

SERMON XIV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I DID let you know the last time, that I intended to speak on these words; that as I had shewn you what ground there is of hope for solicitous, awakened souls, that they shall not finally be lost; so they might from thence see of what importance it is to them to hope that they shall be saved. Their very salvation itself depends very greatly upon their hope of it. If there should be any here (which God forbid!) to whom salvation itself is a little thing, the hopes of it cannot but be less. If there should be any with whom it is inconsiderable, and who do not use to trouble their thoughts with any such matter, whether they be saved or not saved; the hope of being saved cannot with such, but by consequence, be very inconsiderable; a thing that will weigh very little with them.

But for such whom God hath awakened, and made to bestir themselves, such as are afraid of perishing, and to whom destruction from the Almighty is a terror, such whose hearts tremble within them, to think of any possibility or hazard that they may yet be lost under a gospel of salvation; to such (methinks) these words should carry a grateful reviving sound.

And as they must be supposed to have this their wont, to revive this great question upon their minds, and be at it upon their hearts; What (oh what!) shall I do that I may be saved? Methinks it should be grateful to them to have so apposite and present an answer to their question,—why, you are to be saved by hope. The hope of being saved must do something to save you.

We know by common experience, that hope is that mighty powerful engine, which moves all the intelligent world, and rules and governs the whole frame and course of rational nature every where; so as that no design is driven on, no undertaking ever set on foot, but as men are

* Preached May 17, 1691.

influenced, and led on by hope. In reference to any thing whereof they have no hope, they sit still and do nothing.

And as it is so in reference to common affairs, it would be proportionably so too, in reference to the affairs of our salvation, if this great engine, which is planted in the very soul of every man, were but rightly and duly managed and turned this way. And so much the more effectual it must be, and work with so much the more energy, by how much the more its ground is better and firmer, in reference to those affairs that do relate to our souls, and to our final salvation. God hath set no such connection between the most earnest endeavours and answerable success, with reference to external and secular affairs. He hath given men no ground to be confident, that if they labour to be rich, they shall be rich; if they labour to be great and honourable in the world, they shall be so: but he hath given sufficient ground to be confident, that no man that seriously mindeth and manageth the affairs relating to his salvation, shall be lost. Therefore, whereas in reference to other affairs, hope is the *causa sine qua non*, here it is the *causa sine qua non et cum qua*; that is, in reference to other affairs, hope is the principle, without which nothing could be done or attempted; but in reference to those affairs that relate to our final and eternal well being, not only the attempt, but a good issue, will ensue upon the use of a true hope.

And that is it therefore which I design to insist on from this scripture; That is, to shew you, (which you must take for the ground of our discourse,)

Doctrine. That whosoever are finally saved, are saved by hope. And in speaking to this I shall shew,

1. What this hope is, of which this is said.
2. What influence it hath towards our salvation.

1. What this hope is. It would be a very useless thing to discourse philosophically to you about hope in general; which every one doth better understand by feeling, by the sensation he hath of it in his own mind, than he could do by the most accurate definition of a philosopher. It is easy to be collected what hope in general is, by considering the nature of man, and his present state, in comparison with one another. The nature of man makes him covet to be happy, and he finds his present state admits of no such thing; whereupon hope is that passion which must of course arise from such a complexion of the rational nature, and such a state of the common case of men. "It is that passion of the soul, by which it reacheth forth itself

to the uttermost, in the pursuit of somewhat that appears to be good, and likely to better its state, and that is attainable, possible to be attained, but not to be attained without difficulty." This is hope in general.

But when we have this account of hope in the general notion of it, we are yet to seek of what hope this is said, that it saves, that we are saved by it. We are sure this is not universally true of all hope. There is much hope in the world that signifies nothing to men's salvation; yea, much that signifies a great deal to their destruction. Many are not only lost, notwithstanding their hopes, but they are destroyed by them: they might have been safe and happy if they had had no such hope.

And therefore, what this hope is, concerning which this is said, we are more narrowly to inquire: and we do not find that the text itself doth suffice to give us a distinguishable account of it. It doth not assign its proper characters; it describes it no way, but only by its remote final issue, —We are saved by it.

But since it is manifest that all hope doth not save, and that much hope doth destroy, it is sufficiently intimated to us, that there must be somewhat very particular and distinguishing in the nature of that hope, to which this effect is ascribed, when we are told we are saved by it. It is intimated to us, that there is an hope that is saving. We must consider in what sense therefore hope may be said to be saving. It is in a twofold sense that hope may admit to have this said of it, in opposition to such hope of which it cannot be said.

1. As salvation hath a certain connection with it. There is an hope with which it hath a certain connection; a hope true at first, and which therefore continues, and which being continued, doth terminate upon salvation, and takes hold of it, as all of a piece with it. "Gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." 1 Peter i. 13. When we are there told of "receiving the end of our faith, the salvation of our souls;" verse 9. and are told of "them that believe, to the saving of the soul;" Heb. x. last verse; we find this believing, or that faith, described in the very next words, Heb. xi. 1. "to be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;" so that faith and hope (we may shew you hereafter with what difference) have their exercise upon one and the same objects, till they actually end in

salvation, with which therefore they have a firm and immediate connection; even as a thing hath with itself; as that which is begun, and is yet imperfect, has with the same thing having arrived to its consummate and perfect state. But then,

2. Hope may be said also to be saving, not where it hath an immediate connection only with salvation, but where also it hath a leadingness and tendency thereunto, though that effect may not certainly ensue. And accordingly there must be a twofold hope. There is an hope that we are to reckon an effect of the Spirit of holiness, a real part of the new creature, a divine production in the soul. "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope, by the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. There is such a hope as that; and there is also a rational human hope, which may have its exercise about the same thing, about the same final object, and about many things that lie intermediate thereunto, as means for the attaining of it; and which, being assisted by the common grace of the Spirit, may end in the former hope, and consequently in salvation. Now it is the former hope that must be aimed at, and for this latter hope it is neither to be rejected nor rested in. It is not to be rejected.—A rational human hope, as such, when it is employed about divine objects, while we have no more in us, if any have nothing more, yet in him; this he ought not to reject, nor ought he to rest in it by any means; but labour to cherish it as an improvable thing, as that which by the influence and operation of the Divine Spirit falling in, may be heightened and raised up into that which shall be certainly saving hope; or the hope that shall be in immediate next connection with salvation. And both these are very distinguishable from the hope that hath no tendency to save, but hath a most direct aptitude in it to destroy, ruin, and undo souls for ever. They are both of them very distinguishable from that. And to speak a little more particularly, I shall therefore here,

1. Shew you what hope it is that hath not this tendency, and is not like to have this end of saving. And,

2. Then shall shew you what it is.

1. What hope is not saving? It is not that which is quite wrong and false, both as to its object, and as to its ground; or in reference to the one or the other of these. Take them distinctively, that hope which is wrong, either

as to its object or as to its ground, is none of the hope that hath any tendency to the saving of us.

1. If it be wrong as to its object, its material object, the thing we hope for; if that be quite alien, and of another kind from the business of our salvation, and final felicity, it can contribute nothing thereto: all that hope wherein the minds of men do go besides the proper business, and run into things of quite another kind: it is plain that hope can do a man no good, in order to his being saved. That hope whereof the object is a worldly felicity, or prosperity, whether it be for one-self, or whether it be the felicity or prosperity of any party of men in secular respects, to which he hath thought fit to adjoin himself, and to make one with: this can signify nothing, it is plain, to the saving of him. "If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable." 1 Cor. xv. 19. This hope doth not only not save, but it destroys, carnalizes men's minds, habituateth them to this earth, and transforms them into the image of it. And do men think to carry a piece of earth with them up into heaven, when that is all their hope terminateth upon, or is concerned about? No; this is so far from helping to their salvation, that it hurts and hinders all that can be. It is by such an inclination of mind as this, that men run themselves into snares and temptations, and come at length to be drowned in perdition and destruction. 1 Tim. vi. 9. The root of all evil is that very desire that is twisted into this hope. And suppose it be a good state of things in this world, from any community or party to which they have adjoined themselves, so as that their minds and hopes fly no higher, but only that things may go well with them and their party, here in an earthly state. This signifies as little to final, eternal salvation; yea, though the party and design be never so right with which any such have united themselves. It is very true, it is no unlawful thing, yea, it is an highly commendable thing, a praiseworthy thing, to have one's mind very much concerned and taken up about the prosperity and success of a just cause, of a good and honest interest in this world, supposing these two things be provided against.

(1.) That we do not mind and employ our thoughts and hopes about things of that nature finally and terminatively, so as to exclude the great things of the other world, and that last end that runs into eternity. An everlasting felicity to ourselves and the church of God, wherein he is to

have out of us, and from all, his entire, complete, and consummate glory. Supposing that the intention of our minds and thoughts, and the exercises of our hopes about these temporary things, do not exclude and shut out their higher and more vigorous exercise, proportionably to the higher excellency of the things themselves, about these superior things. Supposing that in the first place. And,

(2.) Supposing too, that we do not so mind such concerns, as thereby to debase and weaken religion. It is a very usual thing, and hardly to be avoided, and which is actually avoided (I doubt) but by a few, where there is a complication of secular interests and religious interests, together with one another, so to let our minds be involved and run into the one as to look off from the other. And thereby in that very complication, religion suffers, 1st. A debasement; and 2nd. A defilement, an enfeeblement; it is made a weak thing first, and thereupon a feeble and impotent thing. But how few are there in the world that do mind the concerns of it, in reference to the concerns of another world; and that do exercise their thoughts about its present concerns with an universalized mind, a truly enlarged mind, that takes in the interests of God and Christ as the main thing, and the interests of men as men, and of christians as christians, under a common notion? But how mean is it, and debasing to the spirit of a man, and how enfeebling to religion itself, when all the intention of men's souls runs about the little separate interests of this or that party, even as it is such, without considering the reference of things to God and the Redeemer? It is this that hath made religion a mean, sordid, terrene, and earthly thing. A political religion is that which, of all things, I cannot but consider with dread, according as I find verging, degenerating, and declining more and more into that. Let each orb be kept apart, and distinct from one another; and religion for the proper ends and purposes of religion, to refine men's minds, to bring them nearer to God, to make them capable of his converse and enjoyment, and to fit them for a blessed eternity. Let religion do its own work as such; and let all secular concerns be only minded in subserviency hereto, as they serve to promote the interest of such religion, as is really worthy the name, and will do the work of religion. But in the mean time, hopes that do fill the minds of men with thoughts about, whether their own private, or more common and public secular affairs, so as to eat up the thoughts

of heaven, and to emasculate the strength and vigour of their spirits, that should work thitherward: all these hopes signify no more than a dream towards their salvation; and have no more reference to it, but to prejudice and to hinder our pursuit of it, and our final attaining of it. And,

2. Suppose that hope be placed on salvation itself, (and certainly that hope must subserve to salvation, must be the hope of salvation, as it is called, 1. Thes. v. 8.) yet if the ground of it be wrong, it can signify nothing to this end. If a man hope to be saved upon no ground that will bear the burden of such an hope, or that can rationally support it. That is,

(1.) If men do hope in themselves, if they hope to be saved from their own worthiness, through the apprehensions they have, whether of their own excellency, or if it be but of their own innocency; here is an hope that will betray them to perdition, while it is with them the hope of salvation. Or again,

(2.) If they hope in Christ, but not upon his terms: many are very full of hopes that they shall be saved; and confess themselves to be sinners, and pretend to despair of being saved for their own sakes, or upon their own account; but it must be for Christ's sake, and upon his account. But then they hope for it upon none of his terms: as if a man hope to be saved by Christ, without ever being made holy by him. "He that hath this hope, purifieth himself." 1 John iii. 3. It must be an hope right first, as to its end, as to its final object: that is, an hope of seeing God as he is, and then right as to the way; that is, of being made like him, as that which only can agree with such a vision, or make the soul capable of it. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. And every one that hath this hope in him, (it may well enough be understood of Christ, to have reference to him,) purifies himself, as he is pure;" that hope, it will attemper the soul to the final object. It is exercised, and taken up about a state wherein men are to be like God, upon their seeing of him as he is; "every one that hath this hope, purifies himself." It drains the soul from terrene dross, and from every thing that is defiling and impure: a man cannot converse with so glorious objects but by an hope that carries (as it were) a printive power and property with it; for it is by hope that we do enjoy the object hoped for at a distance. This I say,

cannot be, but that objects will impress their image, and beget somewhat like themselves in the soul. The soul that is directed and carried, by the power of its own expectation, to a continual converse with God, as him whom he expects to see as he is, and to be made perfectly like him, by the power of this hope, it will be growing liker and liker to him, and will be purifying itself as he is pure. But he that hopes to be saved, without ever undergoing any such change in the present temper of his spirit, he that hopes to be saved without ever being regenerate, he that hopes to be saved against the plain word of Christ, is so far from hoping upon his terms, that he doth hope against the terms which he hath expressly laid down in the gospel; whereas he hath said in his gospel, "Except a man be born again," John iii. 5. except a man be regenerate, born from above, (as the word admits to be read,) he can never see, or enter into the kingdom of God. Yet I will hope that I shall enter into that kingdom, and possess that kingdom, though I never be regenerate, though I remain the same man I was all my days.

And whereas Christ hath said, "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish," Luke xiii. 3. yet men will hope they shall be saved, though they never repent. And whereas Christ hath said, they that believe "shall not perish, but have everlasting life," John iii. 16. they will yet hope to be saved without gospel faith; and that, notwithstanding the gospel itself so expressly saith, "He that believeth not shall be damned;" Mark xvi. 16. "he that believeth not is condemned already;" John iii. 18. "he that believeth not, the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 36. And whereas, again, the word of the gospel hath said that Christ will be the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him," Heb. v. 9. men will yet hope that he shall be to them the author of eternal salvation, though they continually disobey him, and live in affronts to him, to his known laws, and the sceptre of his government; and that, also, notwithstanding he hath so expressly said that Christ will "come in flaming fire, taking vengeance upon all that obey not his gospel." 2 Thess. i. 8. Such as do hope for salvation by Christ altogether without ground, are never to think that that hope will save them, but betray them into perdition, or at length, be the very instrument of a self-destruction to them; their own instrument, and of their own destruction. This is an hope that will never save, but will do more to destroy than to save

them. That hope, that is first totally wrong in its object; and, secondly, is altogether without ground, be the object what it will, yet it rests upon no ground that can sustain such an hope. But then,

2. We shall briefly shew what the hope must be that hath this tendency to save; hath (at least) a tendency to it. It must,

(1.) Be an hope rightly terminated as to its object. As I told you before, it must be the hope of salvation, which is said to be that part of the spiritual armour, which is thought fit to be expressed by the name of an helmet. The helmet is to defend the head. You all know the head is the seat of design, where projects are formed, where counsels are laid. Now no man (as you heard before) designs for that of which he hath no hope; that confounds all designs. If a man hath formed in his head never so specious models; when once any thing appears in view which shews the whole business to be impracticable, so as there is no hope of succeeding, all those models are confounded and lost; there is an end of them. Therefore, there needs an helmet to protect the head, the seat of counsels and designs. And this is that which doth it,—“the hope of salvation.” If there be a firm, well-laid hope of salvation, this keeps the mind clear, and in a composed posture, ready still for deliberation, and to contrive the way, and course, and method, that may best serve on the one hand, and to countermines whatsoever may obstruct, and hinder in the prosecution of it, on the other hand. This hope must have for its final object the divine glory and likeness, as that which we are to behold, as that which we are to bear, as that into which we are to be transformed; as above in this chapter; “I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us.” And it is the hope of this that saves, taking in the other requisites, of which you will hear more hereafter. So, (Rom. v. 1, 2.) “being justified by faith, we have peace with God, and rejoice in hope”—of what?—“of the glory of God.” The great thing that terminates this hope must be “salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, with eternal glory.” As the apostle conjoins the privative and positive expressions there; whereas, when there is no such conjunction, either put alone serves for both, when a man’s hope is pitched upon this final term and end; that (as was intimated before) draws his heart, and keeps it under the transforming influ-

ence of the object which the Divine Spirit accompanies. The Divine Spirit doth the transforming work, even at first, and progressively afterwards; but it doth it by objects, by glorious objects, by objects blending in the gospel. We are first changed, and continually "changed into the same image, from glory to glory;" but it is "by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. iii. last verse. And then,

(2.) This hope must be right as to its ground, as well as in reference to its object; and that can be nothing else but the covenant of God in Christ,—God in Christ to be apprehended and closed with in a covenant; or, as he is pleased to give a sinner the advantage of taking hold of him, as he hath brought himself under the bonds of a covenant. I will be such and such to you; my Son shall be such and such to you. I engage in a covenant: it shall be so, if you take hold. Here is the only firm, secure ground of such an hope; and this is that which the soul actually must do, or must (at least) be actually designing to do; and accordingly may its hope be either certainly saving, or have a leadingness and tendency thereunto, as was told you before. If the heart can bear record in the sight of God, I have taken hold of the gospel-covenant, and therein of God in Christ upon gospel-terms, my heart regretting nothing of them; but readily, and with good liking falling in with every thing; then I have that hope in me, that, while it lasts, is a piece of salvation; salvation and it are of a piece.

But suppose I am not arrived to that pitch yet, that I dare avow it before the Lord, that I have come to such a closure; I am not sure of the sincerity of my own heart; yet, if this be the thing I design, I abandon all other hopes, and all other grounds of hope; and this is that I am aiming and driving at, to come to a sincere closure with God in Christ upon the terms of the gospel. I do not yet know whether I am come up to it fully or not; but I am aiming at it, making towards it as I can. This, even this is saving hope, in one of the senses before explained; that is, as having a tendency and leadingness to salvation; and which, as it is not to be rested in till it come to a plerophery; so, nor is it to be rejected neither; it is to be cherished and complied with. God may make somewhat of this more trembling hope, though my anchor be not yet so firmly cast within the veil, or I do not know that it is; while I yet abandon and renounce all other hopes, and look to be saved in no other way; and am aiming to be saved

in this way, it is a good sign, for there can be no aim without some hope; total despair throweth you off from every thing of endeavour, and every thing of design, for heaven and eternity; gives you up to perish, and delivers you up to eternal perdition. But while you cannot say your hope is saving, as that which will certainly save you at last, yet it may be said to be saving while it is tending towards a state of salvation, and carrying your hearts forwards towards that state. And this account, that is, that though you are not sure you have actually built upon the proper ground, yet you have the proper ground in view before you, and there you design to build, and you will build no where else. Why all this, while there is that hope which hath a leadingness and tendency to salvation, and which ought to be cherished, that it may save. When it is so far (as hath been said) right, as to its object, and when it is so far designingly right as to its ground. This, in the one sense or the other, is the thing whereof the text speaks; "We are saved by hope." Then,

2. The second thing is, to shew the influence that such hope hath upon, and towards salvation; and that would be very easy to shew you by representing to you what it is that is necessary to salvation; or what are the certain characters of the saved ones. They do make a select community, distinct from all the rest of the world. The nations of them that are saved, (as they are called Rev. xxi. 24.) they are all gathered into that city of God; they make a very distinct community from all the rest of the world; and must be understood to be distinguished from them by that which is characteristical of them that are saved ones. And so the distinction must consist in something or other that doth notify them to be the subjects of salvation. If it doth appear that such an hope be necessary to that, it must be concluded to be necessary to salvation too. That that is necessary for that which is necessary for salvation, is itself too necessary to salvation: *Causa causæ est causa causati*; do but agree what thing or things are necessary to salvation, and if hope have a necessary influence upon these things, it must itself be in the way to salvation also. And if it be productive of those things it will be productive of salvation too; and not only be the cause without which salvation cannot be, but by which it will be.

Now it is very plain that these two things are necessary to salvation:

1. Thorough conversion ; the bringing of a person into a state of grace :—And,

2. Continual perseverance therein unto the end. Both these are necessary to salvation. And if such hope as we have already in some measure described to you be necessary to both these, it must be necessary to salvation too. And that is it which, in future discourses, I shall labour to shew you ; that hope is necessary to conversion first, and then to perseverance. The soul's conversion ; its turning to God in Christ, it is with hope ; it is not the act of a despairing soul ; it cannot be ; it is no more possible for a despairing man than for a despairing devil to repent and turn to God, and to close with Christ. I do not speak of the difference of the law ; that signifies nothing in this case ; but I speak in reference to the complexion of the mind and spirit ; and in respect of that, despair would as much keep a sinful man from turning to God through Christ, as it doth an apostate devil.

SERMON XV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THAT which I proposed to do in discoursing to you from this passage was, 1st, to shew what hope that is of which this is said, inasmuch as it is apparently not to be said of all hope. There is an hope that will not save. There is an hope that will destroy ; and to that head we have already spoken. We have shewn you what hope it is not ; and then have positively shewed you what hope it is, concerning which this is spoken, that it saves. And now,

2. Our further business is to shew you which way hope doth operate towards salvation, or what influence it hath in order thereunto. We told you (entering on this head last time) that the understanding of this matter will depend upon our conceiving aright what is more immediately and certainly necessary to salvation ; for if hope will be found to influence such things as are of most apparent confessed

* Preached May 24, 1691.

necessity unto salvation, it will be then found to have a necessary influence on salvation too. If it be necessary to that which is necessary, it must be itself also necessary. And it must be somewhat in itself exceeding great, and so that needs all the suitable and proper influences imaginable to bring it about, that shall distinguish them that are saved from them who shall perish; or, in short, the things that are more immediately necessary to salvation, must be understood to be very great things, and things that are not to be wrought at an easy rate, but which will require the help and concurrence of whatsoever may have an apt subserviency thereto; for the differences of them that are to be saved from them that will be finally lost, must be understood to be fundamental to the eternal differences of heaven and hell. And think how vastly different are the states of men hereafter, who shall be plunged and sunk into an abyss of woe and misery to eternity, and of them who shall be eternally rejoicing and exulting in the highest and most perfect felicity and glory.

There is the embryo of heaven and hell in the very hearts of men on this side both; and therefore the differences must be vastly great, even here in this world, between them that are in a state of salvation and them that are not in that state. The inhabitants of the New Jerusalem, that comes down from heaven, they make up the community of them that are to be the saved ones, as was noted from that 21st chapter of Revelations, 24th verse: "The nations of them that are saved do walk in the light thereof." How vastly another sort of men, in all reason, are they to be from the rest of the perishing world, who are to be exempt from the common ruin, who, when the rest of the world must perish in vindictive flames, are to be caught up in the clouds, and meet their Redeemer in the air, and so be for ever with the Lord! How vast (I say) must we suppose the differences between these two sorts of men, when there is the seed, the very *primordia* of heaven and hell, the very beginnings of heaven and hell, to be found on earth in these two sorts of men! Therefore the distinction of the saved ones must be great and eminent from those that are not to be saved.

And what is their distinction I have generally told you already. It lies in these two things: in thorough regeneration, or conversion to God, by which they are brought into a good and safe state at first; and then, in their perseverance herein unto the end.

1. They are such as are “born from heaven,”—“from above;” and the expression (John iii. 3, 4.) may as well be read “born from above,” as “born again;” they are an heaven-born sort of men; a community of persons that are all of a divine family,—of the family of God, to be the sons and daughters of the Most High; not by adoption only, as if their sonship were no more than a relative thing; but by regeneration too, which is a real thing, and which makes an internal subjective change, the greatest that can be wrought in this world upon the subject where it hath place. By that regenerating impression on them they are turned to God; a divine touch upon their spirits inclines them to him; and now they turn to him with all their hearts and with all their souls. By being turned they turn; passive conversion and regeneration are the same thing. That turning influence by which the whole soul is brought about towards God, is nothing else but the regenerating influence that puts a new nature into them: for it is not a violent turn, but a spontaneous turn; a turn from the inclination of that new nature that is now in them: and in respect of this communicated divine nature are they said to be “born of God,” to be “children of the Most High;” or otherwise (as the same thing is elliptically expressed) “they are of God;”—“we are of God, and the whole world lies in wickedness.” 1 John v. 19.

2. And being brought into this state, they must persevere in it. It is absolutely necessary that they do so: “he that endureth to the end shall be saved.” Matt. xxiv. 13. “They that are born of God must overcome the world;” which, indeed, some way or other, sums up all the enemy’s power that they are to contend with; for the great destroyer of souls tempts men by this world, and their own flesh is tempted by it; so that, take one of that ternary of enemies, and you take them altogether. They cannot be severed; and he that is born of God must overcome these; in overcoming one, he must overcome all of this ternary of enemies, these adversary powers; and, overcoming, shall sit down with Christ on his throne, as he overcame, and is sat down with his Father upon his throne.” They are such, as, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for honour, and glory, and immortality,” till they actually “obtain everlasting life.” Rom. ii. 7. And they are to continue believing, which sums up the whole of that duty which the gospel makes necessary to salvation, till they actually receive “the end of their faith, the salvation of their souls.”

1 Peter i. 9. "They must not be of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe, to the saving of their souls." Heb. x. last verse.

Both these are of most absolute necessity to being saved. This is plain, and out of all question; and they are necessary to salvation two ways, both of them, as in their own nature they do dispose and suit the soul for the heavenly state; both for the work, and for the felicity of it. If it were possible that one should come unchanged, unconverted, and unrenewed into heaven, what an exotic thing would he be there? He could have no business there; there is nothing there to be done that he could do; there is nothing there to be enjoyed that he could enjoy. Suppose one in heaven, that were no lover of God, that can take no pleasure in the divine presence, that hath nothing in him of the divine image, what could he do there? And if we could suppose the wisdom of heaven to do so inapt a thing as to admit him thither, to what purpose would it be? Therefore, upon the account of internal, subjective qualification, both these are necessary.

1. There must be a new nature given, that such an one be regenerate, born of God, turned unto him with the whole heart and soul. And that there be a new creation raised up in him, to attemper and suit him to the heavenly state; that is, that there be (as it were) the epitome of a new world, new heavens, and a new earth, in that soul which is designed for that blessed state above. A new creation is to rise up, which is to top heaven, to wit, to lift up its head into heaven, and a blessed eternity. That work is to be wrought in him that is a congenerous thing unto heaven; "He that drinketh of the water that I shall give him, (saith our Lord,) shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him, shall be in him a well of water, springing up into eternal life." John iv. 14. The regenerate frame and nature is so much akin to heaven, that in nature and kind they are not different things: and so there can no man ever come into heaven, that hath not somewhat of heaven aforehand come into him. He must have the kingdom of God, or the kingdom of heaven, within him, which consists of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. Rom. xiv. which are the very *primordia* of heaven: righteousness, universal rectitude; and peace, universal tranquillity resulting from most perfect and unexceptionable order; and then joy in the Holy Ghost, that state now taking place, that consists of "fulness of joy, and plea-

tures for evermore. Psalm xvi. last verse. All these together are inchoate heaven, and so must in the work of regeneration and conversion, be inwrought into the soul to prepare and qualify it internally and subjectively for salvation, or the heavenly state, which is all one. And then,

2. Perseverance is equally necessary upon the same account, and for the same purpose, under that very notion; for, if it were necessary that such a thing should be, to qualify such and such as subjects for the heavenly state, it must be, for the same reason, necessary to continue and remain. This seed of regeneration must abide; it must continue even to the very last; for the soul is not qualified for the heavenly state by what it was ten or twenty years ago, but by what it is when it comes into it; when it comes actually to possess it, and partake of it.

And then, both these are necessary, not only in the nature of the thing, as internal qualifications of the subject; but they are also necessary as things required by the tenor of the evangelical law of grace, which entitleth none to heaven but those that are regenerate; those that are born of God; and those that, being so, do continue adhering and cleaving to him to the very end; that is, those (as was said before) who do believe to the very saving of their souls.

And you must consider here, that this second necessity of both these things, arising from the gospel constitution, or the constitution of the evangelical covenant, or the law of grace, it comes in this kind to supervene and to be superadded to the other; to wit, considering salvation at length as the effect of the gospel grant; for it is not merely to be looked upon as a natural product, (though you say spiritually natural, or you mean so;) it is not to be considered under that notion, (though it is partly to be considered under it,) but it is withal to be considered under the notion of a gift. "The gift of God is eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord." It is not a mere natural product, nor the product of the divine nature, the spiritual, the holy nature, that is wrought into the soul. It is not (I say) merely such a natural production, but it is to be considered morally too, as the effect of a free donation. And being so a given thing, a thing conferred, then it must be understood to be conferred upon the donor's own terms, the terms that he chooseth, that he is pleased himself to enact and appoint. And these terms are those terms which I have told you of already; "except a man be born again, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God;"—"except ye

be converted, and become as little children, ye cannot be saved;" and (as was told you before) "he that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved." And the righteous Judge of all the world, "who will render to every man according to his works;" (Rom. ii. 6.) "he hath determined this, that to them that by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality," he will give "eternal life;" and for the rest, "to those that obey not the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath."

So far it was necessary to clear to you the immediate requisites to salvation, these two summarily, conversion and perseverance. And now, hereupon, I am to evince to you, that hope hath an influence upon both these; that a man would never turn to God if it were not from the influence of hope; and that being turned, he would never walk with God to the end, never cleave to God to the last, if it were not still from the influence of hope.

I hope you have all so much of gospel-understanding with you as to think, that the asserting such and such a means as necessary, doth not make the end less necessary. We are not to suppose the end (eternal salvation) is less certain, because such means have a certain subserviency thereto; for he that hath appointed the end hath appointed the means too, and settled the connection between them; that is, that there shall be such faith, such a new creature, such holiness; and these shall be continued and maintained till the end be attained; and the end shall be attained hereupon. The necessary subserviency of such means doth not make the end less certain; but more rationally certain, more certain to us, more evident to us, when we see the way chalked out more plainly that leads to it, and in which it is brought about. I say, that nothing is plainer, than that both these are brought about by the influence of hope; both the soul's first conversion and turning to God, and its continuance and perseverance to the end. And, that I may evince the influence of hope as to both these, with the more clearness, there is somewhat that I must premise to make my way the clearer thereto. That is,

1. That God, in his dealings with the souls of men in order to salvation doth work very much upon a natural principle of self-love in them. I say, that, in order to the saving of souls, God, in his dealing with them, doth very much apply himself to a principle of natural self-love. This

is plain, and out of all question. And the precepts, with their sanctions, (the great instruments that he works and moves them by,) do all suppose it. The great gospel precept, "believing in the Son of God," with its sanction admixt, doth plainly suppose it. "Go, preach this gospel to every nation;"—What is this for? In order to believing in general. What is the sanction annexed to this precept?—"He that believeth shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be damned." These are direct applications to the principle of self-love. What can either of these signify by way of argument, but as they do accommodate this principle, and are some way suited thereunto? What doth it weigh to tell such an one, You shall be saved if you believe with a true gospel faith, if he doth not love himself; if he have no love for his own soul? And what doth it weigh to tell such an one, If you do not believe you shall be damned, if he love not his own soul, if he care not what becomes of his soul? Nothing is plainer, than that God doth apply himself to the natural principle of self-love in us, when he comes to deal with us about the affairs of our salvation and eternal well-being. What are heaven and hell laid in open view before us for, in so much amiableness, and in so much terror, but to move this principle of self-love? And then I would premise,

2. Supposing the principle of self-love, the end that every one must design thereupon must suit and answer that principle. And thereupon it will be consequent, that he who is to be saved must be made to design his own salvation; which also the plainest and greatest gospel principles do most significantly and manifestly hold forth to us as matter of indispensable duty; that is, that we are to design our own salvation; to "work out our own salvation with fear and trembling;" what doth that signify else? what doth it signify less? "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure;"—"strive to enter in at the strait gate;" be ye in agonies in order to it; that is the English of that expression. If the principle of self-love is to be set on work; and if, from that principle, our own salvation is to be designed as our end; then it will be most apparently consequent, that the hope of attaining our end must needs be the great influencing thing upon us, in reference to whatsoever is necessary thereunto. And so,

3. The whole business of conversion we must understand to be influenced by hope, upon the supposal that the person that now lies under the converting work is all the

while designing his own salvation. And here my business is, and will be, to let you see how the many things that are incident, and do fall in together in the business of a man's serious and thorough conversion, and turning to God, must be understood to be influenced by hope throughout. The turning soul is, in its turning, an hoping soul, and would never turn if it did not hope; because it hopes, therefore it turns. The Divine Spirit works all, (it is true;) but it works accommodately and suitably to our nature, to the reasonable intelligent nature in which it works. Do but consider the plain and great things that are carried in this turning, when the soul hath received the impression, or doth now actually receive the impression from God that turns it: and see how manifest it is, that the influence of hope runs into every one. As,

(1.) In this turn wrought upon the soul there is conviction of sin, (as is obvious to every one,) accompanied many times with very great terrors, which have much participation even of hell in them, an affinity with it, a nearness to it. The soul, in order to its being raised and brought as high as heaven, is first (as it were) dipped into hell, brought as near hell as it can come without being plunged and irrecoverably lost and swallowed up of it. And you must consider the soul as an apprehensive thing all the while. You must consider the Divine Spirit working upon an intelligent, rational subject, in this its descent. The soul descends with open eyes, and it descends with a kind of consent, let me go down and visit my own deserved portion and lot. It descends an apprehensive thing, an open-eyed thing, and voluntarily; there is a voluntariness in it; but that there could never be if there were no hope. I am content to go down, and descend even to the very brink and verge of the infernal pit; but I go down with hope, that God will not plunge me in it; that he will not lose me, and let me be swallowed up there; even while it is beset with amazing terrors, they are not the terrors of total despair, then it were to be turned into a mere devil; total despair would make it so. But though there may be so great fear, the soul seems, it may be, to itself, a composition of fear; there is, however, a secret influence of hope; though he shake me over hell, he will not throw me into it; he will, in mercy to my soul, "save me from going down into the pit:" while it is convinced, it hopes; and the more it hopes the more easily it admits of conviction: As vile a wretch as I am, as any representation could make

me, I hope God will not utterly cast me off. The convictions that are accompanied with terror are not accompanied with hope; it is undespairing terror.

(2.) There is in this converting work deep and serious humiliation, which is a farther thing than mere conviction of the evil of sin, and of the deserts of it; which hath for its seat and subject of it, the heart, a tender heart, a relenting heart, a broken, melting heart. This is carried in the work of conversion; but this can never be without hope. All the terror in the world will never melt a soul, but hope will. Hope makes it to dissolve, makes it to relent; he puts his mouth in the dust, if so be there may be hope. Lam. iii. 29. Is there hope for me?—then I care not how low I lie; then let me humble myself to the lowest that is possible at the footstool of the mercy-seat; for I see there is hope for me. Despair would harden the heart, and render it as a rock, impenetrable, inflexible. But hope makes it to melt and dissolve. There is the greatest horror (to be sure) in hell itself, where there is the most absolute perfect despair; and so that fire, even the fire of the infernal pit, that scorches, that enrages, that exasperates, that inflames the soul with enmity, malignity, and hatred against the very Author of its being. But it is another kind of fire that melts. Hell fire will scorch, but it will not melt. It is the spirit of divine love in the gospel that only melts; and if it melts it gives ground of hope, as God is revealed reconcileable and willing to be at peace. When the gospel saith so, and the Spirit breathes in that gospel, and declares to the soul immediately, God is reconcilable; now is the heart clothed with shame and confusion, and lies low in self-abasement, even to the very lowest it can lay itself; “that thou mayest be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I am pacified towards thee for all that thou hast done, saith the Lord.” Ezek. xvi. latter end. That is, when I have shewn thee how willing I am to be reconciled, revealed myself so pacifiable, reconcileable, and given thee hope of pardon, mercy, and grace, then shalt thou be ashamed and confounded, and never open thy mouth any more, because of thy shame, when I have discovered myself so placable towards thee, and so willing to be reconciled. And again,

(3.) There is in this converting work, a mortification endured and undergone, even of the most con-natural corruptions, and evil inclinations. The soul endures the cut-

ting off the right hand and the right foot, and putting out the right eye; and submits to the command, *Ure, Seca*, as that Father is brought in saying, Lord, burn me, wound me, cut me, so thou wilt but save me! I matter it not. What? Cutting off the right hands and feet, and plucking out the right eyes?—this would never be endured if it were not for hope. Here is in this turn a denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts whatsoever, under the instruction of grace, under the instruction of *that* grace, which appears bringing salvation, and that teaches us this denial of all ungodliness and worldly lusts. And how, and in what way?—“Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” While I yield and submit to such things as these, to be pulled away from all ungodliness, and to have all my worldly lusts torn from me, it is in the contemplation of that blessed hope. Oh, how comfortably shall I behold Christ, and will he behold me, who have endured all this for his pleasure! The pleasures of sin are abandoned, which are but for a season. And why?—Because there is an eye had to the recompense of the reward; and because that faith begins now to take hold of the soul, that is “the substance of things hoped for.” Heb. xi. 1. compared with what is mentioned in the 26th and 27th verses. And again,

(4.) There is in this work of conversion a forsaking of all the world; that is the term the soul turns from, when God is the term it turns unto; a forsaking of all this world, as a most despicable thing, a composition of idols; and what have I to do with idols? saith the turning, the returning soul. What have I any more to do with them? “Love not the world, nor the things of the world; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” 1 John ii. 15. And what can make a man abandon a thing he hath loved, but the hope of a better?—I shall meet with something better, something that will be a rich compensation for all that I abandon and throw away. We find those converts to whom the Apostle Peter writes his first epistle, that they were thrown out of all for Christ and the gospel’s sake: elect strangers, scattered throughout the several quarters of Cappadocia, Asia, and Bythinia, and wherever else scattered they were; driven from their own home and inheritance. And how came they to yield to all this; to quit all they had in this world, and betake themselves to wandering? Why, it was for the sake of Christ. You have

“ been begotten (saith the Apostle) to a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.” This was in their very regeneration; this was among their *natulitia*, the principles of their birth, their new divine birth. A certain hope of better things than they were to lose for the sake of Christ and the gospel. They were to lose all their earthly inheritances; no matter for that, “ we are begotten again to a lively hope” of such an inheritance; and we shall be kept to it,—“ kept by the mighty power of God through faith to salvation;” as there it follows in the same context. And,

(5.) Here must be in this work of conversion a serious, solemn taking of God for our God, when the soul is so far loosened and unhinged from sin, and from this world, to which it did cleave by sinful inclination. Then are things so prepared and made ready for its unitive closure with that great object, from whom it hath injuriously withheld itself all this while; and unto whom, out of the state of apostasy, it must now betake itself, and is now betaking itself. Now having thrown off this world, and being loosened, and saving myself, by the help and power of thy grace, from the bands and cords of my own iniquity, I come, blessed God, to accept of, and unite with thee, to take thee for my Lord and my God. Here is the term to which the soul turns, when sin and the world were the terms from which it did turn. But now, I pray, do any of you think that a soul ever took God for its God with despair?—or doth it ever take God for its God without hope? To be without God, and without hope, they come together; and to be with God, and with hope, must parineam be joined together too. “ Ye are without Christ and without God in the world,” (saith the Apostle to the Ephesians, referring to their natural unconverted state, Ephes. ii. 12.) when the case herein is changed, that the soul is no longer without God, then it is no longer without hope. It would be without God, if it still were without hope; but it having conceived an hope, that God is graciously and most condescendingly willing to be embraced by such a poor wretched thing as I am, he will permit himself to be embraced; I hope he will, I say; because it hopes therefore it chooses, therefore it accepts him, therefore it takes him. This God shall be my God; he takes him under hope; he covenants with him under hope.

You see how the case was with apostate Israel; they

were gone off from God, and he threw them off, when he abandoned them to the captivity; well, he hath, at length, gracious inclinations towards them, and within the appointed limits of time revisiteth them, releaseth them, and bringeth them back into their own land. And then the great assembly of them, in the posture of penitents, (as you read in the 10th of Ezra,) is gathered together, and the result is, "Come, now, and let us make a covenant with God." They are for covenanting with him; they have a mind to have this God for their God again. But how is this introduced? Now, because "there is hope in Israel concerning this thing," therefore let us make a covenant; since there is hope, let us do this; since there is still some ground for hope, that God is taking up the controversy, and will not abandon us finally, and quite throw us off, and cast us away from being his people; "because there is hope in Israel concerning this thing, therefore let us make a covenant." Every particular soul, upon its return to God, hath in it the epitome of this very case; I have been a wandering wretch, a revolted creature, an apostate rebel; God hath discovered himself, however, placable and willing of my return, and that I strike a covenant with him anew; and he hath published this to be the tenor of his covenant, "I will be your God;" and I am to give my consent to it, and take him hereupon for my God. Now this (I say) the soul only doth because there is hope; I will make a covenant, because I see there is hope in this thing. If I make none, I am lost; if I do not covenant, I am undone; if I will be still a stranger to God, there is no way but to perish. But because there is hope I will covenant, I will take him for my God; because there is hope he will accept a poor returning soul. And,

(6.) In this work of conversion there must be an absolute self-denial, self-abnegation, an abandoning one's-self. This is the plain state of the case; conversion being that by which the soul enters into the Christian state of discipleship to Christ; and Christ himself hath determined the matter; "Except a man deny himself, he cannot be my disciple;" he can be no disciple of mine except he deny himself; because Christ's business with all that he christianizeth, that he admits and takes to be his disciples, is but to take and lead them back to God; and that they are never capable of till he takes them off from their rival god. Self is their rival god; and in this converting work the soul must abandon itself, must deny itself, so as no longer

to live according to its own will, as its rule; nor for its own interest, as its end. I am to live (saith the soul) a self-governed, a self-designing creature, no longer. I told you before of a very lawful and necessary self-love; that is, a love to a man's soul, and a true desire of his own felicity; but that self that is to be denied is a carnal self, a brutal self, that is now become ourselves, become the whole of us; and so it comes to this with every returning soul; I am not I; *Ego non sum Ego*. There is a self to which it doth adhere, and there is a self, the which it doth abandon and forsake; but, through the influence of hope, because I have hope in losing myself, I shall find myself; because I have hope, that, in throwing away this base, sordid self, I shall find and gain a rich glorious hope, self-conformed to the divine likeness; and, finally, made happy in him. Therefore I endure such severities as these; and I do endure all in hope.

