

SERMON UPON 1 THESSALONIANS V. 8.

But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.—
1 THESS. v. 8.

IN the context the apostle inferreth our duty from our profession of christianity. All christians are taken into a new estate, called out of darkness into light, and so are children of the day, and not of the night. Now deeds of darkness will not become the broad daylight of the gospel that we live in. He instanceth in two sins—negligence and voluptuousness: ver. 7, ‘They that sleep, sleep in the night; and they that are drunken, are drunken in the night.’ Sleep is a night-work, and drunkenness also is a night-work. He opposeth to these two duties watchfulness and sobriety. He opposeth to sleep, watchfulness; and, as opposite to sensuality, he enforceth sobriety. Watchfulness implieth a carefulness and constancy in our duty, and sobriety an holy moderation in all earthly things; and more particularly a sparing use of worldly delights, that security may not grow upon us, and the day of the Lord surprise us unawares. Unless we moderate our affections in the pursuit and use of earthly things, a strange benumbedness seizeth on the conscience, and an oblivion and forgetfulness of God and heavenly things presently followeth it: Luke xxi. 34, ‘Take heed to yourselves lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and cares of this life; and so that day come upon you unawares.’ Now the apostle doth not barely dissuade them from sleep and sensuality, as we would persuade a man that hath an ordinary work to do to prevent sloth and loss of his day-time, which was made for work; but as we would deal with a soldier that is upon his watch to prevent danger. Therefore it doth imply, not only how misbecoming these things are, but how baneful. It is not enough to be sober, but we must be armed, else we cannot be safe from temptations. Our life is a conflict, and our graces are our armour: Rom. xiii. 12, ‘The night is far spent, the day is at hand; let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light.’ Therefore it is not enough for us to be sober or to be awake, but prepared for our spiritual warfare: ‘But let us who are of the day be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.’

In the text there is a double exhortation—

1. To keep ourselves awake: ‘But let us who are of the day be sober.’ The word is *νήφωμεν*; it signifieth both sobriety and watchfulness. The

meaning is, take heed we be not lulled asleep by worldly desires, cares, and pleasures.

2. To put on our armour. Two pieces he commendeth to them, a breastplate and an helmet. Men fence the breast for the heart's sake; and the head is the seat of the sense, upon whose safety dependeth principally the safety of the whole body, for the head guideth the whole body. Wounds in either of these two parts are most dangerous. Now—

[1.] The breastplate consisteth of two graces, faith and love; these two are joined together, for the one can do nothing without the other. Faith without love is but a dead opinion, and love to God in Christ cannot be without faith; both together enable us to do notable things for God: Gal. v. 6, 'Faith worketh by love.' What can withstand faith working by love?

[2.] The helmet is 'the hope of salvation,' or a sure and earnest expectation of our eternal reward from Christ. Keep these, and you shall not only be in a blessed condition when the day of the Lord cometh, but in all your troubles, trials, and temptations you are safe for the present, and you shall not miscarry by the way.

If any say the pieces of the spiritual armour are otherwise reckoned up, Eph. vi., I answer—(1.) Metaphors may be several ways used; and in these things, so the matter be fitly delivered and understood, it is enough. (2.) Here the apostle showeth what is necessary to watching; there, to fighting. He that watcheth provideth for enemies, but doth not presently encounter them; and therefore here a decorum is observed. Livy tells us of Paulus Emilius, *Vigiles novo more, scutum in vigiliam ferre vetuit*. It is enough if he hath a breastplate, though no shield; for his business is not presently to fight, but to excite others to fight, when he perceiveth the enemy approaching; a breastplate is enough, till he call others to help him.

Doct. Christians are not well prepared for their spiritual warfare till they have put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation.

