

THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.—

1 PET. I. 9.

THE apostle here giveth a reason why believers rejoice in the midst of afflictions; they are qualified thereby to receive salvation, yea, in part have it already, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.'

In which words observe:—

1. The benefit: *the salvation of our souls.*

2. The grace which qualifyeth us for that benefit: *faith.*

3. The respect between the benefit and the grace; it is τέλος, the end, or reward.

1. The benefit, which may be considered as consummated, or as begun; and accordingly the word Κομιζόμενοι must be interpreted. If you consider it as to consummation and actual possession, so we receive it at death, when our self-denying obedience is ended; and for the present we are said to receive it, because we are sure to receive it at the close of our days. We believe now that we shall at length have it, and therefore rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

(2.) If you consider it with respect to inchoation or begun possession, we have an undoubted right now, and some beginnings of it in the consolations of the Spirit. Now we receive it in the promises; we receive it in the first-fruits, which are some forerunning beams of the daylight of eternal glory.

2. The grace which qualifyeth and giveth us a title to this benefit is faith. The word *faith* is taken in scripture sometimes for *fides quæ creditur*; sometimes for *fides quâ creditur*, for the doctrine or grace of faith. The first acceptance will make a good sense here, namely, that the whole tenor of Christian doctrine leadeth us to the expectation of, and diligent pursuit after, eternal salvation. It is the whole drift of the Christian religion. But I take it rather for the grace. This is the prime benefit which faith aimeth at, as I shall show you by and by.

3. The respect between faith and salvation. It is τέλος, the end; or the word signifyeth the fruit and the reward. As τέλος is taken for an end and scope, the scripture favoureth that notion: κατα σκοπόν διώκω, I press towards the mark or scope, Phil. iii. 14. And 2 Cor. iv. 18, σκοπούντες, the salvation of our souls is the prime

benefit which faith is not only allowed, but required to aim at. A believer levelleth and directeth all his actions to this end, that at length he may obtain eternal life. Sometimes it is put for the fruit or reward: Rom. vi. 22, 'Being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.' The issue of all, the final result, was your salvation.

The point that I shall insist on is this:—

Doct. That the end and reward of faith is the salvation of our souls.

I shall open the point by explicating three questions:—

1. What is this salvation of our souls?

2. What right the believer hath to it?

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it? The last is most important.

1. What is the salvation of the soul? It is not meant of temporal deliverance, or an escape from danger, as some would affix that sense upon it, but of eternal life, or our happy estate in heaven. This belongeth to our whole man, the body as well as the soul; but the soul is the chief part of man, and that which is first glorified. When men come first into the world, first the body is framed, and then the soul cometh after; as we see in the creation of Adam, first his body was organised, and then God breathed into him the spirit of life. And we see it in common generation, when the body is first framed in the womb, then it is quickened by a living soul. This lower region of the world is properly the place of bodies, therefore reason requires that the body, which is a citizen of the world, should first be framed, that it may be a receptacle for the soul, which is a stranger, and cometh from the region of spirits that is above. But when we must remove into these heavenly habitations, then it is quite otherwise; for then the soul, as a native of that place, is presently admitted, but the body, as a stranger, is forced to reside in the grave till the day of judgment; and then, for the sake of the soul, our bodies also are admitted into heaven. This is the ordinary law for all private persons. Christ, indeed, who is the head of the church, and the prince of this world and that which is to come, his body as well as his human spirit was made a denizen of heaven as soon as he ascended. He entered into heaven not as a private citizen, but as king and lord of the heavenly Jerusalem, and therefore carried both body and soul along with him. But as to us, first the soul goeth there, as into his ancient seat and proper habitation, and afterwards the body followeth.

Well, then—[1.] At death our souls go to Christ, and enter into a state of happiness: Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved, and to be with Christ.' The soul is not annihilated after death, nor doth it sleep till the resurrection, nor is it detained by the way from immediate passing into glory; but if it be the soul of a believer, as soon as it is loosed from the body it is with Christ: Luke xxiii. 43, 'Verily, I say unto thee, to-day shalt thou be with me in paradise.' He asked to be remembered when Christ came into his kingdom; and Christ assureth him of a reception there that day, as soon as he should expire.

[2.] In due time the body is raised and united to the soul, and then

Christ will be 'glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe,' 2 Thes. i. 10. Such glory and honour will be put upon those who are but newly crept out of dust and rottenness; the saints themselves, and all the spectators, shall wonder at it.

