

## SERMON XXXI.

*For we are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?—ROM. VIII. 24.*

IN this verse the apostle giveth a reason why believers do groaningly expect the adoption, the redemption of their bodies, and so, by consequence, salvation—because yet they had it not. And in this reason there is secretly couched a prolepsis, or an anticipation of an objection; as if the apostle had said, If any shall object, We are adopted already, redeemed already, saved already, this I would answer him: We are not actually saved, but in right and expectation only; salvation indeed is begun in the new birth; but is not complete till body and soul shall be glorified in the day of judgment; then we are redeemed or saved from all evils, and then do presently enter into the actual possession of the supreme happiness or glory which we expect. He proveth it by the nature of hope, because hope is of a future thing: 'For we are saved by hope; but hope,' &c.

In the words two things: 1. An account of the present state of a believer; 'For we are saved by hope.'

2. The proof of it by two reasons. The first is taken from the nature of hope: 'For hope that is seen is not hope.' The second from the absurdity of the contrary; 'For what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?'

1. An account of the present state of a believer, 'We are saved by hope.' A christian is already saved; but he is only now saved by hope, *spe, non re*; he hath complete salvation, not in actual possession, but earnest expectation; that is the apostle's drift here. He doth not show for what we are accepted at the last day, but how saved now; he doth not say we *shall* be saved by hope, but we *are* saved by hope, which expecteth the fulfilling of God's promises in our salvation.

2. The proof.

[1.] By a reason taken from the nature of hope; it is conversant about things unseen: 'Hope that is seen is not hope;' *ἐλπίς βλεπομένη* is the thing hoped for; the act is put for the object; as also Col. i. 5, 'The hope which is laid up for you in heaven.' Hope is wrought in our hearts, but the thing hoped for is reserved in heaven for us. 'Is not hope;' there it is taken for the act of hoping—is not hoped for. The meaning is, things liable to hope are not visible and present, but future and unseen; for vision and possession do exclude hope.

[2.] From the absurdity of the contrary supposition; 'for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it;' that is, things enjoyed are no longer looked for. To see is to enjoy; as also 2 Cor. v. 7, 'We walk by faith, and not by sight;' that is, we believe now, but do not enjoy. So here, where the thing hoped for is possessed already, it is said to be seen. Otherwise if you take seeing properly, a man may hope for that which he seeth, as the wrestler or racer hath the crown in view; but whilst he is wrestling and racing he hopeth to have it, but hath not yet obtained it. Well then, the apostle's meaning is, who

would look for that which he hath in his hands? It is foolish to say he hopeth for it, or looketh for it, when he doth already enjoy it.

*Doct.* Hope is one of the graces necessary to obtain the great salvation promised by Christ.

*First.* For explication :

1. Hope is a desirous expectation of some promised good. The act is a desirous expectation ; the object is some promised good. Of the act I shall speak afterwards ; the object I shall consider now. It is some good ; for evil is not hoped for, but feared. And a good promised ; for hope, the grace, is grounded upon the word of God : Ps. cxxx. 5, 'I have hoped in thy word.' And the apostle telleth us that the heirs of promise being secured by two immutable things, God's word and God's oath, do fly for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before them : Heb. vi. 18. The promise doth both declare and assure ; declare what we may hope for ; the apostle saith it is set before us ; not before our senses, or the eyes of the body, but before our faith, the eyes of our minds, in the gospel ; and withal doth assure us in hoping ; for we have the word of God, who is the supreme verity, that neither can deceive nor be deceived ; and the promises of the gospel are ratified by the solemnity of an oath ; the more to excite our drowsy minds to consider upon what sure grounds we go upon. Well then, there is some word of promise assented unto by faith, before we expect the good promised. Promises are the holdfast we have upon God, and the sure grounds of raising hope in ourselves, or pleading with God in prayer. We may plead them to ourselves if we would have strong and solid consolation : Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God I will praise his word ; in God have I put my trust ; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Thus did David rebuke his fears. The fidelity of God in his promises is matter of firm confidence and hope to us. Only we must not make promises to ourselves, lest we become false prophets to ourselves, and build up our own dreams. So in pleading with God we have free leave to challenge God upon his word : Ps. cxix. 45, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, wherein thou hast caused me to hope.' Our necessities lead us to the promises, and the promises to Christ, in whom they are yea and amen ; and Christ to God, as the fountain of grace ; there we put these bonds in suit, and turn promises into prayers.

2. The promises do concern either this life or that which is to come : 1 Tim. iv. 8, 'Godliness is profitable to all things, having the promise of the life that now is, and that which is come.' There are supplies necessary for us during our pilgrimage ; therefore God hath undertaken not only to give us heaven and happiness in the next world, but to carry us thither in a way best pleasing to himself, and conducive to our good ; that we may serve him with comfort and peace all the days of our lives. Therefore there is an hope in God's promises for what we stand in need of by the way ; and God delighteth to train us up in a way of faith and hope in expecting our present supplies, that by often trying and trusting him for these things, we may the better hope for the great salvation ; as men practise swimming in the shallow brooks before they venture in the deep ocean. But temporal things are only promised so far as it may be for God's glory and our good ; we must

not set God a task to provide meat for our lusts, or imagine that his providence will lacquey upon our humours and vain fancies. It is the ordinary practice of his free grace and fatherly love to provide things comfortable and necessary for his children: Mat. vi. 3, 'For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.' There is a common bounty and goodness which reacheth to all his creatures, even to the preservation of the smallest worm; how much more will he provide for us whom he hath adopted into his family, and to whom he hath made promises that he will never leave us to insupportable difficulties? You would count him an unnatural father that feedeth his dogs and hawks and lets his children die of hunger. Certainly we may hope in God that he will do what is best, all things considered.

3. The great promise, and so the principal object of our hope, is salvation by Christ, or eternal life: 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise,' and so the principal object, which he hath promised us, eternal life.' Christ hath promised other things too, but this is the promise. It is the great end of Christ's mediation to bring us to God: 1 Pet. iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God;' and that is not fully done till we live with him in heaven; this is the end of our faith, 1 Pet. i. 9; this is the prime benefit offered to us in the gospel, to which all others tend. By justification our incapacity is removed; by sanctification eternal life is begun; by the mercies of daily providence we are preserved in our duty and motion towards this happy estate; 'Kept blameless to the heavenly kingdom,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. From hence we fetch our comfort during the whole course of our pilgrimage, this we look upon as the recompense of all our pains and losses; and upon the hopes of it the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense defeated; and therefore hope is described in scripture by this object more than any other thing. Called thence, 'The hope of salvation;' and all other hopes are in order to this: Rom. xv. 4, 'Whatever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope;' that is, by submitting and waiting upon him in variety of providences here in the world we might still keep up the hope of eternal life.