1. It is supposed that it concerneth us to arm ourselves for a conflict. Partly because we have sore enemies, the devil, the world, and the flesh. The devil is a roaring lion, and must be resisted: 1 Peter v. 8, 9, 'Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour; whom resist, steadfast in the faith.' The world either vexeth us with fears or enticeth us by hopes, and must be overcome: 1 John v. 4, 5, 'For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?' but the sorest enemy is within, to wit, our own flesh, which must be subdued and tamed: Gal. v. 24, 'They that are Christ's have crucified the flesh, with the affections and lusts.' Partly because we are constantly observed how we acquit ourselves in the conflict. Now for the present there are spectators, God and his holy angels; hereafter there will be a judge, Jesus Christ. Now there are spectators: 1 Cor. iv. 9, 'For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels and to men.' He speaketh there of the apostles, who were, as it were, exposed as the

forlorn hope, set up in the eye of this world; but it is true of all christians. Christ maketh inspection now, for we fight in his presence; he seeth how his people carry themselves in their conflicts and temptations: 'I know thy works: behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it; for thou hast a little strength, and hast kept my word, and hast not denied my name,' Rev. iii. 8. But Christ, who is now a spectator, will be hereafter a judge: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day.' Now he observeth, then he crowneth his combatants; partly that we may thoroughly discharge our duty. We can hardly do any good, but we must fight for it; but especially in the great work of our heavenly calling, practical christianity is a serious application of the mind and heart to do what Christ hath required, that we may obtain what he hath offered; and to do it as our first work and chief business: Phil. ii. 12, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;' Phil. iii. 14, 'I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.' Now the devil will not let you alone in this earnest diligence, but seeketh to break your resolutions, or deaden your affections, or damp and discourage your zeal; and the flesh joineth with him, especially when the world frowneth upon your endeavours, and are set against you for being so faithful to Christ.

2. That they are not prepared till they are endowed with faith, hope, and love. To evidence this, I shall show—(1.) Their nature; (2.) Their mutual respect to one another. (3.) Their use in the spiritual conflict.

I. Their nature.

1. Faith, which is a firm and cordial assent to the doctrine of the gospel, of such things as are revealed by God, because revealed by him.

[1.] The object.

(1.) The material object of faith in general is such things as are revealed by God in his word: Acts xxiv. 14, 'Believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.' The precepts, promises, threatenings, histories, mysteries. The general faith goeth before the particular; there is no building without a foundation. The special object is God's transactions about man's salvation by Christ: John xvii. 3, 'This is life eternal, to know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.'

(2.) The formal consideration is, because revealed by him: John iv. 42, 'Now we believe, not because of thy saying; for we have heard him ourselves, and believe that this indeed is the Christ, the saviour of the world;' that is, because they had heard his words, and were convinced and satisfied: 1 Thes. ii. 13, 'Ye received it not as the word of men, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.' Not as any doctrine devised of men, but as sent by God from heaven, for the benefit of mankind.

[2.] The act of the soul. It is an assent. The understanding hath a double act about divine truths. (1.) Knowledge, or a due apprehension of them; (2.) Exercising a judgment about them. This is acknowledgment or assent; and this assent hath two adjuncts—

(1.) It is a firm belief of these things. There is a latitude and difference in the firmness of assent; there is conjecture or opinion, which is a weak faith, but assurance doth best: Col. ii. 2, 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ.' I say, there is a difference. In the firmness of assent there is *certitudo notitiæ* and *certitudo adhaerentiæ*, a certainty of knowledge and a certainty of adherence; but in all that are sincere, it is so firm as to sway our choice, incline our hearts, and govern our resolutions, that we see all the reason in the world to follow the way which Christ hath prescribed, that we may be everlastingly happy; whatever it cost, they will venture: Heb. x. 39, 'But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of our souls.' Sense saith, Spare the flesh; but faith saith, Save the soul.

(2.) It is a cordial belief, or such as engageth the heart; for faith considereth not only the evidence of things propounded, but the weight, worth, and greatness of them: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation.' Simon Magus believed, but his heart was not right with God, Acts viii. 13, compared with ver. 21. So, 'Many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did; but Jesus committed not himself to them, because he knew all men,' John ii. 23, 24. This is faith; for first men believe, then love, then hope, then lift up the head.

2. Love, which is a grace which inclineth our hearts to God as our portion and chief happiness. This overruleth all their affections to their outward interests: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' Here we shall consider—

[1.] The qualification of the object. Love in the general considereth the object as good. God is good in himself, and good to us: Ps. cxix. 68, 'Thou art good, and doest good;' and we love God as a good God, having received our beings from him: Rom. xi. 36, 'For of him, and through him, and to him are all things.' And being redeemed by him when all was forfeited into the hands of his justice: 1 John iv. 19, 'We love him, because he loved us first.' And looking to expect more from him when all his promises shall be fulfilled: 1 John iii. 1, 2, 'Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God. Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God; and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

[2.] The respect of love to the object. It is such a respect as becometh the chief good and happiness; such a superlative and transcendent love, that our love to other things should be as no love when it is compared or cometh in competition with our love to God. There are two acts of love to God—desire after him, and delight in him.

