

SERMON IV.

Ps. CXIX. 92.

“Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.”

HE that would improve the promises, so as to make them spiritual bladders to keep him from being drowned in the deep waters of affliction, must not only make a catalogue of the promises, but he must also—

We must not only make a catalogue of the promises, but meditate on them.

II. Fixedly and seriously meditate on them; first, he must treasure up these jewels in his heart, and then unlock them by meditation; first, he must make his nosegay, and then smell of it. The Word of God, as I have said, is as

a garden full of excellent promises, as so many choice flowers; and it is our duty to walk often in this garden, to gather up all the flowers that lie scattered in it into several nosegays, to bind them together, if I may so speak, with the thread of faith, and then every day to smell of them. The promises are the saints' legacies left them by Christ in His last will and testament. The saints are called the "heirs of the promises," (Heb. vi. 17.) And if they would be filled full of joy in the day of their distress, they must be frequent in reading these legacies. The promises are, as it were, the breasts of God, full of the milk of grace and comfort; and it is our duty to be sucking out, by meditation, the milk of grace and comfort contained in them. That which the prophet saith of the Church of Christ may as truly be said of the promises of Christ, "Rejoice, O ye people of God, and be glad, all ye that have an interest in the promises: rejoice for joy, all ye that are

mourners in Sion, that ye may suck and be satisfied with the breath of their consolations, that you may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of joy and comfort contained in them." The promises are the saints' cordials, the saints' planks to swim to heaven upon, the saints' fiery chariot to carry them up to heaven. And the great reason why they walk so uncomfortably, so desolately, and so unbelievably, in the time of their tribulation, is because they do not smell of these nosegays, they do not chew these cordials, they do not read over these spiritual legacies, they do not, by serious meditation and consideration, suck out the comfort comprehended in them. For as fire will not warm us unless we tarry at it, and as a bee cannot suck out the honey that is in a flower unless she abide upon it, no more can a child of God receive supportation and consolation from the promises in the hour of temptation, unless

he seriously and solemnly ponder and meditate on them.

There is a double difference between a presumptuous sinner, and a poor, humble, distressed child of God.

1. A presumptuous sinner studieth nothing but the promising word: He slights the commanding, and the threatening Word. The Word commands him to keep holy the Sabbath day, not to love the world nor to lust, but he turns a deaf ear to it. The Word threateneth to wound the hairy scalp of every one that goeth on in his wickedness; but because God is patient and long-suffering, therefore he regards it not. But as for the promising Word, he snatcheth at it, he doth not truly lay hold on it, but snatcheth at it, before it belongs to him, and spider-like, sucks the poison of sin out of it, and makes of it a cradle to rock himself asleep in sinful courses. Because God hath promised, that whensoever a sinner turns from his

Difference between a presumptuous sinner and a true child of God in relation to the promises.

sins which he hath committed, he shall surely live and not die, therefore he delays and prorogues his turning from sin.

But now a poor, distressed, humble Christian fails on the contrary part ; he pores upon the commanding and threatening Word, but never ponders the promising Word. God, saith he, commands me to love Him with all my heart and soul, to wash my heart from iniquity, to love my enemies, to cut off my right hand, and to pluck out my right eye, &c. But I cannot perform these commands ; therefore surely I shall never be saved. God, saith he, hath threatened to curse every one that continueth not in everything that is written in His law to do it, and therefore surely I am accursed. But he never studies nor ponders the promising Word, for if he did, he would quickly know three things for his everlasting comfort :

Three observable things about the promises.

(1.) That there is nothing required by God in His Word as our duty, but God hath either promised to bestow it

upon us as His gift, or the saints have prayed to God for it as His gift. God commands us to love Him, but He hath promised to circumcise our hearts to love Him, &c., (Deut. xxx. 6.) God commands us to fear Him, to turn ourselves from our transgressions, and to make ourselves a new heart and a new spirit. But He hath promised to give us a new heart and a new spirit; to put His fear in our hearts that we shall never depart from Him; and to turn us from our evil ways. The saints of God also have prayed unto God for this, as the fruit of His free mercy, (Jer. xxxi. 18; Lam. v. 21.) There is nothing commanded in the covenant of works but God hath promised it in the covenant of grace, in some measure to work it in us; for He hath promised to work all our works in us, and to write His law (not one commandment of it only, but the whole law) in our hearts, and to put it in our inward parts, and to cause us to walk in His ways.