4. Eternal life must be expected in the way God promiseth it. We must not take that absolutely which God promiseth conditionally; God promiseth it to them that believe in Christ: John vi. 40, 'This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' Those that saw him with the eyes of the body, and were not offended at his despicable appearance, but could own him as the Messias, as Lord and Saviour: those that see him with the eyes of the mind, see such worth and excellency in him, as to be content to run all hazards with him, and count all things but dung and dross, that they may be found in him, that they may venture their souls and all their interests in his hands. Sometimes to the obedient, Heb. v. 8; sometimes to them that persevere notwithstanding temptations, Rom. ii. 7; sometimes to the mortified, Rom. viii. 13. No; you must consider not only the grant or the benefit contained in the promise, but the precept, the condition required. The benefit or privilege offered,

expresseth God's grace ; the condition required points out your duty, and by consequence your right ; for we are not duly qualified according to promise, and the gift is suspended till we fulfil the condition. But when you have done that which the promise requireth, then your title to heaven is incomparably more sure than any man's title to his possessions, and the inheritance to which he was born ; and you will find the saints, in fixing and raising their hopes, do not only look upon what is promised, but their own qualification : Ps. cxix. 166, ' Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments ; ' so Ps. xxxiii. 18, ' The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, that hope in his mercy ; ' so Ps. cxlvii. 13, ' The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, that hope in his mercy. ' They so believe in God, as they fear to offend him ; and the hope of salvation goeth hand in hand with a care of keeping the commandments ; we must not look to one side of the covenant only, the privileges and benefits ; but also to the duties and qualifications of those that shall be saved—the penitent believer, the mortified saint, the heavenly-minded, self-denying christian. All this is shown, that it is not enough to expect eternal life, but it must be expected in God's way.

5. The expectation is certain and desirous. It is certain ; for it goeth upon the promise of the eternal God ; it is desirous, because the thing promised is our chief happiness ; all the pomp and glory of the world is but a May-game to it. With respect to these two properties different effects are ascribed to hope :

[1.] It is patient and earnest. Patient: 1 Thes. i. 3, ' Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope ; ' and in the verse next the text : ' And if we hope for it, then do we with patience wait for it ; ' and earnest: ver. 19, ' For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God. ' The emblem in the resemblance of it is the earnest expectation of the creature ; and 2 Pet. iii. 12, ' Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the Lord. ' It is patient, because it is sure ; it is earnest, because it is good. When the soul therefore is possessed with the truth and worth of these things which we hope for, it looketh and longeth, because they are such glorious blessings ; but tarrieth God's leisure, because his word is sure, though he doth delay our happiness, and how smart and heavy soever his hand be upon us for the present.

[2.] There is another pair, rejoicing and groaning. Rejoicing: Rom. v. 2, ' Rejoicing in the hope of the glory of God ; ' and groaning: 2 Cor. v. 2, ' In this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven. ' We groan because of present burdens, and our desire is delayed ; but we rejoice that our affection may be somewhat answerable to the greatness of the thing hoped for, which is the vision and fruition of the ever-blessed God. When we seriously consider what we shall have to do hereafter, how can a christian choose but rejoice ? It must needs possess his mind with a delight. It is, questionless, a comfortable thing to him to think that he shall see the glory of God, and be filled with his love, and be exercised in loving, lauding, and praising him for evermore. Where this is soundly believed and earnestly hoped for, it will breed such a joy as supports us under all discouragements, fears, cares, and sorrows ;

and on the other side, weigheth down all the pleasures and riches of the world; in short, sweeteneth our lives and maketh religion our chiefest delight.

*Secondly*, Reasons to prove that hope is a necessary grace, I shall prove.

1. For the state of a believer in this world. We are not so saved by Christ as presently to be introduced into the heavenly inheritance, but are kept a while here upon earth to be exercised and tried. Now while we want our blessedness, and there is such a distance between us and it, in the meantime we encounter with many difficulties; there is need of hope, since the believer's portion is not given him in hand; he hath it only in hope; things invisible and future cannot else be sought after. As our understandings are cleared by faith to see things to come, otherwise invisible, our wills are warmed by love, that we may be earnestly carried out after the supreme good; so our resolutions and inclinations must be fortified by hope, that we may seek after it, and not be diverted either by the comfortable or troublesome things we meet with in the world. This is the difference between the children of God in their warfare and in their triumph; in their way and in their home; they that are at home are rejoicing in what we expect and are in possession of that supreme good which we hope for, they are entered into the joy of their Lord, and have neither miseries to fear nor blessings to desire beyond what they do enjoy; they see what they love and possess what they see; but the time of our advancement to these is not yet come, and therefore we can only look and long for it; the glorified are distinguished from us by fruition, and we are distinguished from all others by hope. We are distinguished from pagans who have no hope: Eph. ii. 12, 'Having no hope and without God in the world;' 1 Thes. iv. 13, 'Sorrow not as others which have no hope.' We are distinguished from temporaries: Heb. iii. 16, 'If we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm to the end.' The temporary loseth his taste and comfort, and so either casteth off the profession of godliness or neglecteth the power and practice of it; the other is diligent, serious, patient, mortified, heavenly, holy, because he keepeth the rejoicing of his hope; the end sweeteneth his work.

2. From the new nature, which is not entire without hope. This is one of the constitutive graces which are essential to a christian: 1 Cor. xiii. 13, 'And now abideth faith, hope, and charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity;' he opposeth the abiding things, the necessary graces, to the arbitrary gifts, and among these he reckoneth hope. It is the immediate fruit of the new birth: 1 Pet. i. 3, 'Begotten to a lively hope.' The new nature presently discovereth itself by a tendency to its end and rest; which is the fruition of God in heaven; now the new creature cannot be maimed and imperfect because it is the immediate production of God.

