

SERMON VIII.*

Rom. 5. 5.

—*Hope maketh not ashamed.*—

IT will not be impertinent or unuseful to say something, from this scripture, concerning this property of the christian's hope; namely, that it maketh not ashamed. But let us first, briefly consider the scope and series of the apostle's discourse here, and see how this passage depends and is introduced.

We have here, after a long discourse touching our justification by faith in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, some account of the privileges of a justified state in the beginning of this chapter. As first, peace with God. "Being justified by faith we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ." Ver. 1. And secondly, free access unto God, and the liberty of his presence. "By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Ver. 2. In which words we have also the patient, joyful expectation of the glorious state, that was designed for the people of God hereafter. And finally, cheerfulness in a pre-

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sent afflicted condition, is represented by the apostle as another privilege. And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also. Ver. 3. It was no such strange thing, that they should be found exulting in the expectation of so glorious a state, as that which christians look for hereafter; but we have this also to say (saith the apostle) concerning our case, that we can glory in tribulation too, and triumph over all the difficulties that accompany an afflicted condition. And of this, as having something of a paradox in it, and appearing more strange he giveth the particular grounds and reasons. As

First: The knowledge of this truth, that tribulation worketh patience. Ver. 3. We are, as if he had said, well pleased, yea, and do even glory in our present afflicted condition upon this ground, that we know, by this means, that patience will be wrought out. We look upon it as a thing of very high value, that the mere hope of so much gain should make persons glory in such tribulations, which seemingly call for other affections. Tribulation is not a pleasant thing to be gloried in of itself; why then, or upon what account is it to be gloried in? Why, upon this account, as that out of it the gain of patience shall accrue, and result to us. By this we shall have our spirits composed to a peaceful acquiescence in the divine will, and the waywardness of our own wills shall be subdued and brought down. There is a future heaven to be enjoyed, a glorious heaven; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of that state: yea, and there is a present heaven too involved, and wrapt up in patience. When once the heart comes to be resigned, and rest quietly and peacefully in the divine will, this is a present heaven; and bears a great resemblance to that which is future, and expected.

Secondly: The apostle adds, that of this patience there will be a further gain, to wit, of experience. Ver. 4. As patience comes to be more and more exercised experience will grow. And,

Thirdly: Of that experience shall spring hope, (ver. 4.) that shall reach and touch the other heaven; hope, as he had said before, of the glory of God: (ver. 2.) even such hope as will not make ashamed; and that for this reason, because (saith he) the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us. Ver. 5. While we find, by the Holy Ghost that is given to us, an effusion of the divine love into our souls; while we find this love shed abroad in our hearts, and then testifying itself, as if there was an immediate assurance of heaven; this puts us out of all doubt that God will never let our hope be disappointed nor end in shame.

This is the order and contexture of the preceding discourses. And as to this passage that we have chosen to insist upon, we need not go about to vary the words, which you see are short and plain; "Hope maketh not ashamed:" only it is needful to inquire,

I. Of what this is spoken. And then consider,

II. This particular property of it.

I. Let us inquire of what this is spoken, or what it is that doth not make ashamed. It is here indefinitely said to be hope. But though it is so generally expressed, yet, it is plain, it is not meant of all hope. The circumstances of the text are sufficiently limiting, and teach us of what hope this is to be principally understood. It is hope of the glory of God; it is hope that groweth out of experience; it is hope that is maintained by the love of God, shed abroad in the soul, through the Holy Ghost given to it. It is in short then undoubtedly the Christian hope that is here meant; and whereof we find this is expressed, that it maketh not ashamed.

If you would have a more distinct account of this hope, take it thus: It is that sanctified affection of a renewed soul, by which it is carried continually to expect what God hath promised, concerning its own welfare and blessedness here, and especially hereafter; notwithstanding whatever difficulties do occur in the pursuit, and expectation of those things hoped for. And if you would know what it superadds to common hope, or what there is in this Christian hope of a distinguishing, peculiar nature; it superadds,

1. Sanctity. A true Christian hope, is a pure and holy hope. It engages them that have it, to purify themselves even as God is pure. 1 John 3. 3. And again it superadds,

2. Solidity. That which a christian hopes for, is some solid substantial good thing. He hopes not for shadows and lying vanities. They who lived in the exercise of this hope, to whom the author of the epistle to the Hebrews speaks, had before them the prospect of a better and enduring substance in heaven; (Heb. 10. 34.) a substance that would never fail their hope. There is a kind of hope that runs all in the chase of trifles, for the most part. Men hope for things, which they cannot have; and if they had, were to very little purpose. It superadds,

3. Certainty. Men that hope at the common rate, do but hope conjecturally; and therefore their hope often maketh ashamed. Even at present they frequently outlive their hopes, they being pitched mostly upon things that are temporary. They hope for that, which is swept away like a spider's web.

