep thy statutes. And then in ver. 10, 'With my whole heart have I sought thee,' saith David. Why, what is the matter? 'Oh let me not wander from thy commandments.' As if he should say, Lord, I account this to be the greatest evil that can befall me in this world, for me to wander from thy commandments; if

thou leavest me to myself, I shall wander from thy commandments. But, Lord, let me feel the work of thy grace powerfully in my heart, that I may not wander from thy commandments. And in ver. 20, 'My soul breaketh;' for what? 'For the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.' There was a breaking of David's soul; there was never any man that desired anything in this world with more earnestness. What expressions can be more than these? And in ver. 131, 'I opened my mouth and panted, for I longed for thy commandments.' Now, put all these together: 'Oh that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes;' 'With my whole heart have I sought thee;' 'Oh let me not wander from thy commandments;' 'My soul breaketh for the longing it hath unto thy judgments at all times;' and 'My soul panteth again.' These are the earnest desires of a gracious heart after righteousness.

Seventhly, These desires are very industrious desires. They are not idle desires, as the desires of most people in the world after grace are—mere idle. The Lord give me grace, and when God gives me grace I shall do better; and so go no further than I pray God give me grace. But I appeal to thee, what labouring, what striving is in thy spirit, what painstaking, what working of thy soul after grace? and therefore observe that scripture in Ps. lxxiii. 1, 8, compared: 'My soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee,' saith the psalmist; but then mark what follows in the 8th verse: 'My soul followeth hard after thee,' saith David. That will be the fruit of gracious desires. If thou hast a desire to get grace, to get righteousness, if thou dost thirst for it, then this will follow: thy heart will follow hard after God in the use of all means that God is pleased to afford. If there be any ordinance of God that may further the work of thy grace, thou wilt desire that too; and if there be any pains, if ordinary means will not do it, thou wilt be willing to set upon extraordinary means. There is such a corruption that thou complainest of, and ordinary means will not do the work; well, though it be to beat down the body, to beat down the flesh, whatsoever thou dost cross thyself in, yet this is the thing that thou art resolved, if power against corruption can be had, thou wilt have it. Thou wilt rather do or suffer the hardest thing in the world than not have these thy desires accomplished.

Eighthly, They are abiding desires. They will continue, and never be quiet until the thing be done. In Ps. exix. 20, before named, 'My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments'—mark, 'at all times.' There are some of you that, in some good moods, you have even breakings in your souls—mighty desires—oh that God would give me grace! And you can pray mightily, and send mighty

cries to heaven for grace in some good moods. It may be when you have been upon your sick-beds, and afraid of death, or when you have been stirred in a sermon, you have gone home, and have manifested your desires to heaven, that the Lord would be pleased to help you, and purge your hearts, and give you grace; but is it at all times? At other times you are far enough from any such working of spirit after this righteousness. But it was in David; his soul did break after the judgments of God at all times. By judgments we are to understand the statutes, the commandments, the will of God—that is, that he might have his heart suitable to the will of God, revealed in his word; and in Ps. cxliii. 6, 'My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land.' Now you know the thirsty land it gapes for want of water, and it never closes again till there be some showers, and so saith David, O Lord, it is with me as the thirsty land. I am, as it were, chapped, and I find a gaping in my heart after some showers of thy grace; and, Lord, till they come, I shall never have my heart closed, but as the thirsty land. Thus you have seen what kind of desires these are that the soul hath to this righteousness, as well as to the other.