3. From the use for which it serveth.

[1.] It is necessary to quicken our duties. Hope sets the whole world a-work; the husbandman plougheth in hope, and the soldier fighteth in hope, and the merchant tradeth in hope; so doth the christian labour and serve God in hope: Acts xxvi. 7, 'Unto which promise, our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come.' Certainly

a man that hopeth for anything will be engaged in the earnest pursuit of it, and follow his work close day and night; but where they hope for no great matter they are sluggish and indisposed. The *principle* of obedience is love, but the *life* of it is hope: Acts xxiv. 15, 16, 'I have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust;' 'Εν τούτῳ ἀσκάω, 'and herein,' or thereupon, or in the meantime, 'do I exercise myself to keep a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.'

[2.] To vanquish temptations, which are either on the right hand or on the left, but both are defeated by hope. On the right hand when some present delight is ready to invite us to sin; on the left hand when some present bitterness is likely to draw us from the ways of God; in both cases the hopes of future joys outweigh that pleasure and allay that bitterness. If the temptation be the comforts of the world, or the delights of sin, he that sincerely hopeth for heaven, dareth not think so slightly of it as to lose it, or put it to hazard for a little carnal satisfaction; it is noted high profaneness in Esau to sell the birthright for a morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 16. Sin cannot offer him things so good, but he must forego better, and so the heart riseth in indignation against the temptation: 'Shall I leave my fatness, my sweetness, to rule over the trees?' If the temptation be some grievous inconvenience or affliction: Rom. viii. 18, 'For 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 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' This is the language of one that hopes for salvation; all is but a flea-biting to him that hath his heart in heaven.

[3.] To comfort us in all our tribulations. There are many difficulties that intervene and fall out between hope and having; between our first right to eternal life and our full possession of it. In our journey to heaven, we meet with trials and sufferings by the way; now it is hope carrieth us through, and therefore it is compared to an anchor, Heb. vi. 19; to an helmet, 1 Thes. v. 8. As we would not go to sea without an anchor, nor to war without an helmet; so neither must we think of carrying on the spiritual life without hope. Nothing else will compose the mind or keep it stable in the floods of temptation; therefore it is an anchor. Nothing else will cause us to hold up head in our daily conflicts and encounters with afflictions but this helmet. Without this anchor we are in danger of spiritual shipwreck; without this helmet our heads are exposed to deadly blows from sin, Satan, and worldly discouragements.

[4.] That we may die peaceably, and with comfort. We need hope while we live, but we most need it when we come to die, and shoot the gulf of death. They that are destitute of the hope of salvation are then in a dangerous, woful, and most lamentable case: Job xxvii. 8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, if he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' They may be full of presumption and blind confidence while they live, but what hope have they when they come to die? All their worldly advantages will then yield them no solid comfort. We live in a presumptuous dream that all shall be well; but then they die stupid and senseless, or else despairing; and their hopes

fail when they have most need of them. But then a lively hope of eternal life sustaineth the hearts of the faithful; they are going to possess what they expected; and when they resign their souls to Christ they can commit their bodies to the grave in hope: Ps. xvi. 9, 10, 'My flesh shall rest in hope, for thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, nor suffer thine holy one to see corruption;' God will not utterly forsake that dust that is in covenant with him, nor suffer his servants totally to be extinguished, or finally to perish.

*Use 1 is Information.*

1. That the great reward of a christian lieth not in things seen, but unscen; not in the good of this world, but of another; because hope is one of the graces requisite to his constitution, and hope is about future things. Much to blame then are they who place all their happiness in present things which are so transitory. God hath reserved us to a future estate, because he bestoweth graces that suit with it, and nothing so opposite to it as the spirit of the world: 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'For we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God.'

2. The cognation and kin that is between faith and hope. The one is the evidence of things not seen, Heb. xi. 1; the other is the earnest desire and expectation of things not seen; the one is an assent, the other an appetition. Faith differeth from hope—

[1.] In the order of nature. Faith goeth before, as the cause is before the effect; first there is a firm persuasion of good things to come, and then a certain expectation of them in the way which God hath appointed. Faith assents to the truth of the promise, and hope looketh for the accomplishment of it.

[2.] In the object there is some difference. First, In the latitude of the object. The object of faith is larger; faith is of things past, present, and to come; as by faith we believe the creation of the world, Heb. xi. 4; the present existence of God, Heb. xi. 6; and the truth of heavenly joys, Heb. xi. 1; hope is only of things to come. So again, we believe some things that we hope not for, as the torments of the damned; for hope is an expectation of good to come, and the pains of hell are matter of fear, not of hope. Secondly, In the formal consideration of the object. Faith looketh to the word promising, *verbum rei*, hope to the thing promised, *rem verbi*. Faith considereth the veracity or truth of God in making the promise; hope the benignity and goodness of God in making so great a promise as eternal life and salvation by Christ. Faith respects the person giving, his fidelity; hope, the persons receiving, their benefit. Faith persuadeth us there is salvation; hope, that we shall, or at least may, obtain it.

[3.] There is a difference in the subject. Faith, as it is an assent, is in the mind; hope is in the affections, as reflecting upon the goodness of the thing promised; so that though there be some difference between faith and hope, yet they are much of a like nature.

3. It informeth us of the excellency of hope. Faith saveth, Eph. ii. 8; and hope saveth, as in the text; which is to be regarded, because our thoughts run so much upon faith that we overlook hope; and we do so altogether regard our present reconciliation with God through the merits of Christ, that we forget our eternal fruition of him

in glory, and what is necessary thereunto, as if the whole drift of the new covenant were only to comfort us against the guilt of sin. Now a christian should mind both, not only his peace with God, but his going off from the world; and must believe, not only to the pardon of sins, but also to eternal life: 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them that should afterwards believe on him to everlasting life.' There is the final and ultimate object of faith, which must be first thought of; for all things are influenced by the last end. When we are invited to Christ, we are invited by this motive,—that sinners shall not only be pardoned, but glorified. Therefore a true and well-grounded hope of eternal life is a more weighty point than we usually think of; and a great part of religion lieth in drawing off the heart from things visible and temporal to those that are invisible and eternal. The great effects of faith, which are love to God and victory over the world, are more easily produced when faith hath the assistance of hope, or this lively expectation of the world to come. Therefore we must not only consider the death of Christ as it hath procured for us the pardon of sin, or the promise of pardon; but as he died for us, that we might live for ever with him, 1 Thes. v. 9; that so the soul may more directly and expressly be carried to God and heaven.

