

thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Death is yours: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

SERMON IV.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.—2 COR. v. 2.

IN the former verse the apostle had asserted his confidence of a blessed estate, both in his own name and the name of other believers. Now he speaketh of his readiness to enter into it, or his desire of getting out of this life, that he might enjoy this immortality and blessedness; *for in this we groan*. In this, *ἐν τούτῳ*, or in the meantime. In the words observe—

1. The greatness of the affection here mentioned, expressed by the words *στυνάζομεν*, *we groan*; by which he meaneth not the groans which come from sorrow, but from desire and hope. 2dly, The other word is *ἐπιποθοῦντες*, not desiring only, but *earnestly desiring*.

2. The object or thing affected—*To be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*, where our glory and blessedness is set forth by a double metaphor—a house, and a garment. Men do not clothe themselves with houses; but this is such a house as is so fitted for us, and we for it, as apparel is for the body. Well then, the state of glory is called a house with respect to the deliverance which we have from the pressures which the bodily life is subject unto; as in a house we are sheltered and defended from the injuries of wind and weather. And then it is compared to an upper garment, to hide our blemishes and imperfections. Because the apostle used the word *ἐπενδύσασθαι*, some have thought the apostle's meaning to be, that he would have that life clothed upon this life, as the tunic upon the vest; that he would not put off the body, or die at all, but go to heaven by that sudden change spoken of, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, and 1 Thes. iv. 17. Indeed, many of the expressions of the context seem to look that way. But I shall adjourn the debate till I come to open the third and fourth verses.

Doct. Those that sincerely believe and wait for a blessed immortality do also groan for it and earnestly desire it.

The reasons for this groaning are—

1. Because of the pressures and miseries of the present life, 'Being burthened, we groan,' verse 4. We are pressed under a heavy weight, burthened both with sin and misery, and both set us a-groaning very sorely.

[1.] With sin. To a waking conscience and a gracious heart this is one of the greatest burthens that can be felt; see that Rom.

vii. 24, 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' If any had cause to complain of his afflictions, Paul much more; he was whipped, imprisoned, stoned, in perils by land and by sea; but afflictions did not sit so close to him as sins. The body of death was his greatest burthen, and therefore did he long for deliverance. A beast will leave the place where he findeth neither food nor rest. It is not the bare trouble of the world which sets the saints a-groaning, but indwelling corruption, which may be cast down, but is not cast out. This grieveth them—they are sinning whilst others are pleasing God, serving him with weakness and manifold defects whilst others are serving him without spot and blemish. They see clearly what we see darkly, and as in a glass, and adhere to God perfectly, whilst we are distracted with sensual and worldly affections, and many incident fears and cares. They are enjoying and praising God while we are mourning under sin, and such a heap of remaining infirmities. Surely it is weariness of sinning which maketh the saints groan. As light and love increaseth, sin groweth a greater burthen to them; they cannot get rid of this cursed inmate, and therefore are longing for a change. A gracious heart seeth this is the greatest evil, and therefore would fain get rid of it; not only of the guilt and power, but of the very being of it, which will never be till this tabernacle be dissolved. Then sin shall gasp its last, because death removeth from us this sinful flesh, and admits into the sight of God. And therefore the saints are groaning and longing for the parting day, when, by putting off flesh, they shall put off sin, and come and dwell with God.

[2.] They are also burthened with miseries; and these are not the only causes, yet they are a cause of the saints groaning. For they have not divested themselves of the feelings of nature, nor grown senseless as stocks and stones. The apostle telleth us, Rom. viii. 20, 21, that the whole creation groaneth, because it is put under misery and vanity. It is a groaning world, and God's children bear a part in the concert, because they live here in a valley of tears and snares—blessed be God that there are any hopes mingled with our tears!—therefore they groan, and desire earnestly. 'Few and evil are the days of the years of my pilgrimage,' said holy Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 7. Our days are evil, and it is well they are but few; that in this shipwreck of man's felicity we can see banks and shores, and a landing-place where we may be safe. Here all our days are sorrow, and our travel grief; but there is our repose. There are many things to wean a christian from the present life: manifold temptations from Satan, grievous persecutions from the world, and sharp afflictions from God himself. All these may be ranked under the head of miseries.

(1.) Manifold temptations from Satan, who seeketh all advantages, either to dissuade us from serving God, or distract us in it: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'All these things are accomplished in our brethren which are in the flesh.' They are all acquainted with a busy tempter, who seeketh to ensnare their souls; and this is one of a christian's burthens, that in this world, which is Satan's walk and circuit, they meet with so many snares laid for them.