Ezek. xviii.
31, xxxvi. 26;
Jer. xxxii.
40; Mic. vii.
19; Rom. vi.
14.

Isa. xxvi. 12;
Jer. xxxi. 33;
Ex. lxiii. 27.

(2.) That God, under the covenant of grace, will for Christ's sake accept of less than He requires in the covenant of works. He requires perfection of degrees, but He will accept of perfection of parts; He requires us to live without sin, but He will accept of our sincere endeavours to do it. "If there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not," (2 Cor. viii. 12.)

(3.) That though he cannot in his own person perform all that God commands, yet Jesus Christ, as his surety, and in his stead, hath fulfilled the law for him, and that God will accept of Christ's perfect, as a cover for his imperfect, righteousness. That Christ hath redeemed him from the curse of the law, being made a curse for him. That the threatenings of the law are serpents without a sting, and that Christ hath taken away the power and force of them.

Did a broken-hearted and wounded sinner ponder and meditate on these

things, they would fill him full of joy and comfort ; he would fly from the covenant of works to the covenant of grace ; from his own unrighteousness unto the righteousness of Christ ; and from the commanding and threatening Word unto the promising Word ; he would say, Lord, Thou commandest me to walk in Thy statutes, and to keep Thy laws ; this I cannot do of myself, but Thou hast promised to cause me to walk in Thy ways, and to write Thy law in my heart. Lord, give me power to do what Thou commandest, and then command what Thou wilt.

2. A presumptuous sinner is always studying the promising Word, to bolster up himself in sin, but he never studies his sins and iniquities, to repent for them, and from them. He meditates on the promises to harden his heart in sin, but not at all on his sins to humble himself for them, and to turn from them.

Second difference.

But now, on the contrary, a poor 'distressed Christian pores upon his iniqui-

ties and corruptions, but never minds himself of the promises; and this makes him live so dejectedly and disconsolately. A wicked man studieth his corruptions too little—a distressed Christian too much. If he did study the promises, as much as he doth his corruptions, he would not walk so uncomfortably.

Wherefore if ever you would make the Word of God a conduit of comfort in the day of your distress, you must not only meditate on the commanding and threatening Word, but on the promising Word. The commandments and threatenings must drive you to the promises; you must not only study your corruptions to humble you, but also the promises to comfort you. I do not say you must not study your corruptions, but you must join the study of the promises together with them. If Abraham had minded only the deadness of Sarah's womb, and of his own body, he had never believed, &c., but he was strong in faith, and staggered not, because he con-

sidered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, nor the deadness of Sarah's womb, but was fully persuaded, that what God had promised, He was able to perform. If Sarah had considered only that she was past age, she would never have believed that she should have a child; but she eyed the promise, and judged Him faithful who had promised, and that made her believe. If a saint of God looks only downwards upon the deadness of his heart, and meditates only upon his sins and infirmities, he will never be comforted in the day of his distress. But he must also look upwards unto the promises, seriously ponder and fixedly study them; which will be as strong pillars to support him, and keep him from falling into despair, in the hour of tribulation.

Quest. What are the meditations which we must have in reference and relation to the promises in the day of our distress?

Rom. iv. 10,
20, 21; Heb.
xi. 11.

Ans. I will rank them into nine particulars.

I. You must meditate upon the three great truths already mentioned.

The first meditation about the promises.

1. That God commands nothing as our duty which He hath not promised as His gift.

2. That God, in the covenant of grace, will accept of less than He requires in the covenant of works.

3. That if we truly believe in Christ, God will accept of His righteousness as a satisfaction for our unrighteousness.

The second meditation :
Meditate on the preciousness of the promises.
2 Pet. i. 4.
The promises are precious in five respects.

II. You must meditate upon the excellency and preciousness of the promises; they are called exceeding great and precious promises. They are precious in five respects :—

2 Cor. i. 20.

1. Because they cost a great price (even the blood of Christ) to purchase them. They are all made to us in Christ and for Christ; they are in Him Yea, and in Him Amen. The covenant (which is the cabinet of all the promises) was sealed with His blood.

