

witness to our spirits, that we are the children of God ;' 2 Cor. i. 22, ' Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts ;' Eph. i. 13, ' In whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise.'

SERMON XIII.

And having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.—
1 TIM. VI. 8.

THE apostle hath mentioned some in the 5th verse that counted 'gain was godliness;' that is, suited their godliness with their worldly ends, or made a trade of it to live by. Their religion must bear all their charges, they would be at no cost about it at all. The apostle takes occasion to show that their notion may be right if well interpreted, though extreme wrong in the sense they mean it. It was impious in them to make Christianity a means to secular advantages; but interpret it aright, 'Godliness with contentment is great gain,' much better than all the wealth in the world. By godliness he means the Christian religion, because it prescribeth and delivereth the true way of worshipping and serving God, and they gain fairly that gain Christ. A man that is acquainted with God in Christ is the true rich man; this with contentment is great gain. Our worldly desires make us poor. You have enough if you be contented with the condition wherein God places you. Paul retorts their own notions upon them. He is a rich man that doth not possess much and hath need of little. Anything above a competency is needless to us, who must shortly pass out of this life into another. Nature is contented with a little, and grace with less; because it is manifest that 'as we brought nothing into this world, so we can carry nothing out,' and all that we have above what we spend or use is lost to us. In the text he inferreth his inference: 'Having food and raiment, let us be therewith content.' The words are plain, and afford this observation:—

Doct. That one great point of godliness is to be content with what we have, though it be but food and raiment.

In handling this point, I shall inquire:—

I. What contentment is.

II. What considerations are most apt to breed it.

III. That it is a high point of Christianity.

I. What contentment is. It is a quiet temper of mind about outward things; and so it is opposite to three things—murmurings, distracting cares, and covetous desires.

1. Murmurings: Jude 16, 'Murmurers, complainers.' The word signifies blamers of their portion; they are always picking quarrels at God's dispensation, and entertain crosses with anger and blessings with disdain. But now, when our minds are satisfied with the fitness and sufficiency of our present condition, there is no repining against

God, no fretting and tearing ourselves; the mind is framed to the estate, be it never so mean.

2. Distrustful and distracting cares. Men are full of troubles, especially when they are in a hazardous strait and low condition; therefore God forbids this: Mat. vi. 25, 'Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat, or what you shall drink; or yet for the body, what you shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?' Men are fearful and anxious for the future, and doubt whether God will allow them the necessaries of life, food, and raiment; therefore it is said, Luke xii. 29, 'Be not ye of a doubtful mind.' They distract themselves with these anxious thoughts. The word properly signifies to be carried in the air, as clouds, by an uncertain motion; and so it is applied to them who are tossed about without consistency or fixedness of mind, by an impatient suspense or anxious solicitude about God's providence.

3. Covetous desires: Heb. xiii. 5, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have.' The apostle speaks there of times of persecution; and no temper of mind is so fit for us in such times as contentation with whatever God at present allows us. They that are greedy of more forget or dislike what they have already. There is no reason for it; for what use is there of more than what may nourish us within and cover us without? But we punish ourselves with our own wild desires. Well, then, contentation is opposite to all these; it is such a quiet of mind as suiteth our hearts to our condition, and relieth upon God's merciful providence and gracious promises for support and necessaries during our service in the world, without being troubled about other things.

II. What considerations are offered and implied in the text as most apt to breed it.

1. That God is a sovereign Lord, and dispenses these outward things at his pleasure. We are not proprietaries; we must only content ourselves with the use, or a transitory fruition: Luke xvi. 12, 'If you have not been faithful in another's, who will give you that which is your own?' That *other's* is God, who is the dispenser and disposer of these things. The whole drift of the parable is to show that we are but stewards: God reserves the sovereign right to himself—gives us only the use or trust for our own and others' good. No man esteemeth himself to be an owner of that which another besides himself hath power to dispose of, as God hath of us and of all that belongeth to us. Our possession of anything is but limited and respective. We are but tenants at the will of the Lord; he can take us from our service, or our service from us at his own pleasure: Job ix. 12, 'Behold, he takes away, who can hinder him? Who will say to him, What doest thou?' God hath an absolute power, his right is uncontrollable; so is not ours. Now, this hath a great influence upon contentedness with our condition; for if we and all that we have be God's own, he may do with his own as it pleases him, Mat. xx. 15. If he takes anything from us, he doth but require his own; and nothing more reasonable but that every one should have liberty to dispose of what is his own according to his will. Every one of you must say, I am God's creature; he may use me for his glory, in what manner and in what rank and degree he pleaseth.

