

SERMON XXXI.

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WHAT GIFTS OF GRACE ARE CHIEFLY TO BE EXERCISED IN ORDER TO AN ACTUAL PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF CHRIST BY DEATH AND JUDGMENT ?

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came ; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage : and the door was shut.—Matthew xxv. 10.

WE have two large and weighty discourses of Jesus Christ to his disciples newly before his death : the one, to comfort them against his departure out of the world ; (John xiv.—xvi. ;) the other, to prepare both them and us against his return to judge the world ; of which the present chapter treateth, and part of the precedent. In the former chapter we have Christ's exhortation unto watchfulness against his second coming, urged from the uncertainty of the time of his return ; (Matt. xxiv. 42 ;) and this exhortation is continued in this twenty-fifth chapter ; in which there are these three parts : *The first* is contained in the parable of the ten virgins. (Verses 1—13.) *The second*, in that of the several talents given by the master to his servants, to be employed and improved by them against his return. (Verses 14—30.) *The third* containeth the description of the coming of Christ to judge the world. (Verses 31—46.)

My text lieth in the first parable ; namely, that of the ten virgins ; of whom " five were wise, and five were foolish." And whereas Christ very often opened his mouth in parables, none of them comes closer to the consciences of men than this, as I may have occasion to show hereafter. I shall not insist in opening the whole parable, seeing the following discourse will take-in most thereof : I will hasten, therefore, to that part thereof which I have now read unto you.

Now as for these ten virgins, they professed alike ; and who were the wise, and who the foolish, lay undiscovered till the midnight-cry was heard : " Behold, the bridegroom cometh ; go ye out to meet him." " Behold, he cometh with clouds, he cometh to judge the earth ; he shall judge the world in righteousness, and his people with equity." This was an awakening cry to slumbering virgins in the midst of the dark and black night, who little dreamed that Christ was so near at hand ; but wise and foolish are startled and raised with it, and all of them betake themselves forthwith to the trimming of their lamps ; when the foolish, finding theirs extinguished, desire the wise to communicate of their oil unto them. They speak like persons not well awake ; for though there is a communion of saints in the exercise of their graces mutually among themselves, yet there is no communication of personal graces to each

other; and moreover "the just shall live by his" own, and not by another's "faith." What therefore say the wise? *Μηποτε, Nequaquam*, "By no means," say they; "'lest there be not enough for us and you;' we have no oil to spare; 'but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.'" *Salsa derisio, non cohortatio,** saith Beza. The wise answer the foolish wisely; yea, wittily upbraid them for their folly; for was this a time to get grace, when the Bridegroom was come, and time was slipped? Is that a time to have oil to buy, when we should have oil to burn? Or is this oil to be bought with money and price, which is most freely given in the day of grace and mercy? What, therefore, do the foolish do? As if they foolishly understood an exprobration for an exhortation, they are thinking now of buying: "But while they went to buy, the Bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage; and the door was shut." In which words you have, 1. *The going of the foolish to buy.* 2. *The coming of the Bridegroom to the marriage.* 3. *The preparedness of the wise to enter with him.* 4. *The shutting of the door after them.* But not to insist upon these things distinctly, let me gather-up the principal scope of our Saviour in the words; which is, to show us,

OBSERVATION.

That very miserable is the condition of such, especially professors of the gospel, who have grace to seek and get at the coming of Jesus Christ; and as happy is the state of such who are ready to enter with him into the bride-chamber of eternal rest and peace.—This is the point that I shall insist upon; which, in the application, will lead me to the question that is to be spoken to.

1. I say, *Very miserable is the condition of such.*—That is, of such in general; and not only of such as profess to Christ, but of others also that profess not to him at all, as to any show of godliness in their lives; such as are the far greatest part of men; yea, and commonly too, where the gospel is preached, who are, sure enough, to seek not only of the oil of grace in their vessels, but of light also in their lamps.

2. *But more miserable is the state of such who are professors of the gospel, and yet have grace to seek and get at such an hour.*—Yet so will it be, as you see in my text; for such are these foolish virgins, who go to purchase grace when the Bridegroom cometh.

3. *Very miserable is their case, because the door of the bride-chamber is shut against them.*—They profess to the Bridegroom in common with the wise; and now the wise are admitted, and the foolish excluded; for the everlasting doors of glory stand open unto *saving*, but never unto *common*, grace.

4. *It must needs be, then, that the state of the wise is very blessed.*—Because they are prepared, and their lights are burning, and their loins girded, and their oil of grace in exercise, when Christ is coming to them; and therefore they are brought to the "King in raiment of needle-work;" yea, with gladness and rejoicing they are brought, and "enter into the King's palace," where "the wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and even as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."

* "A sharp and derisive speech; not an exhortation."—EDIT.

But I shall not stand upon this second part of the doctrine,—*to show the happiness of the wise prepared virgins*; the time, and question to be handled, will not permit it: only something I shall speak to it in the close of this exercise. Therefore, in opening of the other part, namely, *the misery of such as profess to Jesus Christ, who have grace to get and seek at the coming of the Bridegroom*; let me show you,

1. That *there are such as profess at a high rate, and yet are no better than foolish virgins*.—For such are these here in my text, who rise very high in their professions, as excelling the ordinary rank of pretenders unto Christ. “How so?”

(1.) *They are virgins*.—“And what is that?”

(i.) *They have renounced anti-christian idolatry, and all the false worships of the mother of harlots*.—And they will in no wise conform to the inventions of men; as it is said of the hundred and forty-four thousand which stand with the Lamb on Mount Zion: “These are they that have not defiled themselves with women; for they are virgins.” (Rev. xiv. 4.) That is, they have abandoned the spiritual fornications of the great whore, and kept their garments undefiled in that respect.

(ii.) *They have also renounced “the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”* (2 Peter ii. 20.) —Τα μiasματα, “the puddles or sloughs” wherein the swine of the world do wallow; they “flee from” these, as the word doth signify: yea, they are not only ἀποφυγοντες, but also ἀποστρυφοντες; not only “such as flee from” these puddles, but “such as,” at least seemingly, “abhor” them. For these virgins are too neat to defile themselves with the world’s mire and dirt: they arise, you see, and trim their lamps; they are therefore trim virgins, who have not visibly defiled themselves.