2. Because they assure us of great and precious things; they assure us of our interest in God, of our justification, reconciliation, adoption, sanctification, and glorification; heaven itself is nothing else but the enjoyment of the promises, (Heb. vi. 12.) The promises are heaven folded up: heaven is the promise unfolded. For the promises are nothing else but the eternal purposes of God towards His children made manifest. The purposes of God are His concealed promises; and the promises are His revealed purposes. The promises are the kisses of Jesus Christ—they discover His dear love; and when He discovers to us our interest in them, then He kisses us with the kisses of His mouth, and fills us with joy unspeakable and glorious. They are made by God, and they make over God to us as our portion, and Christ as our Saviour, and the Spirit as our sanctifier, and all good things both here and hereafter as our inheritance, and therefore may well be

called "exceeding great and precious promises."

3. Because they put a price upon the New Testament; for wherein doth the New Testament exceed the Old unless it be in this—because it is founded upon better promises, (Heb. viii. 6,) and bringeth in a better hope, (Heb. vii. 19.)

4. Because they put a price upon all the blessings of God. A little mercy reached out to us as a fruit of a promise is more worth than a world of blessings coming to us merely by way of providence. A man may receive blessings from God upon a double account, either by way of providence or by way of promise.

(1.) By way of providence: Thus God gives the earth to the sons of men, (Ps. cxv. 16.) Thus He gave one hundred twenty and seven provinces to Ahasuerus. Thus He sets up the basest of men to rule over nations, (Dan. iv. 7.)

(2.) By way of promise. Thus He

gives health, wealth, and all outward comforts unto His children. For "godliness hath the promise of this life and that which is to come," (1 Tim. iv. 8.) Now, you must know that a little blessing coming to us as a fruit of the promise is more worth than a thousand blessings coming to us only by way of providence. And therefore David saith, "A little that the righteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked," (Ps. xxxvii. 16.) And the reasons are,—

1st. Because blessings given by virtue of a promise are signs of God's special love, and come flowing to us from the same love with which God gives us Christ—they are the fruit of covenant love.

2d. Because we have them as blessings. A man may have a blessing, and yet not have it as a blessing. The Israelites had quails sent them immediately from God, which was a blessing in itself, but was not sent to them as a

Ps. xvii. 7,
30, 31.

blessing; for while “the meat was in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them.” The wicked have blessings, but not as blessings, but as the cup in Benjamin’s sack, which proved a snare to him rather than a mercy. But the godly have blessings as blessings: they have grace with them to improve them for God’s glory; they have not only the blessings, but a thankful heart for them, and a fruitful heart under them, which is a certain sign that they have them as blessings.

3d. Because they are pledges to them of better mercies, and beginnings of better; they are not their wages, but an earnest of heaven. Now, a farthing given as an earnest of a thousand a year, is more worth than many pounds given as a reward. A wicked man hath outward blessings as his portion, his heaven, his all; but a godly man that hath them by virtue of a promise, hath them as a pledge of heaven, and as a beginning of eternal mercies. .

5. The promises are precious, because they produce great and precious effects. They are not only excellent in themselves, but are also very powerful and operative upon all believers. The promises, as one saith, sealed by the blood of Christ, ratified by the oath of God, testified by the Spirit of truth, delivered by the hand of mercy, and received by the hand of faith, are operative words, and produce rare effects in the soul. They have, (1.) A sanctifying power. (2.) A comforting power.

(1.) A soul-sanctifying power. Therefore they are said to make us "partakers of the divine nature," (2 Pet. i. 4.) I say, of the divine nature, not by the communication of the divine essence, but by participation of divine grace. Not in a familistical sense, as if we were Godded into God, and Christed into Christ, but in a spiritual sense; we are by the promises made partakers of the divine nature, that is, of the divine graces, by which we are made like to

God in holiness. The apostle tells us that they have a power to "cleanse us from all filthiness, both of flesh and spirit, and to enable us to perfect holiness in His fear," (2 Cor. vii. 1.)

(2.) A comforting power. They are able to comfort us in the worst of days and dangers. Oh, how precious is a promise to a distressed Christian in the hour of extremity! The sun is not more comfortable to a man in a dark dungeon, or food to a man ready to starve, or water to a man ready to die for thirst. The promises of God are always precious, but never more precious than in times of misery and calamity; and therefore let us in such times especially meditate upon the preciousness of them.

The third meditation :
Meditate on the freeness of the promises.

