

by sense as to the present world; and they live by fancy and vain conceit as to the world to come. Live in their sins and vain pleasures, and yet hope to be saved. Here they walk by sight, but not such a sight as the apostle meaneth; they must have something in the view of sense—lands, honours, pleasures; and when these are out of sight, they are in darkness, and have nothing to live upon. But now a christian is never at a loss, let his condition be what it will. Suppose God should bring him so low and bare that he hath no estate to live on, no house to dwell in, yet he hath an inheritance in the promises: Ps. cxix. 111, 'Thy testimonies I have taken for an heritage for ever;' and 'God is his habitation,' Ps. xc. 1. A full heap in his own keeping is not such a supply to him as God's all-sufficiency, Gen. xvii. 1. That is his storehouse. But his great happiness is in the other world; there is all his hope and his desire, and he looketh upon other promises only in order to that.

SERMON XI.

We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.—2 COR. v. 8.

IN this verse the apostle repeateth what he had said verse 6, with some amplification. Here take notice of two things—

1. His confidence of sight, or of a blessed condition to come—*θαρόομεν, We are confident, I say.*

2. His preference or esteem of sight, or of that blessed condition before the present estate—*εὐδοκούμεν μᾶλλον, And willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord.* Where two things—

[1.] What he was willing to quit—'the body.' We are willing (*ἐκδημηῆσαι*) to travel out of the body.

[2.] What he did choose and prefer—*ἐνδημηῆσαι*, to be at home with the Lord, to dwell in the same house with the Lord Christ; this he preferred before remaining in the body.

Let us a little explain these circumstances.

First, His confidence of sight to be had at length. 'We are confident, I say.' There is a twofold confidence—(1.) The confidence of faith; (2.) The confidence of assurance, or of our own interest. Both are of regard here. (1.) Faith in part produceth this willingness to go out of the body, and enjoy the heavenly life, and comfortably to leave the time and means thereof to God. Faith, where it is in any vigour, begets in those that live by it a holy boldness, whereby we dare undertake anything for God, not fearing the power and greatness of any creature; no, not death itself. (2.) assurance of our own interest doth much more heighten this confidence and holy boldness when we know assuredly that our end shall be glorious, and that when we depart out of the body, we shall be present with the Lord. The hope of our salvation is not uncertain.

Secondly, His preferring and choosing the future estate before the present; *εὐδοκοῦμεν μᾶλλον*, we approve it, we like it better: Rom. xv. 26, 'It hath pleased them of Macedonia;' and ver. 27, 'It hath pleased them verily,' *εὐδόκησε*; the same word also, Mat. xvii. 3. So here we make choice rather, and are infinitely better pleased to leave this body behind us here, and to go out and die, that by this means we may come to our home and bliss in heaven. So that faith doth not only shake off the fear of death, but enkindle in us a holy desire of it; for what we render 'and willing,' is, are more pleased or better pleased.

The points are four—

1. That our happiness in the world to come lieth in being present with the Lord.

2. That we are present with the Lord as soon as the soul fitteth out of the body.

3. That this state is chosen by the saints as more pleasing to them than to dwell in the body.

4. This will, desire, and choice cometh from a confidence of the reality of a better estate, and our own interest in it.

1. That our happiness in the world to come lieth in being present with the Lord. This hath been in part touched on in ver. 6; I shall only add a few considerations. Surely it must needs be so; because this is the felicity denied to wicked men, but promised and granted to the godly. Denied to wicked men: John vii. 34, 'Where I am, thither ye cannot come;' that is, so living, and so dying, they have no leave, no grant to be there where Christ is; paradise is closed up against them, but it is opened to God's faithful servants by the promises of the gospel: John xii. 26, 'There where I am, there shall my servant be.' Christ will not be ever in heaven without us. As Joseph brought his brethren to Pharaoh, so Christ will bring us to God. Wicked men desire not Christ's company in this life, and therefore they are justly secluded from coming where he is; but the godly are trained up to look and long and wait for this when they shall come before God.