Here is in all this sowing to the Spirit, which sowing requires the breaking up the fallow ground beforehand, and the tearing out of weeds and roots, that did infest. And this is in order to such sowing to the Spirit, and that is with expectation of reaping of the Spirit what shall be suitable to it; and "they that sow to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." But now you know, (as the Apostle teacheth us to conceive, and to speak elsewhere upon another account,) every one "that soweth, soweth in hope; and he that plougheth, plougheth in hope," that he may be partaker of his hope. 1 Cor. ix. 10. When I give over sowing to my own flesh, pleasing and indulging of that, and begin to sow to the Spirit, as my ploughing before was ploughing in hope, my sowing now is sowing in hope. I would neither plough or sow, but only in hope; so it is in a spiritual sense. And hereupon,

(7.) There is in this work of conversion, a giving oneself up quite unto God, absolutely to be his; you have taken him to be your's; you abandon self thereupon, and therewithal; and now you give up yourself to be his. And is this an act of despair, when a man gives up himself to God? "Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead," as the charge is, Rom. vi. 13. Is this giving or yielding ourselves to God a yielding one-self to perish?—or is this the act of a despairing soul, when it saith, I will be the Lord's? Though he saith, absolutely, Let him do with me what he will, yet it always apprehends he will not destroy me. When I yield myself to him; when I

put myself into his hands by my own act and deed, by my free and voluntary surrender, I know he will never destroy what I so voluntarily resign. And again,

(8.) There is hereupon a resolution of walking in the way of holiness; I have chosen the way of truth; that I will do whatever it cost me. And this cannot be but in hope neither. I shall find a pleasure in this way, though it seem uncouth at the first; I shall find safety in it at length, at the latter end. Because I hope, therefore I choose. And there is, hereupon,

(9.) An abandoning of all associates that any have united themselves with in an evil way; a forsaking of them all; a breaking off from them. They that have been my companions in wickedness shall be my companions no longer, unless they will accompany me in the ways of God. This cannot be but in hope. There is an irksomeness in it, parting with those with whom we had all pleasantness of wit and raillery, and a delicious conversation, according to the gusts and relishes of impure imagination. And these relishes cannot be forsaken and abandoned, but upon the hopes of better. Now I shall be the associate of the blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, to whom by baptismal vow I have been given up, and to whom now also I have afresh given up myself. Those that know, not only what it is to leave the ways of sin, but their accomplices in wickedness, do know withal that there is difficulty in it, to which they need this powerful inducement of hope, that there will be that at length which will recompense and make up all to me.

SERMON XVI.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THERE is one, and a main thing yet behind, which I reserved to the last place, because there is most to be said to it. That is,

* Preached April 26, 1691.

(10.) That in this converting work there is a solemn closure with Christ; a passing quite into a vital union with him, so as that the soul comes thereby to be in him, and Christ comes to be in the soul. And this transaction could never be brought about but under hope. Christ will never come to be in that united state with you by your own consent and choice, if he were not eyed by you under this notion, "Christ in us the hope of glory;" Christ is to be mine, as my great hope, for eternity, and another world. And this transaction and contracting with Christ I reserved to the last place, not as if it were the last in time in the great work of conversion, but as that which I design to speak more largely unto.

As for the method and order wherein all these mentioned things lie to one another, and wherein they may be effected and wrought in the souls of men, it may vary, and not be always the same. Some thoughts may be injected into some minds first, and others first into others. And though suitable and correspondent impressions be made according to injections of thoughts, yet the Spirit doth not always keep one way; though some things must, in their own nature, precede, yet there is certainly an intention of an end always before the use of the means. With all rational agents and movements the end must be propounded that they design for; and then the way taken that is accommodated to that end. And so the eye of the soul must be towards God finally; first, as him that I am to return to, and then come to a closure with him, in whom he only is accessible. In reference to that, singly considered, that peculiar method is observed, though there are other things that have been mentioned which may partly precede, and partly follow.

But this is that I would now insist upon, and make out to you, that, as in the work of conversion and regeneration, the soul is brought to an agreement with the Son of God, as the Redeemer, Saviour, and Ruler of sinners; so it is brought to this by the influence and power of hope; and it could never come to this agreement with Christ otherwise, but as its hope doth influence it hereunto. Most plain it is, that, wheresoever a work of conversion is brought about, and any do become Christians indeed, they are brought into Christ, they are brought to have an in-being in Christ, (as the Scripture phrase is, and that we must keep to, and labour to understand the mind and meaning of the Spirit of God in it,) Christ is nothing to

us, till we be in him; "Of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." 1 Cor. i. 30. That is, he is every thing to us that our case requires and needs, if once we be in him; and nothing if we be not in him: whereas we are foolish creatures, he is made to us wisdom; whereas we are guilty creatures, he is made unto us righteousness; whereas we are impure creatures, he is made unto us sanctification; and whereas we are enslaved creatures, he is made unto us redemption, if we be in him; but nothing of all these if we be not in him. When God deals with souls in order to the renewing of them, they are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus, to walk in them. Ephes. ii. 10. When he creates the new creature, it is said, "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are done away, and all things are become new. 2 Cor. v. 17. This is the great thing that is brought about in the work of conversion or regeneration, or the work of the new creation, which are various scripture expressions of the same thing. The giving the soul an in-being in Christ; inverting, implanting it into him, or (which is all one) bringing about an union between Christ and the soul; in respect whereof that union is so intimate, that he is sometimes said to be in it, and it is sometimes said to be in him. They are mutually in one another. This we must consider is the thing effected in conversion, and which we are to shew you, cannot be effected but by the influence of hope.

Nothing can be more suitable to the Apostle's present scope, than to insist upon this, and evince it to you; for do but observe how he begins this chapter, and take notice how the whole series of his discourse proceeds upon the supposition of this one thing, their being in Christ; having spoken in the foregoing chapter, of the conflict, the war that is between the fleshly principle, and the spiritual principle; and the victory of the Spirit over the flesh, in all that are sincere, and where there is a thorough regenerating work wrought, thereupon he begins this chapter thus, "There is, therefore, now, no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit;" whereby he plainly signifies to us, that the fleshly principle ceaseth to govern, and it ceaseth to condemn at the same time; when sin doth no longer reign, it no longer condemns. This mighty turn and change is brought about in the state of such a person, and in the frame and temper of such an one's spirit, at one and the same time; to wit,

he is now no longer condemned for sin, and he is no longer governed by it. There is no condemnation, and they no longer walk after the flesh, but after the spirit. But whence is it, that he hath this double privilege, or that this mighty turn and change is made in the state of his case? Why, now he is in Christ, he hath been instated in Christ, and now he is neither condemned for sin, nor governed by it.

And upon this supposition of persons being once in Christ, proceeds all the following discourse, through the residue of this chapter. So that now take such an one, suppose him giving (as it were) his account, standing on the brink of the rapid gulph, out of which he newly emergeth, and by grace enabled to spring forth, and make his escape: suppose we such an one, giving an account of his deliverance, and how it was brought about: You that were plunged in so deep and horrid a gulph, and so dreadful impurities, how comes it to be otherwise with you now? Why, I have been brought into Christ, and so, through the grace of God, is my state safe and comfortable. I was tossed in the common deluge and inundation of wickedness and wrath, that had spread itself over all this world; and this was my case, till I came to be in-arked in Christ, and so I became safe. But how came you unto him? or what made you offer at any such thing? Why, I can give you but this account in the general, I am saved by hope; if I had no hope, I had been lost, sunk, and perished for ever; but here was the offer made me of a Redeemer and Saviour, and I hoped it was by one that had no design to deceive me; and there I cast my anchor, and I am come to an agreement with the Son of God, the Saviour! And thus I come to be in this safe state. Safe I am through grace, and I own it, I am safe through hope.—I had been lost else, if I had no hope, and should never have looked after Jesus Christ;—but I had hope when the gospel discovery and representation, and offer of Christ was made to me, that it was by one that could not fail, and would not deceive; one that was not impotent, and too weak to save me, and one that would never be false and untrue to me, if I ventured upon him; and because I had hope, therefore I ventured, and so I am come to this safe state. It is by the influence of hope, that souls are brought into that agreement with the Son of God, upon which their eternal salvation and well-being depends. This is that I have to

make out to you, to wit, that the soul in its first eyeing of Christ, doth eye him as the only hope of sinners.

It is observable how the Apostle begins that first epistle of his to Timothy, in which a little after the beginning, he tells us in that great transport of spirit, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world, to save sinners." But see (I say) how he begins that very chapter and epistle; "Paul an Apostle of God, and of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God, and our Saviour, who is our hope." His heart was full of this thing,—That Christ was the great hope of sinners;—and naturally breaks forth into such expressions as those that do afterwards follow: and being replenished with this sense, having his heart full of it saith, "This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." He is represented and held forth in the gospel, under such a representation as doth signify him to be the great and only hope of souls: so he is closed with, so he is received, so the soul resigns and gives up itself at length unto him.

We see that under that notion, he is laid hold on. Look to that; Heb. vi. 18. "By two immutable things, by which it was impossible for God to lie, (to wit, the oath of God added to his word,) the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." An allusion to the manslayer, one that had by casualty (but within the meaning of the law that gave immunity in such cases) slain another, for whom the cities of refuge were appointed and provided, with respect to the several tribes. This is the representation of the case of a sinner frightened and pursued by the *vindicta* of the divine law and justice; such have no way of escape remaining to them, but to fly for refuge to that hope that is set before them: that is, to Christ, the great antitype to those types,—these cities of refuge were so many types of him. But where is he to be eyed and followed now? He is entered as a forerunner into the holy of holies, he is gone within the veil, and thither our hope must follow him, as you may see in the close of that chapter; "Which hope we have, as an anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, entering into that within the veil; whither Jesus our forerunner is for us entered." I can have no hope (saith the pursued soul) but in Christ. But where will you find him? He is gone far enough out of sight, he

is entered within the veil, the heavens have received him. But yet (saith the soul) I mean to follow him thither, and my hope shall enter there, even within the veil, whither Christ is for me entered; I will not be held off from him. So this laying hold upon this hope is to be understood; hope is objectively taken there, the hope set before them; it is coming to an agreement, a contract with Christ. It is that by which we actually become entered into the covenant of God by Christ, we can take hold no other way but by the covenant; taking hold of the covenant, and taking hold of him, whom that covenant doth (as it were) enwrap and give us the hold of; they are equivalent expressions, and mean one and the same thing. But then understand under what notion is he to be taken hold of; you see that text speaks the matter plainly; he is to be taken hold of, under the notion of the hope set before them. And so when the soul comes into such an union with him, as to have his entrance into it, so as that he is said to be in the soul, to be, by an internal presence, actually indwelling in it: under what notion is that? Why, that scripture tells us, Col. i. 27. "Christ in you." How is he in us, under what notion is he in us? As the hope of glory, he makes his way into the soul, under the notion of the soul's hope. The soul receives him, admits him, unites with him under that notion, as its great hope; Christ who is our hope, as that mentioned introductive passage of the Epistle to Timothy speaks.

And here I must note to you, that speaking of the influence of hope, upon this great transaction of the soul with Christ, I speak not of the hope which doth follow the receptive act, or the self-resigning act, but of an hope that doth precede it. It is true, there is an hope which follows it, by which every believing soul is to continue hoping to the end; often repeating that act, through its whole after course. But there is an hope that doth precede it, of which I now speak, that is, that leads to this reception of Christ, and self-resignation to him; and under the influence whereof, the soul doth receive Christ, and resign itself, and which therefore must be understood to precede: and that is only the immediate product of the gospel representation that is made of Christ; he is discovered to us in the gospel in those capacities, and under those notions, in which he is to be received. This representation of him, so believed on, I believe (saith the soul) this is true, which the gospel speaks concerning Christ, I assent to the truth of this word.

Hence ariseth this hope in the soul, which intervenes between the assenting act of faith, and the relative act of faith; the soul having thus assented to the truth of the gospel revelation, it hereupon hopes, surely I shall run no desperate hazard if I do receive Christ, and resign myself to him according as the gospel doth direct; and so by the influence of this hope accordingly doth receive, and doth resign.

And so the matter being so far stated before us, which we are to clear to you; I shall first argue it out by some more general considerations very briefly, and shall in some particular heads that do concur in this transaction with Christ, discover to you the influence of this hope to this purpose, the bringing about such an agreement and closure of the soul with Christ.

1. It may be argued out to you, from such general considerations as these.

(1.) That the soul's contracting, or coming to such an agreement with Christ, is most certainly a very wise act, the wisest thing that ever any soul did for itself in all this world. As certainly they cannot but be great fools, who, when the gospel reveals a Saviour, will perish by neglect of him; will rather perish than receive him, when they have the Saviour in view, and the terms in view upon which he is to be received.

(2.) Wisdom in any such action is to be estimated by the reference thereof to the end, which is to be designed therein. There is no wise action, but is designed for some end or other, as aptly serving and contributing to the attaining of that end. That is a succedaneous consideration, which is plain in itself. And then add,

(3.) That the proper end, which in such a reception of a Saviour must be designed, is salvation. Nothing can be plainer, than that the end, I am to design in receiving a Saviour is, that I may be saved by him. What else can it be? To which I subjoin,

(4.) That there can be no design without hope. It is naturally impossible to me to design my own salvation by receiving of a Saviour, but it must be with hope of success in this way. There can be, in all the world, no such thing as a design laid without hope of compassing it; no end proposed without hope and expectation, that at last it may be brought about. It is not needful that there should be a certainty that it shall, but there must be an hopefulness and probability that it may, otherwise there can be no

design at all. It is not agreeable to the human nature to design for that, of which there is no hope. These are general considerations, which do plainly enough evince, that this transaction of the soul with Christ, in order to its own salvation, must be under the influence of hope. But,

2. I shall go on to shew, from several particulars, which lie within the compass of this great work of transacting and agreeing with Christ, according to the terms of the gospel covenant; upon each of which, it cannot be, but hope must have influence. As,

(1.) In such a transaction with Christ, or when the soul is coming to an agreement with him upon gospel terms, it must renounce any other saviour or way of salvation, that either is co-ordinate with him, or much more, that shall be opposite to him; whatsoever indeed shall be subordinate, must be taken in, but to think of any thing co-ordinate, of any such thing, there must be a most absolute renunciation. The soul must speak its own sense in such words as the church speaks here; "Asher shall not save us, nor will we say to the works of our hands, ye are our gods; for with thee the fatherless find mercy." There must be an exclusion of all things else, that shall be co-ordinately joined with Christ, or that shall be brought into any kind of competition with him, in this his saving work, and offer. I abandon all other saviours, (this is the language of the soul,) and all expectations from any other.

Now, whereas it is manifest the soul must be brought to this, if ever it come to a closure and agreement with Christ, so it can never be brought to this, but by the influence of of hope concerning him. A drowning man will never let go his twig, but in order to a surer hold of something that may be stronger, and that he may better trust to it. If men have nothing else to rely upon, but their own imagined innocency, or their righteousness, or their performances, that they have performed such and such things in a way of duty, or withheld themselves, and abstained from such and such things in a way of sin. If men have nothing else to rely upon here, they will hold till they have a better hold. It must be the influence of a better hope, some better hope introduced, that must make the soul willing to let go this hold: they will never quit the twig, till they have in view somewhat better and stronger to take hold of. There must be this, in the first place, in the soul's transacting with Christ, a renouncing of any other Saviour, or any other way of salvation.

(2.) There must be the taking on of Christ's yoke; in this transaction with him, the soul must agree to take his yoke upon it, submit its neck thereunto. The gospel is plain and express in this, even in those words of grace themselves, than which the gospel did never breathe sweeter and more grateful ones; "Come unto me all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest; learn of me, and take my yoke upon you, and you shall find rest to your souls, for my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." But such as it is, take it you must; or you are never to expect rest from me, safety, or relief from me. If I give, you must take. If I give you pardon, if I give you peace, you must take my yoke, my burden upon your necks and shoulders: in short, the soul must submit to be governed by Christ, subject itself to his governing power, and the sceptre of his kingdom. This must be its fence. "Other lords have had dominion over me, but now I will make mention of thy name, of thine only." It must be subject to the government of Christ, both negative and positive; that is, must submit, and be bound up from every way of sin, and it must submit and yield to be bound to every way of duty: and this is taking up of Christ's yoke, and this it can never do but with hope, but under the influence of hope.

It is upon the declining of this, that many a soul comes to break with Christ after a treaty begun, and (it may be) carried on far: they may be content to entertain those pleasant thoughts which the gospel gives some intimation of, and by its first overtures doth (as it were) suggest and offer to the soul, of having sin pardoned, and God reconciled, and being saved from the wrath to come, and of being intitled to future felicity, and a blessed state. These are pleasant thoughts, and the first aspect of the gospel doth suggest them; and while the soul looks upon these alone, and doth not look upon what there is of conjunct duty with it, it may go on far, and there may seem to be an agreement entered, or very near to be entered, or which the soul is in a great disposition to enter into with Christ, while it is only expecting much from him, and thinks of bending itself in nothing to him. But when that part comes to be reflected on too, then the soul begins to recoil, to revolt, and to fly off. It can be content with every thing but to be yoked, to come under restraints from such and such ways; no, (saith the soul,) I will never endure to be yoked, to come under obligation to such and such

things as have displeased me, and I could never yet like. Yes, but this Christ insists on. If ever you expect rest from me, I expect you will take on my yoke; that you willingly submit to be yoked by me; it is indeed an easy yoke, and I would have thee understand the matter so, and thou wilt find it an easy yoke, when once thou hast tried it; but a yoke it is, and as such it must be received. But here is the great matter of hesitation, the wretched soul sticks at this, No, I will not endure thy yoke! It is as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke, as Ephraim is represented, Jer. xxxi. 18. and if ever they come to be made sensible, they will speak that sense truly, "I was like Ephraim, thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, I was as a bullock unaccustomed to the yoke; turn thou me, and I shall be turned." This is their sense, if ever they become truly and thoroughly sensible; but in the meantime, here is the stick, because they have not been accustomed to the yoke, and cannot endure to be yoked, therefore doth many an one part with Christ, and give up all; all treaty is quite broken off between Christ and them. And if it be, pray what is the reason of it, thou wretched soul? If one may speak thy own sense in the case, if thou wouldest but reflect and see, whether it be not so, this will prove to be it, to wit, thou hadst no hope. I believe I may speak the heart of many an one in this case, if they could but tell how to speak their own, and to observe so much of their own heart.

I would have such to consider it, as are yet in their youthful days, whether sometimes, having been struck with convictions, and having taken up thoughts of providing for their own safely, and eternal well-being, they have not thereupon come to some kind of deliberation: The gospel is plain, here I have the Redeemer fully represented to me in it. And then this hath been your sense, Lord, I begin to take up thoughts of coming to an agreement with thee upon the terms proposed to me in thy gospel. It may be, the soul hath seemed to itself willing to submit to them, rather than perish; but afterwards, through want of watchfulness, or too much self-confidence, or too little dependance upon the grace of God, a temptation hath proved victorious in some or other particular instances, and here hath been a relapse into somewhat (it may be) of a gross sin; I inquire of such, whether this be not the truth of the case, whether hereupon their souls have not grown hopeless? Well, I shall never overcome; here are my corruptions that are

too hard for me, and I shall never prevail! It may be, thoughts have been resumed, and trials have been renewed again and again, and returning temptations have prevailed, and got the upper hand. Well, saith the soul, I shall never do any good at it, I shall never make any thing of it: and thereupon all hath been given up, and the reins have been laid freely on the neck of lusts, and that resolution hath been taken, "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" and why it was taken, so that text tells us, Jer. ii. 29. Thou hast said, there is no hope; and what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go."

So very contiguous and bordering, are despair and presumption upon one another, when the soul absolutely despairs, then it most highly presumes. There is no hope; well, what then? "I have loved strangers, and after them I will go;" I will let corruption and sensual inclinations have their swing, I will obey the lusts of it, for there is no hope. And then, how lamentable a thing is it, that a soul should be lost so; for if there be no hope in the case, there will be no repetition of endeavours, no further strugglings, no further contests: and then, all is lost, all is gone, which is the forlorn case of those (as I have had occasion at large to shew) who had in some measure escaped the corruptions of this world through lust, by the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, and are again entangled therein and overcome; their latter end with them is worse than the beginning. And whence is this? Because they have been entangled and overcome, therefore they throw away all hope. They should indeed, throw away all hope of being saved, while they are overcome, and remain so, and are slaves, vassals, and captives, to corrupt inclinations; they should throw away all hope of ever being saved in this state; but they should not throw away all hope of being saved out of it. They should throw away hope of being saved without overcoming; but they ought to entertain hope that they shall overcome; that yet they shall overcome, if yet they watch, and yet strive, and yet pray, and yet depend; and there is no other thing to be done. It is not to lie down and perish thus, and say there is nothing more to be done. That is another thing to be done in this coming to an agreement with Christ, upon which hope hath influence, namely, taking on his yoke. And,

(3.) Taking up his cross, that must be done too; and you can never come to a closure with Christ, to an agreement with him upon other terms; you cannot without it be a

disciple, Luke xiv. 20. that is, cannot be a Christian; he only makes feint offers at being a Christian, but is none till he comes to this, to take up the cross, that is, willingly to submit to these terms, that it shall be laid upon him whenever Christ pleaseth, whenever his word and providence together so state the case, that either I must embrace sin or the cross.

And as it is plain, that thus it must be whensoever the soul transacts with Christ, so it is most highly reasonable that thus it should be. Do not murmur at it, do not think it hard that you are to go (if Christ will have it so) a suffering Christian to heaven and glory; for pray, did he not bear a worse cross for you? and do not you expect to be saved from worse things by him? Did not the death that he suffered upon the cross import unspeakably more of grievance and of horror, than any thing you are capable of suffering in this world? And as to what you are capable of suffering for him, and upon his account, is it at all comparable to the sufferings you expect to be delivered from by him? Is it not reasonable then, that a state of most absolute devoting to him all your external comforts, and your very life itself, (if it should be called for,) should come in, and be made part of those terms, upon which Christ will conclude with you, that you shall be his, and he will be yours? Never mutter at it, the reason of the thing speaks itself, that you in coming to him say, Lord, I am come to make a most absolute contract with thee; take me, my life, my estate, my concerns, all that is dear to me in this world, I am willing should become a sacrifice to thee; do with me, and what belongs to me, as thou wilt, only save my soul; it is for eternal life I am come to thee, and for no temporal immunities or enjoyments.

(4.) Another thing considerable in this contract and agreement with Christ, and which is the essential thing, is the vital union that the soul must enter into with him. If ever you come to an agreement with Christ, you must be vitally united. There must be that union of life between him and you, as whereupon spirit may be said to touch spirit, and life, life; as in that 1 Cor. vi. 17. "He that is joined to the Lord, is one spirit."

Oh! that this might be understood, and enter into all our hearts! I am much aware of it, how easy a thing (in comparison) an external and outside Christianity is, and how apt men are to take up with that. A religion, a Christianity, that consists but in externals, or any thing of that kind,

is incomparably easier than this venturing, or adjoining of ourselves with Christ. The affrighted soul when once it is awakened in any measure, and apprehensive of the danger of its case, it readily submits to any thing but this, which is a thing partly not understood, and partly irksome and grievous to flesh and blood: it recoils at the very thought of it. Any thing is easy in comparison of this: any thing that shall only be an exercise to the outward man, or (as I may say) to the surface of the inner, to wit, the soul when it is under an affright, then it may yield: I will comply with any external abstinences, I will submit to any external performances, I will abstain from what you will have me, I will perform what you will have me, as to the outward man, only let me be excused from such efforts of the inner man, as I partly do not understand, and partly as I do understand them, I cannot but regret, and have an aversion to them.

Here it is that many an one breaks with Christ, because they will not endure those paroxysms, which they must pass through in passing from death to life; in turning the very vertical point. It is being created in Christ, coming to a vital union with him, that is the great thing at which the heart startles and revolts. This was the very case we read of in that 6th chapter of John, when our Saviour had said and inculcated again and again, "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him." And he observes the tumultuations and mutinies of their minds at the spiritualities of his foregoing discourse: thereupon saith he, Do not murmur at this, for I tell you, that "No man can come to me, except the Father draws him." And in the sequel of that discourse, (verse 65th,) Did not I tell you before, "no man can come to me except it be given him of my Father?" They were willing to comply far in externals; you see they followed Christ from place to place, with mighty complacency attended upon his gospel, were pleased with his doctrine; when they miss him in one place they run to another part of the country, they take ship and follow him; when they understood he was gone to the other side of the sea of Tiberias they throng after him in great multitudes; they leave the affairs of their callings to go from place to place after him; but yet, when they heard this from him, many went back, and walked no more with him. This is the sense of many an one towards Christ; Lord, we will follow thee all the country over; we will go from place to place, wheresoever we may meet thee, or

hear any thing of thee. And these persons, while they did thus much externally, did also abstain from much, you may be sure, where they could have no opportunity of indulging and gratifying their appetites; being thus hurried from place to place, pursuing and following Christ; yet they did it. So it may be with many an one besides, in our days, when they are awakened, and in some terror, there are no external abstinences that we think or know will offend; we will no more be drunk with the drunken, nor scorn with the scorers; no, by no means; we will undergo any restraint and severities in this kind, rather than run the hazard of our souls; and we will stick at no external performances; nothing that hath but bodily exercise in it. We care not how many sermons we go to hear; we will go any where to the church, or to the meeting-place, where we may hear the most serious ministers; we will be sure always to stick close to the honest side, and to the best cause; we will be true to the last, to the protestant religion and government, and to that party that adhere thereto. All this is fairly and well overtured; but tell them, that besides all this you must have a work wrought in your heart and soul, which is to be done by a divine power. By a divine power, say ye? Then where are we? Can we command the divine power? This is the foolish cheat and deceit that many put upon themselves; and they make the matter to be hopeless from such expressions; "No man can come to me, except the Father that hath sent me draw him," and "except it be given him of my Father." Here are true and just premises, from whence many times men allow themselves to infer the falseth conclusion imaginable. That, therefore, they have nothing to do, and therefore they have nothing of hope remaining to them; considering that which is only in the power of another, not in their own. But upon serious and sober thoughts;—is it not all one, whether you have that power of your own, or may have it from another, if it be duly sought in the prescribed way that plainly lies in view before us all? Doth not the same gospel, the same word that saith, "no man can come to me except the Father that hath sent me draw him," or "except it be given him of my Father," say also, that he "will give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him," as readily as parents will give bread to their children rather than a stone?

This doth not difference the case; it is only a reservation that the great God doth think fit to keep to himself, as

suitable to the majesty of a God in the way of his dispensations towards perishing creatures, offending creatures. Mercy you shall have; help you shall have; power you shall have to do what is necessary to be done in order to your being made safe and happy. But you shall know you are to receive it; you are to seek it; you are to come upon the knee for it; you are to be in the dust for it; to wait, and be prostrate at the foot of a mercy-seat, and before a throne of grace. This is suitable to God, and it is suitable to you; to an offended Majesty, and to offending creatures; but it doth not infer that there is therefore no hope, because there is such a vital union to be brought about with Christ, as can only be brought about by a divine power; for there is still hope that you may have that power afforded you, and exerted in you, both from the gracious nature of God, to which it can never agree to let a soul perish that is aiming at a compliance with him, in his own way, and upon his own terms. And there is encouragement from most express words of scripture, that carry such sweet alluring breathings of grace in them; "Turn ye at my reproof; I will pour out my Spirit upon you; I will make known my words unto you." Prov. i. 28. And do you think these words signify nothing? "As I live, saith the Lord, I take no pleasure in the death of him that dieth; Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die, O house of Israel? Turn, and live." There must be offers of turning, aims to turn, aimings to come to his closure, reachings forth of the soul towards Christ, to come to a living union with him; and in that way you are to expect help.

Objection 1. But it may be said, what hope yet can there be, when, upon the whole matter (as we have lately been taught) there are very few that are saved, and when it is so apparent that the generality do perish, do walk on in destructive ways,—ways that take hold of hell, and lead down to the chamber of death? What hope is there for us, that we that are here in this assembly, when there are so few that are saved; what hope (I say) can there be given to us, that we shall be of those few?

Answer. To this let me say but thus much at present; that, as few as they are, who have you heard of concerning whom you have ground to think, to admit a thought, that they did perish, or were in likelihood to perish, taking the course that hath been directed? That is, having the terms of the gospel in view before them, and aiming and striving to their uttermost, and accompanying their endeavours

with earnest supplication to the God of all grace, for help to comply with those terms, and come up to them? As few as they are that are saved, they are certainly much fewer that ever perished this way, if ever you can suppose that any one perished that doth thus. If there are few that shall be saved, do but consider how much fewer a number you have here to oppose of such as perish in such a way, and upon such terms: incomparably fewer, if ever it can be thought that any at all have thus perished. And no more needs to be said to this now.

Objection 2. But it may perhaps be said,—it seems, however, a very mean thing, that the soul, in coming to a closure with Christ, should be influenced hereunto only by the hope of being saved; I come to him, because I hope I shall be saved by him; I have terrible destruction in view, and I find myself beset with dangers and deaths, and I have no other way to escape; but the hope of escaping brings me to Christ. This (it may be said) is mean.

Answer. Mean, say ye? And to whom is it mean? Is it mean to you, or is it mean to Christ? It is very true indeed, to you it is mean, and it is fit it should be so; for a company of offending creatures, must they stick at any thing that may be mean to them in order to their being saved? Why, man, it is in order to thy being saved from eternal death and destruction; and wilt thou grudge at any thing, because it is mean, that tends and is necessary to the saving thee? No; it is fit for us to put our mouths in the dust, (as was said,) “if there may be any hope.” They that have forfeited their lives, and deserved a thousand hells, is it for them to stick at any thing because it is mean? But when to you it is mean, to Christ it is not mean; that he should be the hope of sinners, to him it is honourable; to him it is glorious. And by how much the more it is debasing to you, it is so much the more exalting to him, magnifying of him in his office, and magnifying of him in the great and high excellencies of his nature and person.

SERMON XVII.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

BUT now there doth somewhat need to be considered in reference to all that hath been opened, which may, by way of objection, occur and offer itself to the thoughts of many. As,

Objection 1. This may be objected; that it seems not so intelligible how hope should have influence upon conversion; for, can there be any thing good in the soul before conversion? And inasmuch as by conversion itself the first grace is given, can there be any grace before this first? Why, there are several things that may be said to this, which it will be of very great use to us to consider; and which (this being a fit way of introducing them) I choose to introduce this way. As,

Answer 1. That there is always a difficulty in fixing the beginnings of things. The very *transitus* of any thing from its *non esse* to its *primum esse*; from its state of nothingness to its beginning to be, is always a matter of real difficulty, and which cannot but carry somewhat of obscurity and dubiousness along with it. But,

Answer 2. It was upon the foresight of what I tell you now is liable to be objected, that I told you formerly of a two-fold hope, which we are to consider in reference to the present case; to wit, of an human and rational hope, and of an holy and gracious hope. The former whereof is leading, and introduced to the latter; and, indeed, to be presupposed to it as a foundation, according as the human rational nature is unto the holy gracious nature; every one must be an human creature before he can be an holy creature; the being of the man precedes the being of the saint, or holy man. So it is in this case too; the very being of an human rational hope must precede that of the gracious and holy hope; and as such, it is not without the influence that hath been mentioned to the mentioned purposes. If any yet cannot hope as a saint, they ought according to the

* Preached, June 14, 1691.

grounds they have in view before them, to hope as a man. If you cannot yet hope as an holy creature, you ought to hope as a reasonable creature, according to those grounds that God hath laid in view before you. And,

Answer 3. To hope as an human and reasonable creature is to hope, upon the consideration of such things as have that tendency in themselves to found and raise an hope in us; that is plain and obvious in itself; for consideration is nothing else but the exercise of our reasoning faculty; a communing with ourselves; a discussing matters with our own souls, or in our own minds, according to the concernment that we may apprehend them to be to us. And in that way, (if there be a real ground,) hope ought to be excited and raised up in us. And we ought to be active, in order to its being so. This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope; (Lam. iii. 21.) recollecting and calling to mind such things as are proper matter of hope, ought to excite and raise such hope in us. And again,

Answer 4. This God himself doth point out to us as the proper method of conversion; to wit, the engaging and setting on work our own considering power, which, being duly engaged, hath a tendency that hath been noted to raise hope. It is marked out as the great bar and obstruction to conversion, when people will not consider: "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib; but Israel doth not know, my people will not consider." Isaiah, i. 3, 4. "Ah, foolish people! a sinful nation; a people laden with iniquity; a seed of evil doers; children that are corrupters; they have forsaken the Lord." Isaiah, i. 16. And afterwards, he reasons with them to turn; "Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes;" as you find throughout the series of that chapter. He calls upon his apostate people, (when they have revolted and gone back from him, and when therefore the exigency of the case makes their conversion and return necessary,) he calls upon to shew themselves men; "remember this, and shew yourselves men; bring it again to mind, (oh,) ye transgressors!" Isaiah, xlvi. 8. And for that very reason, he discovers himself ready to shew mercy: when he hath at any time the opportunity given him of observing such a temper and disposition of spirit to consider and return. "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness which he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive." Ezek. xviii. 27, 28. "Because he considereth, and turneth

away from all his transgressions that he hath committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die." "Because he considers and turns;" if he do not consider, he will never turn. If he do consider, he may, especially, when he doth consider such things as tend (as was said) to found and raise an hope for him of mercy in returning. Again,

Answer 5. Such things as ought to be considered in such a case, they do more clearly and distinctly present themselves to view with them that live under the gospel. That gives mighty advantages to such considerations as carry matter of hope with them: and God will deal with all sorts of people according to that measure of light which he affords them. For those that live under the gospel, they must be dealt withal according to what discovery is extant before them of his mind and will by that; for those that have no gospel, they will be dealt with by other measures. But, for those that live under the gospel, to whom that bright, and morning, and pleasant light hath shined, they ought to judge, and make, and estimate of their own state and case accordingly; and think I am not a creature turned loose into the world to wander in it as in a wilderness; but I am by special, peculiar, divine favour placed under the dispensation of an everlasting gospel, in which he speaks his mind distinctly to men about the ways and methods of recovering and saving lost and perishing souls; so that whatsoever hath a tendency to administer any matter of hope, it lies in view with the greatest advantage imaginable, before whom this divine and express revelation of the mind of God about these concernments is come. And,

Answer 6. That hope that shall (upon consideration of the things that have that tendency) arise in the souls of any in order to their conversion, and before that work be as yet done, we must understand it to be greatly improved and assisted by those greater measures of common grace, that are afforded to them that live under the dispensation of the gospel. And so, I told you at first, that human rational hope, assisted by common grace, may have a great and very significant influence towards this blessed change that is to be wrought upon the soul. And though it be very true, therefore, that there can be no special grace before the first special grace, (as the matter speaks itself,) yet there may be common grace before special grace. That grace that goes under the name of common, it is leading, it is preparatory, it is antecedent to that which goes under the notion of special. And so the doubt is answered, what

grace can there be before the first grace? Before the first grace, there may be other grace,—grace that is not special grace; that is common, and that is in a greater measure afforded to them that live under the gospel. And thereupon I add,

Answer 7. That there are sundry obvious considerations that tend to raise hope, which, as common grace falls in with it, (though it be but merely human and rational hope otherwise,) may have a mighty hand in the soul's first turn to God, or an influence upon it; considerations that tend partly to awaken in the soul a sense of its own case; and that tend thereupon to erect and lift it up towards God in hope. I do not confine the discourse I am upon, nor would I confine your thoughts to such considerations merely, abstractedly, and singly, as tend to beget hope; but such as tend to beget a sense first, and then to beget hope; that is, when the soul is made to feel its own distress, and perceive sensibly its own forlorn wretchedness; this makes it the more susceptible of that hope that must have influence upon this great turn to God through Christ. And those will be such considerations, as they who live under the gospel have their present and constant advantage for. It is for one to sit down with himself, and think; and we may be sure the gospel will never do that soul any good that never thinks, that never considers. But if one under the dispensation of the gospel will set himself to consider, he hath such considerations as these obvious to him:—

“ I am an apostate creature; a poor wretch fallen from God, cut off from him by mine own iniquity, who hath been the Author of my life and being to me, and from whom alone I can expect a blessed eternity. I have by apostasy incurred his displeasure, fallen short of his glory, fallen under his wrath; I am, by nature, a child of wrath, as well as others are; I know there is a satisfaction due to divine justice from me, for the injury and wrong I have done to the majesty and authority of his government over me, who gave me breath; I know I am never capable of making that satisfaction myself; if I were to lie everlastingly in consuming flames I should be always satisfying, but I should never have satisfied. But I find with all (and the gospel tells me so) God doth not expect from me that I should satisfy for my own sin; he hath devolved that matter wholly into another hand; and the gospel having declared to me his mind and pleasure herein, it would be the

greatest presumption imaginable in me to offer at being a satisfier for my own sin; to offer at that were to offer an affront instead of a satisfaction; to suppose I could satisfy, were for me to measure arms with the Almighty; it were to take upon me as if I were a God,—as if I were the man his fellow; as if any thing that could be done or suffered by me could bear proportion to the rights and dignities of the divine government, when they have been invaded, usurped, and violated, as they have been by me. But I find by the same gospel, that though I am not required to make satisfaction to the justice of God for my own sin myself, yet I am required to return to God, and to receive his Son, who hath made that satisfaction; and to receive him with a dependant and subject heart, casting myself upon him for salvation, and subjecting myself for government, even unto eternal life. I find this is required; every one that lives under the gospel may consider so, and ought to consider so. This light shines into every one's face that lives under the gospel.

“ And then hath every one of us to consider further,—but for this mighty turn I find for myself no power; I ought to turn to God through Christ, but I cannot; not through natural impotency, but moral; for this can be resolved only into disinclination of will. My will is disinclined, bent another way; I must tear myself off from those ways of sin that I have run in; I cannot alter the bent of my own heart, no more than a leopard can his spots, or a blackmoor his skin. Here is the great stress and hinge of this case. That must be done, or I am lost, which I myself cannot do. But such an one hath yet further to consider: I find it is charged upon me to return, to come back to God through Christ; to repent towards God, to believe in his Son. I find these things are charged upon me; and my reason and conscience cannot but tell me, that that impotency which only lies in a disaffected disinclined will, can never excuse me from such duty. That is the very sum of all malignity itself; a will against my duty; a will against the good and acceptable will of God; this carries all the malignity of hell in it, to have such a will. Therefore this ill habit and bent of my will can by no means in the world invalidate the obligation of those laws and precepts, that bind me to repentance and faith in the Son of God; they lie upon me as a matter of indispensable duty still. That such an one hath to consider and think that,

Then nothing can be more obvious than to consider further,—

“ If I have such things lying upon me as matter of most apparent and indispensable duty, for which I have no present power, nothing remains to me but to offer at my duty; otherwise I lay myself under the manifest guilt of most insolent rebellion: for I cannot but say, that a sinner is righteously enjoined to repent. If it were great iniquity in me first to offend, it is most apparent duty to repent of my having offended; and if God offer to me his own Son to be to me a Saviour and a Ruler both together, surely it is most justly enjoined upon me that I receive him as such, that I rely upon him as a Saviour, and subject myself to him as a Ruler. I have nothing to say against the equity, reasonableness, and obligingness of these laws of his. Why, then, if they do lay actual obligation upon me, and I feel no present power in my own soul to comply with them; but cannot but be sensible of impotency, to wit, a disinclined heart. What? I offer at turning to God? I may as well offer at removing a mountain. Here is a difficulty invincible to me; a power that I can by no means overcome; a carnal, corrupt inclination, carrying me another way, and that strengthened by all the infernal powers of hell and darkness too; for every one that is turned is “ turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.” Acts, xxvi. 18. And who hath “ delivered us from the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” Coloss. i. 13. A mighty turn this is! And when the law saith to me, Repent; when it saith, Turn, believe, receive Christ; subject thyself to him; rely upon him. If I look into myself I find myself dead; “ You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins;” Eph. ii. 1, 2. where all have naturally their conversations, “ according to the course of the world, and the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that worketh in the children of disobedience.” What shall I do in this case against all the power of my own indwelling corruption, and all combined powers of the hellish infernal kingdom, that labour to the uttermost to keep me off from God, to keep me off from Christ, that I may never come to a closure? What is to be done in this case? Why, the mentioned considerations are most obvious; to wit, those great evangelical precepts requiring nothing but matter of most plain and indispensable duty, from which a disinclined will is no excuse, but rather the highest aggravation imaginable of my iniquity

and guilt, if I comply not; so as that I am held under a strict tie to do what the evangelical law requires and charges upon me. Nothing is (I say) plainer, and more distinctly in view, than that I am to offer at what I cannot myself effect; otherwise I add insolent rebellion to all my former indisposition. And I find this is the plain meaning of the commands, as they are explicated by superadded promises. "Turn ye at my reproof." Prov. i. 23. What, I alone? What, I by myself?—No; do you turn; do as much as in you is; put yourselves into a turning posture; and "I will pour out my Spirit upon you; and I will make known my words unto you."