2. It is the wisdom and will of God not to give to all alike, that some should have more and some should have less. He puts ten talents into the hands of some of his servants, and but one into another's, Mat. xxv. Therefore if your portion be straiter than others, it is what God hath allotted: 1 Sam. ii. 7, 8, 'The Lord makes poor and the Lord makes rich; he bringeth low and he lifteth up: he setteth some among the princes, and to inherit the throne of glory; whilst others sit on the dunghill or roll in the dust. The world is not governed by chance, nor is it the blind idol fortune that dispenses honours and estates, but every man's portion and the bounds of his habitation are set forth by God. It comes not from second causes, or an uncertain rolling about the sphere of human mutability, but God's ordinance and appointment, who, as he hath cast the world into hills and valleys, hath made the estate of one man differ from another. No estate in this world is universally good for all, as no gale of wind can serve for all passengers on the deep waters. Nor doth the same weather fit every soil; that drought which burneth up the hotter grounds comforteth those which are more chill and cold. If one man had another's blessings he would soon run wild, as another would grow desperate if he had their crosses. Therefore the infinite wisdom of the great Governor of the world allots every one his portion. God knows the reasons of this unequal distribution, though they be hidden from us. Now, this also hath an influence upon contentment, for we ought to submit to the good pleasure of God, and can no more quarrel with his providence for keeping us low and bare than his creation, that he made us men and not angels, or that he will furnish the world with all kind of creatures, worms and beasts as well as men: Isa. xlv. 9, 'Shall the clay say to the potter, Why hast thou made me thus?'

3. These earthly things, which are thus variously dispensed, are only useful to us during the present life in the mortal body. In heaven we have no need of these things, and we must leave them all on this side the grave: 1 Cor. vi. 13, 'Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats; but God shall destroy both it and them.' Meats are appointed by God and nature for the use of men, and the body of man in this life hath absolute necessity of them; but in the next life, which is a spiritual life, this eating and desiring of meat shall be taken away. It is a mercy to have meat when we are hungry, and garments to cover our nakedness when cold, but it is a greater mercy to be above these necessities. Well, now, this life is but short and uncertain; it is but a coming into the world and a going out again: Job i. 21; 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out.' Now, we that are ready to step into another world, and are certain within a short time to be stripped for ever of all these things, what great matter is it if God keep us low and bare? All will shortly be as poor as you, and a little time should make but a little difference. That is not our true wealth and riches which we cannot carry away with us; what is left behind is not ours, but other men's; and therefore, whilst you are alive, you should not be much troubled about that which you cannot enjoy when you are dead. If we have what will serve for our passage, what should we do with more? We cannot carry away our riches along with us, but the sting and

guilt of mis-enjoying them and mis-employing them will be sure to stick by us both in death and judgment. It is not the possession, but the use that will comfort us. Though we cannot carry our estates into the other world, yet the comfort of a good conscience we may carry with us: 'Their works follow them,' Rev. xiv. 13. Then they go to enjoy the eternal reward of bliss and peace for their hard and painful service here in the world.

4. The comfort, safety, and happiness of this life lies not in abundance: Luke xii. 15, 'Take heed and beware of covetousness; for a man's life lies not in the abundance of things which he possesseth.' This consideration is added because some might think, though we can carry nothing out of the world, yet whilst we live we should seek larger supplies. Our Lord answereth this surmise: Though outward things are very useful to sustain life, yet no man is able to prolong his life, or to make it more happy and comfortable to him, by possessing more than he needs or uses. What good will the superfluity of wealth do him? These things are extrinsical to our being and happiness. When you have the world at will, you can get no more from it than bodily food and bodily clothing. The poorest may attain to that. It is no great matter whether our dung or excrements be of finer matter or coarser; whether a gay show we make in our apparel, so we have for warmth and decency; whether few or more dishes at our table. Too much oil puts out the lamp, and superfluity afflicts and oppreseth that part which it seems to gratify. When men have troubled themselves and the world to make themselves great, what a sorry happiness have they! Their net and their drag, by which they catch men as a fisherman doth fishes in the sea, it all tendeth to this, that their portion may be fat and plenteous. A poor felicity, that they have a little good cheer and a merry life here. They that want such abundance live as well as they, and have as much health and contentment: Ps. xvii. 14, 'They have their portion in this life, and their bellies are filled with hid treasures, and they leave the rest to their babes.' They ransack the storehouses of nature to satisfy their gluttony and excess, but yet all this while they are not the nearer to contentment, nor farther off from the grave. So that it is best to be content with necessaries.