Reasons.—(1.) Because then we shall have sight and immediate communion with him, and our happiness floweth from him without the intervention of any means: Acts iii. 19, 'Days of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;' compare it with 2 Thes. i. 9, 'The wicked shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.' Eternal happiness is granted to the elect by the full revelation of Christ's face, Rev. xxii. 4. 'They shall see his face.' And the very look and face of Christ is the cause of vengeance on the wicked: Rev. vi. 16, 'They shall say unto the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth upon the throne, and the wrath of the Lamb.' Christ's face produceth powerful effects, either in a way of grace or punishment. In the days of his flesh we had a proof of it both ways. The Lord looked upon Peter, and that melted his heart, Luke xxii. 61. And when the high priest's servants came to attack him: John xviii. 6, 'He looked upon him, and said, I am he. And they went backward, and fell to the ground.' But surely in heaven

we shall need no more to make us happy than once to see the face of Christ—'In thy presence' (or in thy face) 'is fulness of joy, and pleasure for evermore,' Ps. xvi. 11. The fruition of God's immediate presence is not like the joys of the world, which can neither feed nor fill a man; but in seeing him we shall have full content and complete felicity. The children of God long to see God in his ordinances: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and inquire in his temple.' There is but one thing David was solicitous about, and importunate for in his prayers; what was this one thing? Not that he might be settled in his regal throne, which he seemeth not yet to be when that psalm was penned (for the Septuagint in title add to what appeareth in our Bibles *πρὸ τοῦ χρισθῆναι*, before he was annointed), but that he might enjoy the sweet pleasures of daily and frequent converse with God, that he might behold the beauty of the Lord; so Ps. xlii. 2, 'My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God; when shall I come and appear before God?' David was impatient of being debarred from the presence of God. Now, if there be so great and so longing a desire to see God in these glasses, wherein so little of his glory is seen with any comfort and satisfaction, how much more to see him immediately, and face to face? If that glimpse which God now vouchsafeth be so glorious, what will it be when he shall fully show himself to his people face to face.

(2.) Because then we shall converse with him without impediment and distraction. Here bodily necessities take up the far greatest part of our time: Luke x. 41, 'Thou art cumbered about many things, but one thing is necessary.' The present life requireth many ministries and services at our hands. Besides sinful distractions, there are many worldly occasions to divert us; but then it is our work and our wages to see God, our business and blessedness to study divinity in the Lamb's face: John xvii. 24, 'That they may be where I am, and behold my glory.' It is our constant work in heaven to admire and adore God in Christ. The difficulties and distractions are removed, and that mass of flesh which we now carry about us will be then no clog to us: 1 Cor. vi. 13, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats, but God shall destroy both it and them.' Nature calleth for them, and in this life there is an absolute necessity of them, but the necessity and use shall cease; the spiritual body will need no other supplies, and put us upon no other employments, than the loving, pleasing, and serving of God. All the things which we shall see will leave more sweet, enlivening, and powerful impressions on us than possibly now they can, because we shall understand them better, and have more leisure to attend upon them.

(3.) Our presence with him shall be perpetual. We shall meet never to part more: 1 Thes. iv. 17, 'We shall be for ever present with the Lord.' Wicked men shall see Christ, for they must appear before his tribunal; but they shall see him to their confusion: Rev. i. 7, 'Every eye shall see him, and they that have pierced him shall wail because of him.' But the godly shall see him to their consolation: Job xix. 26, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and with these eyes

I shall see him.' The one shall see him as their judge, the other as their saviour; but the chiefest difference is, the one shall see him for a while, and then be banished out of his presence: Mat. xxv. 41, 'Depart, ye cursed.' There is a dispute whither *pæna damni* or *pæna sensus* be the greatest; I cannot determine such nice points. The sense of pain is from the wrath of God; conscience reflecteth upon our loss; the agents are not to be compared. Yet on the other side the object is greater, the thing lost is God himself; it is the creature that is pained. But I am sure the loss will be much greater than now we apprehend it to be. For the present we do not value communion with Christ, we have other things wherewith to entertain our souls; there are no pleasures of the flesh to abate and divert the sense of our loss; nothing left but the vexing remembrance of our own folly and perverse choice, which will torment us for ever; but now to be received into Christ's presence and ever abide with him, how great is the happiness!