(1.) Desire is the pursuit of the soul after God, that we may get nearer to him. It is expressed usually by seeking after God; and when God is sought after in the first place, then are we said to love God; as Prov. viii. 17, 'I love them that love me, and they that seek

me early shall find me.' All duties and all acts of the spiritual life are a seeking after more of God : Ps. lxxiii. 8, ' My soul followeth hard after thee ; ' Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord, and 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 to inquire in his temple.' This ardent and burning desire is a great effect of love to God ; but when men are cold and flat, and more indifferent as to the distinguishing testimonies of God's love, there is something on this side God which doth content us and divert us from him.

(2.) Delight in God. The highest exercise of this is reserved for the world to come, when we shall enter into our Master's joy ; but now it is a pleasing thing to think of him : Ps. civ. 34, ' My meditation of him shall be sweet : I will be glad in the Lord.' And to speak of him : Eph. v. 4, ' Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient, but rather giving of thanks.' And to converse with him : Ps. cxxii. 1, ' I was glad when they said unto me, Come, let us go into the house of the Lord.' Yea, it is the pleasure of their lives to serve and obey him : Ps. cxii. 1, ' Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.' This complacency or well-pleas'dness of the mind in God should be much regarded by us, and is known by this, when those mercies are most valued which are nearest to himself, and do show us most of God, and least detain us from him, such as his favour, his Spirit, or sanctifying grace ; when these are desired, when these are delighted in, we are said to love God : Mat. v. 6, ' Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness ; ' Ps. iv. 6, 7, ' Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us : thou hast put gladness into my heart.' His favour is as life, his displeasure as death to the soul : Ps. xxx. 7, ' Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.' Now thus must we love God, not with a partial and half love, but such as transcendeth our love to all other things : Mat. x. 37, ' He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me.' If anything be nearer and dearer to us than God, we do not sincerely love him. Some have a weak, imperfect motion of their will, a wish, a faint desire to please God, but not a strong volition or inclination of heart to love him in all, and above all things ; but being overcome by their lusts, they do not simply and absolutely and uncontrollably desire it, but had rather please their fleshly lusts than please God. At least the event doth evidence it ; you give God nothing if you give him not all the heart. We are so to love God as to seek his glory and do his will, even when it is cross to our carnal interests, that his favour may be counted our happiness, and the pleasing of him our greatest work. Surely they do not love God that cannot deny a lust for him, or venture the loss of anything that is dear to them for his sake, but, with Pilate, will yield to crucify Christ, rather than venture the Jews' displeasure ; or, with the Gadarenes, will part with Christ, rather than their swine. Others have a deliberate resolution, and seem for the present to resolve absolutely and seriously to please God in all things and keep his commandments, but they do not verify it in their conversations. Their purposes and resolutions are not dissembled for the present, but soon changed ; they neither keep the commandments of God, nor study to please him.

3. The next grace is 'Hope of salvation;' and here—(1.) The subject; (2.) The respect to the object.

[1.] The object is our eternal reward; for a christian must chiefly fetch his supports and solaces from the other world, where all things do abundantly counterbalance the temptations of the present life. Be they troubles and sufferings: 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.' Glory for affliction, and a weight of glory for a light affliction, and eternal glory for what is momentary affliction. Or be they sensual delights, as riches: Heb. xi. 26, 'Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.' How much better is it to be poor and scorned here than to be destitute and rejected for ever hereafter! So for pleasures; most men look at present pleasures, not at future joys, and therefore forget God, and neglect their souls, and those eternal pleasures which are at God's right hand, Ps. xvi. 11. But to a gracious man a glorious estate of bliss is far more eligible than momentary sinful pleasures.

[2.] The respect to the object. It is a certain and earnest expectation.