It is a most vanishing, uncertain hope. But if they should cast their eyes on futurity, that future happy state of things beyond time, they have no real ground to entertain any hope of it; or if their hope relate to present things, it is merely conjectural, and self-founded. God hath given them no ground for this hope. He hath not promised them, that they shall be rich; live a long life, and spend all their days in prosperity here. There is that strange kind of monstrousness in the common hope of men; that whereas a christian hopes, because God in his word hath promised, who cannot lie; they hope, even with reference to these their greatest concernments, because they think he will lie. For if they believed that he would not lie, but that all was true that he had promised and spoken; they would be in despair: they would with respect to these concerns, have no hope at all, but the horror of despair. Besides,

4. Which is another distinguishing circumstance of the christian's hope, every such person hath a community belonging to it. The Christian hope is common to them that are christians, in which they all unite and meet: whereas in reference to the hope of other men, there is no such thing as a centre in which their hopes may unite and meet; and so they lie scattered, according as their own inclinations, and appetites carry them. Falsity is various, and manifold; truth can be but one. And therefore says the apostle, concerning the hope of christians, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." Eph. 4. 4. All the hearts of christians do run into one hope; they meet in one and the same hope, the ground of which is that they are called to one, and the same state; and this call will warrant their hope, and justify it. "Why should not I hope to reach the state to which I am called? and why should not I attend to the affairs relating to that state? May not a man be warranted in things relating to his calling? This is my calling (saith the christian) and I hope for, and expect success." He can answer it to all the world, be the things never so great and high of which he is in expectation. They are very great things we hope for, but however to such things we are called. God hath called us to his eternal kingdom and glory by Christ Jesus. 1 Thes. 2. 12. This calling is not peculiar, or particular to persons severally; but the same unto all that are called, whose hope is one. There is a community, whose hearts as they run one way in desire; so do their hope and expectation; and their faith too being one common principle among them, they must needs have one common hope of the glory of God.

Now concerning this hope which is proper to the Christian community it is said, that it maketh not ashamed; which we are now to speak to in the

II. Place. And as to this property of the Christian hope, which we now proceed to consider, we have only two things to do;

1. To open the import of it : and,

2. To demonstrate the truth of the assertion; or to shew how necessarily this property doth agree to the Christian hope, namely, that it maketh not ashamed.

1. We are to open the import of this property of the hope of christians, which maketh not ashamed. Not making ashamed, is a negative expression denoting, that those who admit or give place to this hope, and in whose hearts it lives, and is fixed, are not liable to be made ashamed on this account. Now to make out this, there must be a concurrence of several things, which we must understand to be denied by this same negation: or that do not belong to the hope of christians. As,

(1.) Shame, as it refers to the foregoing hope implies disappointment. There may be shame upon many other accounts, but as it refers to hope it implies a disappointment. They were confounded (as the expression is in Job) because they had hoped; they came thither, and were ashamed. Job 6. 20. Job is speaking there allusively to a troop of travellers, or merchant men, passing through desolate countries, and expecting relief of which they fail, and meet not with. They were ashamed because of their hope; that is, because they had hoped, and were disappointed; they met not with what they hoped for.

(2.) It supposes hereupon disgrace and reproach. For shame is properly the resentment of any thing under the notion of its being ignominious, or that carries matter of reproach in it to us. We find therefore these in conjunction sometimes in Scripture; to wit, reproach, shame, and dishonour; Psal. 69. 19. and elsewhere. Now in this present case; to have hoped, so as to suffer disappointment, is an argument of weakness, and so is apt to spread a shame over a man's face, and even to clothe him with confusion. A man reckons it a reproachful thing to him to have betrayed his impotence, want of foresight, an aptness to be gulled and imposed upon in this respect; and very shameful that he should hope with no more security. When a person has cause, and apprehends that others have also of censuring him, concerning the hope that he had, there it is that shame takes place. But this we must understand to be denied

here. This hope, which the apostle speaks of, shall never meet with a disappointment; and consequently no reproach, nor disgrace, shall attend the hoper. He shall never have cause to call himself fool, because of his hope; nor shall any one else have cause or ground to call him so for ever.