(4.) The person whom we see, and with whom we be present, he is our best friend. It is with Jesus Christ, who is the life of our lives, and the whole felicity of his people; as long as the church is without him, she cannot take full contentment. What doth the spouse esteem, when she seeth him not to whom she is espoused? What can delight the wife when the husband is absent? What comfort when they want the presence of Christ, to whom their souls cleave? When the church is here upon earth, she heareth much of Christ; he is evidently set forth before their eyes in the word and sacraments, but we do not see him face to face, we do not enjoy his presence nor his immediate embraces. The church is left upon earth, but Christ is received into heaven with his Father; we believe in him now, rejoice in him now, when we see him not, 1 Peter i. 8. But how shall we love him when we see him, and see him glorious in our nature, and enjoy him by seeing! Hearsay and report could not convey such a knowledge and report as this personal experience, as they said, John iv. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying, but we have seen him ourselves.' Here is but a sight at second hand, as the Queen of Sheba: 1 Kings x. 17, 'It was a true report which I heard in my own land of thine acts, and thy wisdom, but when I came, and mine eyes had seen it, the half was not told me.' We believe the report of Christ in the word; but when we come to see him, we shall find that prophecy was but in part, the one half was not told us; however sight is the more precious, because faith went before; we believed him a saviour, and now we find him to be so. How glad was Simeon when he had Christ in his arms: Luke ii. 29, 30, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, for mine eyes have seen thy salvation.'

(5.) The place and the company, where we shall be present with him. The place is glorious; the heaven of heavens must contain him, Acts iii. 24. The earth is not a fit place for his glorified body, nor for us to converse with him in his glorified estate. We shall be there where God dwelleth, and where he hath designed to manifest himself to his people, and amongst the servants of the Lord shall we ever remain: Heb. xii. 22, 23, 'To an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the first-born which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and the spirits of just men

made perfect.' A choice company, picked and chosen out of the world to be objects of his grace. In this council of souls we are to abide for ever.

Use. Let us often think of this blessed estate; what it is to be present with the Lord, among his holy ones, to be called to heaven as witnesses of his glory. The Queen of Sheba said of Solomon, 1 Kings x. 8, 'Happy are the men that stand in thy presence.' They that stand before the Lord, and see his glory, are much more happy. Zaccheus, being a little man, pressed to see Christ upon earth, and got upon a sycamore tree. The wise men came from the east to see him in his cradle. It is our burden in the world that the veil of the flesh, and the clouds of heaven, interpose between us and Christ, that there is a great gulf between us and him, which cannot be passed but by death. That Christ is at a distance, therefore our enemies so often ask us, 'Where is your God?' But then when we are in his arms, then we can say, Here he is; here is he whom we loved; here is he in whom we trusted. Then our Redeemer shall be ever before our eyes, to remember us of the grace purchased for us; and we are as near him as possibly we can be; we dwell in his family, and abide in his house. David envied the swallows that had their nests about the tabernacle. He telleth us, Ps. lxxxiv. 10, 'One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.' Now you shall be always before the throne, and look upon Jesus so as to live on him. This sight shall ravish and content your hearts. The three children walked comfortably in the fiery furnace, because there was a fourth there, one that was as the Son of God. If a fiery furnace be a comfortable place when Christ is there, what will heaven be when Christ, and we shall be there to all eternity? Again, this presence maketh way for enjoyment. It is not a naked sight and speculation; we are co-heirs with Christ, Rom. viii. 17. We shall be like him, live in the same state, participate of the same glory. Servants may stand in the presence of princes, but they do not make their followers their fellows and consorts with them in the same glory. Solomon could only show his glory to the Queen of Sheba, but Christ giveth it us to be enjoyed: Luke xxii. 30, 'Ye shall eat and drink at my table in my kingdom.' The greatest love that David could show his friends, was to admit them to his table: 2 Sam. ix. 7, 'Thou shalt eat bread at my table continually,' said he to Mephibosheth; and so to Barzillai. 'He put him upon his own mule, and caused him to sit upon his throne,' 1 Kings i. 33, 35. Thus Christ dealeth with us; we sit upon his throne, we are feasted at his table with unmixed delights. In how much better condition are we than Adam! Adam was in Paradise, we in heaven; Adam was there among the beasts of the earth, we with God and his holy angels; Adam was thrown out of Paradise, we never out of heaven. It is no matter if the world leave us not a room to live in among them; they cast us out many times, but Christ will take us to himself. Again, if this presence of Christ be no small part of our happiness, let us more delight in it. We enjoy his presence in the ordinances; this is to begin heaven upon earth. Therefore let us begin our familiarity here.