5. Nothing besides food and raiment is absolutely necessary. By food is meant something to nourish us, and by raiment something to cover us. If you indulge wanton appetites, if you make provision for the flesh, or ask meat for your lusts, God will not hear nor regard your desires. Jacob desires but food and raiment of God: Gen. xxviii. 20, 'If God be with me, and keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, then God shall be my God.' But how could he put his owning and acknowledging of God upon these terms? The meaning is, this shall be a new engagement, esteeming it as a great favour. All our desires should be suited, not to our luxury, but the necessity of nature; raiment, not ornament; necessary supports, not delicacies: therefore we should not make lust a wanton, but be content if God will any way enable us to serve and glorify him. We should be content with his allowance; it is enough for the service and honour which he expecteth from us, and to carry us through that little time which we have to spend in the world. It is not abundance

that we need, but a contented heart : let a little suffice, if God gives no more. Diseased persons need more attendance than the healthy ; the distempers of our souls multiply our necessities, and as we indulge them they gain upon us ; therefore every one of us should bring himself to be content with necessaries. Superfluities are an impediment rather than a help, as a shoe too big for the foot hinders our going, or as David could not go on with Saul's armour, because it was too great for him, 1 Sam. xvii. 39. We are freest from temptations when we have least, though enough for health, strength, and cheerfulness.

6. Food and raiment are not hard to be obtained. I do not mean with respect to our endeavours, but God's blessing ; for in these things God will not forsake us. We have a heavenly Father, who knows what we stand in need of, Mat. vi. 32. They that have least from God have ordinarily food and raiment vouchsafed to them ; he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties ; our condition is tolerable, if not comfortable, 1 Cor. x. 13. He hath wonderful means to help, when all their supplies are removed out of the view of sense. It is notable to observe, the Israelites were not plagued when they murmured out of want, but when they murmured out of wantonness. Real wants, we may rationally presume, will be supplied, not fancies and carnal appetites. As for instance : Ps. lxxviii. 21, ' Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth, and a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger came up against Israel.' Therefore—why ? When he had taken care to supply their wants by giving them plenty of water out of the rock of Horeb, and by sending manna in the morning and quails in the evening, yet they fell a murmuring and complaining, preferring their condition in Egypt before that which God had brought them into. They must have a table better furnished with bread and flesh ; they were clogged with this manna, not contented with a provision for their wants, but required a satisfaction to their appetites. This highly displeased and provoked God, and brought very sharp punishments upon them. So again, Ps. cvi. 14, 15, ' They lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert, and he gave them their request, but sent leanness into their souls.' Their minds ever and anon ran upon the flesh-pots of Egypt ; and because they had not that festival plenty in the wilderness, they murmured as if Moses had brought them out of Egypt to die there, and God must show more miracles, not to supply their wants but to pamper their lusts.

7. This life was given us to seek a better, and therefore the felicity of it must not be measured by a more ample portion of food and raiment, but as we are fitted and prepared for the better life, which is the end and scope of life itself. All these things are but your provision in the way to heaven, therefore not principally to be sought after ; your business is to serve God, and seek the salvation of your souls : Mat. vi. 33, ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;' that is, there will be enough to sustain us in our journey to heaven, whilst we are preparing for eternity, and therefore we should be content.

8. Many times the less we have in this life the more fervently is the life to come sought after ; a moderate estate is freest from tempt-

ations. Abundance of all things without any want inclines us to a forgetfulness of God; as, on the other side, perpetual want, without any cheerful taste of God's goodness, disposes men to atheism. In the two extremes religion is either starved or choked. We see it in countries and persons: in countries, Sodom and Gomorrah, which was as the garden of God, Gen. xiii. 10, was the first instance of unnatural sin, and an example of supernatural judgment. Some in great prosperity have no thoughts of God and the world to come; others that live in sordid poverty never consider the goodness of God, and so live and die miserable creatures. The middle estate is freest from danger, and religion is most secured in it: Prov. xxx. 8, 9, 'Give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: lest I be full, and deny thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of God in vain.' Pride and insolency are incident to the one, and any base dealing to the other. A great estate, like a rank soil, is more apt to breed weeds; and bitter necessity betrays us to any base shift for our sustenance; therefore if God gives us anything to live upon, we should be content.