(1.) It is certain, because our hopes are built upon the promises of God, which infer not only a possibility, or probability, but certainty of the things promised, if we be duly qualified. There is a twofold certainty—conditional and actual. Conditional: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life;' that is, built on the covenant which promiseth to the penitent believer and mortified and diligent practiser a sure reward. Actual certainty is where the qualification is evident; this is built on spiritual sense or experience: Rom. v. 4, 5, 'And patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' Our condition is made safe by the first, comfortable by the second; in both a certainty is required. The first is spoken of Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' The second, Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.'

(2.) It is an earnest expectation, called 'a lively hope,' from the effect, because it puts life into our endeavours: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Who hath begotten us again unto a lively hope.' The soul is weak when our expectation is cold and languid; but serious and earnest thoughts of the world to come do warm our hearts, and enkindle our affections; as mourning: 2 Cor. v. 2, 'For in this we groan earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house, which is from heaven.' And joy: Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.'

II. Their mutual respect to one another. We know God in Christ by faith; we are inclined to him as our felicity and happiness by love; and we look for the eternal enjoyment of him by hope. As the object is diversified, so the grace conversant about it is called by several names; as our supreme good is something invisible or unseen, we apprehend it by faith; as it is good and excellent, we embrace it by

love; as it is absent and future, we wait for it by hope. The understanding is cleared by faith; that is our spiritual eye-salve: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen;' as things are invisible by reason of their nature or distance: Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' By it we see things that cannot otherwise be seen, or in another manner than we saw them before. We see more amiableness in God, more odiousness in sin, more excellency in Christ, more beauty in holiness, more vanity in the world, more reality in blessedness to come, than we saw before. Our wills are warmed by love, or carried out after the supreme good, with an earnest and strong desire: Isa. xxvi. 9, 'With my soul have I desired thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek thee early.' Where love is strong, desires after God are early and earnest, and we cannot be contented without him, or such enjoyment of him as may give us assurance of more. Our resolutions and inclinations are fortified by hope, that we may continue seeking after God, and not be diverted, either by the comfortable or troublesome things we meet with here in the world. Not by the comfortable things: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind; be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.' Nor by the troublesome things of the world: Rom. viii. 39, 'Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Well, then, the supreme good, or fruition of the ever-blessed God, is believed, sought after, waited for. We know it by faith, we seek it by love, we wait for the enjoyment of it by hope. Faith affordeth us light to discover it, and direct us to it; love possesseth the soul with a desire to enjoy it; and hope giveth us a confidence of obtaining it, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

III. Their use in the spiritual conflict.

1. They impel us to do our duty with all diligence, whatever temptations we have to the contrary: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.' Whence you see work is ascribed to faith, labour to love, and patience to hope. Work to faith, because that grace is working, and ready to break out into obedience: 2 Thes. i. 11, 'And the work of faith with power.' Labour to love, because love puts men upon industry and diligence; they that love God will be hard at work for him: Heb. vi. 10, 'For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love.' Patience to hope, because that grace produceth endurance and constancy: 2 Thes. iii. 5, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.' And the good ground 'brought forth fruit with patience,' Luke viii. 19. In short, you see these graces are of an operative and vigorous nature. Faith is but a dead opinion unless it break out into practice; love but a cold approbation of the ways of God unless we overcome our slothfulness; hope but a few slight thoughts of heaven unless we persevere and hold out till the time of retribution cometh.

2. These graces restrain and subdue those corrupt inclinations which

are yet in the heart, and would be a great impediment to us if they be not more and more overcome; such as ungodliness and worldly lusts, atheism, or a denial of God's being, and unbelief or distrust of his promises. Worldly lusts: Titus ii. 12, 'Teaching us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts;' that is to say, worldly fears, and worldly desires, or, in one word, the sensual inclination called the spirit of the world. These can never be overcome without faith, by which the mind is soundly persuaded of the truth of salvation by Christ; nor without love, by which the will is firmly resolved and bent upon it; nor without hope, by which the executive powers are fortified and strengthened in their operations. In short, when the doctrine of Christ concerning things to be believed and done is first propounded to us, it findeth us wedded to the world, and entangled in the vanities thereof; but as this doctrine is received and believed, the bent and inclination of our souls is altered; a new bias is put upon us, and our love to God and heavenly things is more and more increased; the heart is set to seek after God, and that with the greatest earnestness and diligence. Without this, the carnal and worldly inclination prevaileth over us. As in the want of faith: Heb. iii. 12, 'Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.' Want of love: 1 John ii. 15, 16, 'Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' Want of hope: Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' Many are beaten out of their christianity at last, because they cannot tarry for Christ's recompenses.