Doct. 2. That we are presently with the Lord as soon as the soul flitteth out of the body.

This is one of the plainest texts to prove that separated souls, as soon as they are out of the body, do enjoy bliss and glory. There are a sort of men in the world who are so drowned in sense that they cannot believe things to come, either questioning the immortality of the soul, or else, which is a step to it, asserting the sleep of it; and all because they so fancy it to be tied to the body, as that it cannot exercise its functions and operations without it. Those that deny the being of the soul, or the abiding of it after the body is dissolved, I shall not handle that now; but to those that grant the abiding of the soul, but in a deep sleep, without any sense and feeling of good or evil, I must show the falsehood of this opinion, or else all that I shall say will be to no purpose. Therefore I shall handle these three things—

1. That the soul is distinct from the body.

2. That the soul can live and exercise its operations apart from the body.

3. That the souls of the saints actually do so.

1. That the soul is distinct from the body, and is not merely the vigour of the blood, appeareth by scripture, reason and experience. In scripture we read, that when man's body was organised and framed, 'God breathed into him the spirit of life,' Gen. ii. 7.

[1.] The life of man is a distinct thing from this mass of flesh; that is proportioned into hands and feet, head and belly, arms and legs, bones and sinews. And this life of man, whatever it be, it is such a life as implieth reason, and a faculty of understanding, and willing or opposing: 'In him was life, and that life was the light of men,' John i. 4. It doth not only enliven this flesh, but discourse and choose things at its own pleasure—a life that hath light in it. It is distinct from the body in its nature, being a substance immaterial, and not capable of being divided into parts, as the body is, for it is a spirit, not created of matter, as the body was. The body was formed out of the dust of the ground, and therefore it can be resolved into its original, but the spirit was immediately created by God out of nothing. Therefore the scripture saith, Eccles. xii. 7, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was, and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it.' Where the body is dust in its composition, it shall be dust in its dissolution. There is described the first and last condition of the body, in regard of its material cause, and the soul is described in the kind of its being. It is a spirit, or an immaterial substance; its author, God, gave it; he framed the body too, but not so immediately in ordinary generation. And our natural fathers are distinguished from the Father of our spirits, Heb. xii. 9. And by its disposal; when the body returneth to dust, the soul returneth to God that gave it. When the material and passive part is separated from that inward and active principle of its motions, the scripture telleth you what becometh of the one and the other. The material part is resolved to dust again, but the spirit returneth to God. So the saints resign it: Acts vii. 59, 'And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.'

[2.] It is distinct in its supports. The body is supported by outward means, and the help of the creature, but the soul is supported without means, by the immediate hand and power of God himself.

The body is patched up with daily supplies from without. As it was made out of the earth, so is its food brought out of the earth, Ps. civ. 14, and its clothing too; but the soul needeth not these things.

[3.] It is distinct in its operations. There are certain operations of the soul wholly independent on matter, as understanding and willing, for they agree to God and angels, who have no bodies; and there is no proper instrument in the body by which they should be exercised, as sight by the eye, hearing by the ear; nay, it understands not only corporeal things, which are received by the ministry of the senses, but spiritual things, as God and angels, who have no bodies. And it can reflect upon itself; therefore it hath operations proper and peculiar to itself; so that it doth not depend on the body.

[4.] It is distinct from the body as to weakness and perfection, as to pleasure and pain.

(1.) As to weakness and perfection. The soul perisheth and decayeth not with the body; when the body droopeth and languisheth, the soul is well and jocund—yea, better than it was before. There are distinct periods of time, beyond which it is impossible to add a cubit or hair's-breadth to one's stature. But the soul is ever growing forward to its perfection; and multitude of years, though they bring on much weakness, yet increase wisdom, Job xxxii. 7. Yea, the soul is strongest when weakest; dying christians have manifested the highest excellency under bodily infirmities, and when least of the life of nature, most glorious expressions of the life of grace: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For though the outward man perish, the inner man is renewed day by day.'