9. That God best knows what will do us good or hurt, and therefore we should refer it to him to dispose of us according to his own pleasure. Certainly we should not want if God saw it better for us to abound, for he is no niggard of his blessings, but is good, and doth good. But it is not meet that man should have the disposal of himself, or his own condition and affairs, or that God should accommodate his providence to our carnal interest and will. No; God's will must always precede, and ours follow. We have a corrupt will, guided by a dark understanding; and if the blind lead the lame, what can be expected but disorder and ruin? Therefore our wills must not lead and make the first choice, but God's. We must bring our hearts thoroughly to yield to what God appointeth, and that our present estate is best for us. How unmeet judges are flesh and blood of what condition is fit for us! We would be fed only with the delicacies of prosperity and pleasure, but it is for our profit that we should be chastened, 'that we should be partakers of his holiness,' Heb. xii. 10, 11. What a strange creature would man be if he were what he would wish himself to be! Vainly proud, stupidly careless, and neglectful of God and heavenly things; therefore our best way is to be what God will have us be: 'Not my will but thine be done,' Mat. xxvi. 39.

10. We must be contented with a competency, but yet we ought to be fitted and prepared for eternity. If God please to give us conveniency, it is his great mercy; but our resolutions must be to be contented with any condition God will put us into: we except not life itself out of our resignation. The people of God are wont to suppose not only some necessity but an extremity: Hab. iii. 18, 'Yet will I rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' He saith not, If I have only food, and raiment, and hard fare, it shall suffice me. No; but 'If the labour of the olive shall fail, and the field shall yield no meat, and the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls.' In many cases poverty may come upon us like an armed man, and spoil us of all: but when we seem to be

starved in the creature, yet then we may feast in God. God's children do not capitulate with him how much they will suffer and no more, but resolve to bear the heaviest burden, to submit to the sharpest affliction. So again, Ps. xlv. 19, 20, 'Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death, yet we have not forgotten the name of our God, or proved unfaithful to him.'

III. The reasons why it is a high point of Christianity to get contentment with any estate God shall put us into are:—

1. In the general, it is a mystery only learned in Christ's school: Phil. iv. 11-13, 'I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be therewith content; and I know how to be abased and to abound: I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need; I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' This art is not soon learned. What is there in Christianity above other disciplines to teach us this contentation? The doctrine of God's particular providence, fatherly care, and eternal life,—these, seconded by the sanctifying operation of the Holy Ghost, cause this resolution in us, to encounter all the difficulties of this present life in a humble and quiet mind.

2. More particularly, let us consider—(1.) What is necessary to this contentment; (2.) What effect it produces.

[1.] What is necessary to this contentment.

(1.) Faith, or a sound belief of God's being and gracious promises and eternal recompenses; that there is a God, that he hath a particular care of human affairs, and that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties, but will guide them to eternal life. It is in vain to press people to contentedness till they be thus persuaded. For the first truth, that there is a God: 'He that cometh to God must believe that God is.' For the second truth, that he hath a particular care of human affairs: 1 Peter v. 7, 'Cast all your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you.' The third truth, that he will not leave his people to unsupportable difficulties: Heb. xiii. 5, 6, 'Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee; so that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me.' For the fourth truth, a prospect of eternal life: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' Now if God be, and be thus engaged to his people, why should we be discontented if he takes his own methods to bring us to everlasting glory? We cannot suffer anything that God is not aware of; every dram of our affliction is weighed out to us by that all-wise, all-merciful Providence; and there is nothing which we suffer that he knoweth not how to turn to our good, looking for nothing from us but our trust and thankfulness.

(2.) It comes from humility, when we are content to be at God's finding, knowing that we have deserved nothing from him: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all thy truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant; for with my staff passed I over this Jordan, and now I am become two bands.' The humble man is content to be dealt with as the Lord pleases. Pre-

scribing to God always comes from ascribing to ourselves. We think we have deserved more than he gives us. We, that are worthy of the heaviest judgment, surely should be thankful for the smallest mercy: Eccles. vii. 8, 'The patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.' Patience is rooted in humility, but discontent in pride.