III. You must meditate upon the freeness of the promises. The promises are the outward discoveries of God's eternal love to His people. Now, nothing moved God to enter into covenant with them, and to engage Himself

to them by promise, and thereby to become their debtor, but His free love and mercy; and therefore they are said to be given us of God. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises," (2 Pet. i. 4.) God promiseth in His Word, not only to love us, but to love us freely. "I will heal their backsliding, and love them freely," (Hos. xiv. 4.) The reason why God makes us His people, is not from any worth in us, but only because it pleaseth Him so to do. "The Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake; because it pleased the Lord to make you his people," (1 Sam. xii. 22.) The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the great and fundamental promise, the root of the other promises, is freely tendered in the gospel, and freely given. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only - begotten Son," &c., (John iii. 16.) "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely," (Rev. xxii. 17.)

The fourth
meditation :
Meditate on
the stability
of the pro-
mises.

IV. You must meditate on the firmness, faithfulness, unchangeableness, and immutability of the promises : they are the promises of that God who cannot deny Himself. "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but one jot or tittle of the Word shall not pass." There is no promise which God hath made, though never so improbable and impossible to flesh and blood, but it shall come to pass in due time ; whatsoever He hath promised in His goodness, He will perform by His power. "God is not a man that he should lie, neither the son of man that he should repent : hath he said, and shall he not do it ? or hath he spoken, and shall he not make it good ?" (Num. xxiii. 19.) God hath promised that the same bodies that die shall rise again at the last day. This is incredible to natural reason. The Stoics and Epicures derided it when it was preached by Paul, (Acts xvii. 32.) But hath God said it, and shall He not do it ? Is the Lord's hand shortened ?

Therefore Christ tells the Sadducees, "You err, not knowing the Scriptures, and the power of God," (Matt. xxii. 27.) God is omnipotent, and therefore able to do above what we can ask or think. God hath promised at the resurrection to make our vile bodies like unto the glorious body of Christ. This is impossible to natural reason; but mark what the apostle saith, "Who shall change our vile bodies, and fashion them like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself," (Phil. iii. 21.) God hath promised that before the end of the world there shall be a national conversion of the Jews; that the kingdoms of the world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and Saviour, and that Babylon shall fall. These are the promises of God, who cannot lie. "Faithful is he who hath said it, who also will do it," (1 Thess. v. 24.) Though the things promised seem impossible to men, yet with God

Rom. xi. 25
26; Rev. xi.
15, xviii. 2.

Matt. xix. 26.

all things are possible. Therefore the apostle proves the future conversion of the Jews, by an argument drawn from the power of God. "God is able to graft them in again," (Rom. xi. 23.) The like is brought to prove the ruin of Antichrist. "Her plagues shall come in one day, death and mourning and famine, and she shall be utterly burnt with fire, for strong is the Lord God, who judgeth her," (Rev. xviii. 8.) The promises are a firm foundation to build our salvation upon—an anchor both sure and steadfast. When David was taken by the Philistines, he was so supported by the promise of God that he did not fear what man could do against him; therefore he repeats it three times, "In God I will praise his word, in God I will praise his word, in God I will praise his word: [that is, his word of promise:] I will not fear what flesh can do unto me," (Ps. lvi. 3, 10.) The Scripture builds all the hope and comfort of a Christian upon the faithful-

ness of God. "God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that you are able," &c., (1 Cor. x. 13;) "The Lord is faithful, who shall establish you," &c., (2 Thess. iii. 3;) "For he is faithful that hath promised," (Heb. x. 23.) Memorable is that saying of David — "For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name," (Ps. cxxxviii. 2 :) which words are to be understood as Ainsworth explaineth them, Thy word of promise in Christ, and Thy faithfulness in performing of it, doth more exalt Thy name than anything by which Thou art made known. Oh, then, let all the saints of God, who are heirs of the promises, meditate frequently upon the preciousness, freeness, firmness, unchangeableness, and immutability of them.

V. You must meditate upon the fullness and richness of the promises. The promises are the saints' magazine and spiritual treasure; they are called the "unsearchable riches of Christ," (Eph.

The fifth meditation :
Meditate on the richness of the promises.

iii. 6, 7.) It is one of the greatest titles belonging to a saint to be styled "an heir of the promises." That man that hath a right to all the promises in the Bible is the richest man in the world; for God is his, (and he that hath Him that hath all things, hath all things;) Christ is his, (and Christ is all in all;) the Spirit is his, (and he who hath the Spirit hath all good things, as appears by comparing Matt. vii. 11 with Luke xi. 13.) In the first it is said, "How much more shall your Father in heaven give good things," &c.; in the second, "How much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy Spirit," &c. Grace and glory, and all outward good things, are His. It is said of the great Duke of Guise, that though he was poor as to his present possessions, yet he was the richest man in France in bills, bonds, and obligations, because he had engaged all the noblemen in France unto himself, by preferring of them. A true and real Christian is the richest man in the