(2.) Bitter and grievous persecutions, which sometimes make them

weariness of their lives; hard task-masters, that trouble them: 2 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'To you that are troubled, rest with us;' but before the rest cometh, they groan and long.

(3.) Sharp afflictions from God himself. God is jealous of our hearts. Because we are not watchful over them, we are apt to take up with an earthly happiness, and to root here, and look no farther. Whilst we have all our comforts about us, our hearts say, It is best being here; but God awakeneth us out of our drowsy fits—'Arise, depart hence, this is not your rest,' Micah ii. 10. We are so pleased with our entertainment by the way, that we forget home. God is fain to embitter our worldly portion, that we may think of a remove to some better place and state, where all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. We would sleep here, and rest here, if we did not sometimes meet with thorns in our bed.

2. The next reason of our groaning is our having had a taste of better things: Rom. viii. 23 'We, that have within ourselves the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our bodies.' A christian here is unsatisfied, he waiteth for a better and surer state of bliss and immortality. The first-fruits show us what the harvest will be, and the taste what the feast will prove.

[1.] This union and communion with Christ is not perfect. We are one spirit by being joined to the Lord; but yet many things hinder this union from being full. We have but a glimpse of Christ as he showeth himself through the lattice; but there we shall see him with open face. Here sometimes he affords, sometimes he withdraws, his presence; but there ever with the Lord, and the Lord with us. Here we get a little from him in an ordinance, and that little is as much as we can hold; but there he is all in all, and we are filled up with the fulness of God. Christ in us now is the hope of glory, but Christ in us then is the fruition of glory, Col. i. 27. Here we enjoy him in part, and by faith; there we shall enjoy him to the full. This mighty sea is pent up, and floweth now by so narrow a channel that it cannot diffuse itself; but his interest is not crowded up, there is full room for Christ in the soul.

[2.] Our holiness is not perfect, and therefore we groan and long for more. There is much corruption left. The new nature is called the seed of God, 1 John i. 9, and the immortal seed, 1 Peter i. 2. Look, as a little seed will work through the dry clods, that it may grow up unto its perfect estate, so doth this seed of God work towards its final perfection. A christian is not satisfied with such imperfect degrees of conformity to God, and slender tastes of his love, he must have more. Grace tendeth to the place whence it cometh, as a spark of fire tendeth to the element of fire, and they groan and long for the time of perfection.

[3.] His comforts are not perfect. The joys of the Spirit are unspeakable things; but at his right hand there is fulness, pleasures for evermore, Ps. xvi. 11. These the soul longeth for; therefore though they are thankful for a refreshing by the way, yet they groan, as longing to be at home; the Spirit now is a well springing up, but it wasteth itself in an ocean of glory, John iv. 14. Look what difference

there is between the spring's head and the out-fall of a river into the sea, so between our comforts now and hereafter.

3. The excellency of this estate requireth it, that we should groan after and earnestly desire it. If it be not worth your desires, it is little worth. When happiness is provided for you, will not you send a groan after it? It is great ingratitude and folly that, when Christ hath procured a state of blessedness for us at a very dear rate, we should value it no more. He procured it by a life of labour and sorrow, and the pangs of a bitter, cursed death; and when all is done, we little regard it. Surely, if we choose this for our happiness, we shall be longing and looking for it. No man would fly from his own happiness. Where a man's portion is, there not only his mind will be, but his heart will be, Mat. vi. 21; if you prize it, you will sigh and groan after it. Our chief good is that we can least want: you will be waiting as at heaven's gates, expecting when God will let you in. Surely something else satisfieth; you are contented to be here always, if you do not send your desires thither, before you can get thither. The apostle saith, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is much better,' Phil. i. 23—*πολλῶ μάλλον*. If you count it better to be there than elsewhere, your souls will be groaning to be there, and longing to be there; for we are always longing for that which is better, chiefly best of all. There is the best estate, the best work, the best company, all is better. But if you do not think it so, though it be best in itself, yet if not best to you, you will not long for it; but if you count it best, is it so difficult to bring you earnestly to desire it?

4. The three theological graces imply it,—faith, hope, and love; therefore we must seek and earnestly desire it. These graces, 1 Cor. xiii. 13, 'Faith, hope, and charity;' and 1 Thes. v. 8.