And to excite and raise hope higher in this case, the poor wretch hath to consider this:

"It is the God of all grace that I am now to apply myself to; the God that is rich in mercy, and that is the Father of mercies: and again, I am to apply myself to him for the concerns of my soul; of an immortal spirit, that he hath put into me, who is himself the Father of Spirits. Why should I not expect he should be kind to his own offspring?—a poor wandering soul; a degenerate, apostate spirit, that is sensible of having apostatized, that is now aiming to return and to come back to him? Why should not I expect him to be merciful, to be helpful to a poor soul that sees itself lost if he do not help,—if he do not put forth his hand and draw me into union with him, and with his Son, in whom he knows only I must live, and without which union I am left still under a necessity of perishing? And here is this to be considered,—he is more nearly related to this spirit of mine than to my flesh, more nearly to this soul of mine than to my outward man. I have found him kind and compassionate to my flesh and outward man. This is fit to be suggested to any man's soul that begins to awaken and consider his case; and, further, to say within himself, Thou hast nothing to do but to hope in the divine mercy; and thou hast already found the Father of mercies merciful to thy meaner and baser part. How hast thou lived all this while in this world? It was by him that thou didst live, and through him thou wast born; and thou hast hung upon him ever since thou hangdest upon thy mother's breast. Where hast thou had thy bread for a day, and day by day, but from him? Where hast thou had thy breath every moment? thy breath was continually in his hand. He that hath been so compassionate to that flesh of thine without thy seeking, will he

not be compassionate to thy soul, if thou dost seek him,—if thou dost crave,—if thou dost cry, and tell him, Here is one of the souls that thou hast made, ready to perish under the tyranny of a carnal inclination, and under the power of the great destroyer of souls? Is there no place for hope in this case? though the case be a distressed case, it plainly speaks itself not to be a desperate case; will not he, who is the God of all grace, shew compassion to a soul that is aiming to come back to him upon his call, and when he calleth him, though he can come but faintly, struggle but weakly; though he can but aim to come?"

And, again, you have this to consider to found and raise hope; that you do him the highest homage that in your case and circumstances you are capable of doing, when you throw yourselves upon his mercy; and it is that which he is most highly pleased with. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy;" a scripture, that any soul which begins to have an awakened sense of the state of his own case, ought to have as a frontlet before his eyes, and engraven (as it were) upon the palms of his hands. This ought to be considered; Though I cannot comply with him as I should, I cannot do such things as are just and righteous, (which a most unexceptionable, evangelical law, doth ask for, and require, and challenge,) yet I am willing to do him all the homage I am capable of, by casting myself upon his mercy, and by making him my ultimate and last hope. Say you so? (saith God,) Is this your posture? Now you please me beyond all things that you were capable of doing besides, or any other way. "He takes pleasure in them that fear him, and in them that hope in his mercy." This is to acknowledge the divine mercy to be a bottomless abyss, never to be fathomed; you hope in his mercy, when otherwise you had no hope in any thing else. This is that wherein he takes pleasure; this is to acknowledge him to be God, to give him the proper glory of his Deity; and own him to be infinite and immense even in goodness, that great excellency and perfection of his nature.

And admit that all considerations, all the actual thoughts you have of all these things, and your revolving them to and fro in your own minds, are all, as yet, but within the compass, enabling you to raise an hope upon so plain grounds as these are, which lie in view before you; yet every one sees that these things have a manifest tendency to the soul's turning to God through Christ; and so lie in

your way to that special grace, wherein the great turn itself doth lie. And then I add again, in the last place, that,

Answer 8. That, whenever that great turn is brought about wherein is the great effort of grace, which is most special and peculiar, it is manifest that an holy hope is one of the things that doth first appear and shew forth itself in this great turn. For the soul is to close with God in Christ; but this is impossible to it, but as it hopes for acceptance. This can never be the act of a despairing soul. If the soul look upon God and Christ with absolute despair, it is hardened with a diabolical hatred; and can never close, can never unite with him but when it opens itself to receive Christ, and all the fulness of God. It is hope that opens it, and hath the great influence into the sincere covenanting act, the vital covenanting act, by which the soul takes God in Christ, and surrenders and gives up itself to God, through Christ. And that is sincere and so continues, or doth not continue, according as the soul hopes or hopes not, or hopes truly and fully, or otherwise.

The expressions to this purpose are worthy to be written in letters of gold, which we find in Psalm lxxviii. 7, 8. Where we have the very root of sincerity, and the very root of apostacy pointed out to us both together, even with manifest reference to the truth of the thing I am now inculcating to you: "That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God; but keep his commandments; and might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation, a generation that set not their heart aright: and whose spirit was not stedfast with God." The design of all this is to signify, that God would have a people to succeed from that root and stock that should be better than their fathers; but wherein should they be better? or should they come to be better? Why, their fathers were stubborn and rebellious; they were false and unsteadfast in the covenant of God; they did covenant, but it was on terms: "They did but flatter him with their mouths, (as is afterwards expressed,) and lied to him with their tongues." Their hearts were not sincere; there was no fixedness and stability in the covenant of God. And wherein should their children be better? Why, I will have them be taught and instructed, and to learn, from all the methods of the dispensations of God towards their forefathers, to set their hope in God. This was the great thing their fathers did not; and therefore continued rebels still; and when they seemed to covenant were false and treacherous, and un-

stedfast in their covenant with God. But if ever there come to be sincere covenanting, it must come from their setting of their hope in God as the "God of all grace;" as the God "rich in mercy;" to whom, as such, (each must say,) "I do, through his Christ, adjoin my soul, and tell him, Here I will live; here I will die; I am come to this point, brought to thee by the invitation of thine own word and gospel. It hath bid me repent and believe, and required me to yield myself to God, and to take God for mine: I do all this upon the warrant of, and in obedience to, the authority of the law of grace, that supreme, that benign law." This is that which makes the soul stedfast; brings it to a point; now it finds this is a work that will hold, when the soul is setting its hope in God, and unites itself by covenant with him.

And so much with reference to that first objection, which served me to introduce these sundry things, which I hope will be of use to those that consider them.

Objection 2. But, in the second place, it may be further objected: If hope,—the hope of being saved, will have such an influence upon conversion in order thereunto, how comes it to pass, that when the most do so generally profess an hope of being saved, yet so few are converted hereby? Is hope like to have such an influence upon conversion in order to salvation, when we find that men do very generally hope to be saved, and have very great hope of being saved; yet many of them (the greater part of them it may be) are never converted?

Answer. To that there are some things to be said, also, that it may be of equal use to us, to understand and consider. As,

1. Therefore it is, that many hope to be saved who are never converted by their hope, because they do maim the object of their hope; that is, whereas they should hope first to be converted, and then, secondly, so to be saved, they hope to be saved without being converted. And so one great part of the object of their hope is left out; and their hope, therefore, is not only not subservient, but is obstructive to their conversion; and so, consequently, to their salvation too. It doth (I say) not only subserve it, but hinders it. They hope they shall be saved,—that they make the abstract and separate object of their hope, excluding and shutting out from that salvation all considerations of the sanctity, the purity, the holiness, which the conversion, that they should conjoin therewith, carries in

it. And this doth not only not help, but hinders both their conversion and salvation. It doth not help it, because the hope of being saved without it is never likely to make them look after being converted. And it hinders it, because it cannot but provoke God to keep at a distance from them, and move his displeasure to the highest against them; for they do in this kind of hope, not only not hope according to his word, but they hope against it, so as that their very hope is the giving him and his word the lie; the worst and most provoking thing that can be thought. Their very hope is saying to themselves, "Peace, peace," though they walk after the imaginations of their own hearts; though they never alter their course, and though their hearts be never changed, yet they shall have peace. This (I say) is to give the lie to the divine truth, and the word of his truth; and so carries in it matter of the highest provocation; as that scripture expresseth it, "If any man think" and speak, though it be but in his own heart, though he do but mutter it inwardly, though he do but whisper it to himself, "I shall have peace though I walk in the way of my own heart, and after the imagination of my own heart, to add drunkenness to thirst;" to add the act of sin to the desire of sinning. Deut. xxix. 18, 19. My jealousy shall smoke against that man, (though he doth not speak out, though he doth but say it in heart,) for he doth me the greatest injury in his heart imaginable; his conceptions of me are ignominious; he makes me an impure deity, that will give peace to him that walketh on in his wicked ways; so that I should not only be reconciled to him in his wicked way, but I am supposed to be reconcileable to his wickedness,—to that wicked way in which he walketh. I am supposed untrue to myself; he makes me a foolish deity, that all the threats and menaces that are in my word against daring, insolent sinners, are only indeed *terrifica lamenta*, bug-bears, to frighten children and fools with; therefore (saith he) my jealousy shall smoke against that man; I will not spare him, I mean to paradigmize such a man as this, and to let all the world know, by the severity of my vengeance against such an one, that I am what he did not think me to be, a true, a holy, a just, and jealous God. That hope that men have of being saved without ever being converted, or turned to God through Christ, and breaking off from the way of sin, it is of this import, as you have heard. It carries this secret aspect and language in it, so detracting, so reproaching and ignominious to the true, and holy, and

jealous God. And therefore it is not to be thought strange, if men have such an hope as this, and it never doth them good. They will never be the better for it; it never makes them good men in this world, nor happy in the other. And then,

Answer 2. Besides this horrid maim and flaw, which is in the object of their hope, (separating therefrom what should be conjoined therewith,) there is an equally great defect in their very hope itself, which makes it not strange, that it should not have an influence into their conversion: for, if the matter should be examined, what are these men's hopes? It resolves into this; to wit, it is nothing else, but only no fear; it is a negative hope, and no positive thing; an hope that consists in nothing else, but only not fearing. They find they do not fear their being miserable, and that is all. It is very true, indeed, there is nothing that is more common language in the profanest mouths, than that form of asseveration, as they hope to be saved. But let the meaning of those very words be examined and inquired into, and it dwindles into nothing:—Hope to be saved? What do you mean by this hoping to be saved? Let the matter be but grasped, do but grasp at it, and you find this hope signifies nothing but only no fear. There is many an one with whom, in reference to many things there is neither fear nor hope; and it is so here: as from a country that is either merely imaginary, or that you know nothing of, you never hope for good, or fear any evil from thence. You are equally void of any hope, or of any fear, who doth either hope any good, or fear any evil from an Utopian land? This is the case with most of these confident persons, that will briskly say, upon all occasions, As I hoped to be saved, it is so and so. And what is this hope to be saved? It is only their no fear to be damned. It is true they have no fear of being damned; and this no fear they call hope, as if nothing must signify something. This is the plain state of the case; that hope that is to influence salvation, and, in order thereunto, conversion must be a real, active, vigorous principle in the soul; not a mere nullity, not a non-entity,—as no fear is,—never to fear is.

But you will say, Where lies the difference between these things? I answer, it is manifold and vast. As,

1. As to the positive hope that there should be, it is grounded in faith; but this (no fear) is grounded in infidelity; that is grounded in religion, this is grounded in atheism and irreligion. A vast difference! He that se-

riously hopes, hopes because he believes the word of God is true, and that such and such things have a real foundation there; and because he hath an inward reverence and adoration of God; and therefore, upon such and such discoveries of him as he is pleased to make of himself, and the impression on his heart suitably, there is a temperament in the soul towards him, made up of reverence and love, with some kind of dependence and trust. This is all founded in faith, and in religious sentiments; but this same [no fear] is founded in nothing but atheism and irreligion; they have no fear of that which they really believe is nothing, or they think will never be. And then again,

2. This [no fear] is nothing, whereas this hope that is required is a most positive thing, a principle of great liveliness, vigour, and activity, in its own sphere. That which is nothing can work nothing, effect nothing, in order to conversion or salvation. And again,

3. This [no fear] may signify nothing at all more than only the soul's unconcernedness for any such matter; whereas, real hope signifies its great concernedness, its deep intention of mind and thought about such things. There is nothing does more intend a man's thoughts towards any thing than real hope doth; but this [no fear] may signify his not minding any such concernments at all; his being totally unconcerned about them. So it may in many things, in which one apprehends himself to have no real interest one way or other, and so, accordingly, is in the temper of his mind indifferent in reference to such things. There are many such concernments of which we are totally ignorant, have no real knowledge or thought; the concernments of some remote countries, at the uttermost ends of the earth, which we know nothing of, understand nothing of their affairs; we are accordingly altogether unconcerned what is done there, and utterly without the exercise of hope or fear, as to the events of things among them. But it is not so with us in reference to the concernments that are under our notice. There is nobody so indifferent in reference to France, Germany, Flanders, and Savoy, as to the occurrences there, and in the conclave, and nearer home in Ireland. There is nobody that useth thought in those things that is so unconcerned about them, but that there will be various agitations of hope and fear this way; and that, according to the aspect of things among us, nobody can be supposed so indifferent among us, that there should be, in reference to these

things, neither hope nor fear. But every one, according to the wish and inclination of his own mind, hath his hope or his fear variously stirring in him thereunto. But it is possible there may be a total vacancy of fear where there is no concern at all. And as there is no fear, so there is no hope; that is, the things are never minded, never thought of.

And this is the true state of the case with the most in reference to the concernments of another world, as if it were a mere Utopia. They have, in reference thereunto, nothing of hope or of fear, but lie all their days in a stupid dream. And these are the persons, I confess, about whom I have the least hope, and the most fear; to wit, they who in reference to the concerns of their own souls, have neither hope nor fear; but lie in a drowsy sleep all their time, and dream away all their days; and whereas they talk of hoping to be saved, that hope is nothing else but only a not being afraid to perish, because they apprehend no danger, because they have nullified to themselves the great objects of hope and fear.

This, therefore, doth not signify the no influence of hope, but it signifies only the inefficacy, or no influence of no hope; for that hope is no hope which they miscall by that name. The most that they can make of it is, that it is no fear; but, as it is no fear, so it is no hope neither; that is, there is a vacancy equal both of hope and fear; and nothing makes their case more deplorable than this, that they are likely to perish even while there is hope, for want of hope. And this is the forlorn, dismal state of many that live under the gospel; they cannot hope without the intention of hope; there can be no rational or human hope, much less that hope that reaches to the pitch of common grace; without the intention of thought, their thoughts will not be engaged; and one day passeth with them after another, and not a serious thought taken up, Shall I be saved, or shall I perish? What will become of me when I die?

But I hope it is not generally so with you. It would be very sad if it were; when you hear so many Lord's days together, one after another, so much of salvation; one comes and preacheth to you upon that great question, "Are there few that shall be saved?" and another comes and preacheth to you upon that expostulatory passage, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" and a third, he comes and preacheth to you upon this assertion, "We are saved by hope:" nothing but being saved,

nothing but salvation, rings in your ears from one Lord's-day to another. And it will be an amazing thing, if, after all this, we have no concernment about being saved; so that we find no room, no place for the exercise of hope or fear; hope of being saved, or fear of perishing by not being saved.

But if the true import of the word salvation were understood, and received into our souls, it would make work among us; it would find us exercise either for hope or fear; when we have so much spoken of salvation as we find in scripture; and when the name of the Son of God is signalized to us, and celebrated among us as a Saviour, (he shall be called Jesus, for he shall be a Saviour to save his people from their sins,) why, every one that would but use his understanding, would say, What doth this word signify? What is the meaning of all this talk of salvation? of a Saviour, and of being saved; what doth it signify? It plainly signifies that all this world is likely to be shortly in a great flame, and that the Judge is at the door; that hell will shortly swallow up all a whole world of ungodly men, except that residue that shall be caught up in the clouds, to meet their Redeemer in the air, and so to be for ever with the Lord. And if we would but allow the word salvation its true import and significancy, it would be far from us to be without hope, in reference to being saved. And then we should come to understand somewhat of the significancy and of the influence of this hope, the hope of salvation, in order to our conversion first, and then to our salvation itself in the final state.

SERMON XVIII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING proposed to shew the influence that hope hath unto salvation, by shewing both what influence it hath upon conversion, that brings us into a state of salvation;

* Preached June 21, 1691.

and then what influence it hath upon the Christian's perseverance even to the end, by which we are continued in that state, and so finally saved. We have hitherto insisted upon the former, and are now to proceed to the latter; to speak to that influence which hope hath upon a Christian's perseverance in that holy course through which he is to pass on to the state of final glory and blessedness. And here it cannot but be obvious to you, from what hath been formerly said, that hope, as it refers to the perseverance of a Christian, must needs considerably differ from hope, as it hath at first influence into conversion; or a person's entrance into the Christian state, both in the nature and in the object; or in respect of the object of the one and of the other hope.

1. In respect of the nature of the one and the other, that hope that doth influence conversion, and is necessarily presupposed to it, (if you consider the nature of it,) hath no more in it than what doth belong to a merely human, rational hope, assisted only by common grace; for special grace cannot be supposed to be before conversion or regeneration; but even that human rational hope, it hath its influence and usefulness towards conversion, as other things belonging to the human nature have; not only our minds and understandings, by which we are capable of thinking and considering of things that are to affect, and by which we are to be wrought upon, in order to conversion. But even to go lower than that, our very external senses themselves; "faith cometh by hearing," and so it may come by reading the word and gospel, which is to be the means of conversion and salvation, to our souls. But if you look to the nature of that hope which is all along to influence the course of a converted person, one that is become sincerely a living Christian, that hope must needs be a part of the new man, or of the new nature, which is in regeneration communicated and imparted to the soul. And, accordingly,

2. The object of the one and the other hope must needs very much differ, even supposing the soul to be awakened, and that God is beginning to deal with it in order to conversion; it must be supposed to have some hope concerning the issue of this treaty, wherein it is now engaged with the great God about so important a matter. Otherwise (as hath been inculcated unto you again and again) it is impossible it should ever turn; converting and turning to God is not the act of a despairing, but of an hoping soul; and the dispositions thereunto do suppose some hope. And the

object of this hope must be understood to be God as now to be reconciled. The object of the other hope that doth influence a Christian's after course unto final salvation, is God hereafter to be enjoyed. God to be reconciled is the object of that hope, which a person hath while God is dealing with him in order to conversion; to wit, we must suppose him awakened; and being so, considers and bethinks himself, I am an offending, guilty creature; the God that made me hath just matter of controversy with me; will he be reconciled, or will he not? will he always hold me guilty, will he bear himself as an enemy and an avenger to a poor guilty creature as I am? or will he pardon? Will he forgive? Will he shew mercy? I hope he will, saith the poor trembling wretch. And then he turns at length. When God is dealing with the soul in order to conversion, it hath this hope in the midst of a great deal of fear and doubt,—Who knows but God will shew mercy to a returning soul? And thereupon it turns. So the object of his hope is now God to be reconciled,—present reconciliation.

But the object of this hope after conversion, all along, through his succeeding course, is God to be enjoyed in the final state; now more and more, and perfectly hereafter in that state, which is to be final and eternal.

And this the very state of the case itself doth plainly enough suggest to us. There must be this difference also, as to the object of the one hope and the other, according to the difference in the very nature of this and the other hope. The soul before regeneration, it can generally affect and covet to be happy, (which is natural to man,) and dread to be miserable; it is capable of being afraid of wrath and torment; and being so, the state of the case, as it is in view before it, not excluding hope, it can entertain some hope, an human rational hope amidst all that fear. And hereupon, the main thing that it is exercised and taken up about, is the present state of its case, whether God will be reconciled or no; but with final reference too, to its future state, that is, especially the privative part of it, salvation and escape from eternal wrath. It can very well entertain hopes, and admit of agitations of affections to what goes no higher than so, from the very nature of such a subject, an intelligent, reasonable soul, that is capable of happiness, and in general of desiring it; and that apprehends itself liable to misery, and that cannot, without dread and abhorrence, think of that.

But in the mean time, before regeneration it is incapable of any such workings and dispositions as do belong to the holy divine nature. It cannot yet love God; it cannot yet desire a felicity in him; it cannot covet to be like him, or to have that happiness in view which consists in the vision of him. This only belongs to its state after it is regenerate. When once a person comes to be a son, is brought into a state of sonship, and hath a divine nature imparted and communicated to him in regeneration; we see what his sense is, what a kind of happiness he is capable of relishing, and what, accordingly, his hope is. 1 John, iii. 1. When the apostle had told us, in the close of the foregoing chapter, "Every one that doth righteousness is born of God;" every one that hath the same holy nature, which belongs peculiarly, and in its highest perfection, to God alone; every one that hath any participation of that nature, doth thereby appear to be born of God, (or as the same matter is elsewhere otherwise expressed to be of God;) why, that being supposed, in the beginning of the next chapter, he breaks out into that transport and admiration, wherein we find him introducing the matter that follows: "Behold, what manner of love is this, that we should be called the sons of God!" How come we to be called so? not as having a mere title, a name conferred upon us, and no more, but by having a new nature, a divine nature imparted. Adoption is founded in regeneration. There is no such thing as adoption that doth not presuppose regeneration and the participation of a new, divine, holy nature from God.

Now, this being communicated, the happiness that such are hereupon capable of is, and so much (though we do not know what it will be in the perfect state fully yet) we do know concerning it, that we shall be like him, (as it there is,) "for we shall see him as he is." This, they who are his regenerate sons, are capable of understanding, and relishing. And thereupon you see what their hope is; "every one that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, as he is pure." The hope that a regenerate person, a son, hath concerning him, is, that "he shall be like him, and see him as he is."

This is a very considerable difference; though there is an hope (as hath been said) that hath influence upon conversion and salvation itself, yet there is an hope that afterwards hath influence upon the Christian's perseverance through the whole of his after course. These two do very

greatly differ, according as the state of the case doth ; the one being part of the new creature, or of the new man, or principle belonging to the new nature, which is now regenerated. The other may be only an human, rational hope, assisted by common grace, tending towards, and improveable in the methods of God's gracious communications unto the other, heightened up unto the other ; so, whereas the principal exercise of the soul under these previous workings, which lead and tend to conversion, is taken up about a present peace and reconciliation with God ; but its workings afterwards, under the influence of that nobler and more sublime hope, is taken up about a final felicity and blessedness in him ; and so " rejoices in hope of the glory of God," as the matter is expressed, Rom. v. 2. and " obtaining of salvation by Christ Jesus, (1 Tim. ii. 10.) with eternal glory ;" that being the thing whereunto such an one finds himself actually called. That cannot but be his hope, that is called to an everlasting kingdom, and the glory of God by and through Christ Jesus ; the call proceeding from the God of all grace : " the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after ye have suffered awhile, make you perfect." 1 Pet. v. 10. That which is the final term of his calling, is the hope of it, as the apostle speaks, where he prays for the Ephesians, that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, that the eyes of their minds might be enlightened, and that " they might know the hope of his calling." Eph. i. 18. It is another kind of knowledge they are capable of having concerning the " hope of their calling," or what they are to hope for in the state to which they are called after regeneration, and which proceeds from that divine light which is suitable to a regenerate soul, as such. I say, it is quite another sort of hope from that which it was capable of before ; and so they are quite another sort of things, about which the soul is exercised and taken up.

And, in short, that which a person once converted and brought home to God, is entertained and taken up with through the remaining part of his Christian course, is the future state of things ; the invisible state. As he is to be saved by hope, (as the text speaks,) brought on to final salvation by the continual influence of hope ; and to have this influence upon his whole course unto final salvation, is the immediate product of faith ; the soul believes the word of God revealing such and such things that are out of sight, and that come not within the view of common eyes ;

and believing the word of promise, it hereupon hopes for the things promised, reacheth forth in vehement aspirings towards these things, and contends against the difficulties that lie in the way of attainment. And so we are told the holy soul, the just one, is to live by his faith. Heb. x. 37. And that we are told in the very beginning of the next chapter, is “the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of the things not seen.” Heb. xi. 1. Agreeably to what the text saith, “we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope.” It is hope pitched upon unseen things, upon the invisible state of things, by which a person is sustained, borne up through the whole of his course in this world, unto final salvation. “What a man sees, why doth he yet hope for?” It is a matter relating to an unseen state of things, the heavenly state, which is to influence a Christian all along, till he reach heaven.

And so much being premised, I shall now, for the clearing of this to you, (that as hope hath an influence, in order to conversion, so it hath afterwards, a continual influence upon perseverance, unto final salvation,) do these two things; 1st. Shew how, and in what way, hope hath this influence. And then 2dly. Shew you how necessary this influence is to this purpose; to wit, a Christian’s perseverance; his holding on the prescribed course, till he reach the blessedness of it in salvation.

1. I shall shew you what influence it hath, or how it comes to have influence to this purpose. And whereas it is plain and evident, that hope cannot sustain a Christian in his course, if it be not sustained itself; I shall upon this head, more distinctly, do these two things; 1st. Shew what advantages such hope, kept up in life and vigour in the soul, doth afford a Christian’s continuing in his course, in the ways of God, till he reach the end of it: and then shall, 2ndly. Shew what encouragement a Christian hath so to hope; or what it is, whereupon all along his hope is to sustain itself, that it may sustain him.

1. For the former of these, What advantages such an hope, kept up in life and vigour, is apt to afford a Christian, for the continuing of him in his way, or that he may persevere unto the end. Here I shall let you see, that it hath influence upon the many gracious dispositions, which it is necessary should be, and should be continued in the soul, in order to its persevering in the way of life. I shall instance in such things as do most directly refer to this very purpose, the keeping of a person with God, in that holy

course, into which, by conversion, he hath been brought. As,

(1.) An habitual seriousness. This is a gracious temper and disposition of spirit, that conduceth greatly to perseverance, and which is continually influenced by hope. By a serious temper of spirit, I mean (as the thing itself doth sufficiently speak to any one's understanding) a considering temper of mind; that is, a serious mind or spirit, that can consider, and is apt to consider things; nothing is more necessary to a Christian's perseverance in his course. Apostacy and defection from God is never so likely to prevail, as when persons do begin to remit the intention of their minds, as to the considering of things which they are so much constantly concerned to consider, in reference to their present states god-ward, and their future and final state. When once the soul is relaxed and loosened from the objects, which it should be principally exercised, and taken up about, then comes its danger. The unthinking soul falls into mischief, is liable to be caught by this, and that, and the other snare. If there be a disposition to ponder things, while a considering frame of spirit is preserved, the soul is safe. But what shall oblige it to consider those things that are most preservative of it, which have greatest aptness in them to its preservation, and its being kept from destructive snares? What can engage it hereunto, so probably and so strongly, as a continual, lively, vigorous hope?

You may see what that will signify to that purpose, by that of the Apostle, "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." 1 Peter i. 13. "Gird up the loins of your minds," a most emphatical expression, to signify a temper of spirit, most intent upon consideration. Then is the soul in a considering posture, when the loins of your minds are girt up, when fluid thoughts are collected, as more fluid garments are collected, and bound about a man by a girdle: when the more volative thoughts are drawn in, and made to centre upon the things that we are more deeply concerned to consider. Then may we truly say, this soul is composed to a special sobriety. These expressions do expound one another, gird up the loins of your minds, and be sober; a mind girt up in its loins is a considering mind, and that lies in nothing more fitly, and more truly, than in a certain sort of spiritual sobriety. And how is this influenced, and maintained in the soul? Why, by a continual hope,—hope to the end. This is naturally so, that

the hope we have of any design whatsoever, intends our minds, and collects them to the business: but if we have no hope, we are off from it. Whatsoever we have no hope of we abandon, we lay aside thoughts concerning it; it is to no purpose to consider, or think any longer about a business, in reference to which we have no hope. But as long as there is hope, there will be an agitation of thoughts, and the mind will turn itself this way and that, revolving things over and over. There will certainly therefore, be a considering habit of mind preserved, as long as hope remains in any liveliness and vigour, in reference to the great concerns of eternity that we have before us. And,

✓ (2.) To our continuing in our course (if we be by conversion and regeneration brought into a truly Christian course) a steadfast resolution is of most constant necessity. That we may continue our course, we must be most steadfastly resolved that through the grace of God, we will not be put out of our way. There must be a "cleaving to God, with full purpose of heart." Acts ii. 23. And it is plain that a continual hope must influence this resolution; Why will I not forsake this way? Why am I (with dependance upon the grace of God) resolved to persist in it, that nothing shall turn me out of it? Why, I have a great hope before me, I hope for great things by persisting in this way. It is a way that leads to a blessed end, an end which the grace of God hath encouraged me to hope I shall in this way attain unto. The Apostle exhorts the Colossians that they continue in the faith, grounded and settled, and not moved from the hope of the gospel. Col. i. 23. Why was this new faith (as it was a new thing in the world at that time) to be so steadfastly stuck unto? why must there be so resolved an adherence to it? Why, there is the highest, and greatest, and most glorious hope held up in view in that gospel, or by that gospel which is the object of this faith; and which therefore claims and challenges this steadfast adherence to the thing which it represents. Therefore, you are not to be moved from what is contained in the gospel, because it contains the matter of so high an hope.

It is not tempting you by trifles, or shadows, by small or little things; is your hoped advantage, lying in this gospel that is now held up in view before you, which is to keep you unmoved. The object contains in itself the reason of the act, and the frame and disposition of the heart required in reference thereunto. And,

(3.) Love to God will certainly have a most powerful influence upon a Christian's love to God. Perseverance;—I cannot leave the ways of God, because I love him; he hath won my heart, I cannot think of departing from those ways in which I have met with him, and an acquaintance hath been brought about between him and me. And nothing can signify more to preserve and keep alive the love of God in the soul, in strength and vigour, than such an hope godward. I hope I shall see him ere long, and be made perfectly like him, and see him as he is. And whence is this to be hoped for, but from gracious communications from himself? I know it must be from his mere kindness, a good will to me, if ever I come to be finally happy in him, and enjoy him. The hope of so high and great things from him, how highly doth it endear him to us? Can I forsake that God, turn aside from following him, or walking with him, from whom I hope for great things? “He that hath this hope in him, purifieth himself, as he is pure.” He makes it his business, so to work out that sin, that is, a departing from God; (for that is the notion of sin, aversion from God, turning off from him,) the soul would be rid of that: and hope maintains and keeps alive the love of God in the heart. I still hope for more and more from him, and therefore still love him more and more: this holds the soul to him. “Experience begets hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in the heart, by the Holy Ghost.” Rom. v. 4, 5. We love him. Why? “Because he first loved us.” 1 John iv. 19. What doth that mean? Is the meaning, that no body loves God, till they are assured, or have assurance of his loving them? No, that cannot be, there is many a sincere lover of God that hath no assurance of his love. But what must it mean then? Why, that (at least) they have the hope of it; for it is most certain, that with absolute despair, there must be most conjunct, pure, unmix'd hatred. If there be pure despair, there will be pure hatred:—nothing but hatred of God, where there is nothing but despair of his love. As it is in hell, there is despair in perfection, and so there is hatred in perfection (as one may speak) in that horrid kind. The meaning therefore, can only be, “we love him, because he first loved us,” to wit, because we hope so. It is not to be understood, that every one that loves God, hath an assurance that he is beloved of him: but he hath the hope of it, otherwise he could never love him; and if thereupon, the soul doth love him, then it saith, I must

never leave him, I must cleave to him as long as I live, and for ever, through all time, and to all eternity: nothing shall separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus my Lord; nothing shall break those bonds. And most evident it is, that as that love is drawn out into continual exercise, it still doth, in all its exercises, run on with the exercise, and under the influence, of a continuing hope. I am still expecting greater things from him, and the more I expect, the more I love him; and the more I love him, the more I am resolved to cleave to him, and never to leave him. And,

(4.) Patience is another requisite to perseverance: and hope hath a manifest influence upon that. Patience is nothing else but a suffering power, an ability to suffer; by which our Saviour tells us, we possess our souls, that is, save them. It signifies indeed, both present liberty, and final safety; and that that possession of our souls in patience, preserves them. Possession, in that two-fold sense, signifies liberty and self-dominion. He is subject to another's power, that can suffer nothing; but he is master of himself that can suffer. If he have an ability to suffer, then he keeps his self-dominion. He can be master of his own mind, of his own reason, of his own conscience, of his own judgment, of his own faith: but if he can suffer nothing, he must resign all, and admit another master, he must enjoy his own thoughts, his own sentiments, his own reason, and his own conscience no longer. Thence comes apostacy, declension from God, his truths, his ways; I cannot suffer, I have no patience, no ability to suffer: then I must quit truth, holiness, and every thing, which, by my adherence to them, will expose me to the danger of suffering. But if there is patience, therein you possess your souls, you will thereby keep your liberty and self-dominion; so you secure to yourself final and eternal safety: and so keeping and possessing the soul, is in opposition to the final losing, or its being destroyed, and undone for ever.

And very plain it is, that hope is of most constant use and necessity, to the preserving and continuing this ability to suffer, this power of patience, or this passive power; nothing doth so much maintain it as hope. The occasion will not last always: I have the prospect of an end, and the hopeful prospect of a comfortable and good end. Therefore we both labour, and suffer reproach, because we trust, or have trusted, (so we read it, but it is in the original, because we have hoped,) in the living God. 1 Tim. iv. 10.

What a strange sort of men are these, that will endure to be so exposed, so scorned, so trampled upon, as they that bear the Christian name commonly are? What is the reason of it? What account will a reasonable man give, why he will so expose himself? I will tell you the reason; therefore we labour and suffer reproach, because we hope in God, in the living God, and we are pretty well persuaded we shall not finally be losers; we shall not have an ill bargain of it at last. As the same Apostle, when he writes himself "an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ," seems to allow, that he was to doom himself to all the sufferings and calamities, that the enemies of the Christian cause could load him with, and lay upon him, for his assuming to himself such names of an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ. But why should Paul, that wise and prudent man, that learned man, that man of so considerable reputation among his own countrymen, why should he come to be written among the Apostles and servants of Jesus Christ? Why, saith he, it is in hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised. Titus i. 1, 2. I avow myself an Apostle and servant of Jesus Christ upon this inducement, and for this reason, and so I mean to continue unto the end. It is the hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, hath promised to me. He whose nature doth not allow him to deceive, to whom it is impossible to lie, I firmly and securely hope in him; and therefore I will readily dispose myself to encounter all the difficulties and hardships, which the service of Jesus Christ can lay me open to. Again,

(5.) Contentment with that portion and allotment which God affords us in this world, is another great preservative from apostacy, or requisite to perseverance. And this is very much maintained by hope. If persons decline, and turn off from the holy way of the Lord, it is generally this world that tempts them. "Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world." 2 Tim. iv. 8. But if a man be well enough satisfied with the portion (whether it be more or less) which God hath allotted him of the good things of this world, then he is safe from temptation. But how shall he come to be satisfied with a lesser portion of the things of this world? Why, it is the hope of enough hereafter that satisfied him:—I have no great things now, nor do I matter that, I am not solicitous about it, I hope for greater, and a better state.

What made Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, expose themselves to continued wandering, and to dwell in tents;

when God had given them a country (one of the best in the world) by special grant, to have it as their inheritance, yet they lived as strangers, even in their own country, dwelling in tents; so as that they declared themselves pilgrims and strangers upon earth? What doth this signify and mean? Why, this declares plainly, that they seek a country, they hope and seek for a better country, than all the world can afford them; Heb. xi. 13. therefore they tell the world, and tell it plainly, while we are upon earth, we are but pilgrims and strangers here; the world can tempt us with none of its baits: let the things it presents to our view, and makes us an offer of, be never so great, never so special, they signify nothing with us, for every thing we can touch, that we can handle, or have to do with, smells of earth, and we are strangers and pilgrims here upon earth. And this was a plain declaration, their minds were higher, carried to somewhat in an higher region. They declare plainly, they are seeking a country. And what country is that? Why, a better and an heavenly country. And therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God. Heb. xi. 16. It was the hope of those high and great things above, that drew up their hearts, and therefore this world could not entangle them.—Their way was above, (as the way of the wise is,) to escape from hell and death beneath. But it was hope that carried them up into those higher regions, so far out of the reach of deadly snares; the snares of death, as the wise man calls them. And again,

(6.) As contentment is a great preservative from the danger of apostacy, or a great requisite to perseverance; so is the desire of the better things of the better world, that better country, a very good preservative too. We must know that the spirit of man must of course, when it is drawn off from one sort of objects, apply, and turn itself to another sort. It hath not its good within itself, it cannot be a deity, a god to itself; it must have a good to satisfy itself, *aliunde* out of itself. If it be not from this world that it looks for this good, it must find elsewhere, that which may be more suitable, and more grateful to it. Its desires, when they are confined, limited, and moderated by contentment, in reference to this world, are then removed and transferred to the things of the other world; and so it is kept in a steady, composed state. When it sees that the things of this world are not suitable, will not satisfy, it is not at a loss what it shall do next. A superior good presents and offers itself, and the new nature in it, doth attemper and suit its

desires to that. And if it do desire things of that higher and upper region, it is in no danger of being drawn off from God, while that desire remains, lives, and flourisheth, and is in any power with it.

But now it so much the more desires, by how much the more it hopes; desire languisheth, if hope fails, as it is in reference to any thing else, whereby as to the first appearance of good, it comes to its object. Is there any drawing forth of desire towards it, and we come to consider, and contemplate the matter, and we find it to be an unattainable thing, a thing to be despaired of, then we desert, desire fails, and grows flat of course. It is a thing rarely to be found, that desire remains in any vigour, to any object, in reference whereunto there is no hope, or in reference whereunto there is nothing but simple despair. Indeed, the first appearance, or view of goodness, or amiableness, in the object, may draw forth that which we call simple desire, so far as to put us upon the inquiry, is such a thing to be gained, yea or nay? And if we find it is not, desire fails, the hopelessness of the thing makes us lay aside the thoughts of it, and accordingly there is no more desire. If the desires of heavenly felicity live in our souls, this earth will never pluck us off from God; but that desire will last no longer than hope lasts, that such a state is not unattainable. We shall, by the grace of God, be enabled to reach the felicity of that state, we shall not be frustrated, or disappointed at length:—then saith the soul, I will hold on my course. And then again,

(7.) Watchfulness is requisite to a Christian's continued progress in his course to final salvation. But there can be no such thing as watchfulness without hope. Watching imports a continual design, and of self-preservation: but when the hope of that fails, then all subordinate and subservient means are laid aside. But this is a thing enjoined us, in order to preservation, to watch always. And to this I might add,

(8.) Pray always too. This is requisite, as most conjunct with the other. And sure we are, as there can be no watching, so there can be no praying without hope; this is most evident. And,

(9.) A complacent doing of good, or a disposition of doing good with complacency. This makes the ways of God pleasant to men, so as they will never leave them, nor turn aside from them: but it is hope that induceth them hereunto. It is a sowing to the Spirit, when we are doing

good. The Apostle calls it so. "They that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Gal. vi. 8. Then immediately follows, "As ye have opportunity, do good unto all, especially to them that are of the household of faith." This is sowing to the Spirit suitably, or subserviently to the kindness, and goodness, and benignity of the Divine Spirit. But whosoever sows, soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope. That course of well-doing is continued, and the soul is held on in it, by the power and influence of a continued hope. "It is by patient continuance in well-doing, that we are to seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, unto eternal life." Rom. ii. 7. I add again,

(10.) Fervency in a course of duty is a very great requisite to continuance in it. We shall soon grow weary of that course of duty, wherein we have no fervour in our own spirits. It is a wearisome thing to pray continually, without any fervour; and for such work as this we are now engaged in, to preach or hear, if there be nothing of fervour in us in these exercises, it is very dull work, and such as we shall not be well pleased to hold on long in; now it is plain, that hope maintains the fervour of the spirit in duty. "Be fervent in spirit, serving the Lord," Rom. xii. 11, 12. and "rejoicing in hope," are words immediately connected. And,

(11.) Christian temperance is a great thing to preserve us from apostacy. There is nothing that doth more effectually betray a soul into, and ingulf it in final ruin, than the letting loose sensual inclinations. And you find it is the great design of the gospel under which we live, and of the grace that appeareth in it, bringing salvation, "To teach us to deny ungodliness and worldly lust, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world." Titus ii. 11, 12, 13. And how are we induced hereunto? "Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour, Jesus Christ." There is nothing that in common experience proves so fatal to many, that had begun well in a course of religion. Some hopeful young ones, that have been struck with convictions, God hath begun to awaken them, to take hold of their spirits; and they have had some tastes and relishes of the word of God, and of divine and heavenly things: but we have found them recede, and go off again. And how came it to pass? Why, they lost all in a debauch, that extinguished the convictions of conscience, and the desires of

heart, that began to be stirred in them god-ward, and heaven-ward.