It informeth us that none can be saved without hope of salvation. A christian, as soon as he is made a christian, hath not the good things promised by Christ; but as soon as he is made a christian he expecteth them; as an heir is rich in hope, though he hath little in possession. Take any notion of applying grace. As soon as we are justified, we are 'made heirs according to the hope of eternal life,' Tit. iii. 7; as soon as we are converted and regenerated we are 'begotten to a lively hope,' 1 Peter i. 3; and as soon as we are united to Christ: Col. i. 27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' And without hope how can a man act as a christian? Since the whole business of the world is done by hope, certainly the whole spiritual life is quickened by this grace: Tit. ii. 12, 13, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared unto all men, teaching us that, denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, godly, in the present world; looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ;' and Phil. iii. 20, 21, 'For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body.'

But then here ariseth a great doubt, how far every man is bound to hope for salvation? For those that have no assurance of their own sincerity, and cannot unquestionably make out their propriety and interest, how can they hope for salvation?

*Answer,* To solve this doubt, we must consider a little the several states of men as they stand concerned in everlasting life. Some have but a bare possibility; others have a probability; a third are gotten so far as a conditional certainty; others have an actual certainty, or firm persuasion of their own right and interest.

(1.) To some the hope of heaven is but a bare possibility, as to the careless christian who is yet entangled in his lusts; but God con-

tinueth to them the offer of salvation by Christ; they may be saved if they will accept this offer; it is brought home to their doors, and left to their choice. It is impossible indeed in the state in which they are, but their hearts may be changed by the Lord's grace: Mark x. 27, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible;' he can make the filthy heart to become clean and holy, the sensual heart to become spiritual and heavenly; there are many bars in the way, but grace can break through and remove them. This possibility checketh scruples, and aggravateth their evil choice; for they 'forsake their own mercies,' Jonah ii. 8; by their vain course of life they deprive themselves of happiness which might be theirs. It is their own by offer, for God did not exclude them; but not their own by choice, for they excluded themselves, judge themselves 'unworthy of eternal life,' Acts xiii. 46. This possibility is an encouragement to use the means: Acts viii. 22, 'Pray, if perhaps,' or, if it be possible, 'the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee.'

(2.) Others have a probability, or a probable hope of eternal life; as when men begin to be serious, or in some measure to mind the things of God, but are conscious to some notorious defect in their duty, or have not such a soundness of heart as may warrant their claim to everlasting blessedness; as we read of 'almost christians,' Acts xxvi. 28; and 'not far from the kingdom of heaven,' Mark x. 24. And such are all those which have only the grace of the second or third ground; they receive the word with joy, but know not what trials may do; they have good sentiments of religion, but they are much choked and obstructed by voluptuous living, or 'the cares of the world,' Luke viii. 14. Yea, some such thing may befall weak believers; they dare not quit their hopes of heaven for all the world, but cannot actually lay claim to it, and say it is theirs. Now probabilities must encourage us till we get a greater certainty; for we must not despise the day of small things; and it is better to be a seeker than a wanderer.

(3.) A conditional certainty, which is more than possible or probable. That is, when we adhere to God's covenant, and set ourselves in good earnest to perform the conditions required in the promises of the gospel, expecting this way the blessings offered. As for instance, the hope is described by Paul, Acts xxiv. 15, 16. 'And have hope towards God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust; and herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men.' There is such a dependence upon the promise as breedeth an hope, and this hope puts upon strict and exact walking; such a conditional certainty is described in Rom. ii. 7, 'Who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, honour, immortality, and eternal life.' I am sure to find salvation and eternal life, if I self-denyingly and patiently continue this way, and by the grace of God I am resolved so to continue. Now there is much of hope in this; partly because this is the hope which is the immediate effect of regeneration,—the hope that is the fruit of experience, and belongeth to the seasoned and tried christian who hath approved himself;

hearsay is another thing, Rom. v. 4. And partly because this suiteth with God's covenant, or the conditional offer of eternal life, according to the terms of the gospel, where the benefits are offered to invite us to walk in the way of life. Now here is faith believing, hope expecting, and resolution to take God's way; even to deny ourselves, sacrifice our interests, and heartily to exercise ourselves unto godliness. And partly because much of the life of christianity lieth much in this conditional hope and certainty, it being absolutely necessary to all acts of grace. And partly that we may have much comfort by it, for we are making out our claim. I do not doubt, or considerably doubt, of the reward of godliness *ex parte Dei*; no, I know they are sure and steadfast by the promise; but my own qualification is not so sensible and clear that I can positively determine my own right; but I have support and comfort in this way: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 'Run not as one uncertain;' for I have reward in my eye.

(4.) There is actual certainty of our interest, as being qualified. Which admits of a latitude; for it may be full or not full, firm or not firm: Heb. vi. 14, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end;' it may be interrupted or continued; the full hope removeth all doubts and fears; that which is not full hath some doubts accompanying it; but the certainty prevaieth, and is more than the doubting. This is comfortable, to sail to heaven with full sails, rather than make an hard shift to get thither by many doubts and fears; and it is a blessed thing when we can say, 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens;' 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness.' In short, the more we address ourselves to our duty, the more we put ourselves in the way to receive the promise.

## SERMON XXXII.

*For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?—ROM. viii. 24.*

2. WE must distinguish of hope. There are several kinds of hope. (1.) There is an hope in the creature, and (2.) an hope in God.

*First*, All things besides God are false confidences. Carnal men hope for that in the creature which is only to be found in God; dream of an uninterrupted tenor of worldly felicity in present enjoyments; therefore their hopes are compared to a spider's web, which is gone with the turn of a besom, Job xiii. 13, 14. They lay their desigus in their minds as curiously as the spider's web is woven; but the besom of providence cometh, and spider and web are both swept away, and trodden under foot. By the prophet Isaiah it is compared to a dream: Isa. xxix. 8, 'As when an hungry man dreameth, and behold he eateth;

but he awaketh, and his soul is empty ; or as a thirsty man dreameth, and behold he drinketh ; but he awaketh, and behold he is faint, and his soul hath appetite.' A false hope is but a waking dream, which faileth in extremity, and giveth but an imaginary refreshment and satisfaction. This may befall God's children who fall asleep in the midst of worldly prosperity : Ps. xxx. 6, 'In my prosperity, I said, I shall never be moved.' It is hard to keep from sleep when we lean our heads upon a soft carnal pillow, and in our sleep we have many fantasies and dreams ; this is hope in the creature.