(3.) It comes from weanedness from the world. They that do not seek great things for themselves will stand to God's allowance. It may be God may bestow great things upon them, as he did upon Abraham and David, but they do not seek them, especially in times when it is a mercy they have life and liberty. That is forbidden, Jer. xlv. 5. In short, grace doth all, both as to poverty and riches, and makes rich and poor stand on the same level. Now this is a high point in religion, to grow dead to the world, to behave ourselves in a manner as unconcerned in poverty or riches; for the world is the great impediment to the heavenly life, as being the bait of the flesh, the snare of Satan, by which he detaineth souls from God. If once we grow indifferent to these things, we would not feel any great power in temptations to pleasure, wealth, and honour, and would soon be thorough Christians; the spiritual life would be more easy and even. Easy, for where men seek no great things for themselves in the world, and a little matter contenteth their desires, and checketh their murmurings, the resistance of the carnal nature to the empire of grace is without much difficulty overcome; they can enjoy plenty or want, renounce their aspiring thoughts, meddle sparingly with fleshly delights, they are seeking a better estate. More evenly; there is no notable blemish on them who are crucified to the world; they do not stain their profession, wound their consciences. Their choices are governed by religion, not by carnal interest; they are kept 'unspotted from the world,' James i. 27.

[2.] The fruits it produces. I shall name but two of many.

(1.) They are not distracted with great worldly business. They esteem that to be the best way that brings them nearest to their great end, which is not to enjoy happiness in this life, but in the world to come. Those whose hearts are all for the present, they must have the world to the full, or they are not contented; they never think of laying up treasure in heaven, Mat. vi. 19, 20. That is not their end and scope, but to live commodiously here, that they and their posterity may flourish in the world: Ps. xvii. 14, 'They which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasures, they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.' But a good man that eyes another happiness, is not much troubled how it is with him here, so he and his may be accepted with God hereafter. Therefore their business is not to lay up treasure to themselves on earth, but to be rich towards God, Luke xii. 21.

(2.) They that can be contented with a little, are most likely to be true to God and conscience. They can better suffer hunger, thirst, nakedness, and other troubles for the gospel: Acts xx. 24, 'None of these things move me;' that is, made no great opposition and perturbation in his mind. It is no strange thing to them when trials come. They can part with all things under the sun, rather than quit their

duty to Christ ; for temptations have lost their force when worldly desires and lusts are mortified. They withered in persecution that received the good seed for a time, Mark iv. 17. When religion carries one way, and the world another, then farewell religion for the world's sake. When Christ had spoken so much of the cross, then Judas turneth apostate. When Demas saw the world went on otherways, he forsook Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 10. When Christ told the young man of parting with all, he went away sad, Mark x. 22. If heaven cost so dear, it is no pennyworth for him. So men will come into no danger or trouble for Christ, because they are not contented with a little.

Use 1. If the godly ought to be content with food and raiment, it shows the vanity of men's vast desires ; they have much above food and raiment, yet they are not satisfied. A true Christian is contented with necessaries, but worldly men 'enlarge their desires as hell,' Hab. ii. 5. They are so far from acquiescing in their portion assigned to them by God, though it be competent and enough to satisfy their wants, yea, and far beyond (so that many are glad of their leavings) ; yet they are always hunting after more, like death and the grave, which are never satisfied. They are restless, still adding, if they be princes, kingdom to kingdom ; if they be churchmen, preferment upon preferment ; and if ordinary men, estate upon estate, house to house, field to field. These desires are pettishly solicited, eagerly followed, and many times finally disappointed.

2. It checks our impatiency under disappointment. If we have not our will in worldly things, we are troubled, our desires are too ardent. We must needs have them, cannot be without them, trouble ourselves about them, and so murmur and repine against God ; and this breedeth fearful tempests in the soul. As Jonah bitterly contended with God about his gourd, Jonah iv., and Rachel, 'Give me children, or else I die,' Gen. xxx. 1. If we cannot have what we would, all is nothing. Ahab is sick for one poor vineyard. Haman counteth his honour nothing as long as Mordecai sits at the king's gate. As in a carriage, if one pin be wanting all is at a stop.

3. It shows the evil of our distrust, notwithstanding we have God's fatherly providence and promises to rely upon, and so large a covenant interest : 1 Cor. iii. 21-23, 'All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' All things are yours, ordinances, providences, this world, the next, life, death. Would you have more? All are instrumental for our good, if we resolve to be faithful to Christ.