[1.] Faith. They that believe that there is another sort of life infinitely more desirable than that which we now enjoy, will find their affections stirred towards it, for sound persuasion showeth itself in answerable affections, Heb. xi. 13. If we did believe that when this earthly clay-house is dissolved there were a building not made with hands, eternal in the heavens, we would groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with that house. For a christian, while out of heaven, is out of his proper place. 'Looking for and hastening unto the coming of the day of God' are joined together, 2 Peter iii. 12. The one word implieth faith, and the other desire; surely men do not believe eternal blessedness, who are coldly affected towards it. For an estate so blessed, if it were soundly believed, it would be earnestly desired.

[2.] Love. They that love Christ will long to be with him: Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ,' &c. That Christ is there is the great motive to draw our hearts thither: Col. iii. 1, 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.' Love desireth the nearest union with the party loved. Is Jesus Christ the beloved of our souls? Are we espoused to him as to one husband? 2 Cor. xi. 2. Do we desire to meet him, and delight in his presence in his ordinances here? Surely then we would desire to be with him hereafter; for love doth always desire the nearest conjunction, the fullest fruition, and the

closest communion. The absence of our best friend would be troublesome to us, therefore we would groan, and desire earnestly to be there where he is, to behold his glory. How can we love him, when we are so contentedly pleased to be long from him?

[3.] Hope. That is a desirous expectation, made up of looking and longing, and showing itself in hearty groans after, as well as delightful foretastes of, the blessedness expected. What you hope for will be all your desire. This estate is a good absent, possible, but difficult to be obtained; as it is good, it is the object of love; as absent and future, of desire; as possible, we look for it as desirable, we groan after it. Well, therefore, hope hath a great influence upon these affectionate breathings after heaven and happiness, when joined with earnest expectation, Phil. i. 20.

5. The Holy Ghost stirreth up in us these groans, or a fervent desire, partly by revealing the object in such a lively manner as it cannot otherwise be seen, Eph. i. 17, 18; 1 Cor. ii. 22. Partly by his secret influences, as he stirreth up holy ardours in prayer, Rom. viii. 25, 26. Unutterable groans after happiness. He that imprinteth the firm persuasion doth also imprint the desires of these things in our hearts.

6. All the ordinances of the gospel serve to awaken these desires and longings in us, and to raise up our affections towards heavenly things. The word is our charter for heaven, or God's testament, wherein such rich legacies are bequeathed to us, that every time we read it, or hear it, or meditate upon it, we may get a step higher, and advance nearer heaven. The promises of the word tend to this, 2 Peter v. 4; so do the precepts, to put us in the way everlasting, Ps. cxix. 96. All God's commandments have an eternal influence. So for prayer, in company or alone, it is but to raise and act those heavenly desires. There we groan and long in the Lord's Supper for new wine in our Father's kingdom, to put an heavenly relish upon our hearts. All is done in formality and with hypocrisy, if it doth not promote these ends.

7. These desires are necessary, because of their effect. If we do not desire, we will not labour and suffer trouble and reproach and persecution. What maketh the christian so industrious, so patient, so self-denying, so watchful? Only because he breatheth after heaven with so much earnestness. Desires are the vigorous bent of the soul, that bear us out in all difficulties. The soul leaneth that way, its desires carry it. If they be weak and feeble, they are controlled with every lust, abated upon every difficulty; the desire of the other world beareth us out in the midst of the temptations of this world; otherwise a man is soon put out of the humour, brought under the power of present things. Whatever it is that gets your heart, that will command you. Foolish and hurtful lusts drown and sink you into a base spirit, 1 Tim. vi. 9, that all the counsel that can be used will not reclaim you. But if you be groaning and longing for and desiring the happiness of another world, you have a victory over temptations, you have overcome the world, for you regard it then only as your passage; you cannot settle here.

8. The state of the present world doth set the saints a-groaning and longing for this house from heaven. For this world is vexatious, the pleasures of it are mere dreams and shadows, and the miseries of it are real, and many and grievous: Gal. i. 4, 'To deliver us from this present evil world.' The present world is certainly an evil world; take the best part of the world, the state of the church, here it is quite different from what it will be hereafter. Now God's children are pilgrims, and can hardly get leave to pass through, as Israel could not get leave to go through Edom; at other times enemies come forth to stop them in the very wilderness. Sometimes the church is like a ship in the hands of foolish guides that know not the right art of steerage, at other times spotted with the calumnies of adversaries, or the stains and scandals of its own children; sometimes rent and toru by sad divisions, every party impaling and enclosing the common salvation within their own bounds, unchristianing and unchurching all the rest, and the name of christians challenged to themselves and denied to others, and like a ball of contention carried away by that party that can rustle down others who stand in their way. Though with all this disadvantage it is better to dwell in the courts of the Lord than in the tents of wickedness; yet surely a tender spirit that minded Sion's welfare will groan under these disorders, and long to come at that great council of souls who with perfect harmony are lauding and praising of God for evermore, 'that innumerable company of spirits made perfect,' Heb. xii. 23. That general assembly, gathered together out of several countries into one body and one place, who live together sweetly, and serve God without weakness, weariness, and imperfection.