(iii.) And more especially, *they are virgins in professing espousals to Christ the Bridegroom*.—Who, as it was prefigured under the law, marieth “a wife in her virginity.” (Lev. xxi. 13.) These virgins, therefore, are visibly espoused unto Christ, and joined in the same communion with the wise; for here is a fellowship between the ten: they stand at so great a distance from the world’s defilements, that they profess communion visibly with the choicest saints. And, indeed, the saints in gospel-fellowship are virgins, and every church of Christ is a virgin. Hence saith the apostle to the church at Corinth, “I have espoused you to one Husband, that I may present you a chaste virgin to Christ.” (2 Cor. xi. 2.) And therefore the members of the churches are to be reputed such, seeing they are parts of the same homogeneal body.* And thus you see how these professors are virgins.

(2.) *They have their lamps, as well as the wise*.

(i.) In that they are persons of light and understanding, guides to the blind, and lights to them that are in darkness, instructors of the foolish, and yet themselves but fools.

(ii.) The word is also “a lamp to their feet and a light unto their paths,” so far that they will conform their actions to the rule: “For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light.” (Prov. vi. 23.) And in

* *Eadem est ratio partis et totius.* “Those properties which appertain to the whole, belong also to every part.”—EDIT.

these two respects, their knowledge and external conformity, their lamps shine as brightly as [those of] the wise virgins do.

(3.) *They profess not only expectation of Christ's coming, but make also preparation for it.*—In that they go forth together with the wise to meet the Bridegroom. And though at last they are found unready, yet they prepare so far that they go forth to meet him, as hoping to partake in the blessing and comfort of the nuptial day; whereby it appeareth that they had “tasted of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.” And though they fell into their midnight's sleep, so did the wise virgins also: for it will indeed be such a drowsy time immediately before the coming of Christ, that not one of ten that profess unto him will be awaked; no, nor one in five of such as do truly love him. And at the first, too, they only “slumbered;” and neither slept nor waked; but by degrees they fall fast asleep; for security hath its gradual progressions before it be midnight with the soul. But this was not proper to these five, but common to all the ten.

(4.) *They are no less awaked than the wise with the midnight-cry of, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”*—For, saith the text, “Then all those virgins arose;” so that they take the alarm equally with the rest. Thus one may be awaked with the cry of the word of God, and yet be void of grace in his heart.

(5.) *They likewise fall to trimming of their lamps no less than the wise virgins do.*—That is, they fall to furbishing of that profession which had contracted scurf and foulness in the time of their midnight-security. For now they looked upon themselves as espoused unto Jesus Christ, and begin to deck and trim themselves with ornaments against the nuptials, as conscious that preparation is most necessary for those who desire to be found of Christ in peace at his appearance; for there is no meeting him with lamps untrimmed and lives unguided by the word.

(6.) *They persevere unto the Bridegroom's coming.*—They were guilty of security, indeed, and so were the wise also; but here is neither apostasy nor discovered hypocrisy thus far; namely, until the midnight-cry. They held out to the last, and die at heaven's door, and, like the Levite's concubine, with their “hands upon the threshold.” (Judges xix. 27.) Thus they professed far; for such a sort, I say, there is, that rise thus high, and yet are foolish virgins.

2. In the next place, *let us consider where the defect is, and wherein the folly of these virgins lieth.*—For you have heard of their virginity in their separation from and profession against anti-christian idolatry and men's inventions, and also in their escaping the world's pollutions; and you have seen their virginity in their espousals unto Christ, and visible communion with the wise in the enjoyment of gospel-ordinances; you have heard also of their light, their hopes, their awaking, their trimming their lamps, and how near they came to heaven. But here now was the one thing lacking,—that all this was the effect only of an external and ineffectual work, wherein though there was something internal, it was but light and transient, which never wrought a thorough and powerful change of the heart: whereas the wise had an inward and powerful call to Christ, insomuch that “the gospel came to them not in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Ghost;”

whereby they were made to "know wisdom in the hidden part," and became virgins in affection and disposition, as well as in profession and action. Meanwhile the operations of the Spirit are languid, weak, and transient, upon the hearts of foolish ones; as we see in the stony ground, in which there is no thorough, powerful, and abiding change. And hence it is said, "The foolish took their lamps, but took no oil with them;" they wanted the oil of the Spirit of God, and his saving gifts, in the vessels of their hearts. Briefly: the wise virgins were sincere professors and followers of Christ; the others, mere hypocrites and foolish builders, who laid their foundation on the sand. And yet I do not say, that foolish virgins have always saving grace to seek at the coming of Christ; because there is repentance and pardon to be had in time for hypocrites. A foolish professor may go forth to meet the Bridegroom with his lamp only in his hand, and no oil at all in his heart; and yet he may meet with timely awakenings by the way, and Christ may infuse the oil of saving grace into his heart before the midnight-cry; whereby *he* becometh wise in the latter end, *who was* a fool in the beginning; for Christ calls upon hypocrites, as well as others, to repent. (Matt. xxiii. 26; James iv. 8.) Hypocritical Sardis is called hereunto, as well as the other virgin-churches of Asia; and many unsound professors have been effectually converted, when many others have lived and died in their hypocrisy; and perseverance in profession unto Christ is no argument of a good estate to a dying virgin, except she be found in the way of wisdom.

3. There remaineth one thing more to be spoken to for the clearing of the point; and that is, *that very miserable is the state of such as these, who have grace to get when Christ cometh.*—For "the door is shut" upon them. In which words is declared their punishment of loss, which some have thought to be greater than that of sense; which I shall not dispute, but briefly discourse of that of loss, as mentioned only in the text; which is inevitably followed by that of sense.

(1.) *All the profession of these virgins is lost.*—Their prayers, praises, humblings, external reformatations, communications both of their worldly substance and likewise of their parts and gifts; and so are their sufferings and their witness-bearing to the truth, &c. All these are excluded from God's acceptance of them, through want of an interest in the Bridegroom; for none of these were offered up in Christ; and the greatest and most glorious services, without unfeigned faith and love, are nothing. (Lev. xvii. 5, 6; Heb. xiii. 15; Col. iii. 17; 1 Cor. xiii. 1—3.)