Now it is the hope of a soul, which is its safety in this case. What! Shall I lose so great an hope, for the pleasure of an hour, or a moment? It is because that I have great hope concerning this soul of mine, and concerning that vast, immense eternity, that is in view before me, and whereof I have the prospect that I will not do so; I am born to great hopes, and therefore I will not destroy them by so mad a folly as this, to throw away a soul, and to throw away so great hopes, to please two or three fools, that would only have me go to hell in company with them, or to keep them company there. No, if persons have any apprehension, that God hath been at work with them, about the affairs of their souls, in reference to eternity, this may be the beginning of a new birth, of a divine birth; and if so, whatsoever parentage one is born of, his hopes are suitable to his parentage. If I am under the regenerating, divine influence, born, or shall be born, (if things come to a good issue,) a son of the greatest of fathers, a child of God: then if a child, an heir, an heir of God, and joint heir of Christ. Then how high and great are my hopes? How glorious expectancies are those that I have in prospect before me? And what? To lose all this for the pleasure of a debauch? It is hope that makes the mind sober, (as was before hinted,) "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." That you may be sober, that you may have sobriety of mind, of thinking, and of judging reasonably of things, keep hope in exercise; do but consider what you hope for, and you will be safe. And lastly,

(12.) Joy is a great requisite to perseverance, and will be of great use to us, in order thereunto. "The joy of the Lord is his people's strength," Neh. viii. 10. to carry them through the duties and difficulties of the Christian state. And how is that joy to be maintained? "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God;" Rom. v. 2. and our rejoicing is to be in hope. Rom. xii. 12. It is hope that feeds joy in reference to things, while we are in this present state, which doth not afford much of immediate enjoyment, otherwise than that we have by anticipation. It is hope that directs to that which is within the veil; Heb. vi. 19. takes hold of invisible things, and so is as "an anchor to the soul, both sure and steadfast." The soul rejoiceth to find itself upon sure terms, rejoiceth in hope, in the strength

and power of that hope, which, as its anchor, is thrown within the vail, and takes hold of the unseen things there. "The God of peace fill you with all joy and peace in believing," Rom. xv. 13. as the Apostle prays for the Christian Romans. The more joy, the more vigour in your course: the joy of the Lord will be your strength, and the more hope, the more joy.

You see these many ways, hope cannot but have an influence unto Christians' perseverance in the way and course, into which regeneration and converting grace hath brought them.

The next thing will be to shew you, what encouragements a Christian hath thus to hope for, while his hope is to be sufficient for him all along in his course, something or other must be sufficient unto it, something or other must sustain it, that doth sustain him.

SERMON XIX.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

HAVING shewn what advantages hope gives a Christian's progress in his way, we now come to let you see, what ground a Christian hath for such an hope, to wit, that by the grace of God, and the assistances to be given continually from him, he shall be kept and preserved from the great danger of fatal, destructive backsliding and apostacy from God, and a departure from his ways; from turning aside into crooked paths, with the workers of iniquity; Psalm cxxv. 5. and from returning into those ways at length, "which take hold of hell, and lead down to the chambers of death." Prov. v. 5. But before I come to shew you what ground a serious Christian hath for such an hope, something I must premise unto you. As,

1. That the grounds which he had for his former hope before his conversion, and which had influence thereupon, do still remain, and are equally grounds to him of this con-

* Preached June 28, 1691.

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tinuing hope that is to influence his whole after course, and with much more advantage. We are not to suppose that the grounds of the hope that I am now speaking of, do make the former grounds cease. The grounds of the former hope, that which I told you might be only, (and indeed must be before conversion,) no more than a rational human hope, assisted by common grace; what ground there was for that hope, doth still remain, and is still improveable to more advantage: and the grounds of this following hope are not in reference to those grounds privative, but cumulative, (as is wont to be said in such cases,) that is, they do not take away the former, but add thereunto. Whatsoever ground of hope there was before, for a poor wandering sinner to return, and come back to God, and seek reconciliation and peace with him, to wit, from the gracious nature of God, from the rich fulness of Christ's sacrifice, from the freeness of the gospel tender, and invitation, and from the power, and grace, and office of the Holy Ghost: these grounds do still remain, in reference to the present case, and are improvable, even with more advantage, as you will see in reference thereunto. And again,

2. This is to be noted by way of premise, That the hope which they are to take encouragement for, is not to be a rash, fearless hope. It is not to be an hope without fear, pray do not mistake the matter as to this, we are not to aim at any such hope as shall be exclusive of fear, or that shall make that an useless thing, an useless principle, an useless grace in the soul. We are told, "They are blessed that fear always; (Prov. xxviii. 14.) but he that hardens his heart, (that is in opposition to such a fear,) shall fall into mischief." And elsewhere we find such oppositions of fear to hardness of heart, made to one another. "Why hast thou made us to err from thy ways, and hardened our hearts from thy fear?" Isa. lxiii. 17. and we are directed to "perfect holiness in the fear of God," 2 Cor. vii. 3. and warned "not to be high-minded, but fear," Rom. xi. 20. and charged "to work out our salvation, with fear and trembling." Phil. ii. 12. Even they are so charged, whom the Apostle had a little before expressed his confidence concerning them, that "God that had begun a good work in them, would perfect it unto the day of Christ." Phil. i. 6. And yet he requires and charges them in his name, and by his authority, whom God had exalted to so high a pitch, as to give him a name above every name, wherefore, (saith he hereupon,) this charge I solemnly give

you, that his name and authority may be owned, not only in "my presence, but much more, being absent, you work out your salvation, with fear and trembling."

There is no such state of a Christian attainable in this life, that ought to make fear an useless thing, and to supersede it. I say there is no such state as this; no, nor undoubtedly in heaven itself, where reverence of God is higher than now we are capable of, infinitely, unspeakably, exceedingly higher. It will be part of that homage, that we shall be eternally paying to his throne, and part of our felicity too, because of the pleasantness of that temper, the suitableness and congruity of it to a right mind, apprehensive of what is due to the Eternal Being; and besides, we are told this is the very means of our preservation. He that hath promised to keep his, hath promised to keep them thus, "I will put my fear into their hearts, and they shall not depart from me," I mean to make use of that as the great preservative principle in them. Jer. xxxii. 40. Ezek. xxxvi. 27.

Indeed the understanding of all this, doth but depend upon one plain thing, that it is fit and needful that every one should have a distinct notion of in his own mind, to wit, how vast the difference is between fear and fear;—the fear of reverence, and the fear of horror, (as I may fitly enough distinguish it,)—the fear of a saint, and the fear of a devil;—the fear of heaven, and the fear of hell;—so vastly different they are. The one fear doth involve hatred in it essentially, *odiumus quem mehamus*, we hate him whom we so fear, we cannot but do so; but the other doth essentially carry love in it. The fear of reverence carries a complacency in the dignity, honour, and exaltation of him, towards whom we exercise this affection: and yet it hath a collateral and secondary respect to our own interest too, and so ought to have, and must have; as the love we bear to God, and our true love to ourselves; the love by which we design glory to him, and the love by which we design blessedness in him, are the same love. That therefore is a further thing, that thereupon we are to consider. Again,

3. We must hereupon note this too, That the hope unto which we are to be encouraged of being kept from apostacy, and enabled to persevere, and hold on in the ways of God to the end, it must consequently be such as shall admit of, as shall not exclude, but infer all the subsequent cares and endeavours, that are most agreeable and corres-

pendent to such a fear, as hath been before expressed, to wit, our continual watchfulness over ourselves, our abstaining from known gross evils, our endeavour to repress the beginnings, the first motions and stirrings of sin, our giving ourselves to prayer, our meditating upon the things of God, our attending duty, and waiting on God in his ordinances, our avoiding temptations, and shunning the society of them that walk in pernicious and destructive ways. Our hope of being kept, it must not exclude, but infer, all this care and endeavour of our own, in order to our being so kept. As a man's hope of having his natural life, and health, and strength, and soundness preserved, ought to be with a conjunct care of himself all along. It were a mad hope, if a man should then hope that his life, strength, and soundness, should be preserved, if he starve himself, or stab himself, or poison himself, or run into houses infected with the plague, or associate himself with persons that have pestilential diseases upon them, and the like: this were a mad hope, that I should be kept well at this rate. And it is easily apprehensible how this is to be applied to our present case: we are to hope we shall be kept, but we are not to hope we shall be kept in a continual neglect of ourselves; if we will famish and starve our souls, if we will stab them in a liberty of known acts of sin, if we will infect them by running into contagious company, if we will associate with such, and familiarly converse with them that have the plague upon them, if we are not afraid of drawing contagion from so mortal breath, our hope will be a very foolish hope, and not the hope I am now to encourage. And,

4. We must note further, that, supposing that many, or any be in doubt whether they have yet an holy, good principle in them; whether they are yet come into the regenerate state, have that already inlaid in them, which the scripture calls the seed of God, and a divine nature; if (I say) any be in doubt about it, it is not needful that they should stay for a resolution, in order to the receiving any encouragement from what I am further to say: though they cannot so certainly say that the things that are after to be said do concern them as regenerate persons, as those that are already in a state of grace; yet they will find that there may be encouragement taken from thence, though not so directly in order to the bringing of them into it; and so none should think that what is said doth no way

concern them, because they are not yet certain that they are regenerate.

Whatsoever is received, is received according to the disposition of the recipient. If there be a regenerate principle, that will so much the more readily entertain and close with what is spoken for its own strengthening, and further invigorating, and for its nutriment. But if there be not, yet if there be a tendency that way, any seriousness of spirit about any such thing, and with reference thereunto, we must know that it is a true maxim in spirituals, as well as in naturals, *Eisdem nutrimur ex quibus constamur*; we are nourished, and do consist of the same thing, the very same thing. And that which is suitable to the maintaining, enlivening, improving, and growth of a principle of divine life in the soul, is suitable, in some measure, to the begetting of it too. Even the same word, in the sum and substance of it, by which we are to grow, and which we are to receive as "sincere milk," for that design, that we may grow, and may be strengthened by it; by the same word, also, are we "begotten again by the word of truth." James, i. 17. And by the "incorruptible seed," the "word of God." 1 Pet. i. 20. "Sanctify them by thy truth; thy word is truth." John, xvii. 17.

Now these things being thus forelaid, all that I shall say for the encouragement of such an hope as I am now speaking of, will be reduced, and is fitly enough reducible one way or other to this one ground, the gospel of the covenant of God in Christ. That lays before you the firm and sure foundation of such an hope; and it will indeed somewhat diversely give encouragement according to the different states of men, (though principally I intend now the regenerate state,) if you do but accordingly consider the different notions under which we may look upon this covenant; in short, we may look upon it either as proposed, or as actually entered. As proposed, so it gives a ground of hope to enter it; and thereupon gives a ground for all the consequent hope whereof I am speaking.

But if it be actually entered, and that can be distinctly, and with clearness reflected upon, then you have the nearer, the more immediate, the firmer, and surer ground, for such an hope, as I am now to speak of. And your hope ought to arise to proportionable degrees of life, strength, and vigour in you. But the great foundation of this hope lies here in the gospel covenant, whoever of you have any concern for your souls; whoever of you are bethinking

yourselves how not to perish, how at length to be saved; lo, here you lay your hope upon the gospel covenant, the covenant of God in Christ.

For do but consider, that the apostle, speaking of the case of the infidel Pagan world, and of the case of the Ephesians, when they were such, he saith, "Ye were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenant of promise; and without Christ, and without hope, and without God in the world." Ephes. ii. 12. All the while that you were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and from the covenant of promise; all the while that you were as a people of another country, (as the expression signifies,) in being "strangers to the covenant of promise, and without Christ;" you were without hope too, and "without God in the world;" atheists in the world.

The ground of the Christian's hope, as to perseverance, is the gospel covenant, Christ being the great agent that was to bring about a relation; and in order thereunto to bring you into covenant with God through himself. If you know nothing of the covenant of promise, you are without hope. This is the sum of all; here must your hope be laid upon this great foundation.

And this is not a new thing, but as old as faith hath been in the world, and as holiness hath been, or any thing hath been of the divine life. This covenant of God in Christ, it is said even to be but confirmed when the law was given by Moses on Mount Sinai; the covenant that was confirmed of God in Christ to Abraham. It was even confirmed before to Abraham; it received a new confirmation there; it was not made with Abraham then. Gal. ii. 16. It was then but confirmed to Abraham. This covenant of God in Christ being of a much more ancient date. David, when he lay a dying, here was the ground of his hope; "Thou hast made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure; and this is all my salvation, and all my desire, although thou make it not to grow;" 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. to wit, his house, spoken of before, "although my house be not so with God." God had said many things to him about his house and family heretofore, a great deal more distinctly and expressly than he doth usually to men about their houses and families, when they are to be extinct and gone. But David's mind was upon something else,—something greater and more considerable than all this; "Although my house be not so with God, (come of my house and external concerns what will,)

here is "all my salvation, and all my desire," that thou hast "made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure;" which had an aspect upon higher and greater things than that of a temporal kingdom in this world, how big so ever that may look in many an eye.

And, concerning David's understanding and knowledge in the mystery of Christ, (as I may use those words well enough in reference to him,) when we hear him speak so often of his hoping in the word of God, this must be the word which he is to be understood principally to mean, the word of this everlasting covenant; "I had fainted for thy salvation, but I hoped in thy word." Psalm cxix. 49. Intent he was upon salvation; and sometimes being ready to faint about it, his hope in God's word kept him from fainting; "Thou art my hiding-place and my shield." Psalm cxix. 114. I do hope in thy word. You have that which is agreeable, in another place, where he again professeth his hope in God's word, and invites all Israel to join with him in waiting for the Lord, (Psalm cxxx. 6, 7.) from day to day, more than they that wait for the morning; "Let Israel wait on the Lord, for with him is mercy and plentiful redemption, and he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities." This is the summary thing, the gospel of the covenant of God in Christ, which is the great ground and foundation of this hope.

But to speak more particularly and distinctly to it, you will have several grounds of hope some way or other reducible hither, if you will but consider sundry things that we have to reflect upon relating and belonging to this covenant. As,

1. The Author of this covenant is to be considered. It is God's own covenant; he is not only a covenanting party, but he hath formed the covenant, and is the first in the covenant. It is he that hath ordained and contrived the model of it; and doth propose it to us, and enjoin it upon us, as to what is our part in this covenant of God in Christ. And concerning him, though I might insist upon many things, I shall only mention these two, to shew how firm a ground of hope you have from the Author of this covenant, to wit, his all-sufficiency, and his faithfulness.

(1.) His all-sufficiency. When he was drawing Abraham into the covenant, or designing to confirm him in a covenant state, so he mentions himself, I am God all-sufficient; that was enough for his part. "Walk before me, and be thou perfect," Gen. xvii. 1. that would be also enough

for Abraham on his part: as you know, if you have occasion to transact affairs with a man, to contract a covenant with him about matters of importance to you, the great thing you will have your eye upon is, Is the person I deal with sufficient? If you are sure that he is, you traffic with much more security, he being a man of known sufficiency. Saith God, I am an all-sufficient God; come, who hath a mind to deal with me? to transact with me, and traffic with me? who will come into my covenant? And,

(2.) His faithfulness is a most firm foundation of hope: such faithfulness as wherewith consists, no possibility of being false; "In hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised," Titus i. 2. "And by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, the heirs of promise might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them." Heb. vi. 17, 18. You say, you shall one day sink, you shall fail, you shall perish, you shall be lost after so many stops in the ways of God. Think who hath promised you, The God, all-sufficient: and that he is faithful that hath promised.

And consider these things in reference to one another, his faithfulness to his all-sufficiency: he is therefore faithful because it is all-sufficient. It is a great matter, rightly to understand this. It is impossible to the perfection of the Divine Nature to lie, because he is God all-sufficient. Honesty, veracity, and truth, are not things of so ill repute among men, but that men would preserve their credit in the world, if they were not put to shifts, if they were not reduced to straits. They are commonly false, because they know not how to compass their ends; either they have not wisdom enough, or they have not power enough; but he that is all-sufficient, hath nothing to tempt him to falsehood. His perfect nature abhors it;—his all-sufficiency speaks his universal perfection, as you have formerly, at another season, been told. The matter is obvious, if we do but allow ourselves to argue upon it, (though indeed the thing little needs it,) even upon grounds that will be clear to every body.

There is no intelligent agent that doth any thing without design. As an intelligent agent, every human action is done for an end, for a proposed end. He that is the most perfectly intelligent Being, can do nothing but for some end. Now what end can he propose to himself to deceive a creature that he made out of nothing, but the other day,

and can throw into nothing, the next moment if he pleaseth? What end can he propose to himself, in deceiving a creature that he hath absolutely in his own power? Those words of our Saviour, how much of spirit and life do they carry in them? "Let not your hearts be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions, if it were not so, I would have told you." You may trust me; do you think I intended to make fools of you, when I persuaded you to be christians? Have I made you leave all this world, and made you give up yourselves to me, and put yourselves under my conduct, in expectation of great and glorious things hereafter, in another state? I tell you it is as I have said, "In my Father's house there are many mansions, and if it were not so, do you think I would not have told you?" would not I have been honest to you? would I have cheated you into a vain and false hope? so much reason you have to believe me from my word, that you may even believe from my silence; "If it had not been so, I would have told you;" I never yet said to you, shift for yourselves, I have never an heaven for you, I have never a ground of eternal hope for you; all that is vanished and gone. No, "if it were not so," as I say, "I would have told you." The divine all-sufficiency, and his fidelity, taken together in the consideration we have of him, as the great Author of his covenant, upon which you must depend for eternity, how firm a foundation of hope is this? and whatever of encouragement it gives to them who have entered this covenant, and can say, this God is now in covenant with me, and I in covenant with him. They have proportionable encouragement who are invited to enter it, for if I close with this offer, this is my case presently, and I have the same interest that any other hath had before me, who hath entered into it before. But again,

2. Consider the Mediator of this covenant. It is a covenant established in the hands of a Mediator, contracted by a Mediator, on purpose that it might be sure and firm; that it might have more stability, and might better hold than that covenant made with God immediately, or without a Mediator coming between God and man. And we are to consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as giving stability to it, and giving us ground of firm hope from it, under a three-fold notion, to wit, As dying for us; As living in us; And as gone into heaven before us.

1. Consider him as dying for us. And if his death be

considered in respect to this covenant, so it may be looked upon two ways, as *principium essendi*, and as *principium cognoscendi*, it may be looked upon as a ground of the being of this covenant; and it may be looked upon as a ground of the knowledge of it, that knowledge which we may have concerning it, both which are necessary to be the foundation of our hope.

(1.) As a ground of the being of this covenant. If it had not been for the death and sacrifice of the Son of God, there could not have been such a covenant. Psalm l. It is a covenant by sacrifice. As covenants have their ratifications, even among men by sacrifice, and the Jews have a notion *de sanguine sancisa sunt non abroganda*, those arguments that are ratified by blood, become most sacred and inviolable, never to be abrogated. The blood of Christ is called the blood of the covenant again and again; "And have counted the blood of the covenant an unclean thing." Heb. x. 29. "Our Lord Jesus Christ who offered himself to God, by the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect." Heb. xiii. 20, 21. And when he instituted his own supper, he calls it the cup of the New Testament in his blood. The word testament is the same used for covenant. How firm a covenant is that, that hath its foundation in the blood of the Son of God! His blood, who is the great Emmanuel, "the brightness of his Father's glory, and the express image of his person," who came down on purpose into this world, and united himself with the nature of man, purposely that he might have somewhat mortal about him, somewhat that could die, and that by that death of his, he might ruin the designs of him that had the power of death; and might procure that stability should be given to the covenant of life and peace, even this covenant. And then,

2. The death of Christ is not only a principle, or ground of the being of this covenant, but of our knowledge of it too; upon which also depends our hope therein, that is, we know, being informed concerning the death of Christ, how it comes to pass that there can be such a contract and agreement between an offended God, and offending creatures, how comes it to pass? how was it brought about? Why, God hath set him forth "to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness; (to testify to all the world his righteousness;) that he may be just, and the justifier of them that believe in Jesus." Rom. iii. 25. This powerfully controuls the objection of any

unbelieving heart. How can it be, that the just and holy God, the glorious Majesty of Heaven should be offended by an impotent worm, and should threaten death for the offence, and yet forgive it? How can it be? Why, God hath set forth his Son, to be a propitiation, to declare his righteousness, to let all the world know, that now he can righteously pardon sin, and be reconciled to sinners, and take them into favour. What an encouragement is this to a returning soul, a returned soul, a soul that hath returned, or that hath a disposition, or mind to return! God hath set forth Christ to be a propitiation, he lifted him up upon the cross, and he is lifted up in the gospel dispensation, to tell the world. Now, sinner, the matter shall not lie on me, or on my part; if there be still a breach between me and thee, it is not because I cannot be reconciled, but because thou wilt not be reconciled; I can be reconciled, I have my satisfaction in my Son, and if there be a continuing breach, it is because thou refuseth, and despiseth the terms of peace that are offered, and doth trample upon the blood of the covenant, as if it were a profane thing. But to a serious considering soul, one that hath returned, or is upon his return to God in Christ, how firm a foundation of hope is this! I know the justice of God, (the only thing I had to dread, as that could never be reconciled to me,) is satisfied if I return, and shall never have any quarrel with me, if I keep on in the prescribed way that leads to life. Saith the Apostle, "Abide in him, (that is, in Christ, who is the great reconciling sacrifice,) that when he shall appear, you may have confidence, and not be ashamed at his coming. 1 John ii. 20. But then,

2. Consider Christ the Mediator of this covenant, as living in us, as well as dying for us. He gives stability to this covenant, and so is the ground-work of our hope, as he hath been pleased to unite himself with our souls, and take up an indwelling and abode there. "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith, that you, being rooted, and grounded in love, may comprehend with all saints the height, and breadth, and depth, and length; and may know the love of Christ, that passeth knowledge." Eph. i. 3, 17, 18, 19. He testifies his own love by his indwelling presence, and that way he secures you, that the covenant remains stable and firm between God and you. I dwell in you, to keep this always a clear and indubitable thing with you, that God is your's, and you are his, by the tenor of

his own covenant. And again, you are to look upon Christ in reference to this covenant,

3. As ascended, and having entered the heavens on our behalf, upon our account, together with all that is connected therewith, and consequent thereupon. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, and is at the right hand of God; who also maketh intercession for us." Rom. viii. 33, 34. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." 1 John ii. 1. So he is said to mediate for us, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. Heb. vii. 18. And it is said, "He is able to save to the uttermost all them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." Being seated and enthroned in glory, with that very design, that though there may be many offences on our part against the tenor of our covenant, yet they shall not make a final breach; but that still the returning soul shall find mercy, and that still that mercy shall be free. "Return, ye backsliding children, for I am married to you, I will heal your backslidings, and receive you graciously, and love you freely." Jer. iii. 12, 14, 22. I might add,

4. The immediate Agent for bringing of souls into this covenant state, and continuing them there. And how great a ground have you of hope from thence; that is, that the Holy Spirit is appointed purposely by office, to transact this affair with souls; at first to bring them into covenant with God in Christ, and then, from time to time, to confirm their standing, and preserve them in the covenant state. This is that to which he is appointed, to which his very office leads to; that which we find him concerned to do, not occasionally, not on the by, but *ex officio*. A greater ground of hope cannot be conceived than this. How intent is God upon it, that his covenant with souls shall be a firm, stable, continual thing!

SERMON XX.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

IT remains now to shew you, that the influence which hope hath to this purpose, it is not merely necessary to a Christian's better progress in his way and course, but to his progress at all, to any progress which he could make in such a course; to wit, it is not only requisite to the better being, but to the being itself of continued Christianity, so that without hope, there would certainly be a failure; and God, who hath absolutely determined this end, (that his elect shall hold out through the whole of their course,) hath also determined this means, viz. that he will preserve and maintain that hope in them throughout, by which they shall be enabled to hold out to the end: and therefore the certainty of the necessity of the influence of hope to that purpose, is what we have now to make to you. And in order thereunto, we need but to consider in general, 1st. The course of our own operations, such as are internal, and wherein our spirits within us do exert their power and vigour day by day. And then, 2ndly. To consider the special and most natural and proper work of hope. If we do but consider our own nature, and most con-natural operations; and if we do but consider the nature of hope, and what its special and con-natural work is, it will be plain, that such a continued course could not be held, but by the influence of hope.

1. Let us reflect upon the proper con-natural operations of our own spirits. This will be of real use to us, not only as it serves the present purpose, but as it may give us a clearer and more distinct notion of ourselves, which we do need to have our minds furnished with. There are many that do use this body, (for a whole life time that they live in it,) and the several parts and members that belong to it, they do their proper offices with them day by day, and yet seldom, or ever, allow themselves to make a reflection, what a sort of creature is this body of mine? and how, and by

* Preached, July 12, 1691.

what means do the several parts of it serve for those several purposes for which I use them daily? Among all those that do use the body, and the several organs and instruments of action that do belong to it, how seldom do the most that do so, ever take notice what a sort of structure this is, and how it comes to be framed for such uses as the several parts of it serve for! That argues a great deal of stupidity among us, that we should move our hands and feet, and eyes, as we do from day to day, and never consider with ourselves how these come to be moving things, or which way, or by what means they are moved; as to think of the many instruments of this body that serve the purposes of motion, with what curiosity all those muscles are contrived and framed, without which there could be no motion, and which if there were not such variety of them, there would not be that variety of motion that we find, so many several muscles, no less than six belonging to each eye, that it may be capable of moving this way, and that way, upward, downward, obliquely, and transversely. There could be no motion, if there were not such instruments lodged and placed on purpose to subserve this end.

And as little do the most consider the movements of their own spirits, of their inward man; what kind of inducements they are that the mind of man is carried by, this way and that; how it is enabled to form designs and to contrive methods for the accomplishment of them, and to take such and such courses to bring them about. We use these noble powers and faculties every day, which we never consider, never contemplate. If we did allow ourselves to reflect and look a little inward upon ourselves, especially upon the powers of our own minds and spirits, and consider how they come to be engaged in action, this way and that, it were impossible but that such contemplation as that would carry up our souls to adore their own Father, the Father of spirits, and the Father of lights: He that had the fashioning of the spirit of man within him, and who doth order the course and current of all its motions, together with the inducements by which it should be made capable of moving this way and that, with so singular and profound wisdom, as that, if we did but more in this respect consider ourselves, we could not but more admire him.

But this is plain and evident, that whether you look upon the spirit of man as rational, or as regenerate and holy, it cannot but move towards an end. There is nothing that a man doth as a man, no human action (as such) but is done

for an end. And there is no end that any can propose to himself, but under the notion of attainable; and there is nothing that a man can design or project as attainable, but it must be also in as much as it is attainable and hopeful; hopeful, inasmuch as hope hath reference to that which is good, and that which is future; inasmuch as that which one proposeth to himself, under the notion of an end, must be a good. That which is apprehended as an evil, we avert, we shun, we fly from naturally, by the natural constitution of our own souls: and that which we apprehend as good, we pursue and press towards it. Hope having for its object only that which is good, and that which is future, a distant good that I am not possessed of yet. It is impossible I can propose any thing to myself as my end, but at the same time, when I make it my end, I make it the object of my hope; and while I am pursuing it, all the series and course of the actions which I do in the pursuit and prosecution of it, I do continually, as having my mind all along influenced and animated by the hope of attaining it; for if I did not hope, I would give it over, never make one step more towards it. That whereof I simply despair, I must by the necessity that my own reason lays upon me, (as I am a reasonable creature,) give it over, and do no more towards it.

This is the state of things with man as he is a reasonable creature. Look upon his soul as it is rational; thus it is with him: and look upon it as regenerate and holy, that spoils nobody's intellectuals. A man is not less rational for being regenerate, but the more; it mends his intellectuals. Them that were before foolish, and deceived, and disobedient, and serving divers lusts and pleasures, when by the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost, they are (as it were) new made; now they recover their understanding, and a rectitude of mind to that degree, that they now act more like men than ever they did before. And therefore, whether you look upon the soul of man as rational, or as regenerate, the influence of hope is of most absolute necessity to his pursuing any end or design whatsoever. But then,

2. If you do also consider the nature of hope, and its most proper and con-natural work, to wit, to bear up the soul in a continual conflict with the difficulties it meets with, or is liable to meet with, in the way to its end. Therefore (as I told you before) as the object of hope is somewhat good and future, so it is also attended with diffi-

culty. So moralists usually give the notion of hope, and add that as the proper distinction of it from mere desire; for the object of desire is also somewhat good and future, appearing to be good and at a distance. If it were good, and not future, it would be the object of delight and joy; that is the exercise of the soul towards a present good, and wherewith it hath actual union already. But a distant good, both that which is apprehended to be in itself good and desirable, and good for me, and which is at a distance, the affection that the soul exerciseth towards it, is desire, unto which if you superadd that further character of the object, to wit, an arduousness and difficulty of attaining the thing I propose to myself, then it becomes the object of hope. It is the proper and con-natural work of hope to contend with difficulty in attaining, or in the way towards the attaining that good, which we propose to ourselves to enjoy.

Therefore now, this being the office and work of hope, its proper and specifying work, that by which it is distinguished from mere desire, to cope and contend with difficulties that lie in the way of attaining my end; the many difficulties that do fall into the course of a Christian, do give him that constant exercise through the whole of his course, that if there be not an hope maintained in him, proportionable to those difficulties, and that may enable him to keep on the conflict with them, the whole design of Christianity must needs be laid aside, and given up. It is not possible, that according to the constitution of the human nature, (and especially taking it in its regenerate state, which makes it so much the more reasonable and intelligent thing, than it was before,) I say, it is impossible it could hold on that course, were it not by the influence of this hope.

And that leads me to consider, particularly, the many difficulties that occur in the course of a Christian, which are only superable by that principle of divine hope which God hath planted in him for this very purpose, to keep him in that course which he himself hath prescribed to him, and which leads to that glorious, blessed end, his own salvation.

I shall but mention to you, to this purpose, some of the greater and more observable of those difficulties which a Christian's hope is to contend with, and must conquer for him, that he may be finally saved. As,

Difficulty 1. The invisibility of those objects, about

which he is to be principally exercised through the whole of his course. When this is the state of one's case, that the objects wherewith we must have most of all to do; and wherein the sum of our felicity lies, and from whence all our present vigour and liveliness, and the continued strength of our souls for all the exercises of the Christian life is to be drawn forth; when they are all things that lie quite out of sight with us, what should a man do in this case if it were not for hope? That hope which has a pre-apprehension of such things, and makes a representation of them to me, though they are unseen things. Herein lies the peculiarity and glory of hope, that it can do so. With that sort of objects doth its chief business lie. As in the remaining part of this verse, "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?" If there were not such a principle and power in a Christian as hope, referring to things unseen, whereas all his support, and all his vigour, and the liveliness of his spirit, through the whole of his course, must be derived and drawn from such things, what would become of him, if he had not that principle in him, by which he could converse with things that are out of sight?

You have been formerly told, that hope, in all its exercises with reference to the final felicity of a saint, it grounds upon faith. I first believe the divine word, and that word becomes to me a clear and vivid representation of all things whereby the soul goes forth, in all the power of hope, to contend forwards towards them. It reaches forth to them by hope, when once it hath believed the reality and truth of them by faith. And so you come to have these two twisted together. Their object is the same, and their exercises conjunct, though they are distinct. "Faith is the substance (the hypostasis) of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." Heb. xi. 1.

To tell a Christian that hath engaged in a new and distinct way from that which is held by the universality of men besides, "You are now launched out upon a peculiar bottom of your own, pray what are the things that you design to entertain yourself with from day to day through the whole of your course? Why, they are things (saith he) that lie quite above this sphere,—things quite out of sight to you, and things that are quite out of sight to myself, as to any such eye as is common to me and to you. But, then, how will you come at these things?—What commerce have you with them? Why, I have that hope within me,

grounded upon a steadfast belief of the divine revelation of such things as I am sure cannot deceive me, by which my view of these is as clear as the things that are seen are clear to your view. And I should disdain to have my principal converse with them, or that they should be the chief object of the exercise of this soul of mine, now by divine grace renewed, filled with new light, and with new inclinations, if they were not things of that peculiar and distinct kind that they are of, that is, invisible. If they were things that could be seen; if they were things that lay obvious to the notice of so mean a principle as your sense is, they would be too base things for me, I could not tell how to warrant myself, to justify myself; I could not answer it to myself, much less to him that hath given me the new law that I am to be governed by, if I should longer confine myself to so mean things: but because they are things not to be seen, quite out of sight, therefore doth my soul choose that noble employment, to be taken up about these things peculiarly from day to day. If they were not so high as to be quite out of sight; they were too low, and too mean for me." So saith the renewed soul.

But here is a difficulty not superable by any thing but a divine hope; that the best of the things which the soul is to be conversant about, and taken up with every day, lie quite out of sight; what could we do in such a case, if it were not for such an hope as can see, and discern, and anticipate, and give a preventive enjoyment of things that cannot be seen? And,

Difficulty 2. The suitableness and gratefulness of things of sense, of sensible things, is another great difficulty, that our hope is continually to conflict with, and to carry the Christian over. Things that are more suitable to an animal life and the sensible nature; they are things that lie under view continually; they are present and obvious; they are pleasing and entertaining to the sensitive nature that we carry about with us. And yet the soul must be under continual restraint as to whatsoever complacential relishes it can ever take in such things. Here lies the difficulty; here are things suitable and pleasing to sense, to flesh, and blood; and in reference to these things the soul can exert no desire, no delight; can take no grateful complacency in them, but is under continual restraint. The regenerate soul cannot wallow in sensual pleasures; it may not do so; it hath a law laid upon it, and a law put into it, by which it finds itself to be under a prohibition.

And therefore is this sort of men a wonder to the rest of the world; they think it strange they do not run with them "into the same excess of riot." 1 Pet. iv. 4. They cannot allow themselves to be sensual with the fleshly, worldly with the worldly, covetous with the covetous. If they do, they call their own state and standing in Christ under dreadful suspicions. If they can be ambitious and covetous, and voluptuous, men grossly voluptuous, they draw their state into question. But what is it that restrains them, and composes them to an holy kind of severity in this respect, but the power of divine hope? "Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end." 1 Pet. i. 13. Here appears the necessary influence of this hope to preserve a just restraint on the soul through the whole of our course, while our way lies amidst so many sensible things, that are so entertaining and tempting to our natures. We are to "live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." Tit. ii. 11, 12.

It must be considered, that regeneration and the participation of the new nature (as I have told you before) did not spoil any man's reason, nor his intellectuals; so, nor doth it spoil his sensitive faculties neither. Such an one you must understand still to have as good senses as other men have, and senses as apt to entertain and please themselves, on proper suitable objects, as other men. Do you think they cannot taste the relishes of meats and drinks, as well as others can, or what else may be pleasing and grateful to the bodily sense? But they may not, they are under a restraint; they must converse shyly and cautiously, and with great circumspection, with all such kind of objects. And what doth enable them to do so? They are enabled to be sober, because they "hope continually,"—hope on to the end "for the grace that is to be brought unto them at the revelation of Jesus Christ;" and their "looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ." And in the power of that hope they live, not only righteously and godly, but soberly, in this present world.

Though that is an argument, indeed, of the general languor of Christianity at this day, and particularly of Christian hope, that greater latitudes are commonly taken among those that profess religion, in these our days, than have been heretofore. And it is sad to think it should be

so as to meats and drinks, and apparel, and whatsoever borders upon luxury. Truly reformed Christendom is not itself; England is not itself; London is not itself; the families of persons professing godliness are not what they were in these respects. And certain it is, by how much more sensual inclination doth prevail, Christian hope doth proportionably so much the more languish. And,

Difficulty 3. Another difficulty, that the hope of a Christian has to contend with, is, his foregoing all that he hath in this world for Christ's sake, whensoever he is thereunto called, by the concurrence of Christian precepts with present providences. When those so state his case to him, as that it comes to this present posture; things stand thus with him, and towards him, as they lie under his present view in such a juncture. "I must now disobey Christ, or I must lose and forego what is most desirable and delectable to me in this world, it may be, this very life itself. So hath the divine rule, and the divine providence, taken together, stated my case, as to bring matters to this pinch, this necessity. I must forsake all, abandon whatsoever is most pleasing to me in all this world, even life itself, if that be required and called for upon the same terms."

There is a mighty difficulty in this case upon persons that dwell in human flesh, and that have faculties about them which do contemper and suit them to this sensible world in which they live. They have not only the difficulty upon them, that, while they enjoy such things they must enjoy them under a restraint, (as you heard before,) but whensoever they are called for; they must part with them without regret; willingly part with, and forego all. They cannot enjoy them, but under restraint; and they must part with them, and that without regret, if they be called for. As it is not more the commendation than it was the duty of those of whom the apostle speaks: "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." Heb. x. 34. And why did they so? They did it in the power of this same Christian hope, as knowing they had in heaven "a better and more enduring substance." It was the hope of that which made them willingly part with, and forego, all that they had and enjoyed here.

And this is the tenor of the Christian law that lies upon them, as you have it from the mouth of our blessed Lord himself: "If any man doth not forsake all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple;" Luke xiv. 33. he cannot be a

Christian, unless (*suppositis supponendis*) supposing such things as may be supposed, he doth forsake all, when the particular juncture happens; he doth now discover that he hath not the root of the matter in him, if he be not content to forsake all for my sake. But it is a Christian hope that enables him to do so; because that hope possesseth him with a persuasion that he shall gain by it more than all he looseth. "We have forsaken all and followed thee," say the disciples unto Christ; and you shall be no losers, saith he to them. Take but my word, and you will have ground enough for that hope, that it shall not turn to your final loss. None that forsake houses, or lands, or father, or mother, or brother, or sister, for my sake, and for the gospel, but shall have in this world an hundred-fold, and hereafter eternal life. And it is the hope of this that makes a Christian willing to say, Then I can be content to let all go; aye, even let all go; he hath not deceived me that hath told me, and he will never deceive me that hath told me, that I shall not be a final loser by it at length. And,

Difficulty 4. There is this further difficulty in it, that he must, in some cases, not only lose all that he enjoys, but he must suffer all that it can be in the power of men to inflict, as to positive miseries and evils, that are of the greatest pungency unto the flesh and the sense that we carry about with us. All must be willingly undergone that is evil to our flesh, as all must be foregone that is good and grateful to it. And what shall enable any to do so, but the power of this hope?

How full is the scripture and history of these instances! As full as it is of instances of the continual persecutions of Christians and Christianity itself, from age to age, ever since there came to be any such thing obtaining in the world. And it is proportionably full of instances of the power of this hope, carrying them whose hearts it did animate, through whatsoever difficulties they had to encounter in this case. That "cloud of witnesses," (which the apostle sets before our eyes in that 11th chapter of the Hebrews, and that we referred to but now,) so he calls those many witnesses, a cloud, a mighty cloud of such witnesses, all testifying to this one thing, to wit, to the power of that faith, and consequently to that hope, by which, these mentioned were carried through such sufferings, calumnies, as there you read of: "They were tempted, they were slain with the sword, they were sawn asunder, they wandered up and down in sheep-skins and goat-skins,

being destitute, afflicted, tormented ;” men “ of whom the world was not worthy.” And amidst all these things they despised deliverance. And why ? Because they hoped for “ a better resurrection.” It was that faith which carried them through all, which is described at the first verse, to be “ the substance of the things not seen, and the evidence of the things hoped for.” Heb. xi. 1. The great things we hope for are made substantial to us ; we have that clear and substantiating representation of them before our eyes. And therefore, how many thousand deaths can we go through by the power of this hope ;—that hope itself being upheld and maintained all along by an immediate divine power ?

And therefore is it that we read of such joy, and triumph, and exultation, in the midst of all these sufferings, which it was possible for human wit to invent, and human power to execute. It was not yet more than what they have been enabled to bear, and bear with a great deal of triumph many times ; so as that it appeared that they had all under their feet ; they could trample upon dangers and deaths, and were superior to them ; they could not fasten upon them, they could take no hold of their spirits. If one should lead you through the sufferings of Christians in the ten persecutions by Pagans ; their sufferings afterward by the Arians, who were not less bloody and cruel than the former ; their sufferings more lately by the Papists, which after followed, from age to age, for twelve hundred years together ; sufferings in this kind in this land, and sufferings in several adjoining countries. How numerous instances have we of the power of this hope in carrying the poor sufferers through, so as that not only have they not been removed from their Christian profession by all that they have suffered and endured ; but not from their alacrity and cheerfulness of spirit : yea, that hath not only continued, but increased, and grown higher, more and more vigorous and glorious in them, by how much the more the approaches of trouble and danger were nearer. The speeches that have been uttered by many of them, even in the midst of their sufferings, have shewn a triumphant glorying joy in their hearts, which is the continual issue of this hope : “ We rejoice in hope of the glory of God ;” and thereupon “ we glory in tribulation.” Rom. v. 3, 4. They gloried in tribulation, because they did rejoice in hope of the divine glory.