(3.) Shame doth also imply our own reflection upon that reproach; or else there is no actual occasion of shame, if we do not consider in our minds, or view the reproachful thing we are to take shame for. Therefore when the matter is such as only in vulgar estimate is shameful, but is not so indeed; to fortify one's self against shame in that case, is to overlook it, or look another way. So it is said of our Lord Jesus Christ, that he "endured the cross, despising the shame." Heb. 12. 2. Because it was to him no shame, he overlooked it, and looked upon it with contempt. "This will be counted a shameful thing, but I mind it not." He looked another way, having his eye set upon glory. If any thing be really matter of shame, it is by reflecting on it that shame ensues. But this is denied here. In this case there shall be no occasion to pore and look on, so as that from thence matter of reproach may accrue to you that have hoped for the glory of God. Let not your hearts misgive you; you shall have no uncomfortable reflection for what you have done in this matter. As there shall be no reproach, so you shall imagine none. And

(4.) Shame includes in it a heart-dejecting resentment hereupon. That is, a resentment seizes the heart upon this reflection, and sinks into the soul so as to depress it, and bring it low. Shame is grief; only distinguished from other grief by this particular distinction in the object, that it is grief for a thing under the notion of its being uncomely and ignominious. But that is denied here. Hope maketh not ashamed. You shall never grieve for this hope. You shall never suffer heart-displeasure on this account. Your hope shall never leave your heart to sink, because it fails and comes to nothing.

This now is the negative import of this property of the Christian hope; it maketh not ashamed. But then there is somewhat positive implied under this too. We may fitly understand a *meiosis*, as they call the figure, in this expression; that is, when less is said than is intended or meant. Your hope, Christians, shall not make you ashamed. No, it shall make you exult; it shall make you triumph, and glory; it shall raise, and heighten your spirits, so far shall it be from occasioning in you a sinking or dejection of soul. This is very common, in Scripture, for negative expressions to be put with

an accent, to signify some very great positive thing. Thus it is said of the Messiah, that "he shall not break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax;" (Isai. 42. 3.) that is, he shall cherish and support it. Again, "his commandments are not grievous," 1 John 5. 3. Here also a great deal less is said, than meant; for they are glorious, consolatory, and refreshing. "Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are paths of peace." Prov. 3. 17. This then must be understood to be the property of the christian's hope, that it is so far from making ashamed, or exposing him to ignominy, that it ennobles his spirit; and that it does according to the nature and degree of the thing hoped for.

It is obvious to observe how the hopes of persons, by degrees, greaten their spirits from their childhood. There is in some an aptness to mind greater things, and to live at a greater rate than others. And this we call generosity, it being not a name from the descent, but from the temper of the mind. It not only shews itself by men's being descended from noble and generous parents and ancestors (though there may be something in that too) but when such persons as are born to greater things come to understand their capacity, and what they are born to, their hopes do heighten or raise their spirits, and lift them up above the common pitch. So that the proper spirit of a nobleman, a prince, or a king, is greater than that of a common, and inferior man. And the reason is, because as he comes to understand his quality, his spirit grows with his hopes of what he shall come to; his very hopes greaten his spirit, ennoble and raise him, and make him think of living like one that expects to be in such a state, as that to which he is born. Therefore if a prince should be reduced in his infancy to that condition as to be brought up in a beggar's shed, and understand nothing of his birth; it is likely he would mind such things, as children of peasants use to do: but if he afterward come to understand the truth of his own original and descent, and what he was really born to; and withal what his capacity is, and the ground of his hope that he shall one day inherit such and such grandeur and honours; with this hope his spirit will swell, and rise, and greaten.

And such is the property of the christian's hope. It not only makes him not ashamed; but it heightens, enlarges and greatens the christian's spirit, so as to make him aspire high, and to look for great things. Hence it is given as the description of them, to whom God will give eternal life, on that day when he shall give to every one according to his deeds; that they are such as, "by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for hon-

our, glory, and immortality." Rom. 2. 6. 7. To these he will give eternal life ; but to those that are contentious, against the plain truth of the gospel which should rule and govern them, will he give "tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath." The former sort, who shall have eternal life for their portion, are such, whose minds, hearts, and hopes are carried after great things ; who seek for honour, glory and immortality ; who disdain and scorn this earth, and all sublunary things, and can say, "*non est mortale quod opto* ; I have something above, better than, and beyond all that this earth can afford."