(2.) *All opportunities and means of grace are now lost, never to be enjoyed more.*—The door of opportunity (as the apostle calleth it, 2 Cor. ii. 12; 1 Cor. xvi. 9) is for ever shut against them; they have survived all their seasons, which now give place unto eternity. For the Bridegroom cometh first by death; and "it is appointed unto men once to die, and after this the judgment;" not, "After this, and further means of grace;" not, "After this a sabbath, or a sermon, or a time to pray and repent;" but, "After this the judgment." And what, then, succeeds the judgment? The perpetual execution of it; in which respect it is called the "eternal judgment;" (Heb. vi. 2;) so that the door of opportunity is now for ever shut.

(3.) *There is "a door of hope," and that also is shut against them.* (Hosea ii. 15.)—These virgins had hopeful expectations of entrance with the Bridegroom; for that was it they waited for: whereas now their hope is perished, and hath given up the ghost; for, at best, it was but a fine-spun "spider's web," (Job viii. 14,) but never a true lively hope.

(4.) *It followeth upon this, that the door of grace is shut, never to be opened more.*—Christ stretched forth his hands to them all the day long; but now "the accepted time and day of salvation" is ended, and there is no further place for grace and mercy, nor hopes of seeing "the King in his beauty."

(5.) *They have now lost their communion with the wise virgins, who are safe within the door.*—That whereas they separated from the world to join in fellowship with saints, they are now for ever separated from the saints, to take their portion with the world. (Matt. vii. 23.) Time was, when the door of Christ's house upon earth, which is the church of God, stood open to them as well as unto the wise, and the key of the kingdom of heaven gave them admission into this lower house upon their visible subjection to his rule and government; and they had entrance equally with the wise to partake of all the privileges thereof: and now, when they think to enter into the upper house of eternal glory, the key is turned against them.

(6.) *These virgins now have lost their veils.*—And are discovered to the wise, who see not the virgins their companions brought to the King in fellowship with themselves in glory. And now they are discovered also to themselves and to all the world, and known to be what they are; so that they have nothing henceforth to cover them but everlasting shame and contempt. Time was, that they were taken together in the same net with them who are within the door; but the angels have gathered the good fish into their vessels, and cast away the bad. (Matt. xiii. 47—49.) That therefore now is taken from them which they seemed to have, even the shows and shadows of that grace they never had, by Him that "brings to light the hidden things of darkness, and maketh manifest the counsels of the heart." Their lamps were going out, when they awaked at the midnight-cry; (Matt. xxv. 8;) and now they are quite extinguished, never to shine more. The word shall shine no longer to them, nor their knowledge and other gifts to any.

(7.) *It now remains, that they who erewhile were in their midnight's sleep, are now in their midnight's darkness.*—Even there where the light of a candle never shined, nor the voice of the bridegroom and the bride was ever heard. For they are driven out of light into darkness, and an eternal night of grief and desperate sorrow, to "have their portion with hypocrites," their lamps to be put out in obscure darkness. This door of separation, like to the pillar of the cloud between the Israelites and Egyptians, yields light to the wise within, and darkness to the fools without.

These things (which are mostly textual) are enough to demonstrate the misery of these virgins: I need not spend further time to dilate upon the pain of loss, nor at all upon the pain of sense, which followeth inevitably upon what you have already heard. Let me, therefore, apply the truth thus opened, and hasten to the question.

USES.

USE I. *Are these things so? What, then, shall we think of such who fall as short of the foolish virgins as the foolish do of the wise? And where shall the profane and ignorant sinner appear?*—O, how many are there in a land of light, who are far from this virginity fore-mentioned, as being defiled with antichrist's and the world's pollutions! How many, who never engaged in the saints' communion; and who never pretended to the Bridegroom, never waited for his coming, never went forth to meet him, never regarded a lamp of light without them in the word, nor of the knowledge of Christ within them; and who are so fast asleep in sin, that no midnight-cry can awake them! Surely, the door of grace will be shut against these when they die, who never cared to come near it whilst they lived. And if foolish virgins perish with their hands upon the gates of glory, what will become of them who live and die at so vast a distance from them? And if five of ten that go forth to meet and marry the Bridegroom, are yet shut out of doors, what can they expect who go out to meet him in a hostile manner and professed opposition to him?

USE II. *The point admonisheth all that profess unto the Bridegroom, to take heed of resting in aught that is common to them with the foolish virgins.*—For "except your righteousness exceed" theirs, "ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. v. 20.) There are two negatives in the original text, *οὐ μὴ* as much as to say, "You shall not, you shall not enter." The door is double-locked against them. Now you have heard of their attainments,—their virginity, that is, their protesting against idolatry and superstition, and also the world's pollutions; yea, their joining in communion with sincere believers, their light, their fellowship in all the ordinances, their expectations of the Bridegroom's coming, and preparation for it, their awaking and taking the alarm of his approach, the trimming of their lamps, and perseverance in these attainments to the end. Verily, these are great things, and more than we can find in many that profess to Christ this day. Surely our Lord Jesus did foresee the slumbering frame of all the virgins, both wise and foolish, from age to age, especially against his coming, that he hath left behind him such a parable as this to awaken them, which is sufficient to make one start in his midnight-sleep, and arise and clothe himself with tremblings.

You read, Heb. vi. 4, 5, 9, of enlightenings, and tasting of the heavenly gift, partaking of the Holy Ghost, tasting, also, "of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come;" and yet these things do not infallibly attend salvation, but may at last determine in apostasy. Here are three things: *illuminations; common gifts and operations; and tastings*, 1. *Of the heavenly gift*, which is Christ. 2. *Of the promise*. 3. *Of the joys of heaven*. But, I say, these things do not infallibly conclude salvation, except effectual saving grace be joined with them: for they may be where there is no saving grace, and they may be where there is, or they may precede a saving work; but bare *illuminations* as to the doctrine of Christ, and attaining the literal knowledge of the gospel, is no saving work. The like may be said of *common*