*Secondly*, But then there is an hope in God, whose immutable mercy and truth maketh him a fit object for hope : Ps. cxxx. 7, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord ;' so Ps. xlii. 5, 'Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him.' He hath the sovereign command of all things ; and in vain do we look for good apart from him ; if the creature say yea, and God no, all the promises of the creature prove but a lie. Hope in God is that which we press as our respect to him as God ; for faith, hope, and love are duties of the first commandment ; negatives include their positives ; if no other god is before him, then we own the true God for our God. The positive duties of the first commandment are *cultus naturalis, non institutus*, such as are our duty to God as God, though he give no direction about them ; if God be our God, then hope in him : Lam. iii. 24, 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul ; therefore will I hope in him ;' that is, expect all my happiness from him.

Hope in God is twofold, either irrational and groundless, or a rational hope that is built upon solid grounds.

1. There is a vain and groundless hope, which is irrational, such as is in carnal and careless sinners, who say they hope well ; but their hope will one day leave them ashamed, Rom. v. 5. For it is not an hope built on the word of God ; though they live in their sins, yet they hope they shall do well enough, though they be not so strict and nice as others are. Like condemned men in bolts and irons, that dream of crowns and sceptres when they are near unto, and ready for their execution ; so they hope for heaven with as much confidence as the holiest of them all, though God hath told them, Heb. xii. 14, that 'without holiness, no man shall see the Lord.' This hope is but a vain dream, and an awakening time will come ; this hope is not only without faith, but against faith ; this hope is nothing else but a confidence that God will prove a liar ; so that it is a blasphemy, rather than an act of worship ; a believing Satan rather than God ; or hoping in God, who hath declared the flat contrary in his word : 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God ? Be not deceived ; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of heaven.'

2. There is a rational hope, which is built upon solid grounds, probabilities, or certainties.

[1.] There is a rational *probable* hope. For hope is sometimes taken for a probable expectation : 1 Cor. xi. 7, 'Hopeth all things.' It meaneth there, not a divine, but a charitable, prudential hope ; we hope well of others whose hearts we know not, as long as nothing appeareth to

the contrary; charity goeth upon probabilities, therefore hopeth all things: 2 Cor. i. 7, 'Our hope of you is steadfast, that as you have been partakers of the sufferings of the gospel, so shall ye be also of the consolation;' so towards God: 1 Cor. ix. 10, 'He that plougheth, plougheth in hope;' a man hath no promise of a good crop; but the ordinary providence of God giveth him a probable hope of success. In temporal things, when we know not what the event will be, such a kind of hope we have. There is no express promise; but such is the Lord's power and goodness commonly exercised in his providential government, that we have no reason to despair, and say it shall not be; yea, much reason to believe that God will give success to our endeavours, for his glory in the world, considering what hath usually befallen his servants in like cases; though we cannot draw a firm and certain argument from thence, yet it is probable, for the most part it is so. But in matters that concern eternal life, somewhat of this hope may be observed; as before conversion, when we begin to be serious and seek after God, we cannot say certainly God will give us converting and saving grace; we must follow God, though we know not what will come of it, as Abraham did, Heb. xi. 8. There the rule in such cases is, I must do what he hath commanded; God may do what he pleaseth; yet it is some comfort that we are in a probable way. Nay, after conversion, such hope men may have as to their own interest in eternal salvation; they cannot say heaven is theirs, or that God will certainly keep them to his heavenly kingdom; yet they dare not quit their hopes of heaven for all the world, nor cease to walk in the way of salvation; it is probable they are God's children.

[2.] There is a firm and certain hope, when we have assurance of things hoped for, by the promises and offers of the gospel: as Acts xxiv. 15, 'I have hope towards God that there shall be a resurrection both of the just and unjust.' Without this hope a man cannot be a christian.

We must certainly expect the promised blessing to be given to those that are capable and duly qualified; and all that are enlightened by the Spirit do see it and expect it, and positively conclude, that 'verily there is a reward for the righteous,' Ps. lviii. This hope is the life of religion, and doth excite us to look after it by due and fit means; their eyes are enlightened with spiritual eye-salve, that they get a sight of the world to come: Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints;' and if they believe the gospel, it cannot be otherwise. I am certain there is such a thing: Col. i. 5, 'For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel.' There this truth is made known; all that close with the gospel receive it, and by it is this blessed hope of glory wrought in us.

3. There is a twofold certain hope; one sort necessary, the other very profitable, but not absolutely necessary to the life and being of a christian; the first sort is the fruit of faith, the second the consequent of assurance. The first grounded merely upon the offers of the gospel, propounding the chiefest good to men, to excite their desires and endeavours; the other is grounded on the sight of our own qualification, as well as the offers of the gospel; the one is antecedent to all acts of

holiness, the other followeth after it. An antecedent hope there must needs be, before the effect of the holy life can be produced; for since hope encourageth and animateth all human endeavours, no man will engage in a strict course displeasing to flesh and blood, but he must have some hope; and this hope the conditional offers of the gospel doth beget in us, and all serious creatures have it that mind their proper happiness. Rejoicing in hope is the same with ἀρχὴν ὑποστάσεως, Heb. iii. 6, 14; it is the first taste we have of the pleasures of the world to come. Keep up this gust and taste, and you are safe.