3. To fortify us against all evil without. Besides corruptions within, there are temptations without; manifold afflictions, which Satan maketh use of to draw us to sin. Now these three graces arm us against them, 2 Tim. i. 7, where he speaketh of enduring the afflictions of the gospel by the power of God: 'God hath not given us a spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind.' Faith, hope, and love are intended thereby; by a spirit of power meaning hope, which breedeth fortitude, notwithstanding dangers and threats of men; love retaineth its own name; and by the sound mind is meant faith. All these help us to encounter the difficulties and hardships of our pilgrimage, and breed in us a tranquillity of mind, and contentedness in every state.

4. Without faith, hope, and love we cannot pray to God, nor entertain any sweet communion with him while we dwell in flesh: Jude 20, 21, 'But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' That clause, 'Praying in the Holy Ghost,' is to be referred in common to them all; praying to be built up in our most holy faith, praying to be kept in the love of God, praying that we may look for the mercy of our Lord Jesus to eternal life. Prayer is not an exercise only of our natural faculties, but also of the three fundamental graces of the Spirit. There are three agents in prayer, the human spirit, the new nature, and the Spirit of

God. The human spirit, for by the understanding and memory we work upon the will and affections. The new nature, as prayer is the work of faith, hope, and love. And the Holy Ghost is there mentioned, as also, Rom. viii. 26, 27, 'Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities, for we know not what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered: and he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit; because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.' The middle is to our purpose. Now prayer is a work of faith, as the great mysteries of our most holy faith are therein reduced to practice: Eph. ii. 18, 'For through him we both have an access, by one Spirit, unto the Father.' Love is acted in prayer, as we delight ourselves in conversing with God; all our desires and groans in prayer are acts of love, expressing our longings after more of God. Hope is acted in prayer, as we express our trust in God, and the merits and intercession of Christ, and plead his gracious promises. Prayer itself is but hope put into language: Ps. lxxii. 8, 'Trust in him at all times, ye people; pour out your hearts before him.' On the other side, when we omit prayer, or perform it coldly or cursorily, surely there is a defect in their faith, love, or hope. A defect of faith; they do not believe God's being and providence, and the promises of God's holy covenant: Ps. xiv. 1, 'The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God;' and ver. 4, 'They call not upon the Lord.' The practical atheist is one that doth not pray at all times, nor much, nor often call upon God: Mal. iii. 14, 'Ye have said, It is in vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?' Or if they do not soundly believe his covenant: Rom. x. 14, 'How shall they call on him in whom they have not believed?' How can they address themselves to God in Christ if they are not rooted in the faith of the gospel? Or sometimes a defect in their love to God, because they have no delight in him: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Isa. xliii. 22, 'But thou hast not called upon me, O Jacob; but thou hast been weary of me, O Israel.' They are glutted with worldly happiness, and so God is neglected: Jer. ii. 31, 32, 'Have I been a wilderness unto Israel? a land of darkness? Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee? Can a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire? Yet my people have forgotten me days without number.' Or a defect in their hope, they despair either of assistance or acceptance with God. David, when he had lost his peace by some wounding sin, he had not the heart to go to God: Ps. xxxii. 3, 'I kept silence;' 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.' Sin represents God as an angry judge. God is terrible to a guilty conscience. We inherit this as coming from Adam: Gen. iii. 8, 'Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden.'