gifts and operations of the Holy Ghost ; as, a gift of prayer, of preaching, of utterance, of tongues, and of working miracles, as in the primitive times. So for the *tastes*, either of the *heavenly gift*, Christ Jesus, and the glorious divine things of the gospel, or of the *good word of God in the promises*, or of the *joys of the world to come* ; all these things may be found in temporaries. Supernatural gifts are given sometimes to mere natural men. (Matt. vii. 22, 23.) John Baptist's hearers "rejoiced in his light for a season ;" the stony ground "received the word with joy ;" and even Balaam had a taste, for the time, of the world to come, when he desired to "die the death of the righteous ;" and these foolish virgins lived to the last in hopes of entering into glory. But the immortal soul cannot live upon light, superficial tastes, which yield only a transient relish : there must be a feeding on, as well as a tasting of, the heavenly gift, the good word of promise, and the glory of a higher world. Tasting is a thing distinct from feeding ; and therefore, when the apostle useth a similitude to illustrate what he had said of this kind of tasting, in distinction from eating and drinking, digesting and living upon, the things thus tasted, saith he, "The earth which drinketh-in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God : but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing ; whose end is to be burned." (Heb. vi. 7, 8.) In which comparison he intimateth, that as it is not enough that the rain doth fall upon the earth, except the earth doth drink it in, without which it will not be fruitful, nor receive a blessing ; even so it sufficeth not that these heavenly things do fall more lightly upon the spiritual palate, except the soul so drinketh them in as that it liveth upon them ; for then, and then alone, it receiveth a blessing from the Lord ; whereas otherwise such persons are "rejected and nigh unto cursing," and their "end is to be burned."

Brethren, the parable now in hand, and that text to the Hebrews, are of an awakening nature ; for God knoweth our slumbering dispositions. You have heard, then, of the attainments of these virgins, and of those professors mentioned by the apostle to the Hebrews. (Heb. vi. 4—9.) And they are indeed good things : "But," saith he, "there are 'better,' and such as do 'accompany salvation.'" For in the second part of that chapter, he speaketh of "the work of faith, the labour of love, and the patience of hope in the sight of God and our Father ;" (1 Thess. i. 3 ;) that is, such as are not spurious and adulterine, but german and genuine, and will endure the test as to their sincerity, in the presence of a heart-searching God. And by these infallible notes we must take our measures. Illuminations, common gifts and operations, and light, transient tastes and relishes, are no evidences ; we must have these better things to bear up our hearts against the coming of the Bridegroom. It sufficeth not to be enrolled among professors, and to enjoy the charitable thoughts and approbations of the wisest virgins under heaven. It is singular mercy to be rightly guided in self-esteem and valuation ; for they that "measure themselves by themselves, or compare themselves among themselves, are not wise." The apostle would not have us to take up with the positive degree of *good* things ; but to take our aims by the comparative of *better*. (2 Cor. x. 12.) These good things are more light,

ineffectual, and superficial, and too often like the seal that is impressed upon bare paper ; whereas these better things are like the seal's impression on the wax.

Yet let no trembling soul or broken reed be affrighted at the end of these foolish virgins, to see the door thus shut against them : the tender heart of Jesus Christ aimeth not at our consternation, but awakening, and to prepare and hasten us unto glory before the key be turned. Nor doth his apostle, in the foresaid place, despise the day of small things ; but his real scope and purpose is, to excite professors to look carefully to their foundations, and then to "go on unto perfection." (Heb. vi. 1.) And blessed for ever be the Lord for the second part of that sixth chapter to the Hebrews ; in the close whereof we may see the afflicted heart tossed with tempests and not comforted, yet hoping in mercy, and fleeing to Jesus as his refuge, and casting the anchor of his floating soul "within the veil, whither the Forerunner is for us entered," who himself was once tossed in the ship of the militant church, "albeit without sin ;" but is now gone ashore to heaven as our Forerunner, both to look to our anchor, which is fastened there, and to hold all fast, and to draw our tossed ship to shore, and to see all safe ; that where our Forerunner is, there may we be also. And thus the sweet conclusion of that chapter doth fully recompense the severity of its beginning. Let us "comfort ourselves and one another with these" things.

USE III. You have heard the miserable condition of such, especially professors of the gospel and pretenders to Christ, who have grace to seek at his coming. As for the happy state of such as are ready to enter in with him into the bride-chamber of eternal peace and joy, I shall speak a little in the close.

QUESTION.

Now therefore, in the remainder of this exercise, it will be expected, as seasonable, that it be considered, *What gifts of grace are chiefly to be in exercise in order to an actual preparation for the coming of Christ by death and judgment?*—For his coming is first by death, and then by judgment.

1. And I say, "an actual preparation," because *there is always a general and habitual preparedness to meet Christ Jesus in hearts that are truly godly, but not always a particular, actual fitness.*—And this we see here in the five wise virgins, who are found in their midnight-sleep, with lamps that have need of trimming at the coming of Christ. Thus Hezekiah was fit to die, as to a general and habitual fitness, in that he could assert his sincerity before God, when the message of death was brought him ; but he was to seek of a particular, actual fitness, in that he begs for longer life with prayers and plenty of tears. The message of death awaked him, and the holy man is startled, and hath his lamp to trim ; for the tidings of his death at hand was as much in effect, as if it had been said unto him by the prophet, "Behold, the Bridegroom cometh ; go forth, Hezekiah, to meet him." The nature of his distemper, which some by the remedy, a lump of figs applied to the boil, conceive to have been the pestilence ; and this considered with the shortness and sharpness of the message, and the prophet Isaiah's quick and

abrupt departure from him, and that the king had then no heir to succeed him in the throne, and also that he was now at the full strength of nature, being but nine and thirty years of age ; and his fear also what might become of his kingdom, and of his former reformation after the grand apostasy of his father Ahaz ; I say, these considerations made him to apprehend that there was a rebuke of God in this present dispensation, and therefore he is loath to die under a temporal frown ; albeit his avowed integrity would, at the worst, have seen him safe at heaven. For though a child of God cannot die in His debt, yet he is unwilling to depart under the sense of His temporal displeasure, so as the good prophet did, whom the lion slew at his return from Bethel to Judah. (1 Kings xiii. 24.) When David, therefore, was under God's rebukes for sin, and even almost consumed with the blow of his hand, he betakes himself, as Hezekiah did, to prayers and tears. Saith he : " Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear unto my cry ; hold not thy peace at my tears : for I am a stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more." (Psalm xxxix. 10—13.) Thus you see that the dear children of God, who have a general and habitual fitness to meet Jesus Christ when he is coming to them by death and judgment, may yet be to seek of a particular actual preparation.