Heb. viii. 17.

world in promises and obligations, for he hath the great God engaged by promise to be his God, and the God of his. As Charles the First commanded his herald, in a challenge to Francis the First, king of France, to proclaim him with all his titles, styling him Emperor of Germany, King of Castile, Arragon, Naples, Sicily, &c. But Francis commanded his herald to call him so often King of France as the other had titles by all his country; implying that France alone was more worth than all his countries. So when a wicked man brags of his lordships and great possessions, when he boasteth of his thousands a year, a child of God may say, God is mine, God is mine, &c.; I am richer than all the wicked men in the world.

VI. You must meditate on the latitude and extension of the promises. The promises are the saints' catholicon and panacea. There is no condition a child of God can be in, but he may find, not only a promise, but a suitable and

The sixth meditation: Meditate on the latitude and extension of the promises.

seasonable promise to comfort him in it. And herein especially consisteth the spiritual excellency and heavenly wisdom of a Christian, not only to study the promises in general, but to labour to find out; and having found out, to meditate upon such kind of promises which are most suitable and most seasonable to the condition he is in. As, for example—

If thou art poor in estate, meditate on Ps. xxxiv. 10; Matt. vi. 33; Heb. xiii. 5.

If barren, and without children, meditate on Isa. lvi. 5.

If persecuted for Christ's sake, meditate on Matt. v. 10; 1 Pet. iv. 12-14; Ps. xciv. 12.

If sick, and under tormenting pains, meditate on Ps. l. 15; Isa. lxiii. 9; Rom. viii. 28.

If reproached, slandered, and falsely accused, meditate on Matt. x. 25; Matt. v. 11, 12; Luke vi. 22, 23.

If Satan tempts thee, and thou art

not able to resist him, meditate on Rom. xix. 20; 1 Cor. x. 13; Gen. iii. 15; 1 John iii. 8.

If thy corruptions be too strong for thee, meditate on Rom. vi. 14; Mic. vii. 16.

If God hides His face from thee and thou sittest in darkness, and seest no light, meditate on Isa. l. 10, liv. 7, 8.

If ready to faint in waiting upon God, and in expecting the fulfilling of His promises, meditate on Isa. xxx. 18, lxiii. 3, xl. 28-30; Mal. iii. 1.

If ready to die, and full of fears and doubts, meditate on 1 Cor. xv. 55-57; Hos. xiii. 14; Rev. xiv. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 22, 23; 2 Cor. v. 1, 8.

VII. You must meditate on the variety of the promises, and their difference and distinction one from the other. The promises are like unto the stars in the firmament.

The seventh meditation: Meditate on the variety of the promises.

1. For their multitude, they are very many. The Scripture is bespangled with promises, as the heavens are with

stars. It were happy if the saints would prove spiritual astronomers, and make it their work to study the nature of these stars.

2. For their beauty, excellency, and influence. Every star is beautiful in its kind, and very useful and advantageous; so are the promises. And as the stars are most comfortable in the darkness of the night, so are the promises in the night of trouble and adversity.

3. And especially for their distinction and difference. For as one star differs from another in glory, "There is one glory of the sun, another of the moon, another of the stars," (1 Cor. xv. 41;) so do the promises differ exceedingly one from the other in beauty and excellency. Some are temporal, some spiritual, some of things that are eternal; some are conditional, some absolute; some are promises to those that have grace, some are promises of grace; some are general, others particular; some are original, fundamental, and fountain promises, (as

the promise of Jesus Christ, of God being our God, and of the Holy Ghost;) others are derivative, and depending promises, (as the promises of all outward comforts here, and of eternal life hereafter.) Now it is our duty to take notice of every ray of gold, to meditate upon all the promises, both spiritual, temporal, and eternal; both conditional and absolute; both of grace, and to grace, both general and particular; but especially of the original and fundamental promises, the fountain-promises, from whence all others, as so many streams and rivulets, are deduced and derived.

VIII. You must meditate on the usefulness and profitableness of the promises. I have already showed you, that they are the conduits of grace and comfort, that they have a soul-sanctifying and a soul-comforting power. Give me leave to add, that the promises are—

The eighth meditation :
Meditate on the usefulness of the promises.