5. We are not prepared for death and judgment without faith, hope, and love; but either of these days will be terrible to us

[1.] Death. Take either grace, faith, hope, or love. Faith; first we live by faith, and afterwards we die by faith: Heb. xi. 13, 'These

all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' The intervening promises are most questioned in the present life, because of the urgency of present necessities; but the great promise is questioned hereafter. When we are to launch out into eternity, it is a hard matter to look with a steady confidence into the other world; when the soul must flit out of the body, to see heaven open to receive it needs a strong faith: John xi. 25, 26, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth, and believeth in me, shall never die: believest thou this?' So for love; that is necessary, that we may be willing to go home to our Father, who hath admitted us into his family, pardoned our sins, and relieved our souls. And it is a great encouragement in the hour of death, when we are to leave the world, and come immediately into his presence, who hath done such great things for us, and is now about to do more. But in what a woful case are they who must appear before a God whom they never knew nor heartily loved, and with whom they never had communion and acquaintance; they never had experience of his kindness nor interest in his love, and now are forced into his presence against their will! Certainly it is faith and love must smooth and sweeten our passage into the other world, and make it comfortable to us. Love overcometh our natural loathness to quit the body: 2 Cor. v. 8, 'We are confident, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and be present with the Lord.' To enjoy Christ's presence, we can part with what is nearest and dearest to us. So for hope; in what a lamentable case are men when they come to die if they are without hope! Job xxvii. 8, 'What is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' They are full of presumption and blind confidence now, while they swim in the full stream of worldly comforts and advantages; but when this dotage is over, they have no solid comfort, but either die senseless and stupid, or are filled with horror and despair, and their hopes fail them when they have most need of them.

[2.] So for the judgment; for the context speaketh of the day of the Lord, which cometh unexpectedly on the sensual and careless, and is matter of terror to them; but it is welcome to the godly, who are upon their guard, and have long looked and prepared for it. Now, what is the due preparation for judgment, but furnishing ourselves with faith, love, and hope? For these graces do both put us on that spiritual care which is necessary for waiting for it, and also fill us with confidence and comfort. Faith: 2 Thes. i. 10, 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, because our testimony among you was believed in that day.' Love is necessary: 1 John i. 17, 18, 'Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment, because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love, but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment; he that feareth, is not made perfect in love.' Hope: Heb. ix. 28, 'And unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time, without sin unto salvation.'

Use 1. Is to persuade us to get these graces, all of them; partly because without them the new creature is not perfect; you will want

sight, life, or strength, either an eye, or an heart, or a power to act; and partly because they have a mutual influence one upon another; faith and hope upon love, for faith looketh backward to the wonders of God's love shown in our redemption by Christ; hope looketh forward to the state of glory and blessedness prepared for us; and both excite our love to God, and thankful obedience to him. Again, faith and love breed hope, for they that believe and love Christ's appearing will wait for it, and not think of it with perplexity and fear, but with comfort and delight. There is a great deal of grace then to be brought to us.

Well, then, labour to get all these graces. To this end—

1. Remove the impediment, that is, a careless vanity of mind, which groweth upon us through an indulgence to the delights of the flesh, so that either we have none, or seldom and cursory thoughts of God, or Christ, or the world to come. 'Let us be sober,' as in the text; so 1 Peter i. 13, 'Be sober, and hope to the end.' Draw off your affections from carnal vanities or delights of the senses, that you may more earnestly mind God and heaven.

2. Wait on all opportunities of profiting, and use the known means of grace more conscionably. These graces indeed are not acquired, but infused; they are God's gifts. As for faith: Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God.' So for love: 1 John iv. 7, 'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.' Not only recommended to us by his example, but wrought in us by his Spirit. So for hope: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill ye with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.' But God loveth to bless us by his own means, which are the word and prayer.

Use 2. Exercise these graces. Remember they are your armour and furniture for the conflict, when your resolutions of obedience to God are most assaulted, or you are apt to be discouraged.

1. When any want, cross, sorrow, or tribulation overtaketh you upon earth, fetch your comforts from God, Christ, and heaven. Be sure that faith, hope, and love be at work; so the children of God are wont to do in their deep afflictions. How calamitous soever our condition be, faith can see that there is comfort enough to be had in God, Christ, and the covenant: 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' So for hope: Rom. xii. 12, 'Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.' Though we are pressed with wants and miseries, yet there is a better state to come. And in the worst condition, love can rejoice in God: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.'

2. In some grievous temptation, whereby we are apt to wax weary in our minds, stir up these graces. Do I believe the promises, heartily love God, and hope for his salvation? and shall his service, or my fidelity to him, be tedious to me? When some present delight inviteth us to sin, or some present bitterness to draw us off from God, in time of temptation, these graces are seasonably acted, to counterbalance things carnal with spiritual, things present with future: Heb. xi. 35, 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.'