2. Before I come to the answer of the question, let me premise this also : That *though a state of grace is here supposed, seeing grace cannot be exercised where it is not ; yet there may be need to have it cleared.*—Inasmuch as the want thereof is a great hinderance in the way of this duty. You know that one that feareth God, and " obeyeth the voice of his servant" Jesus Christ, may yet " walk in darkness, and see no light ;" (Isai. 1. 10 ;) and he may say with Jonah, he is " cast out of God's sight ;" (Jonah ii. 4 ;) and his " soul is filled with troubles," when his " life draweth nigh unto the grave." (Psalm lxxxviii. 3.) Wherefore let your eye be not only on your lamp, but also on your vessel ; and examine your oil, as well as mind your light. For though you have received an unction from the Holy One, and felt the sweet influences of the Spirit, and have had the witness in yourself ; yet the Comforter, who sometimes relieved your soul, may at the present be far from you, and suspend his testimony ; for grace inherent is not self-enlightening, but like the moon, which holdeth forth light no longer than the sun shineth upon it. And though the dial hath its lines and figures, to declare the time of the day, yet you will be to seek, if the sun withdraw his light. Even thus, though the Spirit of God hath drawn the lines and figures of his gifts and graces in your heart, yet if he also do not shine upon them, you will not know what time of day it is with your soul. Pray, therefore, and strive for renewed sights of grace, and for anointing with fresh oil ; for the saints do often lose their impressions, through carelessness and inadvertency, whilst they have here and there to do, or indulgence to some carnality, and through the malignancy of some overbearing temper or temptation in an hour and power of darkness. And this makes the soul to drive heavily, which sometimes ran as pleasantly as the chariots of Amminadib ; but now the wheels begin to creak, through want of fresh anointings. It being so, look to your vessels and your oil,

and see how they are stored with it, and how the Spirit shineth at any time upon his own lines and figures. This also I premise to the answer of the question, because the soul never acteth grace so vigorously, as when one's state is cleared.

First, therefore, for resolution : *Maintain your faith in frequent exercise, and make no less conscience of acting daily faith than you do of daily prayer.*—For we are apt to rest in a *quondam* call to Christ, and in the original work of faith ; and not to be coming still to Christ, and that as earnestly and studiously as if we had never come before. “He that is coming unto me,” saith Christ ; (John vi. 35 ; 1 Peter ii. 4 ;) the word in the original is a participle of the present tense. And through the neglect of this daily coming the soul is often in the dark, and seemeth to have lost the promise in which it was formerly drawn to Christ ; by means whereof it is sometimes midnight with the wisest virgins, as well as so at other times by means of their security. For instance : “By faith, Abraham, when he was called,” not only unto Canaan, but unto Christ, “obeyed ;” for he looked more to the promised seed than to the promised land ; else, what had his faith been ? But now, in tract of time, namely, about ten years after, he begins to call the promise into question, and to make the steward of his house his heir ; (Gen. xv. 2 ;) till God renewed the promise, to revive thereby the actings of his sleeping faith. “Look now towards heaven,” saith God, “and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them : and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.” Upon this, Abraham “believed in the Lord ; and he counted it to him for righteousness.” “Why ? Did he not believe before ?” Yes ; the apostle dateth his faith from his coming out of Ur of the Chaldees ; (Heb. xi. 8 ;) and yet here we meet with a second date, that is, as to an eminent reviving act of his faith, as if he had omitted to believe, (as indeed he did,) and now began again ; which was only an interruption, not an intercession.

Now thus it may be with you who believed many years ago ; but the promise and impression of it are perhaps almost worn out, and your faith begins to languish. But the promise is still the same ; and “the word of the Lord endureth for ever,” and that is the word of the gospel which is preached to you. Wherefore, take hold of it again and again, and of Christ therein ; and not only of that particular promise wherein Christ at first was held out unto you, but of any other that occurreth ; and in the frequent renewings of your faith, your drooping hearts will be revived, and long at last for the coming of Him in whom your soul believeth. You know that your faith will determine with your life ; and therefore improve it daily for your death, which draweth on by gradual steps, in which you are still making forward toward the Bridegroom's coming, who keeps equal paces with you ; so that he and you will meet together at the point of dissolution. Your faith cannot conquer death ; for there is no discharge in that war between death and nature : only faith will vanquish the dread and horror of it. For death (in which the Bridegroom first cometh to us) is, in itself, “the king of terrors :” other afflictions—as poverty, reproach, imprisonment, debt, exile, sickness, &c.—are inferior fears, which possibly may be escaped, and out of which there is oftentimes deliverance ; but death is the sovereign lord and king

of all of them, from whence there is no return. He that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more, but passeth presently unto the highest tribunal, there to receive the eternal judgment, whether of absolution or of condemnation. And upon this account, the fear of the king of terrors is *the king of fears*, and a sore and painful bondage, in which many are held all their life-time, till faith in Christ release them; yea, and afterwards also, if their faith be not the stronger. What shall I say, then, but, "Awake, faith, and flee to him for refuge, 'who through death hath destroyed him that hath the power of death, that is, the devil; and delivered them who through fear of death were all their life-time subject unto bondage!'" For without this refuge of faith, Christ's coming by death is terrible and astonishing, which the bare habit of faith cannot cure and conquer. Believe, therefore, that you are Christ's, and believe it daily by frequent closings with him and resignations of yourselves unto him; and then you are not so much death's, as death is yours. (1 Cor. iii. 22, 23.) Make good your interest in the Bridegroom, and then you will rejoice at his coming. "Make haste, my beloved," saith the bride. (Canticles viii. 14.) "Why so?" Because he is "beloved," and "*my beloved*." "And the Spirit and the bride say, Come;" (Rev. xxii. 17;) that is, the Spirit in the bride, or the spirit of the bride; for a bride hath a bride-like spirit, which longeth for the coming of the bridegroom. But perhaps the weak believer cannot reach to say thus; and therefore saith the Bridegroom to him, "'Let him that is athirst come:' if thou canst not say, 'Come,' to me, I say, 'Come,' to thee." For we must first come to Christ, before we can say, "Come," to him; yea, we must have some sense of our coming to him, before we can heartily say, "Come," to him. And this faith that I have spoken of, is the principal grace preparing the believer for the coming of Christ, provided that it be maintained in frequent exercise; for hereby the person is justified, the heart purified, the conscience pacified, a sweet correspondence continued between Christ and the believing soul, death conquered, and heaven opened.