1. The breathings of divine love and affection.

2. The life and soul of faith.
3. The anchor of hope.
4. The wings of prayer.
5. The foundation of industry.
6. The rays and beams of the Sun of

Righteousness; and upon all these accounts are very useful and advantageous.

The promises are the breathings of divine love.

1. They are the breathings of divine love and affection. It is an argument of God's wonderful love to His children, that He is pleased to enter into a promise and covenant to be their God, and to give them Christ, and in Christ all blessings here and hereafter. We read, (Gen. xvii. 2, 3,) when God told Abraham that He would make a covenant with him, "he fell on his face as astonished" at so great a mercy, and as thankfully acknowledging the goodness of God towards him. The like we read of David. When God, by Nathan, made a promise to him, he goes into God's house, and prays, "Who am I, O Lord, and what is my house, that the Lord my God should do this?" &c. (2 Sam.

vii. 11, 18, 19.) The promises are the cabinets of the tender bowels of God; they contain the dear and tender love of God towards His elect children; God, by promising, makes Himself a debtor to them. Now that God, who is bound to none, (no, not to the angels of heaven,) should enter into bonds, and bind Himself to give grace and glory to His elect children, this is love above expression! And there is nothing moved God to do this, but, as I have said, His free grace and mercy. For though God be now bound, out of justice and faithfulness, to fulfil His promises, yet nothing moved Him to make these promises but His love and mercy, as David saith of what God had promised to him, (2 Sam. vii. 21,) "According to thine own heart, and according to thy word, not for any thing in me, for what am I, O Lord," &c. Thus you see how the promises are the breathings of divine love and affection, and upon this account are they very useful and profitable. For love is

love's loadstone; therefore the apostle saith, "We love him, because he loved us first." The sense of God's love to us will kindle a love in us to God. Even as the beams of the sun reflecting upon a wall heats those that walk by the wall, so the beams of God's love shining into our souls warms our hearts with the love of God. "The love of God constrains us," as saith Paul, (2 Cor. v. 14.) There is a compulsive and constraining power in love. What did not Jacob do for the love of Rachel? How was Mephibosheth affected with the love of David? (2 Sam. xix. 8.) It is our duty to love those that hate us; but not to love those that love us, is more than heathenish and brutish.

The promises are the life and soul of faith.

2. They are the life and soul of faith. Faith without a promise to act upon is as a body without a soul, as a dead flower which hath no beauty or sweetness in it; but faith grounded upon the promises will enable a Christian to advance in all manner of holiness. What

made Abraham forsake his country and his father's house, and go he knew not whither? Nothing moved him to this, but because God had promised to make him a great nation, and he believed it. Of all graces, none so casual of holiness as the grace of faith. It is a world-overcoming, heart-purifying, life-sanctifying, wonder-working grace; and therefore the promises must needs be very useful, because they are the life and soul of faith.

3. They are the anchor of hope. Hope is called an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast; but the promises are the anchor of hope. All hope of heaven, which is not founded upon a promise, is presumption, and not hope. Presumption is when a man hopes to go to heaven upon no ground, or upon an insufficient ground. But true hope is a hope grounded upon a Scripture promise. And hope bottomed upon divine promises will mightily avail unto purity and holiness. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

The promises are the anchor of hope, Heb. vi. 9.

lived as pilgrims and strangers upon earth, because they looked and hoped for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God, (Heb. xi. 9, 10.) The Old Testament saints would not accept deliverance upon sinful terms, because they hoped for a better resurrection. The Papists and Arminians are much mistaken in teaching that the assurance of salvation is an enemy to godliness. The Scripture saith quite the contrary. "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself, even as he is pure," (1 John iii. 3.) The true hope of heaven will make us live heavenly.

The promises are the wings of prayer.

4. They are the wings of prayer: prayer is a divine cordial to convey grace from heaven into our souls; it is a key to unlock the bowels of mercy which are in God. The best way to obtain holiness is upon our knees; the best posture to fight against the devil is upon our knees: and therefore prayer is not put as a part of our spiritual armour, but added as that which must