And therefore have they been enabled to brow-beat their

enemies, their tormentors, the executioners of all those tragical things upon them which they suffered; as when one should be able to tell the tyrant, after he had received so many wounds in his body, I thank thee, (oh tyrant,) that thou hast made me so many mouths wherewith to preach Christ; for I take every wound thou hast given me to be a new mouth wherewith to utter the divine praises, and wherewith to preach and magnify my Redeemer. With multitudes of instances that one might give of the like kind; which shew that the hope that lived in their souls, whilst they were even dying, did not only keep them from denying Christ,—did not only maintain religion, and keep that alive in them; but made it triumph in an high degree of liveliness, vigour, and joy, that shewed itself more exalted amidst those exercises, than when there were no trials, no danger in view. And again,

Difficulty 5. The many temptations and buffetings in their spirits, which Christians do more ordinarily experience in their course through the world. Nothing could carry through the vexation of this, (which cometh nearer, a great deal nearer, than what men can do when they only torture the outward man,) but only this hope: "God shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly." Though we be vexed with his suggestions, and very vexatious ones sometimes they are, when blasphemous thoughts are injected and cast in; there is an endeavour to fence against them, but they cannot keep them off; the tempter indeed cannot make the soul close or comply with the design of his temptations, but he doth vex by tempting; and that temptation cannot but be vexing, when the soul is solicited to think all the evil thoughts that the wicked one can be author or parent of to him, concerning God, and Christ, and religion, and many false ones concerning himself. All the continual vexing temptations that the soul is followed with from day to day, it is only the hope of final victory that carries it through. I hope it will not be so always; I hope God will give me a complete victory at last; he will bruise Satan under my feet ere long. And,

Difficulty 6. The complication of bodily and spiritual distempers together, so incident even to the generality of Christians; a great deal of lassitude, and dullness upon the outward man; the prevalence of melancholy fumes and vapours, which fall in with a dark mind and dead heart; and for those continual outcries, "Oh, wretched man, that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death!"

Rom. vii. 24. It is only deliverance in hope that carries through all this difficulty: "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

1 Cor. xv. 57. I have conquest and victory in Christ, that hath loved me; I am many times in myself overcome, but in him many times I do overcome, and shall finally overcome. And,

Difficulty 7. Divine desertions: when all these happen to meet together upon a poor creature, and God is withdrawn over and besides,—what a difficulty is here? The withdrawing of such a presence as even that wicked Saul was capable of, how distressing was it to him when he was sensible of it! There was a presence of God, whereof he had experience; but far beneath the excellency and delectableness of that gracious divine presence that he affords to his own, those that are peculiar to him: yet when Saul had lost that more exterior divine presence, saith he to Samuel, (when he had procured him to be raised from the dead, as that text doth please to express,) "I am greatly distressed; the Philistines make war upon me, and God is departed from me." 1 Sam. xxviii. 15.

And it is so with a poor Christian; many times men are let loose upon him; the devil is let loose upon him; there is a great deal of distemperature and deadness within; and at the same time God is gone and withdrawn from him; in his sense and apprehension gone; to appearance gone. And in that case, as to actual comfort, *idem est esse et apparere; idem non esse, et non apparere*; to seem and to be, as to comfort in such a case. Here is nothing to bear up now but hope. I hope all this darkness will be over; all these clouds will vanish and flee away: "I will hope in God, that I shall yet praise him; for he is the health of my countenance, and my God;—why art thou cast down, O my soul? Trust in God, for I shall yet praise him." Psalm xlii. and xliii. I shall yet see a morning after so black and tempestuous a night. And,

Difficulty 8. The wearisomeness of duty and exercises of religion, in the midst of all this, is yet a further difficulty to a poor awakened soul. That is, he finds this to be the state of his case, that, in all the mentioned respects, let it be as ill with him as it can be supposed, yet he must not turn aside from following the Lord. I am in the way wherein I must persist; I must pray still, and hear still, and approach his table still. To go on in such a course of duty as this, when the mind is dark, and the heart is dead, and

there is a great weight and pressure lying upon the soul, and God is withdrawn, and I come to one duty after another, and one ordinance after another, and get nothing; this is hard and heavy work; still to be (as the case is represented with the disciples) fishing all the night, and nothing taken. Now it is nothing but hope that can support and bear up in this case; this is the way of the Lord in which I am, and this way, I hope will have a good end. Though I walk heavily, and the chariot wheels seem to be taken off; though my soul is not the chariot of a willing people, as sometimes it hath been; yet I must hold on my course; I must persist in it. There is that in him all this while, that will not let him desist, will not let him give over; no, by no means; he hath that sense of duty, that conscience towards God, that light concerning the equity and reasonableness of the thing that keeps him to it. God must have his homage, however it is with me, whether it be better or worse; I must not defraud God; I must do such and such acts, as acts of duty and obedience to the Lord of my life and being, whatever becomes of me. He hath a secret hope, that all will issue well; and therefore holds on in his course. Fear will not let him go back; and hope draws him forward; for we are not to suppose that the asserting the necessity of the one of these is a diminution of, or deduction from, the necessary influence of the other. We need all God's means and methods to help and urge us on in our way and course. And I might add to all this,

Difficulty 9. The continual view of prevailing wickedness; a most afflicting and discouraging thing! When a Christian's way towards the end God hath set in view before him lies in a world over-run with wickedness, and wherein they that curse God are secure; he can turn his eye no way but he sees a world full of atheism, full of infidelity, full of contempt of God, and full of rebellion against him. I hope (saith he) truth, and righteousness, and religion, and the love and fear of God, will triumph over all this at last. And because he so hopes, he persists and goes on in his well-chosen way. And in the last place, which I will close with,

Difficulty 10. The slow progress of the Christian interest, and the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ in the world; a most afflictive discouraging thing to all that are lovers of "our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." Indeed, it is that which would have a more particular aspect upon the con-

dition of the faithful ministers of the gospel to see that the most part of their labours is labour in vain.

And you know how far the temptation as to this hath prevailed: I said, I will speak no more in his name, (saith the prophet,) "but thy word was as fire in my bones;" Jer. xx. 9. that was not to be restrained. It is a very uncomfortable thing to labour in this kind, with the souls of men, which we apply ourselves to as reasonable, as intelligent, as capable of understanding us, and understanding the value of souls, and the differences of time and eternity, of present and everlasting things; to deal with such upon agreed principles between them and us; so as that they say, whatsoever we speak to them in the name of the Lord, it is all true. They grant as much as we would have them grant, and acknowledge whatsoever, as to every thing we propound to them, especially in the greatest and most important things, which are also things of the greatest evidence and clearness, so as to force an acknowledgment; and so as that, when we deal with men about these things, (as you heard from that scripture lately,) we have nothing to do but to commend ourselves to the consciences of men in the sight of God. We appeal to you, whether these things be not true that we say to you, in the name of the Lord, yea or no. And they are generally acknowledged to be so. It is acknowledged that there is a world to come; that there is a state of retribution; that there is a judgment day, when men are to receive "the things done in the body, whether they be good or evil;" and wherein only a spiritual holy life, begun here in this world, will end in eternal life; and prevailing wickedness, continued in, will end in eternal death.

These things we represent and lay before men in the name of the Lord, and they say it is all true. And yet they are the same men, *Non persuadebis etiamsi persuaseris*; though we have convinced men, we have not conquered them; we have persuaded, and all signifies nothing; and it is because they have no hope. It is an observable expression, that, in the 18th of Jeremiah, (I have formerly told you of another like it, chap. ii. 25. and it is worth our notice,) "Return ye, now, every one from his evil ways, and make your ways and your doings good." Jer. xviii. 11, 12. So God bespeaks them by the prophet, or the prophet bespeaks them in the name of God: "But they said there is no hope, but we will walk after our own devices,

and will every one do the imagination of his evil heart." Because there is no hope; we have no hope that ever we shall be able to alter our course, or that ever we shall be able to do good of it in an attempt of reformation; and therefore, we will go on as we have done.

Truly then, this is the sense and posture of them that we have to deal with in the name of the Lord; they will not turn, because there is no hope; the case would be the same with us now, who so deal with men; that is, we should give over treating with them if we had no hope; we would speak to them no more in that name, nor open a Bible in our solemn assemblies, if we had no hope; but, because we have this hope, we use great freedom of speech, we hope we shall prevail at length; and we hope, however, that, our blessed Lord Jesus shall have a glorious body out of this world before he hath done; a glorious community, that shall be associated to "the general assembly and church of the first-born, written in heaven; the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect;" whether men we speak to now in his name do hear or forbear, he shall have a glorious assembly above. "He will be glorified in all them that believe," because the gospel testimony was received. That will be a triumphant day; and our hope of bearing a share and part in the triumphs of that day carries us through; and we go on, notwithstanding this great difficulty; a principal difficulty it is to us. But it is a common difficulty to "all that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity;" according as it is the common desire to have the Christian religion, in the power, life, and vigour of it, spread; and that more souls may be proselyted and brought in: all that love Christ, and all that love the souls of men, cannot but have this desire; and accordingly the difficulty and trouble is great that they have continually to conflict with, that so little is done in this case, and that they see so little done in their day. But the hope of a glorious issue must carry you through all these difficulties. This will have a glorious end at last.

SERMON XXI.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

WE have insisted largely in opening to you the great important truth contained in these words ; and now, our yet remaining business is to make some use of it, which will be,

Use 1. In divers instructive inferences that this truth will afford us. As,

Inference 1. If we are saved by hope, then we are lost by despair ; no inference can be more plain.

If the souls of men are to be saved by hope, they are liable to be lost by despair. And it hath been my great design, from this and some other texts, to do what in me should lie to keep you from that horrid gulph. But I must in faithfulness tell you, that there is, as to this, most danger where there is least apprehension or suspicion of it. There is a raging despair, and there is a silent dead despair. This latter is the fullest of danger, according as it is less obvious unto observation, and lies as a mortal disease in wrapping the hearts of them who suspect nothing less than that they should be despairing creatures. But when we are told that we are saved by hope, it cannot be understood by any hope whatsoever ; for there is an hope that will undo, that will destroy ; and so you may, ere long, have opportunity to know too, that there is a despair which is as necessary, as there is a hope that is mortal and destructive ; but there is with all a deadly despair, that kills and destroys when it is never felt.

When we say we are saved by hope, it must be meant by the truly Christian hope ; that hope that is vital, lively ; the *terminus productus* in regeneration : “ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” 1 Pet. i. 3. We are begotten to a lively hope, an

* Preached July 19, 1691.

hope that lives. The want of this hope is the despair I mean ; and it would not be despair in every subject ; but in such a subject as is capable of that hope, and where that hope ought to be, it is despair. As the want of life is death in a man, but not in a stone ; when there is not a lively hope terminating upon God, and upon a blessed eternity, and an unseen glory ; when there is not such an hope, where that hope hath not its proper place, there lies and lurks this deadly despair. A vacancy of hope towards God and the blessedness of the other state, where it ought to be, and which indeed doth carry much of the essence in it (as we shall have further occasion to note) of the new creature ; and it is the very perfection of human nature itself ; to wit, to have a soul directed towards God by the power of a vital hope, continually expecting felicity and blessedness from him ; I say, the vacancy of it is despair. But that perfection of our nature, regeneration brings in and supplies. “ We are begotten again to a lively hope ;” as the degeneration, deformity, and depravedness of human nature expels and keeps it out. But it so much belongs to a man as a man, that, as Philo Judæus (who speaks but as such an one) doth fitly enough say, Hope in God is so much of human nature, that he is unworthy to be called a man that is destitute of it. Now that soul is destitute of it that hath no commerce with God, that hath nothing to do with him day by day. Where there is no hope, there is despair Godward, “ without God, and without hope.” Ephes. ii. 12. You (whoever it be) that transact all your affairs without God, have nothing to do with God from morning to night, you have no hope ; none of this vital hope, this living hope, by which we are to be saved. **Do** you hope in God, when you have nothing to do with him, when you mind him not, when no thought of him comes into your heart ?

I pray, let none so deceive themselves as to think that there is no such thing as despair when they feel not the flames of hell in their souls ; for, sure a lethargy may be as mortal as a burning fever ; when there is such a stupidity upon the soul, such a mindlessness of God, that there is in reference to him neither fear nor hope. And as our present state is, even in reference to the business of salvation, there cannot be hope but there must be fear too ; there is no such hope as to exclude fear in the present state, nor such fear as to exclude hope. But here is the dismal state of the case, as to the most, that they have neither hope nor fear

in reference to the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting concerns; wherever they are, they have no thoughts of such matters; there is neither hope nor fear. And where, then, is that which should save you? If we are indeed to be saved by hope, we are lost by the vacancy of it, and when there is no such thing as fear also. But doth such a supine neglectfulness and ossitancy, with reference to the concerns of our souls and our everlasting state, agree with the common notion of us all; that this present state is but a state of probation and preparation, in reference to a final and eternal state? Is it so indeed? And have we, in reference to that final state, neither hope nor fear? What is like to be the issue of this? But,

Inference 2. We again infer, that the happiness of a Christian is future; for it is the object of hope,—that hope which is to have a continual influence upon his salvation, now the object of hope is somewhat future and unseen; somewhat that lies out of sight as yet. “We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it? But if we hope for that which we see not, then do we with patience wait for it;” as the following words of the text shew us. Understand and consider aright then, the state of one that is a Christian indeed. He is one that hath his best and supreme good lying in futurity, and out of sight. He lives by that faith “which is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen.” Heb. xi. 1. He is one that hath not his good things here. Luke xvi. 25. This is a true account of his state; his portion is not in this life. Psalm xvi. 1. His estate lies in reversion; it is somewhat expected, somewhat looked for; he takes hold of it by that hope which is cast, “as an anchor of the soul, within the veil; (Heb. vi. 19, 20.) whither Jesus, the forerunner, for us entered;” and so his title is sure, for there is such an one gone before, who, having procured, is thereupon gone to take possession of his inheritance for him.

Then, if you are to make an estimate or judgment of the condition of a Christian, a saint, a child of God, do not judge of it by present appearances, and the external state of his present case, while he is here in this world; so it may be an appearance, not only mean, but frightful;—you may behold him not only a despised one, but an hated one, persecuted, trodden under foot by an injurious, angry world;—angry for this, that he seems not to have his satisfaction in the same things that they have, but to be aiming at

somewhat else above and beyond them. This is displeasing ; this is ungrateful. The world doth not understand such a sort of men : “ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God !—therefore the world knoweth us not, (1 John iii. 1.) because it knew him not.” It knows nothing at all of this race, neither father, nor children. The world knows nothing of them ; it cannot tell how to form an idea, a distinct notion, of this sort of men, that are so descended, and of such a parentage. They are men of another genius, another spirit, another kind of design. The tendency of their course is another way, and they know not what to make of it ; “ therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not ;” and because it doth not know, it hates. And all the effects of hatred many times appear mighty conspicuous towards that sort of men ; and would do more, it is likely, if they did appear more like themselves, and did more plainly avow their unrelatedness to this world, and their relation to, and expectations from an upper world, an higher world. But as it is, as the divine nature that is in them doth more or less speak forth, and shew itself, so it stirs the indignation of a deserted forsaken world against them, in whom that nature is and doth appear. And then, by this means, they come to be counted the scum and off-scouring of all things.

Therefore their condition is not to be judged of by such measures as these ; do not judge of the *bonum*, the *optabile*, what is good, and what is desirable in the state of a sincere living Christian, by these present appearances, that lie under common view, as now he is a mean, despised, hated thing ; but consider him in that state which his hopes do aim at and tend to, and then you will behold him arrayed with the garments of salvation ; for it is the hope of salvation that aids him, animates him, and carries him through his course, and which finally will actually save him. Behold him as he is crowned with a diadem of glory, and associated with that blessed community of saved ones, as one that comes to bear his part in adorning the triumphs of his great and glorious Lord and Redeemer, in that day when he shall appear to be “ admired in his saints, and to be glorified in all them that believe ;” because the gospel testimony was received among them in the proper day and season thereof. And judge now what it is to be a Christian ; take your measures of the state of a Christian by

what he hopes for ; not by what he is, but what he reasonably and groundedly hopes to be. And again,

Inference 3. The futurities of a Christian are far more considerable than all the present enjoyments of this world. "We are saved by hope;" and, for this world, it is well if we can be saved from it ; but we are never to expect being saved by it ; but by the hope of these great futurities we are saved. Then, certainly, a Christian's futurities are far more considerable, and far more eligible, than all present worldly enjoyments whatsoever. And you may judge so by this, that such an one is inspired from heaven itself with such an hope as this, that makes him neglect all this earth, and breathe and tend continually upwards. That is a true judgment which proceeds from the directions and operations of the Divine Spirit. He that hath made them hope hath made them thus judge ; (for they do not hope irrationally or brutishly,) that the enjoyments of this world are not comparable to the expectations of believers in reference to the other world. You may trust to that judgment which is made in the virtue, and by the special direction of his Spirit, who is the God of hope : "The God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing," as the apostle's expression is, Rom. xv. 13.

Therefore, if you would make a judgment in this case, which is the most desirable thing, a large, full, and opulent portion here in this world, or "an inheritance with the saints in light," guide your judgment, (if you cannot judge by an immediate light of your own,) by theirs, who may best be presumed to have light in this matter ; to wit, that have this divine principle put into them by God himself, which looks with neglect upon all present things, and waving and overlooking them, turns away from them, and tends its eye and course forwards towards an unseen glory and felicity elsewhere. We do commonly take that as likely to be true, which the wisest and most judicious commonly agree in. Now this is the agreed sense of all the children of God in all times and ages : and thereupon they are carried, according to judgment and choice, to wave a present portion and felicity in this world, and seek it elsewhere ; we may certainly conclude, that the heavenly felicity, which is hoped for by this sort of men, is every way more considerable, eligible, and desirable, than the best worldly portion that can be had here on earth. But it is a great matter when we assent to this, (which we shall do notionally, as soon as we hear it notionally,) to have

also the living sense thereof wrought into our souls, so as to be able to say, I not only know it to be so, but I feel it to be so. But again, further,

Inference 4. We may infer that hope is the life of all true and serious religion. If there be any such thing as living Christianity among us, hope is the life of it. You will easily apprehend, that religion is the way to felicity, the means to the blessed end. But what kind of religion must it be? Not dead religion, but living; and there can be no living religion but what is animated by hope, and by the hope of that very end, to which it is itself in a tendency. The religion of the present state is nothing else but inchoate felicity; it is heaven begun; it is a coming to God, and tending towards him. It is one and the same principle by which any thing doth move and rest. The same nature which is the principle of motion and of rest. If religion be a principle of motion to carry us unto God, it will be a principle of rest, to give us the actual repose and satisfaction and solace of soul, that being in him consists in. But this must be living religion, and not dead. And there can be no life in it but as it is continually inspired by hope.

Religion being an aiming at God, a tendency towards God, to wit, the religion of the way; the religion of the present state; it must continually be influenced by such an apprehension as this, that he is willing to be a "rewarder of them that diligently seek him." "He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." Heb. xi. 6. And it is this faith that is the immediate foundation of hope. I hope I shall find him the rewarder of my soul. I hope my labour in the Lord will not be in vain. This is that that doth inspire religion, and make it a living thing. There is indeed a religion in the world that hath no life in it, that lies all in empty shew, and form, and external appearance. But, if there be life in it, hope is the life of it. I hope I shall reach a blessed end at last in this way. The business of religion is to seek God; in seeking him I hope that I shall find him; I find life, and satisfaction, and felicity, and eternal blessedness in him. This hope is the soul of religion, and the very life of it.

And you ought to consider it so; that, accordingly, the several parts of your religion may be animated and influenced by it. Those are dull duties, that are not considered as your way to your end. Every such duty as we are now engaged in at this time should be considered thus: this is

part of my way to heaven, part of my way to a blessed eternity; we are now met here with that expectation and hope, that we shall, ere long, be taken up to the "general assembly and church of the first-born; to an innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect." Heb. xii. 23. This would make the duties and ordinances of every Lord's day lively things with us, when we are all aiming to take hold, in every such duty, of "the end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls." But if we come together here only to see one another's faces, or to hear the sound of a few empty words, without knowing whither they tend, without minding to what end they serve, or what they aim at, or because we know not how else to spend so many hours of a day that is not allowed for our common labour; we shall make but a flat thing of our religion. But if our religion be a living thing, hope is the end of it, —I hope my way will end in eternal felicity at length; this is my way to God and glory, and to a blessed eternity. And,

Inference 5. You may further learn that all serious religion doth involve and carry in it a design for salvation and eternal blessedness: for we are saved by the hope of this, and there can be no hope of it without the design of it; what we hope for we design for, otherwise our hope is altogether an useless, inactive thing in us. We are only saved by hope, as by hope we are prompted to design salvation, and are made lively and vigorous in the prosecution of that design; which way else should hope save us, but as it engageth to lay a design for salvation, and as it enables us with life and vigour to prosecute that design, as a compassable thing, as a thing that may be brought about, and, by God's gracious vouchsafement, will and shall?

And it is therefore deeply to be considered, that our hope of being saved, and our design for salvation, must measure one another; he that drives no such design through the whole of his abode in this world, he must be looked upon as one of those (of whom I have told you before) that hath no hope in him; no living hope; was never begotten to a lively hope. If he have a living hope in him of a final felicity in God, that will continually prompt him to design, and to prosecute his design with strength and vigour, for a blessed and a glorious eternity. And I pray let us make our reflexion seriously upon this, as in the sight and presence of God. Do we carry it from day to day as those that are striving a design for salvation and eternal glory?

As those that are going to heaven? As candidates of eternal heavenly felicity? Do we live like such? Then should we be every day on the wing, reaching forth (as it is the nature of hope to do) with fervent, raised, aspirings towards the heavenly state. We that have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, (as it is spoken in the immediate foregoing verse in this context,) waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body; for we are saved by hope, so the words are connected. We are saved by the hope of that very state, wherein we are to be owned openly of God, as his children; which is here called the adoption.

There was among the Romans a double adoption; there was a private adoption; that is, the foundations were laid by some private act. But afterwards it came to be declared *in foro*, and to be enrolled, that such an one did adopt such an one, to be his son. And, it is in reference to this latter sort of adoption, or the complement and solemnization of it, that we are said to wait for the adoption; that is, the children of God, they that were adopted before; fundamentally they yet wait for the solemnization of that adoption, when the manifestation shall be of the sons of God, when it shall be declared before angels and men, as it will, in the judgment of the great day, These I take for my sons and adopted ones; and it is by the hope of this we are saved, for we are saved by hope, as immediately there followeth. And I say, that this hope can no otherwise save them, than as it doth continually influence a design of that salvation. But if our great business here in this world be from day to day nothing else but to feed upon the dust of the earth, and to please and indulge self, and the flesh; if this be the design we are daily striving, we have none of this hope that saves souls; where that hope is, a correspondent design cannot but be. The religion of such involves and carries in it a continual design for the blessedness of the heavenly state: therefore nothing can be more incongruous and absurd, than to keep up a shew and face of religion, while yet the hearts of men, if they will but reflect are conscious to themselves of no such design: they are not aiming at God, or at blessedness in God; the possessing of a future felicity, and glory in him, and with him. They cannot justly and truly pretend to such a thing. Then (I say) is a course of religion the greatest absurdity in the world; to do in a continued course those actions that have only reference unto such an end, and never to refer to that

end. To be religious without design, to wit, the proper design of religion, (which is felicity,) nothing can be more absurd.

Objection. But it may be said, how is it possible that a man should be religious without design? A man doth not act in religion, but it must be done voluntary; and if it be done voluntary, it must be done for an end, so there can be no such thing (you will say) as keeping up a course of religion, without a design.

Answer. Very true, indeed, there could be no such thing as keeping up a course of religion, without a design; but that is not the matter I speak of, a design in general. A man cannot do a series of merely human actions without some design or other, or simply without any design; but when the actions that make up a course of religion are done, we cut this design for the proper end of religion. Here lies the absurdity and incongruity that I now state, to tear a series and course of actions from their proper end, and not refer them to that end, this is most irrational trifling. As if, when all the other actions of a man's life are done for a certain determinate end only in the great business of religion, he plays the fool, he doth the thing, but never minds the end; keeps such days as these; comes to church; attends upon the public solemnities of God's worship; but never thinks of heaven, never minds eternal glory, as the thing in this way to be designed for. And so his religion, and the duties of it, bear no proportion to his end, to that end that they were made for. There is a two-fold design driven by religion, or by carrying on a course of religion by very different sorts of men. That is a design for this world, and a design for the world to come: some are religious only with a design for this world; to wit, that I may carry it fair with men in this world, or with that sort of men which I think fittest, and have some inducements which lead me to associate with, to apply myself to them, and to have their good opinion, and have a good reputation among them; I am willing, therefore, to be as they are, and to do as they do; here is a design for this world driven in religion, and the actions and duties of it; not (it may be) to gain; but there may be many worldly designs, besides that of gain; worldly repute and credit among those whose opinion I most esteem, and put a value upon, and to whom, therefore, in such a way, I think to approve and recommend myself.

But there is also a design driven in religion for the world

to come. And this is the true and proper design of religion. And where the former only is designed, we can hardly ever comprehend in our thoughts a more horrid frightful case; when a man is doing the great sacred acts of religion, without a design for their proper end, and in mere subserviency to some mean and inferior design, by how much the less that is, or the lower the design is, or by how much the less is to be got by it, so much is religion the lower debased; being thereby put into a subserviency to that which, it may be, shall be worth nothing to men; that I shall never gain by one way or other: and yet, I choose to do acts of religion; or to do these, and not take other acts thereof; or, to do these I do in this or that form; and do all in accommodation to some secular purpose, and design: but the eternal purposes of religion are forgotten, neglected, and never thought of by me. This is to prostitute the most sacred, venerable thing imaginable, (religion,) to the meanest and most despicable end.

How is this to be answered for, or wherein can we possibly conceive a more horrid sort of sacrilege than this? The acts of religion have a sacredness in them; but I aliene them from their proper end. This I do not, in order to the serving of God; not in order to the saving of my soul; or not in reference to an eternal state; but I do it to please my own present humour, or my friend's humour. Is this that indeed which we will resolve our religion into? Such trifling with religion is that, which will be dearly accounted for at the last day. To do that which we ought to do for pleasing and glorifying of God, and saving our souls in the day of the Lord Jesus, we cannot tell why, or for what reason, will come to a fearful reckoning at last. We ought to bethink ourselves at all such times, when we are thus assembled; What am I here to day for? Why did I come to this place this morning? Why did I take upon me to make one, and bear a part in a Christian religious assembly? Did I do it as one that hoped for salvation, and expected eternal life in this way? Was it that I might draw so much nearer to God, and be so much the more acquainted with him, and fitted for that state which I profess to hope for? But again,

Inference 6. We may further learn, that there is a very great sagacity belonging to the new creature, and the regenerate state; we are saved by hope; this imports the new creature, those that are born of God in order to eternal life, to be a very sagacious sort of creatures. The new

creature is a very foreseeing creature; it is in this, eminently distinguished from other creatures, even of the same rank and order in God's creation; to wit, merely human creatures: whereas others look merely, or only, to the present, here is a strange foresight in this sort of creature that is born of God, by which it eyeth, and looketh towards salvation, and eternal blessedness. As soon as it is born, "It is begotten again to a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance reserved in heaven for it." 1 Peter i. 3. The new creature hath an hope belonging to its essence; as soon as it begins to be, and breathe, it begins to hope. It is born to the hope of immortality and eternal life.

We ought to consider this, and a great judgment is to be made of our own state, by what we find instilled into ourselves of that spiritual sagacity and foresight: There are many that are apt to be foreseeing, (and value themselves greatly upon it) of temporary events, the probability of such and such events, and love to discourse and reason thereupon; as politicians, or as prophets, they can value themselves greatly upon such foresight; but here is the true foresight that sees into eternity.

That is the best, and clearest, and strongest sight that can see furthest; that overlooks (it may be) the concerns of to-morrow, of this year and the next, within the bounds and compass of time; yea, looks beyond all time, penetrates into eternity, beholds the judgment seat, the Judge sat, the books opened, the dead raised, and men disposed severally to their eternal states. The new creature, that divine birth, which fetcheth its original immediately from God, this is its sagacity; with such sagacity and foresight it is endowed. "We are saved by hope," we have an hope by which we expect to be saved, which penetrates into the unseen futurities of an everlasting state. And,

Inference 7. We may hereupon conclude too, That there is a certain generosity, a nobleness, a greatness of mind that doth belong unto a regenerate person. The new creature, one that is born of God, by which he is borne up above all this world, tramples upon it, scorns its smiles, smiles at its frowns and scorns, despiseth its threats and terrors, looks still beyond it and above it. What is all this world to me? A shadow, a despicable vanity! My great concerns lie above in a superior world, in a remoter world. This is generous and great. Oh! saith one that is

born of God, I cannot live at the common rate, I cannot live upon this country fare, I must fetch in all the provisions I live by, from day to day, from heaven; eat heavenly food, and drink heavenly drink, such meat and such drink as the world affords not; for such a prepossession, and such a pre-occupation, there is by hope of the felicity of heaven, and of the heavenly state. They do support this frail mortal life as others do; but they have another life that is to be supported in another way, and by other means; and in reference to which they find an unsuitableness in all things under the sun, as we should in gravel for our meat, and puddle for our drink; so that if you ask such an one, what he lives by, as to the maintenance of that nobler life that is in him, he will answer, by hope.

You may possibly (some of you) have heard and read of a great Prince and General, who, upon a conquest, dispensing great largesses among his Soldiers, was asked, And what, Sir, do you reserve for yourself? Why hope, saith he. I, for my part, live upon hope. I give away all that I have now got, and live upon the hope of more. This is the generosity and nobleness of mind that is in-wrought into a regenerate person, When he becomes so, he despiseth all things under the sun as a portion, as a final terminative good, and lives upon hope. And this we must come to, if ever we come to know what it is to be Christians. It is too little understood (I am afraid to this day) what it is to be a Christian, though we have long borne that name. Are not we told, they are a sort of people called out of the world? "They are not of this world," (saith our blessed Lord, in that concluding solemn prayer of his, when he was going out of the world,) "even as I am not of this world." John xvii. 16. Oh, what an horrid thing would it be to contradict our blessed Lord, in the sense of our own hearts! He saith, "they are not of this world;" but here is one answering, Aye, Lord, but I am of this world; one with this world, united to it: I savour the things of the world, as the men of the world do; I choose with them, and enjoy with them: a fearful thing from the sense of our hearts, to contradict our blessed Lord! to have him say, "They that are mine are not of this world, as I am not of this world;" and we be forced to say, concerning ourselves, Yes, but we are of this world, and related to this world more than any other, and savour the things of this world more than any other.

There are sundry other inferences more that I intend

now to go through, but there is one thing for the present, I would shut up with, though I do therein anticipate and prevent myself; that is, only to recommend this one thing to you, as a piece of solemn counsel and serious consideration, that you will labour to get your souls possessed of this principle, and direct it towards its final object; let it reach forth even unto the very last of the object that it is to be taken up about; for this we must know, that there are intermediate objects, and there is that at length which is most finally final. But hope hath its strongest and most powerful influences, as it doth reach furthest, reach into a most glorious eternity; and makes us say within ourselves, I hope to be there ere long. What a wonderful thing would it be, if we could always worship under such an hope! what mighty vigour would it infuse into our religion, to say to every one that meet together in such an assembly: We meet together in hope and expectation of having our eternal abode with that blessed society above, in the mansions of glory that are prepared already in our Father's house! To have this hope live in us, what life would it not transfuse through all our duties, and through the whole course of our religion!

And what a pleasant relish would it give to all our present mercies, such as we have greater occasion, more solemnly to bless God for; when we have matter of praise laid before us, and offered to us, as we have at this day! We have heard of the great success God hath blessed and crowned them with, who have been fighting his battles of late, especially in a neighbouring kingdom. It is a great thing to say, Blessed be God that hath done so much, and I hope will do more, and will enable them to carry on the work further; and I hope beyond all that, that I shall be one of the saved community at last. What spirit and life would that add to our prayer and praise!

And on the other side, what a damp and diminution would it be to all our matter of praise, and to the praisefulness of our spirits, to say, I have heard, indeed, that things have gone pretty well of late in Savoy, in Germany, and greatly well in Ireland; but all this while I have no hope of being saved; I have no hope of things going well with me hereafter: things may go well here, for aught I know, with them to whom I wish well; but I have no hope that things will go well with me for ever, or in an everlasting state. What a damp is this to the great praisefulness of a man's spirit, and what a diminution to the present matter

of his praise! It is an insignificant thing for me to put in my rejoicing with their joy, who are pleased with any such good successes at these; and in the mean time to be forced to say, Alas! there is a dreadful doom hanging over me, and over my soul; I have nothing in me that looks like a principle of the divine life; and yet I am sure that life must be now begun in me, that must be connected with eternal life. A present spiritual death hath no connection with eternal life, it must be a spiritual life, of which this hope (as you have heard) is so great a principle, that shall end in life eternal.

SERMON XXII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I HAVE made some progress in the use, and some instructive inferences I have recommended to you; and more I did intend to add, but I shall now wave them, intending to make all the haste I can to go through what I most principally intended on this subject.

And, that which remains is to direct to the serious and most earnest (in that way which may be the most probable) endeavour of getting this noble principle implanted, cultivated, and improved, amongst us towards this its high and glorious end, our own salvation. And, because (as hath been largely shewn you,) this great principle (Hope) contributes thereunto, both by the influence that it hath in order to the conversion of the unconverted, and by the influence that it hath upon the perseverance of the converted; therefore, the tenour of my discourse herein must be suitable hereunto, and must respect both these sorts of persons; but so as that I do hope each may find their own concern in each part of the following discourse, while yet the several parts may more principally and directly respect the one sort or the other. And,

Direction 1. The direction I shall give you, (and which will certainly concern us all,) is, that we may all more se-

* Preached September 13, 1691.

riously and earnestly mind the great business of our own salvation, and more deeply concern ourselves about it. I am sure such hope can never signify any thing with them, in order to salvation, who are not concerned about their salvation, that mind no such matter. I am very little willing to be much in repetition of any thing that hath been said to you formerly; but, if I would repeat any thing, I can do nothing that is more fit to be reconsidered, than what I told you upon the first inference: that, if hope have such a tendency to our salvation; despair must have a like tendency to our destruction. If souls are to be saved by hope, they are in greatest danger to be lost by despair. I say, what I told you upon that head, to wit, that there are two sorts of despair; a silent, calm, stupid despair, and a strong raging despair.

There are a great many that are in despair about their salvation, who never think they are; and in whom it makes no noise; to wit, that are without any real vivid hope concerning their salvation; and the vacancy of hope, right hope, in a subject to which it belongs is to be called by the name of its contrary, despair. According to the known, and most common agreed rules of reasoning, in such matters; those souls that are dead towards God, and their own eternal concernments, have no hope in God, and are really sunk in despair, and are likely to be lost and perish by it, if mercy do not seasonably mend their case.

And, in what I am now pressing you unto, hope, to get it implanted, and improved to its proper purpose; I would be loath to be mistaken, as if, in pressing to hope, I pressed to security. And indeed I would hardly think that any one that hath the understanding of a man, that will use thought, can be guilty of so gross a mistake; for sure there is the widest and broadest difference imaginable between security and hope. The hope of salvation, of eternal life, and eternal well-being! What? is there any thing in this like security? Such an hope is a positive thing, a real, and great something; security is but a vacuity of fear and care about a man's own concernments; and that is a mere nothing. What? I beseech you, is there no difference between something so great, a something and nothing? Such an hope is a most lively, powerful, active principle, wheresoever it is; and mightily stirs in the soul, and makes it mightily bestir itself, in the pursuit of its end: security, as it is nothing, so it doth nothing; it puts the soul upon doing nothing, lets it still be dead, and unconverted: care

for being saved who will for them, for their parts they do not. There is no likeness between these two things, security, and such an hope.

But now if I do not prevail with you, as to this first direction, the throwing off security, and minding more seriously, and in good earnest, the concerns of your souls; my labour is lost, and your souls are lost; and if I gain not this first point among you, all that is said and designed is to no purpose. But can any, upon sober consideration, think that it is a likely matter that salvation is so common as the neglect of it is? Or, are men in a likely way to be saved, that so generally disregard any such thing, think of no such matter from day to day, and from year to year? Is that imagination agreeable to scripture calls and warnings? Strive to enter in at the strait gate, that leads to life. Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. What? Are all such words from the mouth of God, and by his inspired servants, only sown to the wind, thrown among men into empty air?

If we would consider things reasonably, and with sober understandings, nothing would be more obvious to us than to bethink ourselves, that contraries have all their place in the same subject, not in divers: and thus in this case so it must be, so it ought to be; this being a matter of moral consideration, that wherever there ought to be hope, there ought to be fear too; the exigency of the case requiring it. And while matters do yet hang dubiously, (as they will do more or less, with all of us in this region of mortality,) we shall never be past all danger, nor all appearances of it; there will be no more perfection of assurance, than perfection of holiness. Doth the scripture say in vain to us, that we are to be saved by hope? And doth the same scripture, the same word of God, say to us, Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling? Sure there is no repugnancy between these things, but a necessary agreement, a most necessary agreement.

And, as contraries do always exist only in the same subject, so in lower degrees they do always co-exist in it, exist in it together: and therefore, where there is hope, there ought to be fear, in reference and respect to the concerns of our salvation; for we are not to think, that the one of these scriptures doth exantlate the other, and make it lose its force and signify nothing; this being a word given to men in mortal flesh, this divine word that we have in this book, we must know that it concerns men, and is to be

applied to them in accommodation to the state in which they are ; and in reference whereunto it is written. And, therefore, the state of none is so desperate as theirs, who, in reference to the affairs of their salvation, have neither hope nor fear ; as they that mind it not, have neither the one, nor the other.

And, because of the weight and mighty importance of this thing, I shall insist upon it ; and press this a little, before I go further, by some considerations. As,

1. That to be unconcerned about the affairs of our salvation, is continually to stifle a most natural principle ; we have no principle, no notion, that is more natural to us, than that we have something about us that cannot die, that is made for eternity, and for another state after this. I cannot now stand to prove to you the mortality of the soul ; my subject doth not lead me to it : but it is that we all profess to believe, and which we pretend to believe of ourselves, unless we could disprove it and plainly evince the contrary ; and, I would fain know how any man would go about to disprove that he is a creature made for another state after this. How will he prove himself to be nothing but a mortal creature ? How will he prove, that let him be never so like a beast, he shall die like a beast too ? How will he prove that ? And that the ultimate end, which man was made for, is attainable in this earthly state ? How will any man go about to prove this ? If he would prove himself a beast, the evidence of things will repugn, and fly in his face. It is only not thinking that makes men adventurous in a matter of this import. Oh ! how dismal a thing is it, when, instead of the hope of salvation, all that a man hath to relieve himself is, the hope of annihilation, a hope of his running into nothing ; that instead of blessedness, he hath no other hope, but only of no being ?

But consider (I say) that by this, here is a continual stifling of a most deeply natural principle ; for there is no man that would fain abolish the thoughts of that immortal nature he hath about him ; but still they will recoil upon him. This spirit that God put into man by his own inspiration, carries with it a secret consciousness of its own immortality ; and there can be no disbelief hereof, or opinion of the contrary, that is not conjoined with a great *formido* opposite, a certain misgiving and fear that it will at last prove otherwise ; but, in the meantime to own such a principle as that, (as among us it is generally owned,) and yet to have the habitual temper of a man's soul be directly op-

posite thereunto ; to wit, in an unconcernment what shall, and may become of him, in an everlasting state ; this is the most intolerable thing that we can suppose the human nature liable to. A most unsufferable absurdity, that I should have such a fixed apprehension and sentiment about me that I know not how to get rid of, and yet the habitual frame of my mind, and the whole course of my practice, run directly contrary to it. And then,

2. As unconcernedness about our salvation doth oppose this principle in the very nature of man, (than which none is more deeply fundamental ;) so it doth reproach the dignity of the human nature, as well as oppose the light of it. It reproacheth the dignity and honour of the human nature. They are continually throwing contempt upon their own nature, that live unconcernedly about their future state and eternal salvation. If we would but consider this matter seriously, who is there that would not be ashamed to have this written in his forehead, I do not care what becomes of my soul to all eternity ? Who would not be ashamed to carry that character visible to every man ? To proclaim himself one that thinks he is of no greater or nobler allay in the creation of God, than a brute creature ? Whence is there a regret to avow and own such a principle, but only that we think it to be ignominious ? If there be not these explicit thoughts, there is such a secret sense, that it would be an ignominious thing, a reproachful thing.

But how unaccountable is this, that a man should not be ashamed of the thing, and yet he is ashamed of the profession of it ? Men are not ashamed of the thing ; to wit, to be careless of, and unconcerned about, their own souls, and their eternal salvation ; they go from day to day without any suitable regret within themselves for their own carelessness and negligence, and yet they would be ashamed to avow an unconcernedness to all the world. There is no rational account to be given, why men should be ashamed of the profession of such a thing, and yet not be ashamed of the thing itself. To go every day from morning to night, without any care, thought, or concern, what shall become of my soul, as to eternal salvation hereafter ; never to have the soul smite them about this thing, from day to day, and from week to week ; and be ashamed, to feel a loathsomeness in their own minds, to avow infidelity, and profess mere brutality, that I am nothing but a mere brute animal ; how unaccountable is this ?