Secondly. *This faith doth necessarily work by love.*—And as they always do co-operate, so are they commensurate, and carry a just proportion each to other; though, peradventure, you may be more sensible of your love than of your faith. But now, the more you abound in both, the more you will long for the coming of Christ, and be the more prepared for it. No marvel, therefore, that the apostle loved the appearance of Christ, (2 Tim. iv. 8,) who had so great a love to his person, that he was "not ready to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus." (Acts xxi. 13.) "To die at Jerusalem;" for there, he remembered, Christ died for him; and this inflameth his love toward him, and makes him willing to die for him, and to be for ever with him. No marvel, also, that he was straitened between the choice of life and death, and that the balance seemed to incline mostly toward departure and being with Christ. He crieth, *Συνεχομαι ex των δυο*. "I am constrained between two." (Phil. i. 23.) "Why so?" Because he could say, *Ἡ ἀγάπη τοῦ Χριστοῦ συνεχει με*. "The love of Christ" (that is, to serve him with all my might) "constraineth me." (2 Cor. v. 14.) The original word is the same in both places.

And how came Peter to sleep so soundly and sweetly in his chains between the soldiers, the night before his intended death, in which he was to go to Christ? Why, he could say, "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." (John xxi. 17.) When Christ lieth in the embraces of faith and love, what followeth next but *Nunc dimittis*? * "How so?" Thus: the more we are purified, the more prepared. Now as the heart is purified by faith, so also by love: for "herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." Love doth assimilate a godly soul to Christ; and then what followeth? "There is no fear in love;" that is, no fear of the day of judgment; for "perfect love casteth out fear;" (1 John iv. 17, 18;) that is, strong love; for so is "perfect" taken sometimes: "In understanding be men," or "perfect;" (1 Cor. xiv. 20;) that is, strong, and not like children. So, Heb. v. 14. So that strong love casteth out the fear of the day of judgment, which every degree of love will not do; for "he that feareth is not made perfect in love;" he may have a true, sincere love, but it is too weak to overcome his tormenting fears about that great and terrible day of the Lord. Be much, therefore, in the exercise of this grace, "keeping yourself in the love of God, and looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;" and be often in the contemplation of the preventing love of God and Christ, to which John in the foresaid place directeth us for the strengthening of faith, and overcoming our fears. Saith he, "We love him, because he first loved us." (1 John iv. 19.) And "Christ is deservedly beloved of him, who is undeservedly beloved of Christ;" † and though there is a force in Anathema Maran-atha, to put the soul upon the love of Christ; yet be taken rather with, "Grace be with all them that love him in sincerity."

Thirdly. *As faith and love are co-operary, so "faith and hope are very near of kin."* ‡—Only, hope is the younger sister as to operation, as waiting with patience for that good which faith layeth claim to in the promise; and without this hope we can neither live nor die with comfort. For the promise is many times deferred as to accomplishment; and without hope's patience, how will you spend the interval? God made a promise to Abraham of multiplying his seed; but neither he, nor yet Isaac, nor Jacob, must live to see it fulfilled. But saith Stephen, "When the time of the promise drew near, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt;" so that God's promises have their stated times and seasons, during which there is work for hope, or else the soul would swoon away. "My soul," saith David, "fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word;" (Psalm cxix. 81;) that is, thy word of promise. Hope is a cordial against the soul's fainting-fits.

Again: during this interspace between the promise and the accomplishment, you may meet with many tribulations, through which you must enter into the kingdom of heaven,—fightings without, and fears within. The watchmen may smite you, and the keepers of the walls may take away your veil, as if you were no virgin, but a prostitute; you

* "Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace," &c.—EDIT.
immeritū qui amatus est sine merito.—BERNARDUS.
Fides et Spes.—PAREUS in Heb. vi.

† *Amat ille non*
 ‡ *Valde sunt cognatæ sorores*

may meet with sad eclipses, and the hidings of God's face ; his wrath may lie hard upon you, and all his waves afflict you. Nay, you may meet sometimes with such a storm, that neither sun nor stars may in many days appear ; during which time, you may reel to and fro like a drunken man, and be at your wit's end ; your tackling and freight may be thrown overboard with your own hands ; you may call all the work of God in you into question ; and your hull may be laid adrift, either to sink or swim. In these and the like cases, what will you do without casting the anchor of your hope within the veil, and riding it out till sun and stars appear again ? O, let the patience of hope "have its perfect work ;" for you will have great need hereof, that when you "have done the will of God, you may receive the promise." Though the wise virgins fell asleep, yet so far as they waited for Christ's coming, they exercised their hope ; and such can say at the coming of Christ, "Lo, this is our God : we have waited for him, and he will save us. This is the Lord : we have waited for him ; we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation."

Fourthly. *Keep even accounts with God, and still be perfecting that repentance which is the work of every day ; and let there be no old reckonings between God and you.*—For so it may be with a true believer ; and it may be called to his remembrance in an evil day, and lie heavy, too, upon his conscience. For this, I conceive, was Jacob's case, who had sinned greatly in his fraudulent and surreptitious way of getting the blessing from his brother Esau ; for which he was not thoroughly awakened to see the evil of it for the space of twenty years, namely, at his return from Padan-aram, and [until] that Esau was coming forth against him to be revenged on him ; but then his sin came fresh to his remembrance, and he set apart a night to seek the Lord by solemn prayer, and to wrestle with the Angel of the covenant. "And what did he wrestle with him for ?" You may see by his answer to the Angel : "I will not let thee go, except thou bless me." (Gen. xxxii. 26.) "Why, did not his father bless him ?" Yes : "I have blessed him," said he to Esau ; "yea, and he shall be blessed." (Gen. xxvii. 33.) And not only so, but when Isaac sent him to Padan-aram, he blessed him again. (Gen. xxviii. 1.) But Jacob would not trust to this, seeing the first and chief blessing, which was due to him by oracle and promise, had an ill foundation as to the manner of obtaining it, and in that respect there was a flaw in the title ; which therefore now he striveth to corroborate, before he dares to look his brother Esau in the face ; as if he should say, "My father indeed hath blessed me ; but there was *error personæ*, he 'mistook the person,' and therefore the blessing is null. And moreover, what the meaning of this providence is, that my brother should come forth against me in this hostile manner, I know not : wherefore, I humbly beg thy blessing, and the confirmation of that title which hath so great an error in it." Thus God brought an old reckoning to his remembrance in an evil day, and set it on his conscience, and put him to repent and mourn ; for "he wept, and made supplication unto the Angel." (Hosea xii. 4.) He came not off so easily, but was fain to wrestle hard all night, to lose his rest, and to struggle, and sweat, and pray, and weep, and shed many a tear, and to go halting afterward upon his thigh unto his dying day. Take heed, therefore, of old reckonings undischarged : look back and consider how it

hath been, and omit not a day without reviewing your actions and repentings; I say, as duly as the day determineth, let not the sun go down upon any guilt contracted, that so your sins may be blotted out when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; and exercise yourself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and men; and this will the better prepare you for the coming of Jesus Christ both by death and judgment.