[3.] There is another period in this happiness, our everlasting habitation in heaven, near unto the throne of God, and in the presence of his glory: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' There we shall also have the company of angels and blessed spirits, and make up one society with them: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.' This is the sum of the salvation which we expect, or our everlasting happiness with God in heaven.

2. What is the right of believers, or the interest of faith in this great benefit?

I answer—

[1.] It doth not merit this reward, for it is not a reward of due debt by virtue of any intrinsic righteousness in us, or anything that we can do and suffer, but of mere grace and favour: Eph. ii. 8, 'For by grace ye are saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.' The apostle is very tender of the honour of grace, and the interest of grace in our salvation. From the first step to the last period, all is of grace; and this glory of his free grace God must not be robbed of, neither in whole nor in part. We have all from his elective love, we have all from the merit and righteousness of Christ, and all from the almighty operation of the sanctifying Spirit. Faith itself is a gift and fruit of God's grace in us: 'To you it is given to believe,' Phil. i. 29. Therefore surely it is God's free grace, favour, and good-will which doth freely bestow that salvation on the elect, which Christ by his merit hath purchased; and that very faith by which we apply and make out our actual claim and title is wrought in us by the Spirit; so that there is nothing in the persons to whom all this is given to induce God to confer so great benefit on us.

[2.] Though it be an undeserved favour, upon which our works have no meritorious influence, yet believers have an undoubted right by the grant and promise of God, wherein they may comfort themselves, and which they may plead before God: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have life everlastingly;' and John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my words, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' And in many places where the believer is qualified as the heir of glory. He that entertaineth Christ's doctrine, and receiveth and owneth him as the true Messiah and Saviour of the world, and dependeth upon him, and obeyeth him, this man hath a full right and new-covenant title to eternal life.

[3.] He hath not only a new-covenant right, but a begun possession. We have some small beginnings, earnest, and foretastes of it in this life; partly in the graces, partly in the comforts of the Spirit.

(1.) In the graces of the Holy Spirit. For salvation is begun in our

new birth, Titus iii. 5; and therefore sanctifying grace is called 'immortal,' or 'incorruptible seed,' 1 Peter i. 23. There is an eternal principle put into them which carrieth them to eternal ends. The life is begun in all that shall be saved, and it is still working towards its final perfection. The apostle telleth us, that 'he that hateth his brother hath not eternal life abiding in him,' 1 John iii. 15; whereby he implieth that he that loveth his brother, or hath any saving grace, he hath eternal life begun in him.

(2.) As to comforts, so they have some foretastes of that sweetness which is in heaven by the life and exercise of faith, which is followed with peace and joy, Rom. xv. 13; or in their approaches to God in the word and prayer, where God most familiarly manifests himself unto his people, 1 Peter i. 3; or upon some apprehensions of his favour, or the exercise of hope and love, 2 Peter i. 8. By these or the like ways, the Spirit of God giveth us the foretaste. Surely such an author, such an object, must needs put ravishing and heavenly joy into the heart of a believer.

(3.) They are also made meet to partake of the heavenly inheritance, Col. i. 12. There is *jus hæreditarium*, and *jus aptitudinale*. The difference is as between an heir grown and in his nonage, when a child in the cradle. As their natures are more renewed and purified, and their souls weaned from the delights of sense, they are changed into the divine nature.

3. What is that saving faith which giveth us a title to it? This deserveth to be cleared, that we may not deceive ourselves with a false claim.

Saving faith is such a believing in Christ, for reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory, as maketh us to forsake all things in the world, and give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for the obtaining of it.

[1.] The general nature of it I express by believing. There is in it *assent*, *consent*, and *affiance*.

(1.) *Assent*. That leadeth on the rest, when we believe the truth of God's word, Acts xxiv. 14, 15, especially those practical truths which do most nearly concern our recovery to God; as concerning man's sin and misery, that we have broken his laws, and are obnoxious to his justice, and have deserved punishment for our sins, Rom. iii. 23. And concerning Christ, his person and office, that he is the Son of God, and that he came from God, to bring home sinners to God, and what he hath done to reconcile us to him: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for our sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit.' And also concerning your duty and happiness, the end and the way. There is no other end and happiness but God, no other way but the Mediator, and the means appointed by him, John xiv. 6. Now these and such like truths must be believed—that is, in the sense we are now upon, assented unto as faithful sayings, and worthy of all acceptance and regard.