I should come now to the opening of the great desirableness that there is in this righteousness. But all that I shall do now is, to desire you to take a review of this that hath been delivered to you in the description of this hungering and thirsting soul after this righteousness of sanctification. I suppose that there is not any one of you but have had some kind of desires after grace, though you have little understood what it meant; but now can you say, as in the presence of God, O Lord, thou hast wrought such kind of desires in my soul; in some measure I can say it, Lord, it hath been, not from ignorance, but from some enlightening of Christ's Spirit. I was an ignorant, sottish soul not long since, but the light of thy Spirit came into me, and shewed me the excellency of thy righteousness—what a blessed thing it was for the creature to live to God! And, Lord, thou knowest that my desires for righteousness are for itself. And there is no degree can satisfy me till I come to heaven. I would have more and more. Lord, thou knowest that all my desires are ruled and ordered by this great desire of my soul after this righteousness, next to the desires of my soul after the righteousness of thy Son. Yea, Lord, thou knowest how painful it is to me to want it. There is nothing in the world more grievous to me than the body of death that I carry about with me; so that if thou shouldst ask me from heaven, and say, Soul, what wouldst thou that I should do for thee? the Lord knows I would make this answer, Lord, let me have the righteousness of thy Son for my justification, and let me have the righteousness of thy Spirit for my sancti-

fication, to overcome my corruptions, and to enable me to live to thy praise. And, Lord, thou knowest that these desires have been earnest, and not at a mood or flash, but in a constant and settled way; and they have been industrious. Lord, thou knowest the pains that my soul hath taken, and still am willing to take. If I might but overcome such corruptions, and be enabled to walk with thee in holiness and righteousness, I care not what pains I took. And, Lord, this hath been from year to year, and I am resolved that this shall continue, and through thy grace I hope it will continue to my dying day, so as if I should perish, I would perish crying to thee for the righteousness of

thy Son, and for the righteousness of sanctification of my heart. Lord, this it is that thou hast wrought in my soul. Now, if thou canst be able thus to appeal to God, blessed art thou; blessed are those that do hunger and thirst after righteousness in this manner. But now, though in the very naming of these things, perhaps the Lord may be pleased so far to work upon some hearts as to quicken some desires after the ways of God and righteousness, yet the main thing that is to be presented to you for the quickening of your hearts, is the setting the beauty and the excellency of it before you. And so the comforting and encouraging of the soul in seeking after it.

SERMON XVIII.

OR,

THE EXCELLENCY OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF SANCTIFICATION.

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

THE third thing propounded in the opening of this great and weighty point of the righteousness of sanctification, or inherent righteousness, was the excellency of it. What is there in this righteousness that causes a soul thus to hunger and thirst after it? There are many things that men hunger and thirst after that are but vanity, and not worth the spending of our thoughts, much less our spirits, upon; and surely Christ would never pronounce them blessed that do so, that spend their time and their thoughts upon vanity. But there is a great excellency in this righteousness, whereby the soul is enabled to glorify God, and honour him as the infinite first being of all things. Now the excellency of this righteousness consists in these things:—

First, This righteousness is the right temper of the soul. The health of the body it consists in the well and right constitution of it. Look, as the body when it is in health can relish and taste things for sweetness and delight, and can work and agitate in the place God hath set it in; but if a man's body be dis-tempered through sickness and weakness, then he can neither work nor relish anything, nor enjoy himself in anything that he hath; and therefore it is that man desires health above all outward blessings. What is it for a rich man to have wealth and a great estate, and not to have health? What is it to a man

to have honours and preferments, to have friends, and all the delights this world can afford, whenas he doth not enjoy himself in those things? Now sin it is the distemper of the soul—that which puts the soul out of taste, and takes away the excellency of all it doth enjoy. Therefore it is so oft in Scripture compared unto things that are the most loathsome. Now when grace comes into the heart, it prevails against all the ill-humours of the soul, and brings health into the spirit; it makes the soul healthful and hale in the service of God.

Secondly, This righteousness is a spark of the divine nature. That expression we have in 2 Pet. i. 4: 'Whereby are given to us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' Grace and righteousness is all one, and it is nothing else but a sparkling of the divine nature that is in God himself. And the soul that understands what this is, how can it but long after it; it sees a greater glory and a more worth in the least spark of this excellency than in all the glory of the world represented unto it in the most taking and beautiful show that can be. The soul by this comes to live even as God himself doth; and is not this very desirable?

Thirdly, It is the very image of God in the soul, and an image represents a thing in the chief excel-