be an ingredient in every part, and which will make every part effectual. But now the promises are the wings of prayer. Prayer without a promise is as a bird without wings: and therefore we read both of Jacob and Jehoshaphat, ^{2 Chron. xx. 8, 9.} how they urged God in their prayer with His promises. And certainly the prayers of the saints, winged with divine promises, will quickly fly up to heaven, and draw down grace and comfort into their souls. And upon this account it is that the promises are so useful to a Christian, because they are so helpful in prayer. When we pray we must urge God with His promises, and say, Lord, hast Thou not said, Thou wilt circumcise our hearts to love Thee, Thou wilt subdue our sins, Thou wilt give the Spirit to those that ask it? Lord, Thou art faithful, fulfil these Thine own promises: and we must remember this great truth, that the promises God makes to us, to mortify our sins for us, are greater helps against

sin than our promises to God to mortify sin. Many men in the day of their distress vow and promise to leave sin, and fight against it in the strength of these promises, and instead of conquering sin, are conquered by sin. But if we fight against sin in the strength of Christ and of His promises; if we urge God in prayer with His own word, we shall at last get victory over it: for He hath said that "sin shall not have dominion over us," (Rom. vi. 14.)

The promises are the foundation of industry.

5. They are the foundation of industry. The promises do not make men lazy and idle, as some scandalously say, but they are the ground of all true labour and industry; therefore the apostle persuades us from the consideration of the promises, unto the study of soul-purification, to have our conversation without covetousness; to flee from idolatry, and to separate ourselves from sinful communion. Divine promises are great encouragements unto spiritual diligence.

1 Cor. vii. 1;
Heb. xiii. 1;
1 Cor. xii. 13,
14; 2 Cor. vi.
17, 18.

Object. Though conditional promises be the foundation of industry (because we cannot have the thing promised unless we perform the conditions,) yet absolute promises, say some, are foundations of laziness, and therefore, they affirm, there are no absolute promises in Scripture.

Ans. Absolute promises are made foundations of industry in Scripture, as well as conditional. The apostle exhorts us to work out our salvation with Phil. ii. 12, fear and trembling, because it is God ¹³ who worketh in us both to will and to do of His own good pleasure. And the reason is, because God performeth nothing which He promiseth, though never so absolutely, but in the diligent and conscientious use of the means on our part. God promiseth (Ezek. xxxvi. 26) to give us a new heart and a new spirit, &c.; but then He adds, (verse 37,) "I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel."

The promises are the rays and beams of the Sun of Righteousness.

6. They are rays and beams, as one saith, of Christ the Sun of Righteousness, in whom they are founded and established. As all the lines in a circumference, though never so distant, carry a man to one and the same centre, so all the promises carry us to Christ the centre. For the promises are not made for anything in us, nor have they any stability from us; but they are made in and for Christ unto us, unto Christ in our behalf, and unto us, so far as we are members of Christ. Now, Jesus Christ is the ground of all soul-purification, soul-consolation, and soul-salvation; and therefore I may safely conclude, that the promises are most singularly useful and advantageous; and that it is the duty of all those that desire to live holily and comfortably, to consider and ponder the profitableness and beneficialness of the promises.

The ninth meditation: Meditate on the necessity of getting an interest in the promises.

IX. And lastly, you must meditate on the great necessity that lieth upon all men to get a Scripture interest in

the promises. This I add, to awaken Christians to attend diligently to the discourse about the promises, and to show them the necessity of minding and of studying them. For he that hath no right to them is in a faithless, hopeless, comfortless, desperate, and damnable condition. All the happiness of a Christian, both here and hereafter, consisteth especially in his right and title to the promises. The Scripture tells us, in express words, that he that is a stranger from the promise is without Christ, without God, without hope. Eph. ii. 20. Sad is the condition of that man who hath no interest in God nor in Christ, and who is without hope. And such is the condition of him who is a stranger to the promises; for all hope of heaven, which is not bottomed upon a promise, is presumption and soul-delusion. All comfort and joy which is not grounded upon a promise is soul-cozenage, and all faith not anchored upon a promise is nothing else but flattery and soul-

mockery. Consider this, you that are full of joy and comfort, and, as you say, rely upon Christ for salvation. Tell me, what promise have you to build this faith, this hope, this comfort upon? For there are thousands that flatter themselves into hell by a false hope of heaven; thousands which promise to themselves to go to heaven, but have no promise for it from God. Such were the five foolish virgins, such was the church of Laodicea, such were they mentioned in Matt. vii. 24, Hos. viii. 2, 3, Micah iii. 10, 11. Remember this, and let it be daily in your thoughts—You that have not true right to the promises, your faith is faction, your hope is presumption, and your joy is delusion. To be a stranger from the promise, is to be without God, without Christ, and without hope. So much for the second particular, viz.,—meditate on the promises.