Indeed, the great iniquity in this matter is this : that

men do not more allow themselves to study and contemplate themselves ; that they do not labour to have more reverential thoughts even of the very nature of man ; I mean the primitive nature of man. There is nothing indeed more despicable and hateful than corrupt and vicious nature. That precept of that noted heathen, that we reverence ourselves and our own nature, it needs inculcation. And, as to this very particular thing of hope towards God, (with which unconcernedness about our salvation and future felicity it is plain cannot consist,) there have been higher and more raised thoughts about it, and about the nature of man, in reference hereunto, with some from whom, one would little expect it, than is usual among Christians themselves. I cannot but reflect again and again upon that of Philo the Jew, who tells us, that hope towards God is that which doth most properly belong to the nature of man : so, that (as he speaks,) (the *euepist*,) he that hath this hope easiest and most familiar to him, is only to be counted a man ; but the (*dyselpist*,) he that finds an aversion in him to such actings of hope towards God, is scarcely to be counted a man ; hardly to be looked upon as one that is partaker of a rational nature ; so high was the notion of human nature laid with some such in those days. But now, where there is nothing else but a daily stupid unconcernedness in men about the affairs of their souls, and their everlasting state, there is even among such (though they bear the name of Christians) such a contempt of themselves and such an indignity done to the nature of man, as many that have not been Christians would have been ashamed of. And,

3. Such an unconcernedness about our salvation, it is a continual disobedience to a most natural divine law. We ought to account, that where no other law than that of our own natures is, that yet such do live properly under the obligation of a law ; for I beseech you consider, do you think that God is not governor of the rest of the world, as well as he is of Christendom ? And how doth he govern reasonable creatures without a law ? “ They that have not a written law, are a law to themselves,” Rom. ii. 14, 15. And Heathens tell us of a *nata* and a *scripta lex*, and where there is not a *scripta* there is a *nata* : a law that is born with us, a law written in our hearts, are expressions common to Cicero, and to the Apostle Paul ; and therefore light about this matter in some degree hath been common to men. There is no more deeply natural law upon men, than that of self-preservation ; and if the soul of man be

the man, or the chief of man, the principal thing in man, do you think it doth not lie under the obligation of a law to preserve itself, to endeavour to save itself, to keep itself, as far as it can, from being lost and miserable to eternity, since it is capable of eternity? And, therefore consider,

4. That God cannot but be highly provoked, when the authority of this law, of which he hath impressed on the very soul of man and wrought into his nature, is continually violated. Consider it, for he cannot but be highly provoked with it; "The wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" where the apostle's discourse is about natural truth, about those dictates of truth that lie naturally and universally in the minds of men; as the notions concerning God do, that he instanceth in, in what immediately followeth; and concerning right and wrong, even unto men; with which is contempered the obligations that lie upon every man in reference to himself; because the duty we owe to other men is measured by that which we owe to ourselves, the whole law being comprehended in love. And that comprehensive principle being thus given by our Lord himself, to wit, "We are to love the Lord our God, with all our hearts, souls, minds, and might; and to love our neighbours as ourselves:" which therefore involves, firstly, and in the highest place, this care for ourselves. And since in the common acknowledgment of all, our souls are our most principal and chief selves, a love to our souls, and care for them, must needs be one of the great principles of natural truth; for the violation whereof the wrath of God is revealed; to wit, against the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold this truth in unrighteousness. To have such truths as these, always lying in my mind and soul, and continually to run counter to them, how provoking is it?

When I consider the law of nature as God's law, and that by which he governs that part of the world which hath no other law, and that the obligation thereof is perpetual and eternal, and can cease no where; to be guilty of continual violations of this, is to tear the foundations of the divine government. And therefore it is not strange that wrath should be revealed from heaven against men, upon such an account; that they hold such truths in unrighteousness, and stifle and counteract it, through the whole of their course, from day to day. And to bring this down to our

own particular cases and concerns: to wit, if a man arise in the morning, and all his care for the following day is, what shall I eat, and what shall I drink, and what shall I put on, and how shall I make a gainful bargain for this world, to advance my estate, and the like? and no proportionable care or concernment is taken for his soul, or its salvation, all the day. This (I say) is to live in a continual violation of one of the most deeply fundamental laws of his own nature, for which the wrath of God is provoked and revealed against men, for such ungodliness. There doth not need a gospel to bring such men under a doom, but it doth bring them under a heavier doom, being super-added. That gospel wherein life and immortality are brought to light, to wit, into a closer and brighter light; that is, whereas the light of the Pagan Gentile world is but a twilight, a dubious light, in comparison of that which we have in the gospel, concerning the future eternal states of men; therefore this super-addition must heightens men's doom. And then again,

5. This is to be considered too, That in such an unconcernedness about our salvation, we do not only offend against the authority of the divine law; but against the goodness and kindness of it, which is an unspeakably higher and more aggravated offence. Oh! that this might but enter into our souls to consider how much there is of good will towards men in laying upon them the obligation of such a law, which as it was first written in our own nature, so it is over and over, and more expressly written again in his word! "Strive to enter in at the strait gate." "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness." A law in various forms and expressions so often repeated. Oh! that it might be considered, how much there is of kindness and benignity in it towards them, whom it doth so much concern! How much there is of good will and favourable propensions expressed, when the primary design of the divine law is to bring us to be happy creatures; that we should have laws laid upon us to be happy. This is the purport of the whole, as if the merciful lawgiver should but speak this sense, (as indeed he hath spoken in his word; often and often, over and over; most fully,) Oh! be kind to yourselves! do not give up yourselves to perish. You have intelligent, immortal spirits about you, that are capable of the same felicity with angels, those glorious creatures above. Do not abandon these spirits of yours unto

remediless ruin, in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of your souls! do not plunge and sink them into an endless, and incurable misery!

We are taught to account, that the very patience that God doth exercise towards men hath this kind design with it, that they might be saved. See his expostulations with sinners about this: "Despiseth thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long suffering? not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance: but, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up to thyself wrath, against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his works?" Rom. ii. 4, 5. The patience of God is intimated to have generally that aptitude in itself to induce men to consider and take up thoughts of returning; and most expressly, when the gospel commenteth upon it, and tells men of its design. Why was not thy careless soul, that heard the gospel the last Lord's day, cut off before this Lord's day? Why? the patience of God is leading it to repentance: so we are directly instructed to interpret. "My brethren, (saith that other Apostle,) count the long suffering of God salvation." 2 Peter iii. 15. Do you put that construction and sense upon it? Make that interpretation to yourselves, Why am I spared? I have been careless of God and my own soul so long, year after year, why am I spared? The Apostle doth teach you to reckon, and make an estimate, why it is, what you are to count it is for; "Count that the long suffering of the Lord is salvation;" 2 Peter iii. 15. to wit, that he is designing your salvation in all this indulgence, and sparing mercy, that he exerciseth towards you. And it is highly aggravated guilt, when there is not only a continual resistance of the authority, but an offending constantly against the kindness of a divine constitution. And,

6. You ought to consider, You are nor your own. And though every one is obliged to intend, with the greatest earnestness, the salvation of his own soul, yet he is not to do it principally and supremely as his own; for God's interest is higher, and more principal in us, than ours can be in ourselves. And therefore, whereas we have a trust incumbent upon us from God, about ourselves, and the affairs of our own souls, he hath required us (though he be our supreme keeper) to keep ourselves, to keep our own hearts with all diligence. Though our Lord Jesus Christ be our supreme Saviour, our great Saviour by office, yet we are

required to save ourselves. Though God in Christ is our supreme Ruler, yet we are told too, that "he that hath not rule over his own spirit, is as a city broken down, and without walls." We have, by divine charge and command, a care incumbent upon us about our own selves, about our own souls; but he is our owner, we are not our own owners.

It is a most horrid thing, when men will not be brought to know their owner. "The ox knoweth his owner." Isa. i. 3. And what? Will not man know his owner? Will not these reasonable intelligent souls of ours know their owner, to whom they belong, who he is that styles himself the God of spirits, even of the spirits of all flesh? So that our having spirits in flesh, embodied spirits, is no diminution to his interest in us, and detracts nothing of it. When these spirits of ours are sunk into flesh, yet he is the God of the spirits of all flesh: they are his, he is the God of them. Then are we to consider besides, that inferior, secondary, subordinate interest that we have in ourselves, and our own souls; we are (I say) to consider God's superior interest in them, whose creatures we are. Then they who live in a total neglect and unconcernedness about the salvation of their souls, what answer will they be able to make to the most high God, when he comes to demand of them; "What have you done with my creature that I put under your care, in so great a measure? I trusted thee with the keeping and care of a soul, an immortal soul, an intelligent spiritual being, stamped with my own natural image. I gave thee a soul capable of loving me, capable of being finally happy in me, capable of being, throughout an eternity, employed in the adoration and love of the eternal God. I gave thee such a soul, what hast thou done with it? What! Hast thou made that soul all the time it dwelt in that body, only a drudge to vanity, only to serve as a slave to sensual and brutish inclination?"

God was to have eternal honour from those souls of ours, by our eternal love and adoration and praises of him, and joining with the glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect in these exercises. And when the wretched creature comes to give an account to God, as he must do; "Why hast thou robbed me of the eternal honour, glory, and praise that is due to me from this creature of mine? Why, instead of taking that way, by which it might be associated with the glorious inhabitants in heaven, hast thou taken that

way by which it must come to herd itself with devils, and go to be employed an eternity, in cursing and blaspheming its Maker? Why hast thou thus used a soul which I gave thee, who am the Father of spirits? Was that soul of thine, while it dwelt in a body of flesh, capable of nothing but gratifying and pleasing brutish desires? capable of no higher thoughts than what are suitable to the body, to eat and drink, and be clothed with? Was it capable of no thoughts of God? No thought of a future felicity? Why hath that soul been so injuriously, so abusively treated? I must have an account of my own creature, that should have honoured me, by the eternal love and fruition of me."

Sure these considerations should awaken us a little to that which I first recommended to you by way of direction, that we may, through the grace of God, agree in a resolution, more to mind the concernments of our salvation, than we hitherto have. It may be, a great many will think themselves very innocent as to this matter, and not apprehend that there needs so much care about their souls, and eternal concerns; but is not that to make our own imaginations superior to the determinations of God's express word? Doth that look as if he thought such a matter could be overcome, when he bids us, (as you have heard,) "Strive (the word signifies, be in agonies) to enter in at the strait gate." When any in that but now mentioned scripture, have it made as the distinguishing character between them that shall finally be saved, and them that perish; that the one sort do, by patient continuance in well doing, "seek for glory, honour, and immortality," till they actually have eternal life: and the other sort "do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness," are contentious against the truth; and therefore are to expect nothing but "indignation, and wrath, tribulation, and anguish," for ever.

And is it not a very strange thing, that about inferior ends, men should think themselves concerned, and obliged to use very great diligence; and every man is praised and commended among his neighbours, as he bears the character of a diligent man, an industrious man in his business? But that in reference to our last end, the universal end, the end of ends, that men should allow themselves in an universal carelessness and neglect, when every thing is greater as it approacheth nearer to the last end. There is a subordination of ends, but as any end comes nearer to the last, so it is greater, and the last, greatest of all. Now that men

should think it very reasonable to be very careful to get estates, to preserve their lives, and live well in the world, and yet think it reasonable to be negligent how they shall live for ever; what inconsistencies are these! There wants nothing but communing with ourselves, to make us apprehend, and understand this, and to make ourselves uneasy to ourselves, till we find a redress. And this word would be an everlasting witness against us, if we should not depart now with a resolution (in dependance on the grace of God) more to mind the concerns of our salvation than ever we have done.

SERMON XXIII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

I SHALL now proceed in giving you further directions for the getting this noble principle cultivated and improved. And to that end, in the next place,

Direction 2. We should labour to extend our hope to its highest and utmost object, its supreme and ultimate object. According as we stretch it further, it works more, and it becomes so much the more a lively and potent thing in us. And do I need to tell what its supreme and ultimate object is? Our best good must be our highest hope, and you can be in no doubt what that is. "And now (Lord) what wait I for? my hope is in thee." Psalm xxxix. 7. "Why art thou cast down, oh! my soul, why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God." Psalm xlii. 5, 11. and xliii. 5. He must be to us, in respect of our hope, (as in respect of our choice, and love, and delight,) our only one. "Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth I desire besides thee." Psalm lxxiii. 25. This is plain and out of question, God is to be our highest hope.

But concerning this, we are to note further, That it is God, as he is, most perfectly to be enjoyed in the most perfect state, that is to be the object of our hope: some

* Preached September 20, 1691.

shadow of which truth was in the mind of that noted philosopher, when he speaks of felicity, as that which is to be enjoyed in the most perfect state of life. But it is that which we are most deeply to consider, when we design God for the great object of our hope. It must be as he is to be enjoyed most perfectly, to wit, in the best and most perfect state. It is plain that that state is here referred to in this context, and in the text itself, if you will judge its reference by the context. Look to the words that do immediately precede; see whither their aspirings do aim and tend. "We who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies; for we are saved by hope." The hope of the final felicity and blessedness of that state, when there should be a perfect redemption of the body. It is an hope of felicity, which will be in its perfection, after being raised from the dead.

And this the Apostle, by another significant name, calls the adoption; to wit, the solemn manifestation of the sons of God, as was the expression a little above, and as is intimated in another place. "Now we are the sons of God, but it doth not yet appear what we shall be." 1 John iii. 1. Our sonship, and the glory and dignity of our adopted state, is not yet displayed or discovered what it is; but it shall be; and the time is coming when it shall: so that the like thing is intimated here, as did obtain among the Romans, to wit, that adoptions were with them twofold. There was a private adoption that was preparatory, and leading to a following public one. Such an one doth first in private pitch upon such a person as he adopts for his own son, and afterwards there is a public notification thereof *in foro*; here it was declared with public solemnity. And it is in this latter sense, and in accommodation thereunto, that this perfect state of the sons of God is called the adoption.

And as we are to take heed lest any temporary or terrene thing should be designed by us, as the main and terminative object of our hope; so that that which is in its kind, higher and better, and most noble and excellent, we must take heed lest itself be made the final term of our hope, in any state of imperfection, that things even of that kind do yet lie under. "If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are miserable creatures," 1 Cor. xv. 19. Our hope must shoot forward into another state, we must cast

anchor into that which is within the vail. Heb. vi. 19. Even this anchor of hope. And again,

Direction 3. We must labour to have our minds well informed concerning that state which our hope is finally to terminate upon; not to content ourselves with a confused general idea of some great felicity hereafter, in another world, and after this life; but we must labour, as distinctly as we can, to apprehend what it is, and wherein it consists and lies; for our hope will be in its operations proportionably lively and vigorous, as our apprehensions concerning its objects are distinct and clear; our souls cannot be attracted, and drawn, and enlivened, and raised, by obscure and shadowy apprehensions only of that which we make its final object. And we are not in greater danger of wronging ourselves in any thing more than here, and about this matter.

The generality of men, the generality of them that live under the gospel, and that call themselves Christians; oh, how little is understood among them of the truly Christian hope! The apostle prayeth for his Christian Ephesians, that they might know the hope of their calling; that they might understand what they are to hope for, what they are called to, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, that that might be understood. Men of carnal minds, they are apt accordingly to form the notion of all things, and where there is yet a prevailing carnality, even under the gospel men do take their measures of future felicity and misery, according to what notions they have of perfect good and evil; and their notions of present good and evil they are taken only from the dictates of sense. Good and evil are estimated by us according to their accommodations or dis-accommodations to flesh and sense; that is taken for good which is grateful to carnal sense; and that for evil that is ungrateful to it. And no higher are they wont to go; but what would be good or evil to an intelligent immortal mind and spirit, herein they little concern themselves for the most part.

And hence are the notions too common even among Christians of Mahometan Paradises hereafter, or of Paganish Elysiums; indeed usually they go no further, when they are forming their notions of what is meant by salvation, than only to think of the privitive part, and by that privitive part, they mean only being freed from that which they think would be tormenting to the flesh; and because

the scripture doth make use of such phrases and forms of speech for our help, therefore are we wont to abuse them to our hurt, and to the depraving and narrowing of our minds and understandings touching these things; all the salvation that the most concern themselves about is, to be freed from fire and brimstone, that they think will torment the flesh; and the apprehension is dreadful, when they are told of such a state of torment as eternal and everlasting; but how much the more the mind and spirit of a man is a greater, and nobler, and more excellent thing than a little animated clay that he carries about with him, so much the more must the good and evil of the future state, which is accommodate to the mind and spirit, be greater and higher than any thing that flesh is capable of, in point either of enjoyment or suffering.

And it ought to be considered, that, whereas the happiness of an intelligent creature can only be in the fruition of God; I say it ought deeply to be considered, what it is to all eternity, to lose this enjoyment, and to be cut off from him: and this is the greatest of your salvation, to be saved from that misery which must of all things be most tormenting to an intelligent mind and spirit; to wit, I am cut off everlastingly from the enjoyment of that highest and best good whereof I was capable; I was capable of it, and have lost it.

Here is the sting and the fire of hell, its hottest fervour, and by this it is, that the soul must be the everlasting tormentor itself. This is it that gives the ground for those (*morsus*) bitings, wounds, and gnawings of the worm that never dies. Oh, that I should debase a mind, a spirit; so noble a thing, so excellent a thing; to a capacity only of converse with earthly things, and thereby to lose for ever the enjoyment of the blessed God, as having lost my capacity for it, stifled it myself, and therewith lost my interest in it: and so as that thereupon divine justice might do an equal thing, and a becoming thing, and that God might do like himself, as became himself; I should therefore hear from him, "Depart from me, accursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels;" Go, accursed creature, into the state which thou choosest.

A salvation from such misery as this, you must labour distinctly to understand, to be the great object of your hope. I hope through the grace of God I shall be saved from this, from ever having things brought to this sad and forlorn pass with me. And so by salvation, though it

sound privative, yet is chiefly meant that which is most highly positive; and lest we should mistake sometimes, we find this positive added in express terms, "salvation by Christ Jesus, with eternal glory." 2 Tim. ii. 10.

This (I say) we must labour to understand distinctly, that so our hope may operate strongly and vigorously, as it will according to the apprehension that we have of the object of it; when this comes to be distinctly understood, (inasmuch as the way of the Spirit's working upon the minds and souls of men is suitable to their own intelligent and rational nature;) the life and vigour that Spirit doth exert, and put forth in this way upon the souls of men, it is so much the higher, and so much the more efficacious, by how much the apprehensions are clearer about the things in which I hope, or for which I hope.

When once this is understood, then will the soul say, (if once it be reduced to a capacity of acting like itself; to wit, like an intelligent thing,) What? Shall I for a trifle lose so great an hope? Then the gospel looks big, and appears great in our view, and what? Shall I lose all this? All this glory, all this felicity, and all that fulness of joy that is to be eternal, for a trifle? for the gratifying my own lust, or pleasing my own fancy, or the fancy of a friend, as he calls himself? But he is, indeed, my greatest enemy, as I am in truth the greatest enemy to myself, while I am apt to be imposed upon by such delusive appearances and semblances of things, against my own good and interest. Shall I for the pleasure of a debauch in company, as vain as I can be, ruin so great an hope as this? "He that hath this hope in him purifies himself as God is pure." But then also,

Direction 4. You must take this further direction, to wit, when you have got the notion in any measure competently clear, concerning the state of salvation, the felicity and glory of the future state, then labour most firmly and stedfastly to believe it. You must have a right notion of it first, else you believe you know not what. But let me have never so distinct a notion of the best and most delectable state that can be thought of, it never affects me, nor can rationally, unless I believe it to be a reality. The most pleasing ideas cannot draw forth rational endeavours, unless I be possessed with the apprehension, that it is a real attainable good that I am to act for.

Therefore, to that purpose, consider, I pray you, what the apostle gives us of the notion of that faith which is to

be indeed immediately fundamental of our hope, Heb. xi. 1. Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen; if one have never so clear a notion of the most delectable state that it is possible for any one to form and conceive in his own mind, and he doth not look upon this as substantial, as an actual substance, it cannot affect him, it cannot attract him, and draw forth the strength and vigour of his soul in a pursuit after it: therefore, here the work of faith comes in, and that is to substantiate, to be to us the very substance of that which we are to hope for, and to be the evidence of that which yet we do not see; and how could faith do this? Why truly even by that which is intrinsic and natural to it; reliance upon his testimony whom we believe. Human faith is a reliance upon an human testimony; divine faith is a reliance on a divine testimony. I take the word of God about the truth of that I have not seen with my own eyes; and his word representing to me a lovely, pleasant, amiable object hereafter, perfectly to be enjoyed; believing the revelation to be true, I thereupon hope for the thing revealed.

As suppose an overture were made to any of you of making a purchase of an estate in lands where you have not been, or which you do not know; it may be you may have some friend or other that hath been there, and that can give a true and distinct description, and tell you how all things lie; he tells you how very commodious and pleasant a seat there is, or may easily be had; why according as you believe, or disbelieve this man's report, this testimony of his, so is your hope of doing well, and living happily in such a place, lively or not lively, vivid or faint and languid; according (I say) as you believe him, or do not believe him, you having not seen the thing with your own eyes.

This is the case here, God hath told us how it is above, in that state where we have not been, what is to be enjoyed there, what our employments are to be, what our company, and what our state every way. Saith the considering soul, It is true, I have not been in the third heavens, I do not know the order of things there by any experience of my own; but I believe in him that hath told me this; I know he can have no design to deceive me; what can he get by imposing on a worm? When he hath made such a discovery and sworn to it; As I live, so and so it is, and so it shall be. By these two immutable things I apprehend it to be impossible for God to lie: therefore here is strong

consolation for them to fly to for refuge, who have this hope set before them. Heb. vi. 18, 19, 20.

But how much another thing is that faith which thus relies upon, and resolves itself into the authority of the divine word, over-awing the soul into an entire acquiescence in the truth of it, and so as to still and silence all abmurmurations and mutterings to the contrary : I dare not think otherwise but that thus it is. How much more (I say) another thing is this faith which so substantiates its object in this way and method, from that which vulgarly goes under the name of faith among us ? The common opinion that men have, that there is a world to come, and so and so men may enjoy, or suffer in that other world, that is a mere traditional belief of these things, without ever considering the true and proper grounds why we admit any such belief into our minds and hearts at all ; but we believe, because such and such have so told us. It is the common belief, all the people of our country were of this mind, all our forefathers were of this mind ; but God, and the authority of his revelation comes not into the case, never falls into consideration at all.

And this faith as it is groundless, so it is fruitless ; for the ground of faith, and the efficacy of it, measure one another ; faith is always proportionably efficacious as it is grounded well and strongly ; that which depends upon nothing doth nothing, effects nothing. It is very plain, that for this common faith which men have about a future state, and which is nothing else but opinion, mere opinion, and nothing more ; it effects nothing, operates nothing, it leaves men's hearts the same ; and accordingly the course of their practice is the same too, as if they were of quite a contrary belief. What a strange faith is that which, instead of power and efficacy, for the forming of the heart and governing the life, is just the same thing with infidelity, not distinguishable from infidelity ; but in point of efficacy, faith and infidelity are the same ? This man's heart is as terrene as it would have been if he had been of no such belief, or of a quite contrary belief : and his practice as loose and irregular, having as little tendency in it towards the attainment of such a blessed state as he pretends to believe.

Pagans have seemed to have higher thought of faith than we have. Cicero tells us that among them (the Romans) there were shrines and temples dedicated to faith, and hope, as being certain tokens that God did dwell in

those minds where these are : so he speaks of them ; where-upon they dedicated temples to them. When in those minds faith and hope did dwell, they looked upon these as certain evidences that God did dwell in those minds. But I beseech you, what argument is there to be taken from the faith and hope of these great futurities that are commonly pretended to among us, that God dwells in these minds? What evidence is there of an in-dwelling Deity, who raised these men, so sublime, so full of heaven, so full of holy aspirings? What is there like this, as the fruit of that faith and hope which are talked of, and pretended to amongst us? And then,

Direction 5. Take this direction, see that when you understand and do believe what the word of God informs us of, concerning the state of salvation, that is to be the final object of our hope, see (I say) that you do seriously desire it; that it is that which the inclination of our minds carries us to, so as earnestly to long for and covet it. Oh, that I were there! Oh, that I were possessed of the felicities and glories of that state! Otherwise, if you talk of hope of such a state, for which you do not find you have any real lively desires in your souls; you impose an impossible task upon yourselves and a contradiction. It is a perfect contradiction to hope for that which we do not desire, or to which the temper of our mind agrees not. If there be not an agreeableness in the frame of the heart and spirit unto such a state understood and believed, it can be no object of our hope. I may desire many things that I do not hope for, but I cannot hope for any thing that I do not desire; for hope always involves desire, though desire doth not always involve hope in it. There may be despairing desires, but hope hath for its object a future good, the same that desire hath; only hope doth superadd something to its object; (though that alters not the case as to this;) to wit, an apprehended difficulty, an arduousness as to the thing hoped for, otherwise desire and hope would be all one.

And about this it concerns us to deal very seriously and closely with ourselves, when we speak of hope as that mighty principle, which is to have influence towards salvation, by the influence whereof we are to be saved, (and are lost if that influence fail, and continue not;) we are to consider what we are to aim at, when we are to aim at the getting our souls possessed with such an hope; we must get them made suitable to the state hoped for; that we may be capable of desiring it; that our souls may fall in with

it; that whereas that state commence that the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ, we may be of those that love his appearing upon that account. And whereas it is the hope of a future felicity, by the power whereof grace teacheth men effectually to "deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly in this present world;" that hope may be looked on by us as a blessed hope, "looking for the blessed hope, and glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ," the very thought whereof (for there hope is taken objectively) is reviving to our souls, makes our hearts spring and leap in us. If you do not desire the thing hoped for, it can never be a blessed hope to you; you cannot look upon it as such: one thought of that hope, that hope but thought of, doth even bless my soul, doth make it live, diffuseth a vital influence through it.

That which is inconsistent with this is a terrene frame that continually carries us downward, a minding earthly things, that upon the account whereof the apostle speaks with tears concerning many of those Philippian Christians, to whom he writes. "I have told you of them, (saith he,) and I now tell you weeping, they are enemies to the cross of Christ;" that is, to the very design of his dying, which was to establish an eternal kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world; they are enemies to his very cross; why, what doth characterize them as such? Their minding earthly things. The design of his dying runs into eternity, into heaven; our conversation is in heaven, as the next words speak; but these men are all for this earth, nothing else is pleasing and grateful to them. If you give them hopes of great honour, and dignities, and riches, in this world, you take them by the heart; but tell them of the felicity of another world, you do but speak to them the words of a dream, they are mere shadows you present to their imaginations, things which they affect not, in which they feel no substance; there is nothing grateful to them in these things.

Always carry this about with you, that it is a most perfect mockery to talk of hope of that which you desire not. "I desire (saith the apostle) to be dissolved and to be with Christ:" this is their strain who are under the power of the truly Christian hope: not as if such actual desires were the constant character of a regenerate soul, because there may be some accidental interveniencies that may damp that act of desire, may interrupt and hinder it; to wit, they may be in

doubt about the state of their case God-wards. Therefore, they cannot be positive in desiring to be unclothed and dissolved; but if the competition be between the felicity of the future state, and the felicity of the present state; and their no desire doth proceed from the greater love that they have to this world, than they have to God, and to heaven, and the purity, and sinlessness, and blessedness of the future state; this is a mortal character; and concerning such we can pronounce nothing but that "they are enemies to the cross of Christ," the design of his dying, as if he died for men only, to procure for them an earthly felicity; as if his dying were only to terminate upon an earthly happy state, than which a greater hostility to the cross of Christ, and against the design of his dying, cannot be. And again,

Direction 6. Take this further direction; to wit, when you have that object before you, in its clear and distinct state, which is to be the final object of your hope, never hope for that abstractly, and separately by itself, so as to disjoin in your hope the end, from the necessary means to that end, salvation, the state of the saved; here is the final object of hope; but then we are told by the apostle, of things that do "accompany salvation." Heb. vi. 9. Never hope for salvation abstractly, and apart from the things that do accompany it, and because that is to be considered as the final object of your hope, the things that are intermediate to it, are to be hoped for too; for there can be no connection besides, between the end and the means; but that connection lies in the aptitude such means have to this end, and the certainty of the consecution of this end, upon the use of such means. You are told of several things in scripture that have certain connection with salvation, so that without them it cannot be; with them it cannot but be. As to give you only the scripture terms of the several things, that it doth connect with salvation as inseparable from it, without explaining the things to you: as repentance, it connects with it; "Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish;" Luke xviii. 5. ye shall not be saved. "Repent, that your sins may be blotted out." Acts iii. 19. by it you shall be saved.—Faith; God so loved the world, that "he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish, but have everlasting life." John iii. 18. "He that believeth not is condemned already, and the wrath of God abideth on him." John iii. 3, 5.—Regeneration, without it there is no entering into the

kingdom of God, there is no seeing of it; but if men be regenerate, they are the children of God; and if they are children, then heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ, that, suffering with him, they may be glorified together." Rom. viii. 17.—Obedience; Christ will be author of salvation to them that obey him, Heb. v. 9. "And will come in flaming fire to take vengeance on them that know him not, nor obey his gospel." 2 Thess. i. 8. These are the plainest connections that can be in the world, nothing can be more plain; so sanctification which falls in with many of the forementioned things: "We give thanks to God for you, that he hath chosen you unto salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 13. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord." Heb. xii. 14.

This is the direction then, that at present, I would leave with you; never be so vain as to hope for the end apart from these things, God having made a necessary connection between it and them, as means thereunto, with which it shall certainly be attained, and without which, it cannot. There are means indeed, that are foreign and external, (as divines are wont do distinguish them from these,) which have no certain connection with the end, as these have; but for those which have so certain a connection with it, it is to murder your own hope, to hope for the end without regarding the means; to hope I shall be saved, whether I repent or no, believe or no, turn to God or no, be regenerate or no, be sanctified or no, whether I obey, or disobey. This is to hope without, and to hope against it; and it is the greatest foolery in the world, for a man to hope against God's word, for that which depends wholly on his pleasure, whose word it is. Who can save me if he do not? Who can bring me heaven if he do not? So that to hope in this case, not only without his word, but against it; no greater madness than this is conceivable, or can be, among men.

SERMON XXIV.*

ROMANS, VIII. 24.

We are saved by Hope.

Direction 7. I SHALL now go on with some further directions, and in the next place, take this.

That such need to make it much their business to understand aright the nature of those things which are so absolutely necessary to being saved; to wit, not only to know that such and such things, so and so called, are requisite; or to understand the names of such as are requisite unto salvation, without distinct understanding of the things themselves, signified by those names. There is nobody that understands any thing of the Christian religion, but hath been informed, and will readily assent, that repentance is necessary to salvation; that faith is necessary to salvation; that a man if he be not regenerate cannot be saved; that if he be not converted he is not in the state of salvation; that if he do not mortify sin he must die, he must perish, and cannot be saved; that if he do not lead a life of holiness, he can never see God, must be excluded his presence for ever. Every one that lives under the gospel and understands the first elements and principles of it, readily assents to all these things; but in the mean time if one do inquire what they do understand by the things signified by such names, here they are at a loss, and to seek, and give such confused and uncertain accounts, or have so indistinct apprehensions of them, that they are never the nearer being saved for having heard of those names; but I beseech you, what can it signify, if, when God saith, they that do not believe, his wrath abideth on them; and he hath “so loved the world, that he hath given his only begotten Son, that they that believe in him should not perish, but have everlasting life;” you do agree to the faith of this that God hath said in his word, you say so too; but in the mean time you intend one thing by believing, when God, it is manifest, meaneth another. You put the name of faith, the name of repentance, the name of conversion, and the name of rege-

* Preached October 11, 1691.

neration, upon quite another thing ; What ! will the names of these things save any body ? Will any be the nearer salvation for something miscalled faith, that is not so ? Something miscalled repentance, something miscalled regeneration, that are not so ?

If you would rationally hope for salvation, so as that hope should really signify any thing for that end, you must understand the real influences and import of such things as these, that God hath put as necessary to salvation, and in immediate connection with it. That is, you must understand faith in Christ to be that which brings your souls into a vital, living union with him, so as that thereby you have him, and have life ; such a receptive act as adjoins you to him, so as that he thereupon becomes an immediate spring of life to your souls. If you do not understand by repentance, that mighty turn and change of the whole soul, by which, when it was a stranger to God before and alienated from him, it is now entirely turned to him, and therefore it is called repentance towards God ; the whole bent of the soul being turned about towards God, as its best good, and as its sovereign Lord, to whom it was a stranger and rebel before : you do not apprehend aright. It is a vain thing for us to go about to delude ourselves with names ; the great thing will be, what will be taken for faith and repentance, and the rest of the mentioned things, in the judgment day ; and we may know now, if we will make it our business to know, and compare scripture with scripture, one thing with another. Those that will yield the necessity of regeneration, understand nothing (it may be) by being regenerate but being baptized ; when the scripture elsewhere tell us in other words, it signifies our implantation into Christ, we are born again, as we are inserted into him, and being in him, become new creatures : old things being done away, and all things being made new ; such things as these, that you find in certain immediate connection with salvation ; you must understand what they are, if you will ever think of entertaining hope of salvation, for such a purpose as that it shall contribute to your being saved. And,

Direction 8. Take this further direction, if you will ever hope to purpose in reference to the business of salvation, begin your hope with despair : despair, that you may hope, that is, that you may hope to any advantage. There is none in whom this hope comes to live, (as it is a living hope, that we are speaking of, and that the Spirit of God

intends,) but there must be a death past upon that soul, before such living hope doth obtain, or hath place in it; such must die, that they may live; must be slain, that they may revive. All false hope must die, they must see themselves dead, lost, and perishing, before any such hope can have place in them; but here I must be a little more particular, and tell such of some things, whereof it is most necessary that they do despair. As, first, they must despair of ever being saved without those things, which you have already heard are necessary to salvation. And then, secondly, they must despair of ever being saved, *for* such things as are to be wrought in them, or done by them. And, thirdly, they must despair of ever attaining those things by their own power.

1. They must despair of ever being saved, without those things which have been already mentioned to you, that must be wrought in us, and that, thereupon, must have an exercise from us in order to our being saved; to wit, such as are, repentance to God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, and the like; despair of ever being saved without these, and what goes accompanied therewith, (about priority I have no mind to trouble you with any discussion,) the full entire work of conversion, which, consider it seminally, is the same with regeneration: consider it progressively, it is the same with continued sanctification, proceeding hereupon; a dying to sin, and living to righteousness. The same design for which Christ died, and bare our sins in his "body on the tree;" 1 Peter ii. 24, that we might "die to sin, and live to righteousness," being healed by his stripes. Isaiah liii. 5. Now, without these things, we must despair of being saved, if ever we would hope for salvation upon good terms.

This I know is that way which an heart yet habitually carnal cannot but deeply and inwardly regret; but that is not to give us laws. The carnal heart was not consulted in framing and contriving the model of the gospel. God did never ask such the question, what will please you, that I may contrive the form and model of life and death, according to your inclination? Such may be apt to say, when they are urged, You must break off from every evil way; you must hate every thing of sin, how much soever you formerly loved it; you must deliver yourselves absolutely to the governing power of Jesus Christ as your Redeemer and Lord, both at once; when persons (I say) come to be closely thus

urged, they will be apt to tell you, We have flesh and blood about us ; what would you have us do ? Why, I would put such upon considering seriously, Pray, for whom was the gospel composed ? To what sort of creatures was it sent ? Was it ever designed or intended to be sent up into heaven, to be preached to angels and glorious spirits above ? Was it ever intended to be sent down into hell, to be preached to devils, and damned spirits there ? No ; it was meant for none but those that have flesh and blood about them ; for none but them whose dwelling is in flesh. And would any excuse himself from repenting towards God, which is turning to him with the whole heart and soul ? From believing in Christ by such a faith, as by which a vital union shall be contracted between the soul and him ; with this that he hath flesh and blood about him ? That is by the same excuse too, to excuse yourselves from being saved : I am not to be saved, because I have flesh and blood about me. For it is a vain imagination to think that God is at this time to alter his gospel, and make new terms of life and death for sinners ; when as this gospel, as it was only made for such as dwell in flesh, or have flesh and blood about them. It is true, that hath inferred a necessity, that that in which you dwell should not rule you. If we live after the flesh we shall die ; but if through the Spirit we do mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live. How plainly doth the word of God speak his mind to us, if we will attend to it ? That, therefore, is one of the things that you must despair of, if you will hope to purpose ; despair of ever being saved without such things to be wrought and done in you, as God hath put in immediate and certain connection with salvation. And,

2. Despair too of ever being saved for those things that are to be acted by us, or wrought in us : though they are works of the Holy Ghost, yet the Holy Ghost was not intended to merit for us ; the Holy Ghost was not to be our High Priest, we must not think to invest the Holy Ghost with the offices of Christ, and to confound their offices, and the works of their offices. Therefore, let repentance be supposed never so sincere ; and faith, conversion, and regeneration, never so true in their own kind ; we must despair of being saved for these things, though we must also despair of ever being saved without them. " We through the Spirit, do wait for the hope of righteousness by faith." Gal. v. 5. The Spirit doth frame souls to an absolute reliance upon

that righteousness that is by faith, that and no other, and so accordingly to wait for the hope of that righteousness. And,

3. Despair of ever attaining to any of these things that are so necessary by your own power; despair of ever being able to turn yourselves, or to beget faith in yourselves, or to regenerate yourselves, or to mortify sin yourselves, which you are told must be by the Spirit. The scripture will not misguide us if we will attend to it; how plainly hath it told us, that our Lord Jesus Christ "is exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins?" Acts v. 31. And that it is God that gives men repentance, that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, "who are led captive by him at his will." 2 Tim ii. 26. And faith we are told is the gift of God, and it is reckoned among "the fruits of the Spirit." Gal. v. 22. And regeneration we are told is by the Spirit. If a man be not born again (or born from above) by the Spirit, "he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." John iii. 3, 6. "And if we by the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live." Rom. viii. 13. And we are likewise told, that "God hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. ii. 17.

Therefore are we to despair of our reaching of those things, that are so necessary to our salvation, by any power of our own. And so to despair is the way to hope; that will not lead to absolute despair, but it only leads to this respective necessary despair, which doth itself lead to hope. It doth not make the case hopeless, that such a thing is out of my power, when it is not to be expected, except in that godlike way that is honourable to him, and becomes the enthroned majesty of heaven, that he should be owned and applied unto as the author and donor of every good and perfect gift, and perfect giving. And we shall miserably cheat ourselves, if ever we think or hope to be saved by a repentance, or faith, or conversion, that are self-sprung things, self-created things. That repentance which is only the product of our own power, or that faith, or that conversion, will lure us, will lead us to perish; but you have heard often, again, and again, that the thing is not the less matter of hope, because it is not in our own power, when as the divine power that is to effect such things is upon such sure and firm grounds to be expected and looked for, that it should exert itself for such and such purposes; but to that purpose more will come in our way bye and bye; these

are things that it is fit and needful that you should despair of that you may hope. And,

Direction 9. Take this further direction hereupon, That you are to put forth all your power to the very utmost, in order to the attaining those things that do accompany salvation, and that are in so necessary and certain connection with it. Your life lies upon it:—without these things you must perish. There is no remedy, but you must perish. What remains then? but that you do, to the uttermost, put forth all the power you have, in order to your serious repentance, in order to your believing with the faith of God's elect, and with a faith of the operation of God; and that you may have new hearts and right spirits created and renewed in you.

Objection. But it may be said, Doth not this contradict the former head? Are we to use all our power, even to the uttermost, in order to the obtaining true repentance, and true faith, and that we may be truly regenerate and turned unto God, when yet we are told, we must utterly despair of ever attaining these things by our own power?