(2.) As to pleasure and pain, joy and comfort. When all the joys of the body are gone, the joys of the soul are enlarged; as when the bodies of the martyrs were on the rack under torturings, their souls have been filled with inward triumphings, and their consolation, 2 Cor. i. 5, 'Also aboundeth by Christ.' When their flesh is scorched, their souls are refreshed.

[5.] They are distinct in the commands God hath given about it. Christ hath commanded us to take 'no thought for the body,' Mat. vi. 25; but he never commanded us to take no thought for the soul; rather the contrary: Deut. iv. 9, 'Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently.' The great miscarriage of men is because they pamper their bodies and neglect their souls, all their care is to keep their bodies in due plight, but never regard their souls, which were more immediately given them by God, and carry the most lively character of his image, and are capable of his happiness.

2. The soul is not only distinct from the body, but can live and exercise its operations apart from the body. There are many arguments from reason to prove it, but let us consider scripture, which should be reason enough to christians. That it can do so appeareth by that expression of Paul, 2 Cor. xii. 2, 3, 'I knew a man in Christ, fourteen years ago, whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell, God knoweth, such an one carried up to the third heaven.' If Paul had been of this opinion, that the soul being separated from the body is void of all sense, he must then have known certainly that his soul remained in his body, during this rapture, because, according to

this supposition, in that state alone could he see and hear those things which he saw and heard. And that argument is not contemptible to prove the possibility, where among other things it is said, death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ. Therefore the soul liveth in a state to enjoy him, in a sense of his love to us, and our love to him.

3. That the souls of the saints not only can live apart from the body, but actually do so, and are presently with the Lord as soon as they flit out of the body. This I shall prove from these particulars taken from scripture.

[1.] From Luke xxiii. 43, 'This day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' This was said to the penitent thief, and what was said to him, will be accomplished in all the faithful; for what Christ promiseth to him, he promiseth it to him as a penitent believer, and what belongeth to one convert belongeth to all in a like case. Therefore if his soul in the very day of his death were translated into paradise, ours will be also. Now paradise is either the earthly or the heavenly; not the first, which is nowhere extant, being defaced by the flood. If it were in being, what have separate souls to do there? That was a fit place for Adam in innocency, who had a body and a soul, and was to eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden. By paradise is meant heaven, whither Paul was rapt in soul, which he called both paradise and the third heaven, 2 Cor. xii. 4. And there all the faithful are when once they have passed the pikes, and have overcome the temptations of the present world: Rev. ii. 7, 'To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.' Well then, there the thief was not in regard of his body, which was disposed of as men pleased, but his soul. And when should he be there? This day. It was not a blessedness to commence some fifteen hundred or two thousand years afterwards. It is an answer to his *quando*. The penitent thief desired when he came into his kingdom he would remember him; Christ showeth he would not defer his hope for so long a time, but his desire should be accomplished that day; it is not adjourned to many days, months, or years, but this day. Thou shalt presently enjoy thy desire.

[2.] The second place is: Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' To be with Christ is to be in heaven, for there 'Christ is at the right hand of God,' Col. iii. 1. The apostle speaketh not this in regard of his body, for that could not be presently upon his dissolution, till it was raised up at the last day, but in regard of his soul. This state that his soul was admitted into, was much more better if compared with the estate it enjoyed in this life, yea, though you take in the end and use of life; yet his being with Christ upon his dissolution, was more eligible, and to be preferred before it. Is it not better, you will say, to remain here and serve God, than to depart hence? It were so, if the soul were in a state wherein we neither know nor love Christ; what profit would it be to be with the Lord, and not enjoy his company? Present knowledge, services, tastes, experiences, are better than a stupid lethargy and sleepy estate, without all understanding and will. It is better to a gracious man to wake than to sleep, to be hard at work for God than to be idle and do