Fifthly. *Be much in the exercise of goodness, mercy, and works of liberality towards Christ in his needy members, according to your opportunity and power.*—For though you shall be saved by your faith, yet you shall be judged according to your works; and it greatly concerneth us to be laborious in that service upon which the judgment shall pass at Christ's appearance. (Matt. xxv. 35, 36.) Call yourself, therefore, to an account, what you have done in this way for Christ; as, how you have fed, clothed, visited, relieved him in his members here on earth. And if this were more considered, such as profess to Christ would be more active for him in aught wherein they might be more serviceable to him: but when we see but little activity in the exercise of this grace, we may well fear there is but little oil in the vessel; for rich anointings will make men agile and ready for every good work, inasmuch as "the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness;" and they that hope for eternal life, when Christ shall come by death and judgment, must "seek for glory and honour and immortality," not only "in well-doing," but in "continuance in" it. Beware of omissions, and, among others, of this great duty. The judgment will reach unto all sins, and to omissions in a special manner; (Matt. xxv. 37—39;) for which that learned and holy Usher was humbled upon his death-bed.* The Nobleman hath put a pound into your hand, saying, "Occupy till I come;" yea, he hath given you many pounds in a literal sense, with which you must trade, as well as with the talents of your parts and gifts of grace: and I know you would be glad to "find mercy," with Onesiphorus, in the day of Christ. Remember, therefore, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy;" (Matt. v. 7;) but "he shall have judgment without mercy, who hath showed no mercy;" whereas "mercy rejoiceth against judgment." A merciful man is so far from fearing judgment at Christ's coming, that he rather rejoiceth at the thoughts of it.

Sixthly. *Exercise diligence and faithfulness in your particular calling.*—For when Christ speaketh of his coming, saith he, "Be ye ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh." What followeth? "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his Lord when he cometh shall find so doing." (Matt. xxiv. 44—46.) When Christ was speaking to this point, saith Peter, "Lord, speakest thou this parable to us, or even to all?" (Luke xii. 41.) Truly Christ spake it unto all, though in a special manner to such as Peter: for Christ will have an account how every one of us has managed our particular callings; but they that are stewards in the house of God, which is his church, have a very great account to give; and "it is required" of them in a special manner, "that a man be found

* In the Narrative of his Life and Death.

faithful ;” and, of all Christ’s servants, his stewards have most to answer for ; [so] that if a dispensation of the gospel and the care of souls were not committed to them, he that understandeth the weight of stewardship would dread to undertake it ; but a “ necessity is laid upon ” them, and “ woe unto them if they preach not the gospel.” It is said of Calvin, that when nature began to decline in him, and the symptoms of a dying man appeared on him, he would be diligent at his studies ; from which his friends dissuading him, saith he, *Nunquid me Dominus inveniet otiosum ?* * “ Shall my Master find me idle ? ” Let such, therefore, and all, be diligent and faithful in their respective places and employments. And, indeed, every man is a steward, more or less. You know what the Master saith of the slothful servant : “ Take him, and cast him into outer darkness : there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” Such slothful servants shall be under the tribute of eternal pains ; (Prov. xii. 24 ;) when the “ good and faithful servant ” shall be made “ ruler over many things, and enter into the joy of his Lord.” (Matt. xxv. 23.) Would you stand before Christ at his coming ? O, dread idleness and unfaithfulness in your callings, as you desire to be found of him in peace at his appearance ! Fill-up your days with duty, and give your time to Him who gave it to you. Paul was a great lover of Christ and his appearance ; and who more abundant in his labours for him ? For he had the conscience of his indefatigable industry and fidelity in his work for his Master. Saith he, “ I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” (2 Tim. iv. 7, 8.) He meaneth especially his military faith and oath in fighting a good fight for Christ. And wherefore do we hear him groaning so earnestly, desiring to “ be clothed upon with his house which is from heaven ? ” It was because he laboured ambitiously, that “ whether present or absent, he might be accepted of him.” “ For,” saith he, “ we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.” (2 Cor. v. 2, 9, 10.)

Lastly. That I might not multiply particulars, let me add what Christ hath joined together : *sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer.*—And therefore “ take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that day come upon you unawares.” (Luke xxi. 34, 36.) “ Gird up, therefore, the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter i. 13.) “ For we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall we appear with him in glory. Mortify therefore your earthly members ; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.” (Col. iii. 3—5.) You must not only deny all visible gross ungodliness, which even the very sons of morality will decline and decry ; but also all worldly lusts and their secret operations, “ living soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world ; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” (Titus ii. 12, 13.) Take heed of slumbering in these secret lusts ; for

* MELCHIOR ADAMUS in *Vita Calvini*.

“ye are the children of the light, and the children of the day. Therefore” take heed that you “sleep not, as do others; but watch and be sober. For they that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation;” (1 Thess. v. 5—8;) “watching and praying always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape those things” which shall befall the foolish virgins, and that ye may “stand before the Son of man,” (Luke xxi. 36,) who “is coming with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all.” (Jude 14, 15.) And “therefore be sober, and watch unto prayer,” seeing “the end of all things is at hand;” (1 Peter iv. 7;) and look well to your lamps, which are your watch-lights, that they burn brightly in this world’s midnight; and pray particularly for daily supplies of oil, and sincerity in all your actions and duties both to God and man; never omitting to beg for death-bed grace, that so you may live and die to the honour of your Bridegroom. And as for this present world, use it as if you used it not, and have no more to do with it than bare need requireth; and set your hearts and houses, and all your civil, secular affairs, in order, “having your conversations in heaven, whence you look for Christ the Saviour.” And thus walking with God in the exercise of these gifts of grace, when we come to die, we shall change our places only, but not our company. And let none of you behold death at a distance, nor have it seldom in your thoughts, but daily in your eye, that you may not fear it when it cometh. A lion is not terrible to his keeper, that seeth him every day. You must frequently converse with God, Christ, death, and judgment. For when Christ speaketh of his coming to judgment, he so expresseth it as if he were to come in their time to whom he spake it. (Matt. xxiv. 42; Mark xiii. 33—37; Luke xxi. 34—36.) And so indeed he did; for he comes to every man at the hour of his dissolution. And we are his agents or factors in a foreign land; and how soon he may remand us home, and call us to an account, we know not. Say not, therefore, “My Lord delayeth his coming;” lest we are thereby rocked into a midnight-sleep, and scared with a midnight-cry of, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.”