But then there is another hope, that is grounded upon the evidence of our sincerity, and is the fruit of assurance, when we can make out our own claim and title to eternal life, which is not usually done without (1.) Much diligence: Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show forth the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end.' (2.) Much sobriety, and weanedness from the world, 1 Peter i. 13. (3.) Much watchfulness, that we be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, Col. i. 23; that our hopes of eternal life begotten in us by the gospel be not weakened and deadened in us; it is not enough thankfully at first to embrace the conditional offer, but we must keep up this hope in life and vigour. (4.) Much resolution in our conflicts with the devil, world, and flesh, 1 Thes. v. 8. Lastly, some experience, Rom. v. 4, of God's favour and help in troubles, and our sincerity therein. When we are seasoned and tried, our confidence increaseth; the frequent experience of God's being nigh to us, and honouring us in sundry trials, is a ground for hope to rest upon, that he will not leave us till all be accomplished: Phil. i. 20, 'According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed; but that with all boldness, as always, so now also, Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death.' Paul gathereth his confidence for the future from former experience. Now these two sorts of hope must be distinguished; for the first hope may be accompanied with some doubts of our own salvation, or the rewards of godliness *ex parte nostri*, at least; not *ex parte Dei*, for there all is sure and steadfast, and to doubt there is a sin; it would detract from the goodness, power, and truth of God; but when our qualification is not evident, this doubting may do us good, as it may quicken us to more diligence to make our title more clear and explicate; especially when we are conscious to ourselves of some notorious defect in our duty, and have a blot upon our evidences; indeed the rather, when more godliness might be expected from us, as having more knowledge or helps, or obliged by calling and profession to greater integrity and holiness of life. Doubting is right when it ariseth from a right and true judgment of our actions according to the new covenant; and we cannot truly say who hath the greatest interest in us, God or the world, sin or holiness. Would you have men muffle their consciences, and think that they have more grace than they have, or judge their condition to be better than it is,—absolutely safe, when they are not persuaded of their sincerity? Indeed, when conscience judgeth erroneously, and a man thinketh he hath not that godliness which is necessary to salvation, which indeed he hath, he overlooketh God's work, his judgment of himself is erroneous, and therefore culpable; though it be not unbelief, or a distrust of Christ.

Well then, as to these two hopes—

(1.) That hope which ariseth from faith must every day be more strengthened; for though there be no fallibility in God's promise, yet our faith may be weak or strong according to our growth and improvement; and in some temptations God's children for a while may question articles of religion of great importance, and the eternal recompenses, not their own interest only; as David: Ps. lxxiii. 13, 'Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency.' As if he had said, What reward is there of holiness, mortification, patience, and self-denial? In the lower world, where God is unseen, our great hopes yet to come, the flesh being importunate to be pleased, and the things of the world necessary for our use, and present to our embraces, christians are not certain and past all doubts of the truth of their everlasting hopes, else there would be no weak faith nor faint hope. Did not the disciples in a great temptation doubt of an article of faith? Luke xxiv. 21, 'But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel;' and ver. 25, 'O ye fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken!' To doubt of what the prophets spake was not to doubt of their own salvation, but of the constant state of their souls. All the godly are persuaded of the truth of the gospel, that ordinarily they have no considerable doubts about it, but that still they resolve to cleave to God and Christ, looking for their reward in another world, whatever it cost them here, and in some measure can sell all for the pearl of price.

(2.) As to the hope which ariseth from your assurance.

First, Make your sincerity more clear and unquestionable, and every day your hope and your confidence will increase upon you. To believe and hope that you yourselves shall be saved is very desirable and comfortable; but then you must do that which assurance calleth for—'give diligence to make your calling and election sure,' abound in the love and work of the Lord, grow more indifferent to temporal things, venture all in Christ's hands; for while your faith and repentance is obscure, you will not have such full comfort, though you are confident of the truth of God's promise to all penitent believers.

Secondly, This latter or consequent hope, which dependeth on the assurance of our interest, admits of a latitude—it may be full or not full: Heb. vi. 11, 'To the full assurance of hope.' That is full which casteth out all fear; that is not full which is accompanied with doubts; but the certainty prevaileth: Mark ix. 24, 'Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;' Cant. v. 2, 'I sleep, but my heart waketh.' Now we should labour to go to heaven with full sails, or 'abound in hope,' Rom. xv. 13; and 2 Peter i. 11, 'For so an entrance shall be unministered unto you abundantly, into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,' with hearts full of comfort.

Thirdly, When it is full, it may be interrupted, or continued to the end; or at some times it may be full, or not full at another: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Hope to the end.' If we continue in our duty with diligence, affection, and zeal, our full hope may be continued; if we abate our fervour, grow remiss and cold in the spiritual life, we lose much of the comfort of our hopes.

Fourthly, The hope which followeth after experience and much

exercise in the spiritual life may result from an act of ours, and from an impression of the comforting Spirit. (1st.) From an act of ours. From our considering the truth of God's promises, or his wonderful mercy in Christ, and his grace enabling us in some measure to fulfil the conditions of the new covenant, when thereupon we put forth hope: Phil. iii. 20, 21, 'For our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body. (2d.) Or some impression of the comforting Spirit supporting and relieving us in our distresses, or rewarding our self-denial and obedience; as Rom. v. 5, 'Hope leaveth not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.' The one is an act of godliness, the other one of God's internal rewards; the one is a duty, the other a felicity.

*Use 2.* Is to press us to get, and act hope. Hope implieth two things—

*First*, Certain persuasion. *Secondly*, An earnest expectation. The certainty is seen in the quiet and pleasure of the mind for the present; the earnestness in the diligent pursuit after the thing hoped for by all holy means. Now we must look to both acts of hope.

*First*, To strengthen the certain expectation. There we must often revive the grounds of hope, which are these—

1. The mercy of God, which hath made such rich preparation for our comfort in the gospel. The first ground of hope to the fallen creature is the undeserved grace, mercy, and goodness of God: 2 Thes. ii. 16, 'He hath given us everlasting consolation, and good hope through grace.' And therefore it is our great invitation to hope: Ps. cxxx. 7, 'Let Israel hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is mercy and plenteous redemption.' Apply yourselves to God as a God of mercy; otherwise, such were our undeservings and our ill deservings, there were no hope for us; so Ps. xiii. 5, 'I have trusted in thy mercy; my soul shall rejoice in thy salvation;' let others trust in what they will, I will trust in thy mercy. The serious remembrance of God's mercy maketh hope lift up the head; so Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of the Lord Jesus unto eternal life;' there is our best and strongest plea to the very last. Therefore the heirs of promise are called, Rom. ix. 23, 'vessels of mercy;' because from first to last they are filled up with mercy.