Answer. Pray labour to understand matters that are in themselves plain. What is easier to understand, than the distinction between use and trust? Doth it follow, that because you are to distrust your own power, that therefore you are not to use it? May not a man lawfully use his money, and use his estate, because he is forbid to trust in uncertain riches? And because some do sinfully trust in chariots and horses, is it therefore unlawful to use a chariot or an horse? Consider that the natural faculties and powers that God hath given you, you are to be accountable for the use of to him. And what? Are you not then to use them? Your understandings, your considering power, your thinking power, are these exempt, from under the divine government, because you are not to trust them, as what were sufficient to do all your business? If you would but consider things with the understandings of men, you might easily know, that it is most indispensably incumbent upon us to do our uttermost, to strive as for our lives, to exert all our powers, while in the mean time, we acknowledge all our power is an insufficient thing. And therefore we are to cry and supplicate, to crave and implore heaven, for the addition of an higher and greater power than ours. This is just, this is rational, and suitable to the order of things between God and his intelligent creatures. And then again,

Direction 10. Let this further direction be considered, to wit, Constantly hope, that, by the divine power, you shall be enabled to reach and attain to those things that are, and he hath made necessary, for your salvation. And this hath two branches,

1. Constantly hope you shall attain them, otherwise, if you do not hope that hope, all is lost, and you are presently at a stand, and cannot move one step further towards being saved, or towards salvation as your end. All is lost, if that hope fail, that you shall attain those things that are necessary, by divine appointment and constitution, for salvation. For pray consider, if a man take a journey, (supposing of an hundred miles,) if he did not hope he should go through that journey, he would never begin it. It is the hope he shall go through, that doth excite and engage to begin, otherwise he would sit still at home; but then, if he doth hope that he shall go through this journey of an hundred miles, and reach such a place at length, he must hope, in order hereunto, that he shall go through the first mile. He cannot hope that he shall go the whole hundred miles, if he do not hope he shall go the first. So if you do hope you shall be saved, you must hope that you shall do things, be enabled to do things, that are necessary to being saved. He that doth not hope to reach a place, but a mile off, that is his certain and direct way to a place an hundred miles off, and there is no other way, will never make one step at all towards that place. And this is your case, when God hath made it so absolutely necessary in order to your being saved, that you repent, that you turn to him, and come into union with his Son, and deliver yourselves up to him, take him to be yours, and give yourselves to be his: if you hope not, you shall reach these things, your hope of being saved will be a mad hope; as his must be a mad hope that he shall reach his hundred miles, when he doth not hope to reach the first mile, when there is no other way to such a place an hundred miles off, but by that a mile off. And therefore this hope must be fixed and kept alive, though I cannot say I have been brought to repentance yet, and to faith in the Son of God, yet I hope I shall. You must hope first for such a thing. And then,

2. Hope that it shall be brought about by a divine power, for otherwise, (as you have heard) you are not to hope for it. And positively, you must hope for it this way, and no other way. "According as his divine power hath given us all things pertaining to life and godliness; and given to us

exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature," 2 Peter i. 3, 4. which carries all this in it. Here must be your hope: Such things have not been wrought and done in me yet, but through the grace of God, I hope that they shall. And,

Direction 11. Take heed that defeatments and delays do not subvert and overthrow in you this hope. Of this there is the greatest imaginable danger; and these two expressions, (defeatments and delays,) I purposely intend to refer to two sorts of persons, who may have their different concerns in this direction, to wit, especially a younger and an elder sort.

1. A younger sort, such as may be in a very great struggle between strong youthful lusts, and strong convictions, which may in some measure have taken hold of their souls. This is sometimes the case, discourses that I have had with divers, and bills that I have received from more, do assure me that this is a case that requires a great place and room in our consideration and discourse. There are those who now and then, (who in that age wherein lust and concupiscence have greater advantages to be predominant,) are taken hold of by the word, and it strikes conscience, and gets some advantages upon them. They are in a great loss in their own spirits. Vicious inclinations are strong; conviction upon their spirits hath some strength too. It may be, some such have found, that whereas here is a struggle, a strong earnest struggle, the conquest is easier over conscience than over inclination: it is an easier matter to overcome there; they easier baffle their light than they can their lusts. And when they have considered, under the power of conviction, that there was some necessity upon them to change their course, it may be, they have come to some resolution upon that consideration, that they would become other men; that they would lead another sort of life. It may be, the next temptation, or the next insinuation of a lewd, idle companion, hath proved too hard and too strong for them; they could not withstand; and the bonds of iniquities have held them faster than the bonds of their vows, and covenants, and solemn engagements, that they have taken upon their souls. They have broken loose from these bonds, and are held so much the faster by those former bonds: and hereupon, having once found themselves at liberty, they sell themselves to slavery, sell themselves to do evil; and the Spirit of God that was

at work in them, is receded and gone: they began in the Spirit, they have ended in the flesh. There are now no more gales, not one breath of that Spirit upon their spirits any more. An hopeful gale they had, that brought them near to a safe harbour; but they are, all on a sudden, hurried back again to a raging sea, that casts up nothing but mire and dirt. What a fearful case is this? If they reflect upon themselves, they will be ready to say, What is to be done in this case? And truly if any one should say so to me, I should return the question, What will you do in this case? or what do you think is to be done in this case? Do you think there is no hope in the case? Will you say that? or if there is to be any hope, what shall that hope be of? or what are ye to hope for? Such a thing I would consider and debate with any such an one. Are you to have any hope at all? Are you to abandon all hope? Truly that is not like a reasonable creature to say so, that you are to abandon all hope, while you are yet on this side hell, and infernal flames have not yet seized you; you are not to put yourself into the state of a devil, whilst as yet, God hath not put you into that state. But if you are to hope at all, what are you to hope for? Are you to hope that God will save you upon other terms than he hath declared in his gospel? Are you to hope that he will make a new gospel, to comply with your humour and lustful inclination? Are you to hope for that? That certainly were the maddest hope that ever was taken up by any one. All hope you are to have is, that if you have any apprehension of your case, the grieved Spirit may return, the affronted, resisted Spirit, if you cry for its return; if you supplicate as for life, that Spirit that carries all the treasures of divine light, and life, and grace in it, may yet return. There have been instances of its having done so.

How famous is the story that we meet with in Church History, concerning that vicious young man, that was at first reduced by the ministry of the Apostle John, and brought to a great degree of seriousness! The Apostle, having occasion to absent himself from the place where he was, leaves him under the care of such an one, charging him with his soul; "Look (saith he) well to the soul of this young man." After the Apostle was gone, the young man breaks out into his former excesses again, and herds himself with a company of thieves and cut-throats. The Apostle being returned, and inquiring after him, saying, What is become of that young man? The answer that was made

him was, He is dead, dead in sin, dead in wickedness again : much like the usage that was in Pythagoras's school, where if any had been in that school of virtue, and made some proficiency there for any considerable time, and relapsed into vice, they were solemnly cast out, and a coffin was brought into the place to hold a funeral for them as dead ; so it is said of this young man, he was dead. But the Apostle makes inquiry after him, and finds him out, brings him to his feet, takes hold of him, down he falls, and by the power of prayer and holy counsel, he was effectually reduced, and brought back again.

So it may yet be with some such horrid decliners and backsliders from the ways of God. If they apprehend whither they are going, whither their way leads them, and cry for the returning of the Holy Ghost as for life, as apprehending themselves lost if he return not, there is yet hope in this case. And it is by no means in the world, to be thought of, that such are to abandon all hope ; for that is to make devils of themselves above ground, and to create to themselves a present hell on this side hell. You are within the reach of the gospel while you are on this side of the infernal regions ; and it is a gospel of grace, crying to you, Return,—return. These are they to whom I had reference in that word defeats ; do not let your hope be destroyed, by the defeats you have met with. But then,

2. There is another sort that I had a more distinct reference to in my thoughts, in using the word delays, in this direction, Take heed lest defeatments and delays destroy your hope. Now that of delays, I meant in reference to such as have sat long under the gospel, even to a grown age, and never have found any good effect by it ; it hath wrought no change, made no impression. There may be many such, that were never vicious persons at all, never grossly vicious ; but then they have lived in a place where some exercises of religion were a fashionable thing. They have had religion enough to carry them to a sermon on the Lord's day in some Christian assembly, and perhaps to engage in somewhat of family duties ; perhaps so, but they have sat with mere formality the greatest part of a life time, under the gospel, and never felt any real good by it, never expected any, never designed any ; but come to a church, or a meeting-house, and spend an hour or two with the rest, in solemn attendances upon the worship of God, and never look after it more, (it may be,) till the week come

about again. All their business is driving designs for this earth; "They mind earthly things," as the Apostle's character is of them, of whom also he saith, "their end is destruction." Phil. iii. 18, 19. What it was to have their souls turned to God, to come to a solemn closure with Christ as their Redeemer and Lord, or to exercise themselves unto inward heart-godliness in any kind, they know not what belongs to it. It may be, they are just and upright in their dealings with those with whom they have to do; and they reckon that their justice towards men must expiate all their injustice towards God, their neglect of him, their slighting him, their casting him out of their thoughts, out of their fear and out of their desires.

This seems to be a very sad case, that a man should have lived all his days under the gospel, and it hath never made any impression on him as yet: the Spirit of God hath not as yet sensibly breathed, so as, at least, to beget any permanent and abiding effect; here hath been a long deferring, a long delaying of taking hold of these souls to purpose; and it may be, now their long delay may make such persons think, No, there is no change to be hoped for, nothing to be expected, none to be looked for; I have sat so long, so many years, ten, twenty, or thirty, (it may be,) forty years, under the gospel, under such a ministry, and never hath there been any such effect wrought upon me, and I do not think there ever will.

Oh! take heed, lest the having any such work upon you deferred so long, do destroy hope that ever such work shall be done; for then again, all is lost if you be hopeless; if there be not a vital hope and expectation, from time to time, in such and such a word, that some good may be done in my soul, that I may hear somewhat that I may feel, that the word may yet drop that may have life in it, that may have power in it. If you do not hope for this, if you do not expect such a thing, you are, as much as you can, putting yourselves quite out of the way of being saved, or having the reasonable hope of it; for still I must say, you are not to expect a new gospel, that God will save you without those necessary pre-requisites to salvation, without repentance, without faith, without conversion, and without sanctification. And therefore in the last place,

Direction 12. That which I would lastly add, by way of direction to this sort of persons is, that you would see to it, that though hope in these cases must not be thrown away, that yet it be qualified with such concomi-

tants as are proper and suitable in such a case. They are such as these; I will but name them, that the next time my discourse may directly respect the other case, that of perseverance.

1. *Prayer*. Your hope in such a case as this must always be accompanied with prayer. It must be praying, supplicating hope. It is suitable to your case, if you hope to pray; and never hope without prayer. When we are exhorted to take to ourselves the "helmet," which we are told "is the hope of salvation," it is presently subjoined, "praying always with all prayer and supplication." Eph. vi. 17. with 1 Cor. v. 8. These must be conjunct; if we hope, we must continue to pray. Give yourselves to prayer, to all prayer and supplication, otherwise we do (as much as possible) blast all our hope, and it can never be an helmet to us; it will betray our head, not cover it, not protect it.

2. *Deep Humility*. Join deep humility with your hope. Let it be humble hope. Such an one should "put his mouth in the dust, if there might be any hope." Lam. iii. 29. And,

3. *Self Loathing*. Join with it self-loathing, self-abhorrence; not only of yourselves as mean creatures, but as vile and odious; and yet hope, join hope with that self-abasing temper, self-loathing of the Publican: then will your sense be, (as his,) "God be merciful to me a sinner," who it is said at last went away justified and accepted. If you be fair in your own eyes, if your sense be that of the Laodicean Church, "I am rich, and increased in goods, and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and blind, and naked;" you have no place in you for that hope that will do you any good; but such self-reviling thoughts, "If I were perfect, yet would I not know my own soul, I would despise my life;" how well doth hope do in such a tempered spirit as this? How suitable a soil is this for that heavenly hope to grow and flourish in? And,

4. *Watchfulness*. Join to your hope watchfulness and vigilancy. Watchfulness may respect both God and yourselves. Watchfulness respecting God is exercised in continual looking towards him: when shall that happy time come? when shall any beam of light descend? when shall any influence of grace flow in? Watchfulness respecting yourselves is exercised in watching over a treacherous heart: and know, that whenever you are to design such a

thing, as your own salvation, and so accordingly to hope for it, a main and principal, and immediate object of your hope must be, that you shall be saved from yourselves; and thereupon indeed, it is a most self-contradicting hope, to hope I shall be saved, without hoping that sin shall be overcome. I shall gain the conquest at last over predominating corrupt inclinations, whether more grossly sensual ones, or whether avaricious ones, or ambitious ones, and the like; for do not you know, that our Lord Jesus Christ hath therefore his name of Jesus, a Saviour, because he was to save his people from their sins: and do you think you shall be saved, without being saved from yourselves, your sinful selves? This is to hope you shall be saved without salvation; this is to hope with such an hope, as wherewith you shall tear a thing from itself, to hope you shall be saved without being saved. If ever you are to be saved, you are to be saved from yourselves; and therefore, yourselves are to be the great object of your watchfulness, your continual vigilancy; watching over yourselves, as your worst and most dangerous enemy. I am to fear hell from myself, death from myself, a curse from myself; and lest I be a continual spring of all misery and woe to myself, there must be a continual watchfulness over ourselves, to repress all ebullitions of corrupt nature at the first. Oh! this lustful heart! This proud heart! This ambitious heart! This sensual heart! A severe self-inspection into, and watchfulness over ourselves, is that which must be in conjunction with hope. Watch and hope, be sober and hope to the end. That spiritual sobriety carries vigilancy in it, a continual watchfulness over yourselves. And again,

5. *Patience.* This hope must be accompanied with patience. Doth not the context tell you so? "We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." God is not bound to your time, he hath not come in yet; suppose he do not strike that stroke upon your heart this day, that is necessary to your being saved. Why hope that he will the next day, or the next after that, "If we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it." "Blessed is he that watcheth at the doors," that waiteth at the posts of wisdom's gates; "for he that findeth me, findeth life, and shall obtain favour from the Lord." Prov. viii. 34, 35. I have not met with him that is to be the life of my soul yet; but I will wait, I will miss no opportunity, I will be always at the posts of wisdom's door, I may find

him at last, who will be the life of my soul; and there all my hopes and all my concernments are involved and wrapt up together. And in the last place,

6. *Diligence.* You must join diligence with hope; an industrious, laborious diligence. It must be a working, operative hope, like that of the husbandman, who ploweth in hope, and soweth in hope, that he may be partaker of his hope, as the Apostle's allusion is; so must you, as to this spiritual husbandry in which you must be engaged, you must strive in hope, and labour in hope. And if yours be not an hope that will put you upon striving and labouring, it is a dead hope, an useless hope; and such as can contribute nothing to your salvation. And so I have done with those directions that are requisite as to the former sort, the unregenerate and unconverted; the next will respect the other sort, and their case, to wit, that of converts, so as to influence their perseverance unto salvation.

SERMON XXV.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

THE order of discourse upon this subject hath brought me now at length to say somewhat, by way of direction, to those, who, being regenerate, and turned to God, are on their way towards him. That the principle of hope, which doth more especially belong to their regenerate state, may be improved by them, to their cheerful and more comfortable progress through the whole of their course and way to their end. We having spoken by way of direction to a former sort, and to a former case, to wit, to direct how hope may be improved, in order to conversion and regeneration itself: nor am I solicitous, that the course I have taken upon this subject hath obliged me to be long upon it; for I both consider the great importance of the subject, which I cannot but know as you, any of you may, and must, when you seriously bethink yourselves of it. And also, I know not, that any have purposely and designedly treated

* Preached October 18, 1691.

upon this subject; that is, to shew the necessary influence of hope upon the whole business of a Christian's life, from first and last, from the beginning of it, till it end in eternal life.

I shall repeat nothing of what hath been said by way of direction, in reference to the former case, to wit, to persons yet unregenerate, what improvement is to be made of hope in order to their regeneration, and their being born of God; to which nothing is more plain, than that it would never be, but as even then they begin to have hope God-ward. But my present and remaining business is to shew the continual influence that hope may be improved unto for a Christian's progress, to help on those that are regenerate, and born to God, in their way to him. That so, upon the whole matter, you may see the new creature, it is from first to last a creature (as it were) made up of hope; its very make and constitution are suited to the state which it is successively made for. In this present state, while its great supports do lie in unseen and expected good things, there cannot but be a continual exercise of hope necessary from first to last; but in the other state, hope naturally turns into joy; when the things that were before matter of expectation, are now come to be the matter of actual fruition. In the meantime, its make and frame suit it to the present state of its case. That whereas, such as were before strangers and aliens to God, in a state of apostacy from him, they begin to be prompted and stirred up to look after God; as soon as any such instinct is put into them, it is put into them in a way of hope.

God hath a design in hand to restore and recover apostate creatures; saith the soul, I own myself to be such an one; I am miserable, and lost for ever, if I do not return to God, and if God accept me not. I have hope I shall: I have hope he will. And so the soul is (as it were) begotten to God, even by the power of hope; and being reconciled, the great remaining expectation is, of being saved, of being brought to a safe and happy state at last. Hope runs through the course of such a converted, regenerate soul, even to the attainment of its end, which is actual salvation.

And whereas the gospel is the great and stated means by which souls are, both begotten unto God, and enabled to adhere and cleave to him, even to the end; where that gospel hath long been, there is great reason to think that God had much such work to do; many such blessed effects to

bring about upon souls ; and that much such work is done : that with us, God hath touched many souls, turned many hearts, implanted that new and divine principle in many, that will certainly end at last in eternal life. It is not to be thought (or at least one would be very loth to think or imagine such a thing) that a bright, and blissful heaven should have been opened among us, so long, so continually, by the gospel, whose design it is to bring life and immortality to light, that we, amidst all the impurities, and darkness, and wretchedness, of this our present state, should have such a glorious prospect given us, and set before our eyes ; heaven opened in all the glories of it, (as in the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ it is ;) and that we, after all this, should agree in it as our common sense, and sentiment, that it is better always to dwell in this dungeon, so as to have no aspirings, no hope, directed upward, towards that glorious state of things ; one would be loth (I say) to admit such an apprehension as this ; that this should be our common sentiment ; that it is better to dwell in a dungeon always, than amidst all that divine light and glory above, whither we are called, and whereupon the hope of our calling doth finally terminate ; yea, and though we know that the dungeon is to fall upon us ere it be long, and that they who have effected that dwelling, must certainly be overwhelmed with its ruin. It is meet for us to judge that there are sundry, whose souls God hath, by the power of his gospel animated by his Spirit, possessed with another sense.

And if there be many such, or any such, that are looking higher, that have their expectations and hopes placed upon some other sorts of things, things of an higher excellency and value than this lower creation can afford ; the greatest care imaginable then must be had, that their hope be kept alive in strength and vigour ; if it fail, if it should languish, if it were possible it should, and it were ever so certain, that it should never expire and fail ; yet means must be used, that it may not ; but (I say) if it should fail, (and the dread ought to be upon our spirits, that it may not fail, that it may never fail ;) then are such poor creatures*ingulphed again, sunk in, and swallowed up by the spirit of this world ; and so exposed, and left to be involved with it in its fearful ruin. That it may not be so, and because it shall not be so with those that do peculiarly belong to God, and are the children of the kingdom, begotten to the eternal heavenly inheritance ; all endeavours must be used that

hope may be preserved and kept alive in them. And in order to it, pray take these following directions.

Direction 1. See that your spirits be deeply and seriously engaged, and taken up in the meditation of that glorious state of things which you profess finally to hope for, and which you expect should be your eternal state. See (I say) that your spirits be deeply exercised in meditation of that glorious state of things. The way to keep hope alive, is to keep its glorious, blessed object in view. The hope of the greatest things imaginable can never live, or be influential in any of us, if we do not preserve the remembrance, and have not the actual thoughts of them. If there be such a thing as the habit of hope yet left, it will be a languishing thing, and afford us no support; it will be as dead within us, if we have not frequent views of the glorious object of it; if we do not look towards that object, take it in its comprehension, and compass even the whole state of things, that we expect and hope for as our final and eternal state. ✓

I pray, let us labour, not only to realize, but familiarize to ourselves the unseen world. It is a shame that we should be called Christians, and that our thoughts should be taken up chiefly, and principally, about things that are seen. Christian hope lies beyond and above those things: we forfeit our names while we confine our thoughts so much to that which is present and sensible. If in this life only, we have hope in Christ, as Christians, we make ourselves the most miserable of creatures; we are made up of contradictions, we are in a continual war with ourselves, we do not act and carry it so consistently with ourselves as other men do, who do not pretend to Christianity; we are more miserable than they.

And, that I may the more fruitfully enlarge upon this, as, that without which our hope is a languid and insignificant thing, and in a direct way to be reduced to nothing; let me desire you to give compass and scope to your thoughts about the invisible world, and the expected state of things, which is to be the great and final object of your hope. The context, which hath so immediate reference thereunto, would afford you very great help for the managing and directing your thoughts in the contemplation of the invisible state. You see it is spoken of a little before the text, under the notion of glory; a glorious state, a state of glory. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be

revealed in us," verse 18. And that glory is spoken of under the notion of an inheritance. They that are the regenerate sons of God, and now actually under the government of the Divine Spirit which begot them unto God; they that are so children, are also heirs, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," verse 17. "That after having suffered awhile with him, they may be also glorified together with him." As to the invisible world, (that happy part of it, where "the heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ," have their eternal concerns lying,) that happy part of it is to be looked upon as a region of glory, all glory. And that you may give latitude and scope to your thoughts about this, which is the very hope of your calling, the final hope of it, I pray consider such things as these more particularly concerning it. Considerations to enforce this first direction.

1. Contemplate the vast amplitude of that glorious region, where you (if you be regenerate, and born of God, and heirs of the celestial kingdom) are to have your everlasting abode. Think (I say) seriously and often of the vast amplitude of it, that you may give scope and room to your thoughts; it is mean to be confined in our apprehensions of things to this little spot of our earth, wherein we breathe; think if you were ascending from it, if you were ascended but a little way, into how vastly larger, and more spacious, and roomy a region do you come but by a little ascent; but if you were ascended as high as our vortex, as the utmost confines of this vortex of ours, to which this earth, and the sun, and moon, and other planets do belong; how inconsiderable a point is all this earth, in comparison of that vortex to which all these do belong? But if you were beyond that, beyond that circuit and those confines within which all this planetary region is limited; then how vastly spacious are all the supernal heavens above the regions in which the sun, and moon, and other planets, do move? So as we are even lost in the thoughts whither we should then go; and it is pleasant to be so lost.

And to consider how despicable a nothing this earth of ours is in comparison; so as it may be lost, it may be consumed, and burnt up, and that it is an insignificant thing to the universe; no more than the burning of one single little cottage would be in a vast empire, containing two hundred and twenty-seven provinces as Ahasuerus's did; one that is an heir of heaven, and of the inheritance of the saints in light, when he thinks of the burning of this world, may say

what is it to me? my concernments lie not here, it is a despicable, inconsiderable trifle; it is no more loss to the creation, and no more loss to me, than the dropping of an hair, one single hair. Labour to aggrandize to yourselves so much as this comes to, of the object of your hope; to wit, to consider the vast amplitude of the region of glory: we must think with ourselves, that as to what doth more subside in this creation is baser and meaner, fitter for baser and meaner inhabitants; it is but a very little inconsiderable part, in comparison of the ample and spacious regions of the encircling heavens above, that seem all appropriated to the heirs of the eternal kingdom. And then,

2. When you are laying before your eyes the object of your hope, that that may be lively and strong in you; consider too the numerous multitude of the inhabitants of those glorious regions, or, to speak collectively of that region of glory. It is true, in this little inconsiderable world of ours, we find the inhabitants are generally very numerous, (as there will be more occasion to speak bye and bye;) but, alas, what is this little perishable thing, (this world of ours,) to the universe? And it is a very unreasonable foolish thought to think the nobler parts of the creation of God to be less destitute of inhabitants than our earth is. Do but turn up a clod of earth, and you see every little clod inhabited with somewhat or other that hath life in it, little insects and *animacula* that have life in them. It is a foolish thought, to think that the nobler parts of the creation of God should be less full of inhabitants, though still meaner the nearer this earth; but if you ascend higher, you are to suppose all filled with living inhabitants; and (as we have reason to apprehend) with creatures innocent and upright with God, angel-like creatures.

It is true many angels fell, many, if you consider them abstractedly; but take them comparatively, and we have no reason to think but that they were a very small part of the host of heaven, in comparison with them that stood, and retained their integrity; and if the upper regions be replenished with innocent creatures, full of the love of God, and of the knowledge of God, and who stand in absolute devotedness to him; then you must consider the blessed society, the society of the blessed, to be a most numerous thing. The innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of men made perfect; so that the angels that have fallen, and the apostate sons of men that shall not be recovered, and that finally persist in enmity against all the

methods of reconciliation, though they will be numerous, yet a little inconsiderable number they must be, in comparison of all those glorious creatures that inhabit the more noble parts of God's creation : and it would make a man's hope revive, and spring, and flourish mightily in him, to think of being ere long one of that vast and numerous assembly, that blessed glorious assembly, the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect. And,

3. Consider, again, the high and admirable perfection of these blessed creatures, of whom you are to be one ; their bodily perfections, (which are not nothing,) and their mental spiritual perfections, which are incomparably more, are to be considered. As to the former, the words immediately foregoing the text, do directly cast back our thoughts upon them, upon those perfections that are more properly corporeal, and that belong to the body : not only they, (that is the rest of the creation,) but ourselves also, which have received the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting (which carries hope in it as you do well know) for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies ; for we are saved by hope. We that now dwell in these bodies so cumbersome, so tiresome, that are such an annoyance to us, and so great a depression to us ; we are hoping, hoping for a time and state of things when these bodies are to have an entire, complete redemption from every thing which is gravenious and burthensome to them, and by which they are gravenious to our spirits, to ourselves ; and it is by the hope of this, that we are saved. Here we are depressed and sunk very low ; these bodies are prisons and dungeons to us ; they are so, but we are saved by that hope of the day of our redemption ; the redemption of our bodies, which is also the day of our adoption, or solemn adoption.

I have told you upon this occasion formerly, of a double adoption among the Romans, private and public. It is the public adoption that is here referred to. In the private, every good soul is adopted when it is regenerate ; but the public adoption, or the manifestation of the sons of God, (as it is afterwards called,) it is referred unto that day when all are to be visibly invested with their glorious bodies, conformed to the glorious body of our Lord Jesus Christ. To have such an agility of body as that, it shall never be a clog ; such refined spirits that will never cloud our thoughts, that will never obstruct the notions of the soul.

And that shall be, with respect of aptitude, to speedy motion so little cumbersome, that, as Austin's celebrated expression is, *ubi voluerit animus, ibi protinus erit corpus* ; wheresoever the mind wills or wishes to be, there the body shall be in a moment. Its motions, and (for ought we know,) its texture, (as that of the sun beams,) gliding as quick as a thought, this way, or that ; and (for ought we know) as fine ; it being very easy to make the grossest earth as fine as the purest ether, to him that made all things out of nothing ; and since chemistry performs a great deal this way by human art, much more may divine.

So as that these bodies that we are afterwards to inhabit, are said to be from heaven, the terrestrial to be all gone ; for in this we groan, " earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house that is from heaven." 2 Cor. v. 2. All of apiece with heaven, contempered unto heaven, the earthly house of this tabernacle, changed into such an one.

2. And it is very material, and seems to be glanced at in that which is said by our Saviour ; " The righteous shall shine as the sun, in the kingdom of their Father." Matt. xiii. 43. The sun in the firmament is (as it were) the resemblance of a glorified body, and how near it may be of the same materials we cannot tell, all our earth being refined into so pure and celestial a matter. And,

3. And then, if you consider again the spiritual and mental perfections (which is incomparably a great thing) of the happy members of this glorious, blessed, numerous society. There you must understand his knowledge in perfection, his holiness in perfection, and his love in perfection. It cannot be expected that in this subject, I could stay to dilate upon every one ; but it is a great thing to think of the matter of our own hope in this : I hope to be one of them, I hope to be such a creature, inhabiting such a mind, in such a body, to be one of those *Isangeloi*, (as they are called,) angels' fellows, equal to the angels of God : Oh ! that we should have such things as these in view, and obvious to our thoughts, and yet have no thoughts about them, or few thoughts about them ! Live with minds (as it were) confined to this earth, and continually grovelling in the dust of it ! This is mean, this is dishonourable to our Father, who hath begotten us to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance ; and it is most injurious to ourselves. To think that I shall have a mind, a spirit ere it be long, (as mean and abject a thing as I now am,) all (as it were) composed, and made

up of knowledge, and of purity, and of love ; what a glorious thing is that ? And that I shall have a spirit inhabiting a body, (since I was made to join with a body,) that shall be no hindrance, no burthensome thing to me, no tedious, irksome, companion to all eternity. And again,

4. Consider about this state, the universal harmony that must hereupon be in all this glorious, blessed society, as vastly numerous and extensive as it is through the spacious heavens, those regions of light and bliss : come wherever one will, the same order universally obtaining every where ; all animated by one and the same spirit ; for they “ that sow to the Spirit, shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” Gal. vi. 8. That immense almighty Spirit (as the living creature in the wheels) acting in every mind, be they ever so numerous, and never so vastly extended through the regions of light and bliss ; all everlastingly under the dominion of the same blessed, almighty, and omnipresent Spirit ; so that there is here among them, wheresoever they be, not one dissentient thought ; all have the same sentiment, the same mind, the same inclination, and all centre in one and the same design : no jarring, no disagreement, no darkness, no obscurity, no error, much more no animosity, having the least place in any member of that glorious society. And again,

5. Consider the glorious visible residence of our great Redeemer among them, who can render himself every where present, and every where appearing in conspicuous glory. How grateful and entertaining a thought must that be to them, who love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, that they are to be for ever with the Lord, when that happy season comes, that the Lord descends with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God ; and the dead in Christ are first raised and caught up into the clouds, and do meet their Redeemer in the air, then are they ever with the Lord. 1 Thess. iv. 16, 17. never out of his company, though their company be so vastly numerous and great ; for he is the head of all principalities and powers, the head of all things to the church ; and yet he must be every where present to every one, for they are all to be ever with the Lord. And when so much is plainly enough expressed and declared to us, we need never trouble ourselves to think how it shall be ; he that we know to have done so great things already, can easily add to this all the rest ; make himself present to those vastly numerous, innumerable

myriads of glorious creatures, that do every where delight in his presence, and cannot but eternally do so.

And to this also, the context here refers us, still leading us to the final object of our hope; they are to be the heirs of the eternal glory, as their inheritance; they are to be "joint heirs with Christ," they are to inherit with Christ, "and, after having suffered with him, are to be glorified together with him," verse 17; after we have suffered awhile; he and we having been suffering together, he and we shall be glorified together. And to the same purpose is that admirable contexture of discourse; 2 Cor. v. from the beginning of the chapter to the 8th verse; but I cannot stay to run it over with you. Take notice, I pray you, what you find there, in that 8th verse; we are confident, (saith he,) and willing rather to be absent from the body, (this terrestrial body,) not any body at all, not altogether to be unclothed, but to be clothed upon; this terrestrial body being reformed, refined, clarified into another thing: for that body we are now in, this terrestrial body, we covet rather to be absent from it, and to be present with the Lord. According to that, Phil. i. 23. I desire rather to be "dissolved and be with Christ, which is far better." We are to be in his presence, and to have him present among us, as soon as we are loose from this base, mean thing, this vile body that we are now linked, and clogged with. And the expressions are very observable, that are used in the mentioned place, 2 Cor. v. The words used, signify to be peopled with, or unpeopled, or dispeopled from. The expression of being present with the Lord, doth intimate the Lord our blessed Redeemer to be the head, the president of that dis-peopled sort of people, whose dwelling is not with flesh; they do not inhabit and dwell in such bodies as those are, in which we now dwell; and I long (saith he) to be dis-peopled from this bodily sort of people; and to be taken into the communion of that people that dwell out of such bodies with the Lord; to be peopled with that people, of which he is the immediate, visible, glorious, head; there I long to be. I would fain be absent from this body. I desire it rather, I choose it as a more desirable thing, to be dis-peopled from this bodied sort of people; and to be peopled with them, to make one amongst them, who do people the glorious regions above, which are peopled with another sort of inhabitants, and with them do I covet and hope to dwell, and long to dwell. And then,

6. Consider too the divine presence universally reple-

nishing all, for in that everlasting state God is himself to be immediately all in all; and so all to be universally transformed into the image of that bright glory, which shines upon them from his blessed face, and all to inhabit that one and the same divine presence, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are "pleasures for evermore." Psalm xvi. last verse. Oh! for such mean creatures as we, to have such a thing in hope, to make one in that glorious, celestial community, among whom, the blessed eternal God shall, by immediate communication, be all in all to every one! Every soul as full of God, as it can hold, and be made capable of beholding unspeakably more, than we can now so much as conceive of; for the design is in our present state, (and very much by the influence of hope,) here to have us refining, and be made more capacious and larger vessels of glory. They that are to be vessels of mercy first, are to be vessels of glory afterwards; here they are to be gradually greatened and enlarged, (and very much by the influence of hope,) in order to their being more receptive vessels, that they may hold more, and be capable of larger and fuller communications from that immense fulness, that filleth all in all. And hereupon,

7. Consider the high satisfaction that every one of those blessed creatures must have in himself, for there is to be a glory revealed in us, (as a little above the text.) The context is full of accounts of the final object of our hopes, and gives us frequent occasion to consider what it imports, and carries with it; "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Every one of these glorious creatures, is to be glorious within. As it is said of the king's daughter, the spouse of Christ, "She is all glorious within." Psalm xlv. "She will be perfectly so; for he gave himself for his church, to sanctify it, and to cleanse it, and to present it a glorious church, without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing." Ephes. v. 25, 26, 27. And sanctification is implied to be the very beginning of that glory the foundation of it. That glory consists in perfect sanctification. He gave himself for it, to sanctify and make it a glorious church; every one of it is then a glorious creature, and eternally glorious, by glory revealed in the divine image shining in him, in perfect and consummate glory. That image which stands all in knowledge, and holiness, in the greatest amiableness, loveliness, and love that is possible.

How infinitely satisfying must such an one's own frame,

and the complexion and temper of his own mind, be to himself, when, through a boundless and immense eternity, one shall never have occasion to reflect upon one disorderly thought, or say I wish that thought had never been thought; never have occasion to reflect upon one irregular wish! Oh! the holy order and rectitude that will be within, when every faculty and every power shall be under the dominion of that Almighty Spirit of divine light and grace; when it shall be as impossible to be the author of one wrong, or misplaced thought, as it would be to any of us to be the author of another world, of a world that should be excentrical to this! What a satisfaction is this, and must be, when a person shall so everlastingly agree with himself, as to have no war within him, nothing of reluctance, nothing of contrariety, against what he knows to be equal, and congruous, and fit, and comely; but every thing just as it should be. And then, thereupon,

8. The mighty complacency that such must take in one another; the everlasting complacencies that they must take in one another, when they are all alike, not equal; it is plain enough there will be different orders; but all alike, all of one mind, all of one sentiment, all conspiring in one and the same design. And then consider,

9. The pleasantness of their perpetual work, wherein they are all to be united; to wit, joyful and everlasting adoration; every one pleased with another, upon this account, that he knows him to be pleased with exalting God and the Lamb, for ever, and ever; when every one knows his fellow to have the same pleasure that he hath in prostration, in falling down before the throne, in ascribing all praise, and dominion, and glory, to him that lives for ever, and ever; the eternal Godhead, Father, Son, and Spirit. When the comeliness and equity of the thing recommends itself so fully to every mind, and all agree in one sense. "Worthy art thou, O Lord, to receive blessing, and power, and dominion, for ever, and ever," and all say Amen, all proclaim their joyful Amen. The vast and spacious heavens continually resounding with this sort of melody, all giving their joyful, grateful Amens, to one and the same thing. And this eternity goes on, never wearisome, never grievous; because all this employment, and the exercise is so suitable to the complexion of every one's mind, none can ever disagree to it, and all things do conspire, and concur to make these associates in bliss, and glory, and adoration, the most grateful company to one another. We ex-

perience something what pleasure and sweetness there is in conversing with such as are wise, and learned, and good, when these things are in conjunction ; but when they are in perfection, in absolute perfection, Oh, the pleasure that will be taken in being associated with such ones ! Lastly,

10. The perfect assurances that all have of the perpetuity of their state, and that there shall never be an end of it. “ The light afflictions that are but for a moment work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ;” it can never lose its weight ; there will be no detraction, no diminution from it, to eternity. Therefore there is an impossibility, an utter impossibility that ever there should be a cessation.

And that is one direction to this purpose, to keep alive this hope, contemplate much, and as distinctly, and with as clear and formed thoughts as you can, the glorious object of it, the final and eternal state ; and be ashamed of having such things in view, and of having so few, so unfrequent, and dull, and sluggish, thoughts about such things.

SERMON XXVI.*

ROMANS, viii. 24.

We are saved by hope.

BUT now go on with the further directions that are to be given for the mentioned end.

Direction 2. That we compare with that expected heavenly state the present state wherein we are ; and with the blessedness of the one, the wretchedness of the other. For if there be any ground for a better hope, there is nothing more likely to awaken it, (supposing we have such a ground before our eyes,) than to have our spirits effectually stung with the sense of the present evils wherewith we are beset, and with which we are continually infested. If we like our present state well, there is no place for hope, no room for it, or if it can have any place, it can have no effect ;

* Preached, October 25, 1691.

it will be a very faint, languishing hope, that we shall have for another state, if we are very well pleased with that wherein we are already; and therefore, as to our present state, we should bethink ourselves, and consider, whether, having such a future one in view as hath been represented already, as the ultimate, final object of our hope, we have reason to take up with that wherein we already are.

And this we are manifestly led to by the context, which, when the text tells us, "We are saved by hope," doth conjunctly tell us, what the present state of our case is, in a twofold respect; in respect of this world, in which we live; and in respect of these bodies, to which we are now confined. The former whereof draws our thoughts to consider the remoter evils which do beset us; and the latter, those nearer and more pressing evils which are closely and continually urgent upon us.

1. In reference to the state of this world, can we think it a covetable thing, long to continue in such a world as this, when we have any ground in view, of a better hope, or the object of a better, represented to us? See how the state of the world is represented in what goes before, and which the text refers unto, that is, the creature (this inferior creation it must mean) is all subjected unto vanity, and is all groaning under the bondage of corruption, and travailing in pain together, until now. This being the case in this respect, saith the Apostle, "We are saved by hope." We are here ingulphed in a world of miseries and sorrows; and all things round about, they are (as it were) in one degree, or another, under a pressure and languor; do not we behold the creation drooping? This lower world in which we are, may be seen (as it were) hanging the head, that a languishment is upon all things, the shadow of death hovering over all in every part, and yet subjected unto this state in hope; hope being in reference to the inanimate or irrational part to be understood but objectively. It is subjected to this state of things, but in hope; there being a prospect that it shall be redeemed, shall be recovered, so as to partake of the glorious liberty of the sons of God, whose manifestation doth approach. Now, when all this world is hoping for a better state of things, shall not we hope? We that have received the first fruits of the Spirit, as it afterwards follows: or what? is impurity, misery, and wretchedness, become so much our element, that we are content to live still there, whilst all things are (as it were) expressing a sense round about us, groaning and travailing; and

we pleased, we only pleased, to remain in such a state as this is ? But to look upon the state of things in this world, more particularly.

(1.) We find it replenished with inhabitants, over whom, Satan hath universal dominion ; he is called the god of this world, (the usurping god of it,) the "spirit that works in the hearts of the children of disobedience." 2 Cor. iv. 6, and Eph. ii. beginning ; as you know the scripture speaks in those places I refer unto. This is that which puts the world into paroxysms every where ; it is under the power of the great destroyer, the Abaddon, the Apollyon, he, whose business it is to destroy, to tear all to pieces, as much as in him is. And hence, by consequence,

(2.) We find this world to be replenished with inhabitants full of atheism, and enmity against their Sovereign, and rightful Lord. All affecting to be without God in the world. And,

(3.) They are full of all unrighteousness, malignity, deceit, envy, wrath, as experience shews, from age to age, and from generation to generation ; and never more than in this age. A world replenished with inhabitants, that are tearing one another to pieces every where, as they can have opportunity ; such an account as is given of the inhabitants of this world, (Rom. i. latter end,) how exactly doth it suit the present state of things ? And indeed, the ordinary state, more or less, in all times and ages ? And again,

(4.) They are still more liable to disturbance from it, who would have least to do with it ; to wit, those that are most intent upon wickedness, every where are most mischievous to them who have any savour or impression of goodness upon them, so that it is to them that are such a very hell. It is to themselves very much their own element. The world is such as they make it themselves, and in very great part affect to have it ; but to them that have received an impression from above, and are begotten with a principle that suited them to be inhabitants of another world, it is of all others most troublesome, mischievous, and disquieting, to them ; and therefore, they of all others have much the more reason to be weary of it, and to cherish the hope (when they have any ground for it) of being in a better state, a better world, ere it be long. And if we lastly consider,

(5.) The dreadful ruin that will befall this world, in the tract of time, and before a perfectly good state can obtain or have any place ; now much soever things may be better

in the meantime ; yet there is an universal ruin to be before there can be a perfect and thorough restoration. And the world is groaning, and travailing in pangs, and will be, more or less so, even to that end, that consummation of things, that day, when all is to be (as it were) purged with fire, “ and pass away with a great noise.” “ When the heavens shall be rolled up as a scroll, (these lower heavens,) and the elements melt with fervent heat, and the earth, with all things therein, be consumed and burnt up.” 2 Peter iii. Notwithstanding all such ruin, we look “ for a new heavens, and a new earth ;” according to God’s own promise, we look for new heavens, and a new earth, a new universe (as it were) composed, and made up of heaven and earth, wherein righteousness shall dwell. Now the wretched state of things, in the meantime, should mightily sublimite, and heighten, and invigorate the hope of that glorious state, that is to be expected afterwards. And then, if we consider,

2. The nearer, and more closely pressing evils that are upon us, as we are in such bodies, as these we do now inhabit, and dwell in, even that should mightily enliven hope, and put it upon a more vigorous exercise, for those are the evils that we are stung with continually ; and to these we find there is a more immediate reference, in what goes before the text, not only they, (the rest of the creation which are, by an elegant rhetorical *prosopopeia*, represented as having sense, and having hope ; a sense of the present evils, and a hope of a better state, not only they,) “ but we ourselves also (verse 23,) who have received the first fruits of the Spirit ; even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption ; to wit, the redemption of our bodies ; for we are saved by hope.” These are the next following words : not only they, not the rest of the creation only ; but we ourselves also, (much more, it must be understood,) who have received the first fruits of the Spirit, do groan, waiting for the adoption, that is, the manifestation of the sons of God, mentioned before in the 19th verse, when our adoption shall be declared, when the sons of God shall look like themselves, and like their Father, whereas now they look very unlike him. It is as if the Apostle had said, Do you think they shall always dwell so meanly as now they do ? No ; they are waiting for the adoption. What is that ? To wit, the redemption of the body ; the time when their bodies shall be redeemed from under all the evils by which they are now, continually, from time to time infested, and

by which, they are debased, and made mean, and vile, as they are called "vile bodies," Phil. iii. 28, or the bodies of our humiliation. As if he should have said, What? Do you think that the sons of God, when they are manifested, and declared to be his sons, shall dwell so meanly as now they do, in such cottages as these, such vile bodies as these? No; we groan within ourselves, (under the present pressures, while we are in these bodies,) waiting for the adoption; to wit, the redemption of our bodies from under all those evils that make them so mean and inglorious things, and so unsuitable to the state of the sons of God. And if we consider those nearer evils, which partly we suffer in these bodies, that is, whereof they are the immediate subjects, and which partly we suffer by our being in them, they ought to have that pungency with them to our sense, as to awaken hope in us, if there be any such thing, and if we have any ground of it in view.