I shall not detain you much longer. You have heard what those graces are which are chiefly to be exercised in order to an actual preparation for the coming of Christ by death and judgment. I now commend them to your daily exercise; and, for your encouragement therein, shall leave a few considerations with you, and conclude.

First. *That the door of eternal rest and glory shall stand open for you at Christ’s coming to you by death.*—“Why?”

1. Because you are ready; and they that are ready, go in with the Bridegroom. God “hath made you meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light,” (Col. i. 12,) and “hath wrought you for the self-same thing.” (2 Cor. v. 5.) You are a “vessel of mercy, prepared unto glory.” (Rom. ix. 23.)

2. You admitted Christ into the door of your hearts, when there he stood and knocked. (Rev. iii. 20.)

3. You had your conversation in heaven, whilst you lived here on

earth. It was your Father's house, where you used daily to converse ; the doors whereof shall open to you at your death.

Secondly. *Consider the place into which you shall be admitted.*—For the wise “virgins shall enter into the King's palace,” (Psalm xlv. 14, 15,) into paradise, the third heavens, your Father's house, “a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God ;” (Heb. xi. 10 ;) a magnificent structure surely, that hath such “a Builder and Maker,” one that hath built the city most artificially and curiously and for public show, as the original words, *Τεχνιτης και Δημιουργος*, do import. Such a city it is ; yea, a “kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world,” (Matt. xxv. 34,) the first handsel of God's workmanship. (Gen. i. 1.) This is the place whither you shall enter.

Thirdly. *You shall enter thither with the Bridegroom, even our Lord Jesus Christ.*—And this is heaven enough ; namely, to be where Christ is : Luke xxiii. 42, 43 ; John xiv. 3 ; xvii. 24 ; Phil. i. 23 ; 1 Thess. iv. 17, heaven is described by “being with Christ.” And when Christ shall descend from heaven with a shout, to judge the world, if all the saints, suppose, should not descend with him, but any of them be left behind, what an alteration would they find in heaven ! Whereas all of them going with Christ, it is all one as if they were still in heaven with him. You know, Paul was caught up into the third heavens ; and yet when he comes to describe heaven, and the saints' everlasting happiness there, he calls it “being for ever with Christ ;” for this is a comprehensive expression. “How so ?”

1. If the saints shall be with Christ, then shall they be exempt from all troubles and trials ; these fall-off from them like Elijah's mantle, when he went to heaven. There is now a glorious door of partition between these and them ; they are all excluded ; namely, sin, sorrow, afflictions, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, poverty, sickness, pain, death, curse, wicked men and devils. You shall never be troubled with these any more.

2. If they enter in with Christ, they shall enjoy the Father in him, (John xx. 17,) and be filled with the Holy Ghost from them both, and thereby with unspeakable consolations and the fulness of God ; and they shall live for ever in the immediate contemplation and vision and fruition of one God in three persons, and be replenished to the brim with eternal love from them and to them.

3. You shall enjoy the fellowship of an innumerable company of angels ; and shall then know who they are, and love them entirely, and be as intimately beloved of them, though now in your present state you cannot bear the presence of one of them.

4. You shall “sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven,” and enjoy communion with “the spirits of just men made perfect.” (Heb. xii. 23.) All this followeth from your entrance into heaven with Christ.

Fourthly. *Consider that you shall enter into heaven with Christ the Bridegroom, and therefore to be married to him.*—And hence again it will follow,

1. That there will be the nearest relation possible between Christ and you ; for you shall be one conjugally for ever with him. You are one

with Him mystically and matrimonially who is one with the Father essentially.

2. You shall be invested with unutterable glory; seeing it is a marriage-time, wherein the Bridegroom and bride shall shine in the richest attire and embroidery that is in all the wardrobe of heaven. Christ and the saints shall wear the very same glory. (John xvii. 22.)

3. There shall be unconceivable love, joy, delight, and complacency between the Bridegroom and the bride; and "as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride," so shall the Lord Jesus rejoice over his spouse. O, there will be a most glorious, delightful, loving, sweet familiarity and conjugal rejoicing between Christ Jesus and the saints! Marriage-joy upon earth is usually great; what, then, will that be in heaven, when shall be fulfilled that which Christ spake at his last supper?—"I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (Matt. xxvi. 29.) Where, by "fruit of the vine," we understand "wine, that maketh glad the heart of man," (Psalm civ. 15,) and causeth it to rejoice, and shadoweth-out the love of Christ and joys of heaven to us. (Canticles i. 2, 4.) And by "new," we understand "other;" (compare Mark xvi. 17, with Acts ii. 4 in the original;) so that in this marriage there shall be "new," that is, other, yea, otherguess, "wine"—namely, love, joy, and rejoicing—than there is in the Lord's supper; for Christ, who kept the best wine to the last at the marriage in Cana in Galilee, will surely do so at his own marriage at the last day.

4. This marriage is not on earth, but in heaven; and therefore it shall never dissolve, as marriages on earth do, but continue unto eternity. O, how will the holy angels rejoice and sing at this marriage! For they that sang at the birth of Christ when he lay in the manger, will sing to the purpose at his marriage, when he sitteth upon his throne in the highest glory.

Now the consideration of these things is greatly inducing to be very studious in actual preparations for the coming of Christ. Be ye, therefore, much in the exercise of faith, hope, love, repentance, goodness, mercy, and works of bounty, diligence, and faithfulness in your callings, sobriety, watchfulness, and prayer; that so at last you may have "an entrance ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." And now, brethren, "abide in him; that, when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming;" but lift up your heads with "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Hear wisdom, therefore, "and receive instruction, that you may be wise in the latter end." And "God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, make you to increase" in all these preparatory graces, "to the end that he may stablish your hearts unblamable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." And now, grace be with all them that love him in sincerity. Amen.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.