2. The promise of God, which cannot fail: Tit. i. 2, 'The hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie hath promised before the world began.' He promised it to Christ in the covenant of redemption, and he hath promised it to us in the covenant of grace; that before time, this in time. Now God will not fail to do what he hath promised; when he made the promise, he meant to perform it. For what need had God to court his creature into a false hope, or to flatter him into a fool's paradise? to tell them of a happiness he never meant to give them? And if he meant it, is he not able to perform it? Men break their word out of weakness; they cannot do all that they would; their will exceedeth their power: or out of imprudence; they cannot foresee what may happen: or out of levity and inconstancy, for all men are liars; but none of these things can be imagined of God. We have

God's word and oath, Heb. vi. 18; we have his seal, the Spirit, who hath wrought miracles—without, to confirm this hope and assure the world: Heb. ii. 4, 'God also bearing them witness, with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles and gifts of the Holy Ghost;'—within, preparing the hearts of the faithful for this blessed estate: Eph. iv. 30, 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed to the day of redemption;' and giving them some beginnings of it, as an earnest: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.' Now since we go not upon guesses, but sure grounds, the promise of the eternal God thus sealed and confirmed, should not we hope?

3. Our relation to God. He is our God and Father: John xx. 17, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, and to my God and your God.' As our God, he will give us something like to himself; something better than the world yieldeth, something fit for a God to give; or else he could not with honour take that title upon him: Heb. xi. 16, 'Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' As our Father, he will give us the heavenly inheritance: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock, it is your Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom.' If God were a judge only, we might fear how it would go with us in the day of trial; but if he will dignify us with the title of children, we may expect a child's portion: Rom. viii. 17, 'And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.' Be sure that you be adopted, justified, taken into the family.

4. Christ's merit and passion: Rom. v. 10, 'For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' Surely the blood of God was given for some other thing than that little happiness and sorry pittance of comfort which we enjoy here. Do men that understand themselves give vast sums for trifles? When wise men lay a broad and large foundation, we expect a building suitable; if Christ be abased, we may be exalted; if he was apparelled with our flesh, we may be clothed with his glory. That which keepeth hope alive is the consideration of that ransom which Christ paid to reconcile us to God, that we might be capable of the highest fruits of Christ's death, an assurance of his love, even eternal life.

5. His resurrection and ascension: 1 Peter i. 21, 'God hath raised him from the dead, and gave him glory, that your faith and hope might be in God.' Christ confirmed his mediatorship, and herein he is a pattern to us; taken possession of heaven in our name and nature; he did in our nature rise from the dead and ascend into heaven, to give us a real and visible demonstration of a resurrection and a life to come, that we might look and long for it, whilst we follow him in obedience and sufferings. Christ is entered into his glory, and shall we be kept out? Some saw him after he was risen, and some saw him ascending; we have certain testimony of it, that he is gone to heaven before us; he that came to be an example of duty is also a pattern of felicity.

6. His potent intercession. He is sat down on the right hand of majesty, that he may apply his purchase, and bring us into possession of

that happiness which he hath procured for us. We have a friend at God's right hand, who cannot satisfy himself to be there without us: John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and may behold my glory.' He is gone to heaven as our forerunner: Heb. vi. 19, 20, 'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the forerunner is for us entered; even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec;' gone ashore, whither we seek to land: Micah ii. 13, 'The breaker is come up before them.' He hath taken all impediments out of the way, and prepared a safe landing-place for us.

7. All our former experience of God. He hath ever borne us good will, never discovered any backwardness to our good; he purposed it in Christ before the world was; sent his Son to die for us before we were born or had a being in the world; called us when we were unworthy; warned us of our danger when we did not fear it; offered this happiness to us when we had no thought of it; and lest we should turn our backs upon it, followed us with an earnest and incessant importunity, till we came to have anxious thoughts about it, till we began to make it our business to seek after it; by the secret drawings of his Spirit, inclined us to choose him for our portion. How many contradictions and strugglings of heart were there ere we were brought to this. Ever since he hath been tender of us in the whole conduct of his providence, afflicted us when we needed it, delivered us when we were ready to sink; he pardoned our failings, visited us in ordinances, supported us in troubles, helped us in temptations, and is still mindful of us at every turn, as if he would not lose our hearts. And shall we not hope in him to the last? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? As they said, Judges xiii. 23, 'If the Lord were pleased to kill us, he would not have received a burnt-offering and a meat offering at our hand, neither would he have showed us these things;' so if God had no mind to save us, he would not use such methods of grace about us.

8. The greatness of the gospel covenant. For that allayeth a great many fears, to remember that we are to interpret our qualification according to the covenant of grace and the sweet terms thereof; and though there be many failings, we may be accepted with the Lord, who will not impute to his people their frailties and sins of infirmity. Not perfection, but sincerity, is our claim; we have indeed a faith too weak, and mingled with doubtings, too little love to God, and self-love too prevalent; our desires of grace too cold, our thoughts often distracted; but yet where the heart is set to seek the Lord, he will accept us, and our infirmities shall be forgiven us for Christ's sake. When he justifieth, who shall condemn? Rom. viii. 23. He will answer for the imperfection of our holy things; every sin is not a sign of death, some are consistent with a state of grace and hopes of glory. There are some sins which every one that truly repenteth ceaseth to commit them: Prov. xxviii. 13, 'He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy;' there are other sins which they that repent do hate, but they too frequently return: Rom. vii. 15, 'What I hate, that do I;' as, the imperfection of our graces, many vain thoughts and inordinate passions, too much

deadness and coldness in holy duties; these are forgiven, and consist with life; these are causes of child-like humiliation, but not of judging ourselves ungodly, or cast out of the favour of God.

*Secondly,* To breed earnestness, and this desirous expectation.

1. Think often of the sinfulness and misery of the present evil world, even the better part of it, that which is incident to the people of God, which are to be considered either singly or collectively. Singly; each saint and servant of God findeth enough to drive him off from the world, and to make him long for heaven, a great deal of sin to make him long for his perfect estate. Here in many things we offend, all of us, and the best of us, James iii. 2; but above, there are the spirits of just men made perfect. A great deal of misery, unless we are in love with distress, and prefer vanity and vexation of spirit before our rest and quiet repose. Why should we not desire to be at home with the Lord, which is much better for us? Phil. i. 23. We had been more in danger to forget heaven if all things had suited to our desires, and our way had been strewed with worldly flowers and delights; but God hath more wisely ordered it, that our temptation to abide here should not be too strong; or when the world appears to us in too tempting a garb and posture, a valley of tears and snares, a world full of sins, crosses, and pains, should make us look out after a better estate. Consider them collectively as a church, here it is quite different from what it will be hereafter. Alas! how often is it like a ship in the hands of a foolish guide, who knoweth not the right art of steering; spotted with calumnies of adversaries, or the stains and scandals of its own children; sometimes rent and torn with sad divisions, every party impaling and enclosing the common salvation, and confining it to their own bounds, unchristianing and unministering all the rest, and many times, in the pursuit of these contentions, unmanning themselves, while they seek to bear down all that stand in their way. Though it is better to dwell in the courts of the Lord than in the tents of wickedness, yet truly a tender spirit will groan under these disorders, and long to come to the great council of souls, to the spirits of just men made perfect, who with perfect harmony are lauding and praising God for evermore.