nothing, to use our powers and faculties than to lie in a senseless condition; it would be far worse with Paul to have his body rotting in the grave, and his soul without all fruition of God, if this were true. What is that preponderating happiness which should sway his choice? Is it to be eased of present labours and sufferings? God's people, who have totally resigned themselves to God, are wont to prefer and value their present service and enjoyment of God, though accompanied with great labours and sufferings, before their own ease. Surely Paul would never be in a strait if he were to be reduced upon his dissolution into a condition of stupid sleep, without any capacity of glorifying or enjoying God. The most afflicted condition with God's presence is sweeter to his people than the greatest contentments with his absence; if thou art not with us, carry us not hence. Better tarry with God in the wilderness than live in Canaan without him. Surely it were absurd to long for a dissolution of that estate where we feel the love of God and Christ in our souls, which is unspeakable and glorious, for a condition wherein there is no taste nor sense.

[3.] The next place is, 1 Peter iii. 19, 'By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison, which sometimes were disobedient, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah.' There are many souls of men and women who once slighted the Lord's grace, and are now in hell as in a prison. Their souls do not go to nothing, nor die as their bodies, but as soon as they are separated from the body, go to their place and state of torment, *ἐν φυλακῇ*, the place of their everlasting imprisonment. So Luke xvi. 23, 24, 'And in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.' God is not more prone to punish than to reward; if the wicked be in their final estate as soon as they die, the saints are in their happiness presently upon their dissolution. On the other side, Heb. xii. 22, 'The spirits of just men made perfect.' The souls of men, unclothed, and divested of their bodies, to these come. How could these things be said if they did lie only in a dull sleep, without any life, sight, joy, or any act of love to God? Present sleep it is a burden to the saints, as it is an interruption to their service, though a necessary refreshment to their bodies.

[4.] That argument also proves it, Col. i. 20, 'That Christ by the blood of his cross hath reconciled all things to God, both in heaven and in earth.' He meaneth the universality of the elect, whether already glorified or yet upon the earth. It cannot be said of the elect angels, who never sinned, and therefore were never reconciled, *Se nunquam cum matre in gratiam rediisse*, &c., but only confirmed in grace, and put beyond all reach and possibility of sinning; and so the things in heaven which are reconciled are the souls of the godly, who departed in the faith.

[5.] That place also proveth it, Luke xx. 37, 38, 'Now that the dead are raised, even Moses showed at the bush, when he called the Lord the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not a God of the dead, but of the living; for all live to him.' The Sadducees denied the immortality of the soul as well as the resurrection of the body, and said that there was no state of life after this. Christ disproveth both by a notable argument—'I am the

God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. For he is not the God of the dead, but of the living; for they all live to him.' The words were spoken by Moses after their deceasing; not *I was*, but *I am* the God of Abraham. God said after their decease that he was still their God; and therefore those that are departed out of the world live another life. The souls of the just are already in the hands of God, and their bodies are sure to be raised up and united to them by the power of God.

[6.] My next place shall be, Luke xvi. 9, 'And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the unrighteous Mammon, that when ye fail they may receive you into everlasting habitations.' What is that time of failing? It is not meant of condemnation in the judgment, for there is no escaping or reversing that sentence; therefore it is meant of the hour of death: then are we received into everlasting habitations, and our everlasting habitation is heaven.

[7.] And lastly, from Luke xvi. 22, 'And it came to pass that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom.' By the bosom of Abraham is meant heaven, and hell is opposed to it; and it is explained, 'he is comforted, but thou art tormented.' Lying in the bosom is a feast gesture, as Mat. viii. 11, a greater expression of love, for the most beloved disciple lay in the bosom of the principal person at the feast; and Mat. xiii. 43, 'Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their father.' Basil telleth us of the forty martyrs exposed naked in a cold frosty night, and to be burned next day, that they comforted one another with this consideration:—Cold is the night, but the bosom of Abraham is warm and comfortable; it is but a night's enduring, and we shall feel no more cold, but be happy for evermore. Well then, here is proof such as is fit in the case. In things future we are doubtful, and of the state of the soul we are in a great measure ignorant; therefore God hath discovered these things to us in his word.