In a word, a true christian is one that seeks that better, even the heavenly country (Heb. 11. 16.) so as not to stoop to this world though there were never such opportunity for gaining it : he would not go back, though he had the opportunity of going into Egypt. And all this is by reason of the hope of coming to a better country. The christian would not go back into the world, being called out of it ; though he should have opportunities for it as good as other men : no, because he is seeking a better country ; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called his God. "Such are of a great, a noble, and generous spirit, like my children ;" saith God. "Such are in some measure worthy of me. They discover something of an excellent spirit, heightened proportionably to those great hopes which I have set before them." And now,

2. We proceed to demonstrate this to be the true property of this same subject ; which will be soon done, though we have but little time, if we do but consider these things about this hope.

(1.) Consider the Parent and Author of it. It is a divine thing, it is part of the new creature, it owes its rise immediately to the Holy Ghost ; as the apostle intimates, when he says, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. 15. 13. Far be it from us to think, that God should beget a hope in his, that should end in disappointment and shame !

(2.) Consider the object of this hope. Christians do not hope for creeping shadows ; they have no reason to be ashamed of such great things, as they hope for. They hope for the glory of God, for a kingdom that shall not be shaken, for the unseen things of the other world. Their hope entereth into that within the vail, whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus. Heb. 6. 19, 20. A man that hath only pitched his hopes upon mean, base, low things, hath cause to be ashamed

that he was such a fool to hope so; but the christian's hope will never make him ashamed.

(3.) Consider the ground of their hope. They hope in God upon the encouragement of his truth and promise. Uphold me according to thy word, that I may live; and let me not be ashamed of my hope, saith the Psalmist. Psal. 119. 116. Thy word is that which I ground my hopes upon; shall I be ashamed? I hope in thee, thy truth, thy power, and goodness; let me not be ashamed. That prayer is as much as a promise, that he should not be ashamed. Prayer, by divine inspiration is as good as a promise. The prayer is, Let none that wait on thee be ashamed. Psal. 25. 3. The promise is expressly, They shall not be ashamed that wait for me. Isai. 49. 23. It is true, indeed, if there were not a proportionable ground for one's hope, a man might be ashamed of his hope; as well because it is too big, as because it is too little. But if there be a real ground for it, a word of promise from that God who cannot lie; then there is no cause to suspect the matter. There is no reason why any should be ashamed, let his hope be never so high, when he hopes only for what God has promised.

Now to make some brief use of what has been said.

1. See the highly privileged state of christians; though in this present condition of little and low enjoyments, yet their case is so good as that they shall not be ashamed. They shall have heightened spirits, their minds shall be greatened by their hopes, even while it is little that they can enjoy in one kind or another.

2. Hence consider and contemplate the different state of other men. It is not said, concerning their hope, it shall never make them ashamed. There is no body that warrants their hope to them. The christian's hope hath a very good warrant. I warrant you for your hope, that it shall never make you ashamed; but what have other men to warrant their hope? they have no one that undertakes to guarantee it, and therefore they are left liable to a shameful disappointment, and bitter disgrace upon that account. Yea, they are not only liable thereunto, but it is a sure and certain matter that it will end so; for "Their hope shall be as the giving up the ghost." Job. 11. 20. We commonly say, "As long as there is life there is hope;" but their hope comes at length to the giving up the ghost, and then the man is gone. A wicked man's hope quite vanishes away; it does not remain weak, and feeble, and infirm only, but it is absolutely gone, and become nothing at all: as we have no hope at all concerning a person, when he hath once given up the ghost. Let the object of their hope be what

it will, either such do hope for vain things, which are gone when they expire ; or if their hope lies towards better things, it is a vain hope. If they hope not for vain things, yet they hope for these better things vainly, having no ground nor reason for their hope ; and so still it perishes, and, as the giving up the ghost, comes to nothing. Or it makes them ashamed, and despised ; sinks them into horror, amazement and consternation, and so much the more, by how much the stronger was their hope. Such a disappointment is a most confounding thing ; when a person expects it should go well with him, yet he perishes, and all his hope turns on a sudden into horror !