Obj. 1. But how can christians groan and long for their heavenly state, since there is no passage to it but by death, and it is unnatural to desire our own death?

Ans. 1. They do not simply desire death for itself, but as a means to enjoy these better things; so Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' It is not our duty to love death as death. No; so it is an evil that we must patiently bear, because of the good which is beyond it. But it is our duty to love God, and to long after communion with him, and to be perfected in holiness. Had it not been an evil naturally to be dreaded and avoided, Christ would never have prayed against it.

Ans. 2. Upon these terms death is sweetened to them. They readily submit to it as the nature of it is changed; and by Christ's death it is made their friend, a passage to an endless life, 1 Cor. iii. 22; Rom. viii. 38. Death shall not separate from, but make way for their full enjoyment of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Obj. 2. But must all sincere christians thus groan and long? Many are so far from groaning and longing to depose this tabernacle, that they groan at the least thought of the dissolution of it. Some there are that can venture to die, but very few that can desire to die.

Ans. 1. Somewhat of this there must be in all that believe, they all groan in this tabernacle, and desire to be dissolved. Paul speaketh in his own name, and the name of all who are like-minded with himself; for no man is unwilling to be happy and attain his end. How

is it an happiness, if it be not to be desired and groaned after? How will you vanquish temptations, if you cannot lay down life and all at Christ's feet, so you may have the heavenly inheritance? How can you labour for that which you do not earnestly desire and groan after? How can you make good your entire surrender of yourself in the covenant of being and doing what God will have you to do and be? Of living to God and dying to God, Rom. xiv. 7, 8; at least submit to die, and to be ready when God shall call you.

Ans. 2. Much of what is here expressed may belong to an heroical degree of grace, not vouchsafed to all christians. All cannot attain to this measure and height. But yet still we must be growing up to this frame of heart. Here are marks to aim at, marks to try by. The marks to aim at are propounded for our imitation, the other are proofs of our sincerity; we are every day to grow up more and more into such a heavenly spirit, and to humble ourselves that after so long a profession of the name of Christ we come short. We should take occasions thence to provoke ourselves to get the same dispositions and affections which God's eminent servants have.

Obj. 3. But this wishing and longing for death seemeth to have somewhat of sin in it. Men in a passion, and when disappointed in the world, seem to be weary of their lives. We have instances in scripture: the murmuring of the Israelites in the wilderness, 'Would to God we had died in Egypt,' &c

Ans. 1. There is a difference between velleity and a volition, serious desires and passionate expressions. In a pet or passion we wish for many things which really we desire not, and are loth God should take us at our words. Now the saints desire to be dissolved and to enjoy another state, is quite another thing.

Ans. 2. There is a difference in the grounds and reasons of both these desires. As, (1.) You ought not to wish for death in a passion and pet, and fit of discontent; as Jonah iv. 3, 'Therefore now I beseech thee, take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than live.' It is an impatient wish, since he could not get his will. Death is the ordinary refuge of embittered spirits, and the back door which we seek to get out at, through impatience, weariness of life, pride, and contest with providence; nothing will please then but death, to be rid of all these troubles in a passion and pet, when you have not something which you would have. It is mere pride that swelleth the heart with discontent, wishing ourselves out of that condition God hath put us into. Now thus the saints do not desire death, because they cannot have their full of worldly enjoyments, or meet with many crosses and disappointments here. These are carnal grounds. (2.) Deep sorrow, or some sharp affliction or difficulty that we meet with in our callings; as Elijah, 1 Kings xix. 4, 'requested for himself that he might die.' (3.) From peevish, doting love; as David, 2 Sam. xviii. 33, 'Absalom, my son, my son, would to God I had died for thee!' But affirmatively, what are the grounds of the saints' regular groaning and desires? (1.) A heart dead to the world, and weaned from the pleasures, honours, and profits thereof, and firmly fixed upon heavenly things. As in the text, this better house; longing for the time when our souls shall be freed from sin and enlarged

for the perfect love of God, our bodies fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, Phil. iii. 20, 21. When we shall live with angels and glorified saints, when we shall see Christ as he is, and be like him, and behold God face to face. These things draw forth their desires. (2.) Some competent assurance of the love of God in Christ. We that know we have a house eternal in the heavens, we groan. (3.) Love to Christ, Phil. i. 23. A panting after a nearer union and more intimate fellowship with him. Love cannot endure the absence of the beloved. They would be filled up with the feeling of his love, and abound with love to him again, and delight themselves in his immediate presence.