Use 1. Well then, here is great comfort for those that are now hard at work for God; the time of your refreshing and ease is at hand.

2. To support us against the terrors of death. In martyrdom, if you are slain, the sword is but a key to open the door, that you may presently be with Christ; if strangled, the animal life is put out that the heavenly may begin; if burnt, it is going to heaven in a fiery chariot. In the general, 'death cannot separate us from the love of God in Christ,' Rom. viii. 38, 39. Though we die, the soul is capable of loving God, and being beloved by him.

3. To support us under the pains of sickness. It is but enduring pain a little longer, and in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, you shall be with God. Angels will bring you to Christ, and Christ present you to God, and then you shall enjoy an eternal rest.

4. Here is comfort to the dying. Commend your souls to God; as Stephen, Acts vii. 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' There is a redeemer ready to receive you; heaven will be your residence, and God will be your happiness and portion for ever.

Doct. 3. This presence with the Lord is earnestly desired and chosen by the saints, as far more pleasing to them than remaining in the body.

1. The thing itself is true, that presence with the Lord is infinitely much better than remaining in the body, and will abundantly recompense the absence from it. God's gracious presence is better than life bodily: Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Thy loving-kindness is better than life.' It is that which giveth a value to life itself, without which it were little worth. Alas! what should we do with human nature, or a rational soul, if it were not capable of loving, knowing, and enjoying God? What! employ it only to cater for the body? That is to act but as an higher and wiser sort of beast. Life is no life without God; then we do live when we live to him, enjoy him and his love. Now if his gracious presence is more worth than life, what then is his glorious presence? Phil. i. 21, 'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.' A christian loseth nothing by death, but he gaineth abundantly more by his being present with Christ. And ver. 23, 'I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.' There is no proportion between the choicest contentments which we attain unto here, even those which are spiritual, and that blessed estate which the saints enjoy hereafter. Now there being such a disproportion in the things themselves, there should be in our desires and our choice; for we are to judge and be affected according to the nature or worth of things, otherwise we act not only irrationally, but feignedly and hypocritically, shunning that by all means which we profess to be our happiness.

2. He is not a true christian that doth not love Christ more than his own body, and his own life, or any worldly thing whatsoever. It is one of Christ's conditions, Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, brothers and sisters, and wife, and children, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' All things must be trampled upon for Christ's sake, or else his heart is not sincere with him. A choosing earth before heaven, preferring present things before Christ, a fixing our happiness here, these things are contrary to the integrity of our covenanting with God. Our valuation of the presence of Christ should be so high, and our affection to it so great, that we should not exchange our title to it, or hopes of it, for any worldly good whatsoever. If God would give thee thy health and wealth upon earth, then thou wouldst look for no other happiness; this is naught.

3. As he cannot be a true and sound christian, so neither discharge the duties of a christian, who is not of this frame and constitution of spirit.

[1.] Not venture his life for Christ: Heb. xii. 4, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin;' unless willing rather to be with the Lord than in the body.

[2.] Not employ his life for Christ, nor live in order to eternity, unless he hath been kept looking and longing for this happy change: Gen. xlix. 19, 'Lord, I have waited for thy salvation.' As if all his lifetime he had been waiting for this. None live the heavenly life but those that look upon it as better than the worldly, and accordingly wait and prepare for it; it is the end sweeteneth the means.

[3.] Nor lay down nor yield up his life with comfort. The very fore-thoughts of their change are grievous to most men, because they

are not willing rather to be with Christ than in the body; and so they move from that which they speculatively call their blessedness, and count themselves undone when they come to enjoy.

[4.] There are many things to invite us to desire presence with Christ, as there are many things to show us why we are not satisfied with remaining in the body. While we remain in the body we dwell in an evil world, Gal. i. 4, which is a place of sins, snares, and troubles. But of this, see ver. 4 of this chapter.