3. We learn hence also, that hope must needs be a very great thing in the life of a christian ; and a most intimate, essential part of his Christianity. It is that which holds his soul in life. This property of hope, that maketh not ashamed, as was said before, is not to be understood as merely negative : it is that which establishes the heart ; invigorates, and gives life to the soul. Indeed you would make a poor thing of Christianity, if you abstract and separate this hope from it. "If in this life only (says St. Paul) we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. 15. 19. The most peculiar and distinguishing things in the hope of a christian, objectively taken, are things beyond time. But if all we were to get by Christ were to be compassed within time, then we were very miserable creatures indeed ; we should make a bad bargain of it, if we had no more by Christ, than what time can hold, and deal very poorly by ourselves.

A christian lives by hope all along, from first to last. He is born to hope, begotten of a lively hope,* is saved by it ; † as if it had been said, he were lost if it were not for this hope. This then is the great, the momentous thing in the life of a christian ; for if it were not for this, we should sink and perish. So that if I am a christian indeed, if I am a new creature, I must live by hope all my days. And that I may shut up all, I shall only leave with you a word or two of counsel, and caution.

(1.) Of counsel. Labour to establish in your hearts this hope, and maintain it ; and live by, and upon it. But I cannot enlarge upon this. And then,

(2.) By way of caution, I add ; be sure that your hope be the truly Christian hope only : that hope, whereunto you can entitle the Holy Ghost as the Author, so as that hereupon we

* Pet. 1. 3. † Rom. 8. 24.

may say, we are begotten by him to that hope. And also see to it, that it be just commensurate with Scripture grounds. That is genuine Christian hope, that measures with the Scripture, and the word of promise. "Remember (says David) thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope." Ps. 119. 49. Then you will hope for nothing, but what God has promised; and in the way, and according to the tenour of his promise. And you need to hope for no more, for he hath promised to give grace and glory, and to withhold no good thing from them that love him. Ps. 84. 11. And what would you have more? what need your hope to range beyond that, or without the compass of this promise? But then it must be according to the tenour of his promise; for if you hope absolutely for that which is a matter only of a limited promise, then your hope would be beside its ground, and so be liable to disappointments.

And you must know there are things which lie within the promise, that cannot be the matter of an absolute hope; because God's promise, concerning them, is not absolute. As to temporal good things; outward prosperity to ourselves, or the church of God in common; there is no absolute promise of these: therefore if we hope for them absolutely, we deceive ourselves, and it is our own fault if we be made ashamed. Who bid us hope so? who bid us let our hopes run that way, otherwise than as God commands, or beyond what he has promised? We may hope absolutely for things, that are of an immutable goodness; but some things are not so, and are only to be estimated according to their end. Sometimes they will serve the end that God designed them for, and sometimes not; and when they do not, they are not good, but evil. External prosperity to the church of God, or ourselves, will not always be serviceable to the end, for which it is designed by God; to wit, to make our spirits better, and more of the temper which he looks for, and approves: and he always knoweth whether it will be best for that end or no. Now if we suppose an absolute promise for any variable good things, which are sometimes good and sometimes not; then take the time when they are not good, and can they be the matter of a promise? No sure; the promise would in that case, be turned into a threatening.

This then shews the reason, why it is altogether impossible that promises, concerning external good things, can ever be universal and absolute. They are not always good, but only as circumstances are. But from the nature of the thing promised we may be at a certainty how the promise is to be understood; that is, in reference to divine wisdom. Such things as do ap-

pear good for us, to that unerring wisdom, in certain circumstances, shall be bestowed upon us; and if we so order our hopes, they will never fail us, for no good thing will God withhold from them that love him. But when there is a doubt in the case, whether it be good or no, there is all the reason in the world he should decide the doubt, and we should yield a matter of dubious consequence to him. But if our hearts be so set upon any temporary good thing, as that such savour more with us, than those things which run into an eternal state; this we ought to guard ourselves against. As suppose it should be more consolatory to me, to be assured of present deliverance or prosperity, than to be told of being at the resurrection brought within the compass of his sheep, whatever troubles I meet with here: this is certainly a great distemper of soul, that I cannot taste the best, the sweetest, the most satisfying, and fullest good, more than present ease; but that any thing of earth would be more tasteful, and grateful. And this, I say, we should always take heed of; that we do not indulge ourselves in any thing, which is in itself of so very dangerous, and dreadful a consequence.