Ans. 3. There is a difference in the manner. It is with resignation, and submission to God's will: Phil. i. 24, 'Nevertheless, to abide in the flesh is more needful for you;' as long as God hath service for them to do. For we must not seek our own contentment in dying or living, but absolutely submit to the will of God. Well then, these desires and groans after happiness are quite different from the passionate wishes that drop from us sometimes. They that give way to them do not desire death as a release from sin, nor as a chariot to convey us to the place where we would be with God for ever, but out of some present imagined and real bitterness. They fly to heaven as their retreat or reserve for the present.

Use 1. Is information.

1. It shows us what an argument we have that there is a better estate provided for us hereafter. Because the people of God are groaning and earnestly desiring, as unsatisfied with their present condition. We are now like fish in a pail, or small vessel of water, which will only keep us alive, we would fain be in the ocean; surely, then, there is a happiness provided for us in the other world. How doth this prove it? (1.) The disposition and instinct of nature towards happiness in general, yea, eternal happiness, is an argument, much more the desires of the saints. All men would be happy; man's soul is a chaos of desires, like a sponge it is thirsty, and seeketh to fill itself: Ps. iv. 6, 'There be many that say, Who will show us any good?' yea an eternal happiness. They grope about after God, Acts xvii. 26, as the blind Sodomites about Lot's door. The soul of man cannot be satisfied here, our sore still runneth upon us. This being the constant, universal disposition of nature, showeth there is such a thing as eternal good, for natural desires are not frustrate; nature doth nothing in vain. (2.) Now as these are increased, and are more earnest, directed to a more certain scope in holy men, it doth more confirm it; for holiness was never designed for our torment. The more holy any are, the more they long. These desires are of God's own planting, raised up in them by his Spirit, and therefore will not be disappointed.

2. It informs us how far they are from the spirit of sincere christians who are content to live here always, will not part with their earthly portion; their hearts are set upon satisfying the vile lusts of the body. They are not as yet weaned children, but hang upon the world's dug; have no desire of that great happiness and glory which God hath provided in the other world. Such as men's natures are,

such will their desires be. Most men are at home in this world, pitch their tents here, desire no other portion than they have in hand; there is a suitableness between the world and them. As fishes desire to be in the water, and fowls in the air, so they are the children of this world, and their hearts cleave to present things, Ps. xvii. 14.

Use 2. To exhort us to rouse up our languid and cold affections, that they may be more earnestly carried out after heavenly things, and with greater fervency seek after them. (1.) Consider how clear these things are to the eye of faith. In the promise you may see enough to awaken the most dead heart. The hope is set before thee, Heb. vi. 18, if we had eyes to see it. So it is said of Christ, Heb. xii. 2, 'Who for the joy set before him.' The promise sets it in our view, that we may eye it much, and often look upon it, and press earnestly towards it; sense cannot discover it, but in the scripture there is a clear representation and firm promise; if we had more lively apprehensions and certain expectations, we would more long after it. (2.) The miseries and troubles of the present world are matters of sense. Sense cannot discover what should draw our desires, yet sense can discover what should drive them from the world; enough to set us a-groaning in a way of sorrow, if not a-groaning and desiring in a way of hope. The misery of the present state is no matter of faith; we need not scripture to tell us that we are burdened and pained, and conflict with sundry trials. Oh! draw off thy heart more and more. (3.) Rouse up your love. Can you love Christ, and not long to be with him? Col. iii. 2, 3, 'Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth; for you are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.' If Christ be in heaven, and your life there, should not your love be there?

SERMON V.

If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked.—2 Cor. v. 3.

THE apostle here limiteth the privilege of the certainty of putting on heavenly glory, which is not common to all men, but only belongeth to the faithful. He limiteth also the desire of that happy estate which he had produced as an evidence of the certainty of it to the same faithful ones, who, departing out of this life to an immortal, eternal estate, are not found naked, that is, destitute of that true covering wherewith our filthy nakedness is covered. 'We groan and desire earnestly. If so be,' &c. There are several senses given of these words; I shall only take notice of two, that seem to offer themselves with equal probability; the first is built upon the special notion of that word, 'to be clothed upon,' *ἐπενδύσασθαι*, used in the former verse. I know not, or I am ignorant of the mind of God in this thing, whether we shall be found clothed with our bodies or naked, that is, stripped