Use. Let us all be of this temper and frame of spirit, willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Almost all will prefer the life to come, in words, when indeed they utterly neglect it, and prefer the fleshly pleasures of this life before it, cry out of the vanity and vexation of the world, and yet set their hearts upon it, and love it better than God and the world to come. God's children do not often enough compare the difference between being present with the body, and being present with the Lord; they root here too much. The desire of this life is very natural to us; but yet if it withdraweth us from these heavenly good things, and weakeneth our esteem of the true life, it should be curbed and mortified, and reduced into its due order and place. Therefore it is very necessary that we should often revive these thoughts, and rightly judge of the present and future life, and use earthly good things piously, as long as it pleaseth God to keep us here; but still to be mindful of home, and to keep our hearts in a constant breathing after heavenly things.

Two things I shall press upon you—

1. Use the pleasures of the bodily life more sparingly.

2. Let your love to Christ be more strong and more earnest.

1. Use the pleasures of the bodily life more sparingly. They that have too great a care and love to the body, neglect their souls, and disable themselves for these heavenly desires and motions; they cannot act them in prayer: 1 Peter iv. 7, 'Be sober, and watch unto prayer.' And they lie open to Satan's temptations: 1 Peter v. 8, 'For your adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour.' Therefore, unless there be a great deal of moderation, and a spare meddling of earthly delights, they are indisposed for the christian warfare: 1 Thes. v. 8, 'Let us who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breast-plate of faith and love.' We cannot exercise faith and love with any liveliness, nor expect the happiness of the world to come: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end.' Whilst we hire out our reason to the service of lust and appetite, and glut ourselves with the delights of the flesh and worldly pomp, as dainty fare, costly apparel, sports, plays, and gaming, there is a strange oblivion and deadness groweth upon our hearts as to heavenly things. A christian looketh for days of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; but these must have their refreshings here. The drunkard seeketh his refreshing in pleasing his palate; the idle man is loth to be put to work, he would have his rest here; the vain, they must have their senses tickled and pleased; pomp and vanity, and sports and pastimes, are the great business and pleasure of most men's lives.

2. Let your love to Christ be stronger and more earnest; for

where love is, we desire union and presence. It is but a pretence of love where we aim not at the nearest conjunction that may be. If we love our friend, his presence is comfortable, his absence troublesome; as Delilah said to Samson, 'How canst thou say thou lovest me, when thy spirit is not with me?' Judges xvi. 15. If we love one, we desire to be with him.

Doct. 4. That this will and choice cometh from confidence of a better estate, and our own interest in it.

For while the soul doubteth of the thing, or of our enjoying it, we shall desire the continuance of our earthly happiness, rather than to depart out of the body with fears of going to hell.

1. It is faith that breedeth hope, which is a longing and desirous expectation. For it is the substance of things hoped for, Heb. xi. 1.

2. It is assurance that doth increase it. It is easy to convince men that heaven is the only happiness; but is it thy happiness? Though the knowledge of excellency and suitableness may stir up that love which worketh by degrees, yet there must be the knowledge of our interest to set a-work our complacency and delight. We cannot so delightfully and cheerfully expect our change till our title be somewhat cleared. It is sad with a man that is uncertain whither he is a-going.

Use. Let us labour for this confidence, a holy and well-built confidence. For he is not in the best condition that hath least trouble about his everlasting estate, but he that hath least cause. Many that have been confident of their integrity and safety have miscarried for ever; yea, that have had a great name in the church: Mat. vii. 22, 'Many will say unto me in that day, Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in thy name, and in thy name have cast out devils, and in thy name done wonderful things;' yet Christ saith, 'I know you not,' in the next verse. And Luke xiii. 25, 26, 'When once the master of the house is risen up, and hath shut to the door, and ye begin to stand without, and to knock at the door, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us; and he shall say unto you, I know you not whence ye are: then shall ye begin to say, We have eaten and drunk in thy presence, and thou hast taught us in our streets.' So Prov. xiv. 12, 'There is a way that seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.' The foolish virgins, Mat. xxv., made full account to enter into the nuptial chamber, but were shut out. Many now in hell little thought of coming thither, those not only of the brutish multitude, but of great note, that have lived in the light of the gospel, and heard the difference between the wicked and the godly.

2. There is no true confidence but what groweth out of a constant, uniform, self-denying obedience: Mat. vii. 21, 'Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doth the will of my Father which is in heaven;' and I John iii. 18, 'My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but in deed, and in truth;' and Rom. viii. 5—7.