1. For the former sort of these evils, which we suffer in these bodies, to wit, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; truly, while we have the prospect of a better state than that, and the hope of it in view, it is mean, and vile, and unworthy, not to have that hope of it live, and be often excited, and raised up in us; for what infirm things are these bodies? How much infirmity do they suffer in themselves? How are these earthly tabernacles shattered from day, to day? Shaken with agues, burnt with fevers, drowned with dropsies, harrassed and torn in pieces with stones, stranguries, cholics, and such kind of painful diseases? Though these are lesser things, they are not nothing. The sons of God are to wait in hope, and with groans, (groans full of hope, not of despair,) for the adoption; that is, the redemption of these bodies, and are in great part to be saved by this hope; it is the hope of a better state, even in this respect, which must draw us off from the present bodily state.

What we feel is not enough, if we do not hope too, for though we feel very great grievances and pressures in these bodies, which they themselves are the immediate subjects of; yet, notwithstanding, we are so much naturally in love with this flesh, and this bodily state, that we shall rather endure all this, than change, if we have not a better hope in view; if our souls be not erected, and raised up within us, to consider, What! I was not made for an eternal inhabitation in such a body as this; and though I am to be patient of an abode in it, I must not be fond of it; I must

endure it, but not take pleasure in it, when I know it belongs to me as an inheritance; and as I am an adopted one, one of God's sons, to be otherwise provided for, in point of habitation hereafter. "We know, that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;" and therefore "we groan within ourselves, not to be unclothed, but clothed upon." They are not so much groans of sense, as of hope: though they are excited, and raised by sense at first, they are heightened and improved by hope. If it were not for hope, we should groan like beasts under such a burden; but when we have so great hope in view before us, that doth quite change the nature of these groans, and maketh them, not only rational, but holy ones; groans of men, and groans of saints, to wit, for such a bodily state, or such a state, as to these bodies, as wherein we shall be more capable of serving and enjoying the blessed God for ever, the great object of our worship and hope. But then,

2. For the evils which we suffer by our being in these bodies, they are of a far higher nature than those that we suffer immediately in them, or whereof they are the immediate subjects themselves. How mighty an influence hath the very temper of these bodies upon our minds, to pervert, corrupt, and deprave them, to bring in upon us, and to continue and renew from time to time in us, whatsoever is most pernicious and prejudicial to the nature, and the proper, and the genuine operations of an intelligent, immortal spirit. For,

(1.) It is by our being in these bodies, that our minds are diverted from those noble employments and exercises, wherein we should be continually taken up about higher things; these very bodily senses, which let in divine light and glory upon us, let in vanity, and befool and betray us from day to day; so that we have cause to complain, (as a worthy person whom I knew did,) Oh! how are we deafened by these ears of ours? and how are we blinded by these eyes of ours? that we cannot hear the voice of God calling us to heaven, to his eternal kingdom and glory; that we cannot behold the divine light that shines through all things! How are we, by these very senses of ours, made insensible, may we truly say? To our very tastes, the best and most valuable things are rendered tasteless, and without savour and relish to us. This is what we do immediately owe to these very bodies, and our bodily abode,

our being confined for this time to these bodies. And again,

(2.) Not only are our minds diverted, but darkened by an influence from these very bodies, in very great measure, so as that all our apprehensions of things, which are of a spiritual and divine nature, they have a terrene tincture upon them; our thoughts are gross, our conceptions are carnal, they smell and savour of the earth in which we dwell, and which makes up our house and habitation for us, incloseth these intelligent, immortal spirits of ours. While it encloses them, it imparts a terrene tincture to them, and makes all our thoughts and conceptions of things gross, earthly, and carnal, like themselves, in which these souls of ours are rather indeed prisoners than inhabitants. And,

(3.) Hence it is also, that our affections become alienated from divine and spiritual things, and in so great a measure, dead to them. The things of this earth we can savour, bodily things we can affect, we can love them, we can desire them, we can delight in them; but things that are of a divine and heavenly nature, towards these we are all dead. A total death passeth, and binds every affection of our souls, till divine grace comes to shew what miracles it can work. Saith God, I can make a clod of clay love me, I can put the tincture of heaven even upon earth itself. Till (I say) a divine, almighty power be exerted, every thing that is of a spiritual and heavenly nature will be disaffected perpetually by us. I can taste no sweetness in any such thing, might the poor soul be forced to say, even from its own continual experience, and often renewed trials of itself. They that are after the flesh, will only savour the things of the flesh, and not the things of the Spirit: and it is only the exertion of Almighty power, by the Divine Spirit, that gives victory to our spirits, so as that they shall not be always under the dominion of the fleshly principle; where these spirits come to recover their own dominion, where light, and reason, and judgment, come to be efficacious, and to have their proper power and government restored.

It is by the influence of the Divine Almighty Spirit, that any are regenerated into this state, otherwise we should be mere compositions of flesh, and nothing else, as is expressed concerning the state of unregenerate men, compared with the state that they are brought into by regeneration. "That which is born of the flesh, is flesh;" (speaking of whole human nature,) it is but flesh; "but that which is born of the

Spirit, is spirit." John iii. 6. There is nothing in us (as it were) that doth deserve the name of spirit, till such time as the regenerating power of the Divine Spirit comes to be exerted, and put forth in us: that, indeed, will create something in us that is fit to be called spirit. "That which is born of the Spirit, is spirit:" there is spirit producing, and spirit produced; otherwise, and not till then, a man deserves to be called nothing but a lump of flesh, and so towards things that are spiritual and divine, there is no inclination at all. But then,

(4.) There is strong and unitive propension in these souls of ours, and by their abode in this flesh, to those things that are terrene and carnal, of a nature like their own. And that completes the wretchedness of our case, that to all things that are most suitable to us, we are dead; but to those that are most unsuitable, and farthest beneath us, to them only we live, to them we are alive: and it is a miraculous work of divine power and grace to make it be otherwise with us, while we are in these bodies. This is that which is certainly to be considered by us with the bitterest regret. Have I that affection in my nature, that is capable of being placed upon God, upon heaven, and upon unseen glory? And what? Is it drawn down by this bodily abode, and union with this body, to terrene and earthly things? Into what agonies should it put us to think of this? Have I that love in my nature, that is capable of uniting to my highest and best good, and instead of that, doth it only unite me with a clod, with a piece of clay, with this base and impure earth? How unsufferable a thing, how little to be borne by them, who understand themselves, to be born of God! and who, though they are to live awhile in these bodies, yet it is but a life that hovers continually upon the shadow of death, a kind of dying life, they are (as it were) between death and life. Life there is, and that life, if it be, or wherever it is, will commence, will be eternal life at length. But in what a faint image, in the mean time, and in what a continual struggle, so that there is always reason for those outcries, "Oh, wretched men that we are! who shall deliver us from the body of this this death?" That pathetical self-bemoaning of the Apostle suits our common case, though we have not that sense of it, that he expresseth, Rom. vii. 24.

Now mark the connection. What we have hinted to us of this sad present state of our case, doth immediately precede here. We are groaning with the rest of a groaning world,

that are all in travailing pangs, being subjected in hope unto vanity, and corruption, and bondage. "We also that have received the first fruits of the Spirit," we are groaning too, with the rest of the world, "waiting for the adoption, the redemption of the body," when we shall dwell like the children of God. It is our consideration of the wretchedness of our present case, in these respects, that must awaken hope in us, and make the exercise of it more lively and vigorous: that the being gradually habituated to so low, and mean, and abject a state as this is, may not quite sink us, as it must do, if hope be not kept alive, and maintained in us; an hope, that though things are in these respects very sad and grievous, yet they shall be better; the case shall be mended; we shall be in a better world, and in better bodies than these are; bodies that shall have more favourable influences upon intelligent minds and immortal spirits, or less noxiousness than these bodies have.

That is the second direction; with the representation which we have of the heavenly state, let us consider and inspect the wretchedness of our present state on earth, as we dwell in this lower world, and as we dwell in such bodies as these that we now inhabit. And,

Direction 3. That this hope may be cherished, and kept alive in us, to our actual salvation, let us carefully avoid unsuitable and unscriptural, horrid thoughts of God, upon whom this hope of ours must terminate. Nothing will so depress and stifle this hope, upon the influence whereof so much depends, as to have black, and dark, and horrid thoughts of God, beyond and contrary to what his own representation of himself in his word gives ground for. Now nothing is more natural than,

1. For persons that are yet altogether in their sins, impure creatures throughout, to represent to themselves an impure deity. Nor again,

2. Is there any thing more natural, when souls begin to be a little awakened, and stirred to mind their own concerns, than to entertain and admit thoughts of an horrid and dreadful being, which they put the name of God upon, and which (as they know God is to be the object of their worship) they clothe with such apprehensions of him, as makes their worship savour of nothing else but a kind of dread, that always possesses their spirits, so as that they worship only like slaves; not like the children of God, not like his sons, but as those that are afraid of a tormenting lash perpetually; that are allured by no love, no goodness,

no kindness, no apprehension of his love. And nothing doth more directly tend to destroy the hope that should be in us, and whereby we are to live.

And pray do but consider this one passage, "Be not thou a terror to me; thou art my hope in the evil day." Jer. xvii. 17. I only note it to shew the inconsistency of these two things, God's being a terror to us, and his being our hope. While we make him a terror to ourselves, we cannot make him our hope: the prophet prayeth, "Be not a terror to me," for then my hope in thee is lost, thou art to be my only hope in an evil day. And what will become of me, if he that is to be my hope, should be my terror? and if that be a thing so much to be deprecated, that God do not make himself a terror to us, truly it ought to be avoided, our making him a terror to ourselves; and for the same reason; because he is our only hope, and he cannot be our hope, while he is a terror to us. And then,

Direction 4. The next direction will be, that which I hinted at the last time, and I told you upon what occasion, to wit, that we maintain in ourselves a just love to our own souls, and a desire of their salvation. This the series of the discourse naturally leads to; and I have found it necessary to speak very distinctly to it, as having met with bills, once and again, that suggest this case; a fear that all that is done, in a way of obedience, should be from a motive of self-love, and a desire and design of their own salvation; and not so principally, for the glory of God therein. Now what I shall say to this, will lie under these two general heads.

1. To evince to you, from the ground in the text, ("We are saved by hope,") that there ought, and must be in us a principle of self-love, to wit, love to our own souls maintained, and kept in exercise all along. And,

2. I shall say somewhat to the doubt, and shew whether this self-love be the principal mover, yea or no, of hope in these souls; or how they may yet discern that it is not the principal mover. For the

1. That there ought to be such a principle of love to our own souls, that must be exercised in us, through the whole of our course, upon the very ground here expressed in the text, that "We are saved by hope," consider the following things.

(1.) If there be not such a love to our own souls, that shall put us upon this earnest desire and endeavour of their salvation, there can be no hope of it; for there is no hope of that, which we desire not. What a man desires not, he

cannot hope for; therefore hope with reference to the business of our salvation, would be simply impossible, naturally impossible, if there were no such love to ourselves, or to our own souls, as should make us to desire salvation; for that which we desire not, it is naturally impossible we should hope for. And,

(2.) Supposing such love to ourselves as should make us desire our own salvation were an unlawful thing, it would by consequence make the hope of our salvation an unlawful thing too: and so to say, we are to be saved by hope, were to be saved by a sin, and the whole business of our salvation were to be carried on continually by a continued sin, through the whole of our course; than which, you may easily apprehend, nothing could be imagined or spoken more absurd.

(3.) We are bound to endeavour, in hope, the preservation of the health and life of these bodies: and much more are we to endeavour, in hope, the eternal life and salvation of our souls.

(4.) We should in our whole course (if we should make it our business to suppress such desire and hope as this) counteract the law of our own nature; and we must know the law of our own nature is God's own law: he that is the Author of our nature is the Author of the law of nature; and there is no principle more natural to us than love of ourselves. And,

(5.) We should not only contradict the law of original nature, but we should act against the continual dictates of the new nature, wherein the principle of this self-love is a governing thing. "He that is born of God, keepeth himself, that the evil one toucheth him not." 1 John iii. 18. He loves his own life, is careful for his own life; he keepeth himself, that he may avoid mortal touches from the evil one, who is continually seeking to destroy that precious life, that is now from God himself sprung up in the soul, and in respect whereof he is now said to be born of God. And again,

(6.) It were quite to subvert the whole gospel constitution, which doth apply itself directly to the principle of self-love in the whole dispensation of it, as supposing that natural to men, and that they should be unnatural, and monsters towards themselves, if they act not according to it. What mean all the gospel invitations, and promises, and threatenings, but to apply themselves immediately and directly to the principle of self-love in men, apprehending that they

should have some regard to themselves, and to the concerns of their own souls? It supposeth this, when our Lord breathes forth such sweet and alluring invitations as those; "Come unto me, all ye that are weary, and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Matt. xi. latter end. What would that signify, if a man were not to desire rest for his own soul, and life and blessedness for his own soul?

"Ho! every one that thirsteth, come and drink of the water of life; incline your ear, and come unto me, hear, and your souls shall live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, even the sure mercies of David." Isaiah lv.

1. What would all this signify, if I were not to take care for, and desire the life of my own soul? And so also all the threatenings of the gospel were lost upon men, if they were to have no dread of perishing; and no hope, no desire, of being eternally saved. "He that believeth, hath everlasting life; but he that believeth not, shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him." All these were thrown away upon them, who were not to allow themselves, either in a desire or dread, in reference either to the death or life of their souls. But then,

2. To answer the doubt, I will only say these things very briefly to you; that is, whether self-love be the predominant principle, so that any have reason to think all their obedience proceeds from self-love, more than from a desire of God's being glorified in their salvation. Why,

(1.) I would desire such to consider, that the blessedness of heaven doth very principally lie in perfect sinlessness, in being perfectly free from sin. And so, in being as perfectly like God, as we are capable: "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." 1 John iii. 2. That implies perfect sinlessness; consider that in the first place. And,

(2.) Sin is the only thing by which God can be dishonoured. "In breaking the law, dishonourest thou God." Rom. ii. 13. He can be dishonoured by nothing but sin. And,

(3.) Let such consider, do they desire perfect sinlessness? yea or no: and let them deal faithfully with their souls in that particular. Do I desire to be perfectly free from sin? or do I hate every thing of sin, so as to long for nothing more, than perfectly to be free from it? Let their own conscience give an answer to them concerning this, whether they can sincerely say, they do desire nothing so much as perfect freedom from sin; they do desire to be rid of that, by which alone they do dishonour God. And you must know, that sin, in the very nature of it, is more dishonour-

able to God, than it can be hurtful unto them: it is both dishonourable to God and hurtful to us; but the principal thing is a dishonour to God, as it is against him first. It is against us but secondarily, and in the lowest place. Let them then bethink themselves; suppose sin did not hurt me, yet do I not hate it, and do not I desire to be perfectly free from it, as a thing that dishonours God, and as it inclines me to dishonour him? And it is an uncreaturely thing, as it is a vile thing, to have that in me which is an opposition and contrariety in its own nature to the Best of beings, the most perfect and most excellent of beings. And then,

(4.) That the blessedness of heaven further lies in the soul's entire satisfaction, and acquiescence in God, which is the thing we mean by enjoying him. Fruition is the soul's rest. The blessedness of the heavenly state lies in the soul's perfect rest and acquiescence in God, as the best and most satisfying good. And hereby it is plain, that we honour him the most that we are capable of doing, for if the soul do perfectly rest satisfied in God, as the best and most excellent good, we do thereby voluntarily acknowledge him in the most significant (to wit, in a practical) way, to be, (what really he is, as he is God,) the best good, the most comprehensive, and the most absolutely perfect good. The soul doth most honour him, in enjoying him, more than it is capable of doing any other way; for my continual enjoying him, to wit, my continual rest and satisfaction in him, as the best good, is my practical owning him as such. And that is honouring him, when I draw off from all things else, and say, You are not good enough, you have not that excellency in you that is suited to the nature, excellency, and capacity of my soul. Then you betake yourself to God, and there you eternally acquiesce, and take up your satisfaction and rest. This is to confess, actually and practically, that he is all that, which all the creation besides is infinitely short of to you. And so to do, is to glorify and honour him, the most that you are capable of as creatures. In our enjoying him, we glorify him most. And then, lastly,

(5.) As that which is so clear and sure (as I think) to put all out of doubt, if any can say that they hate sin, as the worst of all evils that can exist, or be in being; and do love God as the best of all good, as can also exist, and be in being: this hatred of sin as the worst evil, and this love of God as the best and highest good, must proceed from the operation of his own Spirit; none could ever hate sin

as the worst of evils, and love God as the best of goods, but by the peculiar operation of the Holy Ghost. Now if the Holy Ghost does produce these great effects in any, you may be sure he can do God no wrong in these productions of his : he governs his own productions equally. The Spirit of God can never be the author of any one's doing God wrong. That you should desire a good for yourself, more than for glory to him, when such operations in you, as hatred of sin, and love of God, do proceed from his own Spirit, that Spirit will never be the author of irregular motions, so as that you should desire your own felicity more than the glory of God.

And, therefore, though these things lie mixed in you, there is love to God, and love to yourselves : and there ought to be both, but you cannot tell which is predominant, by an immediate inspection and view of the effects ; look to your cause, and these effects could proceed from no other cause, but the operation of the Divine Spirit ; that is, you could never hate sin, but from the Spirit of God. You find that you do hate it, but you do not know whether it be because it is most dishonourable to God, or because it is hurtful to you : yet, I say, your hatred of it proceeds from the Spirit of God. And again, you do love God, but so love yourselves, and your own salvation, that you have one interest in the matter : you love him, in order to your enjoyment of him ; you love him, in order to your fruition of him, which is a good to yourselves, and so it ought to be. But you know not which desire is more predominant, which you desire or covet more, that you may be happy, or God be glorified in your fruition of him ; I say, this supreme love to God is not the work of your own spirit, you could not love God above all, (if it were even for your own enjoyment of him only,) but by the help of his Spirit. And the Spirit of God, when that is immediately at work, will be sure to do right between him and you. It will not let you love yourselves more than God, when that love is the immediate production of that Spirit, living and acting in you. And we can be surer of nothing than we are of this, that there can be no hatred of sin, as the worst of evils, nor love of God, as the best of goods, but from the Divine Spirit. And if it be from a Divine Spirit, that Spirit will not be the author of so irregular a motion in us, that we should design ourselves, more than him, in these things. And so much I take to be exceeding clear and plain, in reference to this doubt ; and it is very unreasonable that any should trouble

themselves much about it, but fall admiring and blessing God, that hath made them hate sin as the worst of evils, and a thing by which he is dishonoured ; and to love God as the best good, which is as inseparable from the eternal enjoyment of him, as that enjoyment is from their eternal adoring and glorifying of him in that state. There are many other directions remaining, but no more at present.

SERMON XXVII.*

ROMANS VIII. 24.

We are saved by hope.

Now to go on, the next direction to be given is,

Direction 5. Ponder well and thoroughly the capacities of your own natures. I know not what should do more to raise and cherish this hope in you, of which the text speaks, for you have been told it doth not speak of hope, as hope ; to wit, all hope. There is an hope (as was said) that is so far from saving men, that it destroys them. There are many that are ruined, and not saved by their hope ; but it is the truly Christian hope terminating to the last end of it, in a glorious eternity that we are to be saved by ; that which is truly the hope of salvation, and which is spoken of under the notion of an helmet, the seat of counsel and design ; and it is impossible there can be any design for salvation, without hope ; or indeed any design at all, whereof there is no hope ; and therefore I say, in order to the heightening, and improving of this hope, the truly Christian hope, it is of the greatest necessity and use imaginable, to study much the capacity of our own natures ; to wit, often to recount with ourselves, what is such a creature as I, an human creature, capable of ? What are the limits and bounds of my capacity, the capacity of my nature ?

Nothing will be plainer, (if it be considered,) than that our natures are capable of greater, and more enduring things, than ordinarily we employ our minds about. The usual exercise of our minds is far from reaching the capa-

* Preached November 8, 1691.

city of our natures: from any body that allows himself to think, this acknowledgment will be extorted, at the first sight or hearing, that spiritual things are greater, more excellent, and more noble, than earthly and carnal things are. And do not we find there is a capacity in our natures of conversing with such things? Are our natures capable of conversing with nothing but earth and clay? Can they look no higher? Can we form no notions of objects of a more noble and excellent kind?

And they are capable of more enduring things than we employ them about, that is, of eternal things; nay, so far it is from us to be incapable of having any thought of eternal things, that if we could impose upon ourselves, we cannot possibly avoid that thought; our minds will run into an endless and eternal scheme, do we what we can; that is, we cannot so much as by a thought fix to ourselves any utmost bounds, or periods of things; and therefore, our minds do naturally run into eternity. And more than that, we are not only capable of knowing much of spiritual, and eternal things, things that are more noble and excellent in their kind, and more lasting in duration, than the things are which we commonly employ them about.

But we are capable of understanding this higher and larger capacity; we are secretly conscious to ourselves, that there is nothing terrene and temporary, that can measure the capacity of our nature, and fill up, and correspond to it; every man is conscious to himself of this, that allows himself to think; we are not only capable of knowing that there are spiritual things above the sphere of sense, and eternal things above the bounds and limits of time; but we are capable of knowing that we know it; to wit, we are conscious to ourselves of the greater and larger capacity of our natures.

And that being supposed, truly it must be said of us, we know too much, to enjoy no more. If we are not to hope for more, we know too much; we know that there is a glorious sphere of spiritual objects, that lie above the reach of our sense; we know there is an eternal state beyond the bounds and limits of time; and knowing this, we know too much, if we are not to hope for more. And if that indeed were the state of our case, that we are to hope for no more than what lies within the compass of our present state, it might make a mere philosopher to curse his nature, that ever it should be capable of prospect, that ever I was a creature capable of prospect, and yet so doomed and con-

fined to the strait and narrow bounds of this base earth as to have nothing to enjoy, higher and greater, than this can afford me. Study the capacity of your nature, and think with yourselves, this immortal mind and spirit that I have in me, is it to be supposed it could have been put into me only to sustain a mean, vile flesh, that after the greatest and utmost care, must at length rot in the dust? Had I a reasonable immortal soul put into me, only to enable me to eat and drink, to please and indulge sense? A brute is furnished for such purposes as these, as well as I.—What? Did I need a mind, an intelligent mind, an immortal mind, for such purposes as these?

A man may confirm it himself, that he is not in a dream about the larger capacity of his own nature; for when he finds he hath in him a mind, is that a dream? Do not I know, I can know? Do not I understand, that I can understand? And that I have that in me that can think? And I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought, and a clod of clay? Between a mind, and a piece of earth? That the capacity of this mind should be filled up with any earthly thing, what proportion is there in that?

And then, that this mind of mine must be an immortal thing, and so exist in an eternal state; I cannot be in a dream about this; for I beseech you, what proportion is there between a thought and death? Is it a likely thing, that a thing that can think, can die? If I have that in me that can think, I have that in me that cannot die.

And then, reckon it unworthy to hope beneath the capacity of your nature; to let your ordinary hope, the hope that is to live in you, and guide your course, to let that (I say) sink beneath the capacity of your nature. And again,

Direction 6. Consider much, the large and immense goodness and benignity of the divine nature; and do not think it agreeable to that, (as it is certain it cannot be,) that there should be such a sort of creatures endowed with a spiritual, immortal mind, that should not be accommodated and suited with proportionable objects. Consider the goodness of God to this purpose, as it appears in other instances. You see that all other sorts of creatures he doth accommodate with suitable objects. Look to yourselves, consider his goodness to you in other respects all your time hitherto. He is that God (as good Jacob when dying said) “that hath fed me all my life;” through him you were born, and through him you have lived; did he give you the

appetite of meat and drink, and hath he not given you meat and drink too? If he hath given you faculties in your inferior nature, he hath assigned you their particular suitable objects. And do you think that if he hath given you also rational and immortal minds, it could stand with so vast goodness, not to suit them with proportionable objects too? Is that like his other methods? When the whole earth is full of his goodness, this region, this seat of apostasy, and wickedness, all the creatures looking up to him with craving eyes, and he satisfies them all: therefore it cannot be on his part that ever there should be such a flaw, such a defect, in the order of things in his creation, that he should have made an intelligent, immortal mind and spirit, and never have provided for it a suitable good, that may answer the capacity of his nature; and you already know, that there is no terrene, or temporary thing, that is a suitable good to it.

And thence it cannot but be, (for the matter must not be refunded upon the Creator,) I say it cannot but be, that if souls be miserable, it must be by themselves; their aversion from God, their refusal to return to him, their resistance of the methods he hath used for the gathering back of wandering souls: they will not return, they love earth and vanity more; and if this, indeed, be the habitual temper of any soul under that gospel, which is designed on purpose for recovering and reducing souls unto God, and this disaffection of theirs cannot be overcome, this is the highest provocation that can be given to goodness itself; and goodness itself must most highly justify and gratify itself in the ruin of those souls, who have had the offers made them of a suitable correspondent good, but lived all their days, while here in the flesh, in the refusal, and contempt, and defiance, of these offers. And again,

Direction 7. Consider the confirmation that God hath so expressly given of his special good-will to his own, besides what may be collected of his common goodness towards the generality of his creatures; think how he has confirmed to them, that are become peculiarly his, his peculiar kindness, and favour; and their right and title to that heavenly inheritance which they are finally to hope for: he hath sundry ways confirmed it to them.

1. By their regeneration; by which he hath in a great measure cured (to wit, in a prevalent degree) the depravity of their sensualized nature. And even in the work of regenerating them, begotten them to this very hope, or to the

hope of this very state. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath begotten us again to a lively hope." 1 Peter i. 3. To what living hope, or the living hope of what? Why, "of an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, reserved in heaven for us." It is true, you had a capacity in your natures, of higher, and greater things than this earth affords; but what signified a mere natural capacity, that was overwhelmed with vicious inclinations when there was a capacity of greater things, but no habitude? But now there is a gracious habitude in the work of regeneration, added to the natural capacity, which repairs the natural powers to those exercises, which that capacity comprehends and means. The understanding is, in some measure, rid of the cloudy darkness that hovered oft over it before: "They that were darkness" in this work of regeneration: are made "light in the Lord." Eph. v. 8. They are become light:—they were dead in trespasses and sins; here is a divine life made to spring up in them, that aims at God, that aims at heaven, that aims at immortal things; and whatever is born, must be fed; here is a new creature born, that cannot be fed at the common rate, how should this heighten, and raise hope?

2. He hath taken them into union with his own Son, who is the primary great heir, and in whose right they come to be sons, and so come to be heirs; how should this raise hope in me? I am taken into union with the Son of God. If you receive him you are so; that is the *amplexus* of the soul; that faith by which the soul receives him, thereby it comes to be adjoined to him, and so to be invested secondarily with his right. "To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God." John i. 12. "And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ." If you share with him in the sonship, then you share with him in the inheritance too. You have a right, even as the sons of God, to this inheritance; this heavenly state, in all the blessedness and glory of it belongs to you by right of inheritance; or as you are heirs of it, "heirs of God, and joint heirs with Jesus Christ," and so you are to be glorified with him: and what? Are you not to hope for your own inheritance? That which doth belong to you by right of inheritance, are you not to live in the hopes of it? And,

3. There is God's special promise superadded to all this; to wit, that he will give grace and glory; and that the things that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it

entered into the heart of man to conceive, are all prepared for them that love him." And,

4. He hath added his oath to his promise, that the heirs of promise might have strong consolation from the two immutable things, the promise and the oath superadded, by which, it is impossible for God to lie. Heb. vi. 17, 18. And why should not hope live and flourish, in reference to this inheritance, the heavenly state you are finally to look for upon all this? therefore, take that for a further direction, often to recount with yourselves the express confirmations and assurances, which God hath given of his special kindness to his own, and of their right to the heavenly inheritance. And again,

Direction 8. Often renew your covenant with God, that so this hope may be cherished and live in you. Renew your covenant with God often, by which he becomes yours, and you his; by which he once became so, that so you may have a constant, explicit notion, or apprehension of him, as such; that you may not look towards him as a stranger, as an unrelated one. There is nothing needful to make him yours, and you his, but this mutual agreement by covenant between him and you. The matter is unalterable on his part; and you may be sure that nothing is more requisite on your part; nothing can be more requisite, than that you often commune with yourselves about this matter; *Do I stand to my covenant? I once said I was willing that God in Christ should be mine, and that I in Christ should be his; am I still willing? Do I stand to this covenant with God in Christ; yea or no?*

Then consider, whence are your expectations to be? I am not to have my great expectations from a stranger, from a strange god, but from a God of my own. "This God is our God for ever and ever, and he that shall be our guide even unto death." Psalm xlviii. last verse. How great a thing is it to be able to say, "God, even our own God shall bless us." Psalm lxvii. 6. Your hope will languish if you let the apprehension dwindle of the relation between God and you; so that you look not towards him from day to day, and at all times, as a God related to you, upon the terms, and by the tenor, of an everlasting covenant; how wisely will that man look about him in his wants, and in his languishings, that hath no one to expect help and relief from? From one no more than from another? That is, if all about him, or with whom he is to expect, are equally strangers to him, and he can have no more expectation

from one than from another. To hear of the name of God, that he is a great God, a bountiful God, and that there is an immense fulness of goodness in him; but what is that to me, when I have no concern with him, nor he with me? But when you know, that there is nothing requisite, to bring about a fixed relation between him and you, but your consenting to the terms of his covenant; "I entered into covenant with thee, and thou becamest mine." Ezek. xvi. 8. If that be from time to time recognized, be made more and more explicit, then are you to walk in this sense from day to day. This God is my God, and I am his. And then what may you not hope for? What may you not expect from him, in reference to present support, and final blessedness? And again,

Direction 9. Keep up a continual intercourse with God hereupon, walk with him if he be yours and you be his, and that is ascertained by a sure covenant often recognized; then accordingly, walk with him continually, keep up an intercourse by acts of reverence, and trust, and love, and subjection; so is the intercourse to be kept up, for you must consider, it is not an intercourse *inter pares*, between equals; but it is an intercourse between an all-sufficient God, a self-sufficient God, a sovereign Lord and Ruler, and a mean indignant object, and (who ought to be) a subject creature; and so only ought the intercourse to be kept up. "As the Father loveth me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love." John xv. 9, 10. And so are we directed to keep ourselves in the "love of God." Jude, verse 21. This is the way to maintain hope, waiting for his mercy by Christ Jesus to life eternal. Be in his fear all the day long, keep your hearts in a subject frame and posture towards him; keep you in a depending frame; keep you in a complacential frame, always apt and ready to exert acts of love, kindness, and good-will towards God. Oh, that I could do more for thee! I love thy name, thy honour, thy interest, thy presence, thy communion. In this way let intercourse with God be kept up, and so hope will flourish, will do its part towards the saving of you; even the saving you out of the gulph in which you now lie, almost swallowed up, only to be saved by this hope, such an hope as is subservient and conducing thereunto. Again,

Direction 10. If such an intercourse should be intermitted, (as can never be, but by slips and failings on your part,)

hasten the restoring of it. As you value the life of your hope, and as you value the life of your souls, hasten the restoring of it. That is not to be borne, for one to say, Now the intercourse ceaseth between God and me; What? that there should be a discontinuance of my commerce with God, this is not to be borne. Oh! hasten to get all rectified, and set aright, by renewed applications of the blood of Jesus; by speedy and serious turning to God with all the heart, and with all the soul. By any such more observable slips hope hath got a wound, and it is to be healed, recovered, reintegrated, by such a return; your return to God in Christ speedily and betimes.

Direction 11. After that walk more “circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise,” as knowing you are to live and be saved by hope; and your hope is to live, and be maintained by your continual commerce with God. Walk accurately according to the gospel instructions; to wit, according to the instructions and teachings of appearing grace. The grace of God, that bringeth salvation, hath appeared, teaching us, what? that “denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we do live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present world;” and what is the consequent hereupon? “Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Now, as being taught effectually by the grace that hath appeared bringing salvation, Oh, deny “all ungodliness,” and every thing of ungodliness; deny it as an abhorred thing, as a most abominable thing. What? Should I bear an ungodly frame of heart to him, whose grace hath appeared to save me? And all “worldly lusts;” shall worldly lusts rule in me, and govern me, who am a disciple of grace, and under the teachings of grace? And it teaches me to live soberly, righteously, and godly. Oh! let us comply with these teachings, when we see what will be the end of it, what will follow, then we shall live “looking for the blessed hope;” how reviving will our own hope be to us then! How full of vigour, how full of sweetness, and how full of power, and life! Every thought of that blessed state will even bless our souls, and make them flourish as a field that the Lord hath blessed. And,

Direction 12. Converse much with them that have the same hope that you have. That is a very heart strengthening thing, mightily animating, to have much conversation with them that will give you a reason of the hope that is in them, “with meekness and fear;” 1 Peter iii. 15. and to

whom also, you may give a reason of the hope that is in you, with the same meekness, and the same fear. That is fruitful, edifying conversation, to converse with them that will interchange accounts with you of the reason of their hopes, which you can give them, and they can give you. But if there be any that care not for that society, that can take a thousand times more pleasure to talk two or three hours over a glass of wine in a tavern, with impertinent, idle fellows, from whom there is nothing of good to be gotten; this is that they rather choose, which they can savour, can take complacency in; but all discourses about God and the things of God, and the world to come, and the matters of an eternal hope, are unsavoury and unpleasant. If this be with any an habitual frame, from week to week, and from month to month, and from year to year, and yet they will tell you they hope to be saved; oh! the monstrous stupidity of these wretched souls! What are they sunk into, and that under this very gospel, which makes all things so very plain!

I tremble to think of the case of such, when they have nothing at all to keep off terrors from their hearts, but either a present peremptory refusal to think, I will think of no such thing; or the vain hope of a death-bed repentance at last, that shall expiate for so sensual and unchristian a life. I tremble (I say) to think what the case of such men will be at last. They may have some confidence in a death-bed repentance at a distance, while they put off from them the evil day; but that repentance may be far fled, removed, and hid from their eyes, when the dying hour is come, and when they are stretched out on the bed of sickness, and languishing. And will God overthrow his own design, merely to comply with the brutish inclination of this or of that man, when his design is to have a people in this world, that shall in their continual, holy, heavenly, conversation, testify against the wicked conversation of it? But he shall dispense with them, and let them live like so many brutal sots all their days, and save them at last, because they say they will repent upon a dying bed; but how such will dare to die, God knows; when in the mean time they hardly dare to come to an ordinance of God, but make all the shift they can, to avoid serious and searching preaching; and think it a great gain to them, if they can this or that day avoid a blow. Thou that hast lived so long in the indulgence of sensual and brutish inclinations, that art afraid to come to a sermon, or come to the Lord's table; or the

like guilt stares thee in the face; how wilt thou not be afraid to die, and to appear at last before the tribunal of thy judge? Will God alter his gospel for you, and determine that a man may live an earthly and carnal life in this world, and be saved at last; though he hath told us, that they who mind earthly things (the gust and relish of their souls lies there, they savour them), their end is destruction, and they are enemies to the cross of Christ? They counter design the end of Christ's dying, and so their end is destruction. And I add,

Direction 13. Take heed of too impatient a sense of the tediousness of your expecting state, while you are expecting: we must be expectants here; we are saved by hope. There needs a great deal of patience; not only in order to bearing, but in order to expecting; not only in order to the bearing of evil things, but in order to the expecting of good things: "ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God, you might receive the promise." Heb. x. 36. And see what immediately follows the text; "We are saved by hope; but hope that is seen, is not hope; for what a man sees, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it:" so we read of "the patience of hope," 1 Thess. i. 3. as that which the apostle blesseth God for, on the behalf of those Thessalonian Christians, having heard of their patience of hope, how cheerfully they did endure in an expecting state. And,

Direction 14. Labour to fortify yourselves against the fear of death, that so your hope may live and flourish. That inasmuch as the final object of your hope lies beyond time, and beyond this present world; it is a sad thing there should be that gulph between you and the last object of your hope, which you dare not shoot; but are afraid of that which you supremely are to hope for. How very uncomfortable a case is that, that the highest matter of your hope should be also the matter of your fear, the going into that estate wherein mortality is to be swallowed up of life? What? Are we afraid of becoming immortal? To be angels' fellows, equal with the angels of God, gathered up to the innumerable company of angels, and the spirits of just men made perfect? Are we afraid indeed of that which we are chiefly to hope for? Oh! labour to overcome that fear; know that Christ died for this end, that you might do it. He was partaker of flesh and blood, he took a human body as we have here; that "by death, he might destroy

him that had the power of death, that is the devil; and deliver them, who, through fear of death, were all their lifetime subject unto bondage."

It is not only an uncomfortable, and an unchristian, but it is an irrational thing, and an unmanly thing, to live under the continual dominion and government of the fear of that which cannot be avoided. That is irrational; no man can give account of his own reason, why he should do so. It is a scandal even to the reason of a man, to be engaged in a continual contest against impossibilities; that which cannot be avoided, it is impossible I should avoid it. And to be in a constant war with this, is what no man can reconcile to his own understanding, if he do but use the understanding of a man.

And, therefore, there is nothing to be done in the case, but to fall into a speedy union with the great Prince and Lord of life, and then never fear death; that being the state of our case, that this death lies between us, and our great hope, our final hope: when we think what we are to enjoy after death, one would go through a thousand deaths to enjoy that; and much more to die once to escape a thousand deaths. We die here every day; we are killed a thousand times over, from day to day, and from week to week; and if we would die a thousand deaths that way, to avoid one death, sure we may die one death, which we are to suffer unavoidably, that we may enjoy what we are to enjoy afterwards. Then I add,

Direction 15. That if we are to hope for the blessedness of the other state, as our last end, we are to hope too for whatsoever is certainly intermediate to the universal introduction of that state: and, therefore, so far as any better time or state of things in this world is ascertained to us, we are to live in the hope of it, as that which shall antecede our end; for it is the last end that our last hope terminates upon. But then, in the last place,

Direction 16. Take heed of letting your hope ultimately pitch upon any thing but what is itself ultimate; that is, take heed of letting your hope settle upon any thing on this side a blessed, glorious eternity, or upon any other state of things: take heed of having your spirits so deeply engaged upon any better state of things on earth, that you mind less, or with much more coolness, and indifferency, the concerns of the eternal state. Be not so much taken up in the thoughts and expectations of a better scene of things in this lower world, that the very thoughts of hea-

ven, and a blessed eternity, should be unsavoury, and unpleasant.

This is a very grievous, (I might say) a mortal evil; so preposterously doth it invert the course of things; it takes down the supreme end, and substitutes somewhat inferior in the room and stead of that. And though this spiritual distemper may be indulged by many, under a spiritual pretence, I would fain see religion thrive more, and God be honoured and better served in this world: yet there is this to be said to it, it is well, if seriously we desire such things indeed; but if such desires after the best state of things that is supposeable in this world do grow superior to the desires that we have of a perfect, blessed state of things in the other world; this is (I say) to set the means against the end; and so is quite to invert the order of things.

Live in the glorious expectation of eternity; and live also in the comfortable hope, that all things in this world in order thereunto shall be managed suitably and subserviently, by that wisdom that cannot err, or make a false step, and by a power that cannot be resisted, or disturbed: but there is a great deal of carnality under that pretence of spirituality; and hence comes that contestation of interests and parties; party against party, and interest against interest. There will be perpetual quarrels, while all men are not of a mind about things within the compass of time; but in reference to the glory of the eternal state, there can be no possibility of such collision, but all will adoringly and joyfully fall into everlasting adoration and praise.

And this must be the matter of our last hope. And so I shall shut up all with the prayer of the apostle: "Now the God of peace, that hath given us eternal consolation, and good hope through grace, fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost." Rom. xv. 13. Amen.