2. Remove impediments, which are sensuality and addictedness to worldly things. Some seek all their delights and happiness in the things of this world, and so set more by earth than heaven, and will do more for it. Certainly when we fall into the snare of worldly hopes, and are laying designs for greatness here, it is a troublesome interruption to think of a remove, and their great change cometh upon them unawares, unthought of and unlooked for: Luke xxi. 34, 'Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and the cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares.' See also Luke xii. 17-20, 'And he thought within himself, saying, What shall I do, because I have no room to bestow all my fruits and goods? And he said, This I will do, I will pull down my barns, and build bigger; and say to my soul, Thou hast much goods laid up for many years, take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, This night thy soul shall be required of thee;' Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth,

in that very day his thoughts perish.' Certainly the cares and pleasures of this world steal away the heart from the life to come; worldly delights make us unwilling to remove.

3. Meditate often on the worth of this blessedness: Col. iii. 1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.' Are you unwilling to come to God, the object of your everlasting joy and love? to Christ, your blessed redeemer and saviour, who hath done so much for you, to bring you home to himself? to the innumerable company of saints and holy angels, and those peaceful regions that are above? Surely if you hold your eye open upon the mark, you will press on with the more diligence, Phil. iii. 14.

4. The more earnestly you look for these things, the more doth heaven come to you before you come to it: Phil. iii. 20, 'But our conversation is in heaven;' living for heaven, or upon heaven here, by earnest hope, the joy of the Lord entereth into you; Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you will all joy in believing;' the more our hearts are exalted to look after it; but usually we are taken up with toys and trifles.

*Use 3.* Have we this hope? You may be contented with a presumptuous conceit or idle expectation, and call it hope; it is not a slight thinking of heaven; no, but a certain and desired expectation of the promised blessedness, according to the terms of the new covenant; the true hope is neither groundless nor fruitless.

1. A groundless hope is a false hope, which buildeth on false promises; you cannot render *λογόν* or an account of it, 2 Peter iii. 5. As David asked the reason of his doubts, so we of our hopes: Ps. xlii. 15, 'Hope thou in God.' They think if they have confidence, though without holiness, they shall see God; they hope to be saved without regeneration, and so hope for that which God never promised; think to be saved while unsanctified; these build on false evidences; James i. 21; build on the sand, Mat. vii. 24; build on false experiences, God's patience, the blessings of this life, deliverance only: their cry from imminent danger, Ps. lxxviii. 38; vanishing tastes, Heb. vi. 5.

2. It is not fruitless.

*Use 4.* Is direction in the Lord's Supper. This duty was appointed to raise and confirm our hope, for it is a seal of the covenant, and the principal covenant blessing is eternal life. Three things are considerable: the acting of hope, the receiving new pledges of God's love, the binding ourselves to pursue everlasting life.

1. The acting of hope. We come to take Christ and all his benefits, which are pardon and life. He is drinking 'new wine in his Father's kingdom,' Mat. xxvi. 29. We come to think of the happiness of the blessed; some are gotten to heaven already; we are of the same family: Eph. iii. 15, 'Of whom the whole family of heaven and earth is named.' It is but one household; some live in the upper, some in the lower room; those on earth are of the same society and community with them in heaven: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven.' They have gotten the start of us, and are made perfect before us, that we may follow after; we are reconciled to the same

God, by the same Christ, Col. i. 20; we expect our portion from the bounty of the same Father, Luke xii. 32. He that hath been so good to that part of the family which is now in heaven, will he not be as good to the other part also that remain here upon earth? Therefore they that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling may and should encourage themselves, and look upon this felicity as prepared for them, though not enjoyed by them, and will one day be their portion, as well as of those others who have passed the pikes, and are now triumphing with God. The apostle telleth us, 1 Cor. xi. 26, 'As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye show forth the Lord's death till he come;' and he cometh to bring us up to those blessed mansions which are in his Father's house. When we show forth the Lord's death, we are to think of those that are in our Father's house: John xiv. 3, 'I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there you may be also.' To keep afoot this promise in the church, and to keep it alive in our hearts, we come to the Lord's table.

2. Our business is to receive new pledges of God's fatherly love and our blessed inheritance, which are represented under a double notion: as an earnest, to show how sure; as first-fruits, to show how good.

[1.] Earnest. Hope is not built upon promises alone, but we have earnest also; the promise is given us in the word, the earnest is given in our hearts, 2 Cor. i. 22. Though God be truth itself, and promiseth nothing but what he meaneth to perform, yet he will give us earnest of his promises. The outward pledges are the elements; the inward pledge is the earnest of the Spirit; his comfort and graces are a part of the promised felicity. He would not weary and burden us altogether with expectation, but giveth us somewhat in hand, light, life, grace, joy, peace; one drachm of these is more precious than all the world, yet these are but an earnest. This is the confirmation that we have in the midst of our doubts and fears; they expect the full sum.

[2.] First-fruits. We come to get a taste of these things to deaden our taste of other things, which would divert us from these hopes, which are vain delights of the flesh, 1 Peter i. 13. Bodily pleasures are put out of relish by these choice and chaste delights; these are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage.

3. To bind ourselves to the more earnest pursuit of these hopes. Our journey is not ended, nor our warfare and conflicts; therefore here we bind ourselves to continue our race, and finish the good fight of faith; as the Israelites in their first passover had their loins girt and their staves in their hands, as resolving on a journey to Canaan, the land of rest; so we profess ourselves strangers and pilgrims; let us therefore resolve on our journey towards heaven, and bind ourselves to the performance of it.

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