(2.) There is a *consent* in faith, whether you apply it to the word or Christ. If Christ be propounded as the object of it, it is called a receiving: John i. 12, 'But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' So the word: Acts ii. 41,

'They gladly received his word;' that is, embraced the gospel covenant, being really affected with what he had spoken concerning their sin and their duty. Without this, the assent is but intellectual and speculative, not practical; an opinion, not an act or motion of the new nature. I am to receive the Christ offered, to embrace the covenant propounded, to accept of the blessings offered for my happiness, and to resolve upon the duties required as my work. This is consent, or a hearty accepting of Christ, or the covenant of grace offered to us in his name.

(3.) There is *affiance, trust, dependence, or confidence*, which is a quiet repose of heart in the mercy of God or fidelity of Christ, that he will give me pardon and life, if I seek after it in the way that he hath appointed. This cometh in upon the former; for when I consent to seek my happiness in God, through Christ, I depend upon the security of his word, that so doing I shall obtain it. This entitleth us to the reward: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' The happiness which Christ promiseth us is spiritual, and for the most part future, and lieth in an unseen and unknown world; but whilst we are engaged in the pursuit of it, we must depend upon his faithful word. That must be security enough to us, to engage us to continue with patience in the midst of manifold temptations, till we obtain what he offereth to us. These three must be often renewed—assent, consent, and affiancement.

[2.] It is a believing in Christ. I make Christ the special object of this belief, not as exclusive of the Father or the Spirit, but because of the peculiar reference which this grace hath to the Mediator in this new and gospel dispensation, which was appointed for the remedy of the collapsed estate of mankind. So Acts xx. 21, 'Repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.' He speaks of repentance as respecting God, and faith as respecting Christ. These are the two recovering graces: repentance is necessary because of the duty we owe to our Creator and supreme Lord; and faith respects our Redeemer, who principally undertook our recovery to God. Christ is believed in, in order to the salvation of our souls.

(1.) Because he purchased and procured this salvation for us as mediator of the new testament: Heb. ix. 15, 'He is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they which are called might receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' By the intervention of his death sins are expiated, that penitent believers might have everlasting life.

(2.) Because it is by him promised, or in his name: 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.' Christ's great business as a prophet is to discover with certainty and clearness such a blessed estate that it may be commodious for our acceptance, laid at our doors; if we will take it, well and good. He is 'Amen, the faithful witness,' Rev. iii. 14, who came with a commis-

sion from heaven to assure the world of it; and to confirm his message, he wrought miracles, died, and rose again, and entered into that happiness which he spake of, 'that our faith and hope might be in God,' 1 Peter i. 21. Guilty man is fallen under the power and fear of death, and strangely haunted with doubts about the other world. Now, he that came to save us and heal us, did himself in our nature rise from the dead, and ascend into heaven, that he might give a visible demonstration, both of the resurrection and life to come, which he hath promised to us. And when he sent abroad messengers in his name to assure the world of it, their testimony was accompanied with divers signs and wonders, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, Heb. ii. 3, 4, that the stupid world might be alarmed to regard the offer, and by this evidence be assured of the truth of it; therefore still it is a believing in Christ.

(3.) Because as king he doth administer and dispense the blessings of the new covenant; and among them, as the chief and principal, this salvation unto all those who are qualified. And therefore it is said, Heb. v. 9, 'Being made perfect through sufferings, he is become the author of eternal salvation to all that obey him.' Every effect must have some cause; and this noble and glorious effect of eternal salvation could have no other cause but Christ; and he, as perfected and consecrated, is the author and efficient cause of it. For as king, he sendeth down the Holy Ghost to reveal the gospel, and work faith in the hearts of men, to qualify them for pardon and salvation; and all those that sue for pardon and salvation in his name, by the plea of his blood before the throne of God, and promise obedience to his laws and institutes, he actually bestoweth pardon and eternal salvation upon them. There be many other ministerial and adjutant causes, which conduce to this effect. But he is the principal; and the word *αἴτιος*, which signifieth a *cause* in general, is fitly by our translation termed the *author* of eternal salvation. So that still you see a new reason why saving faith should be described to be a believing in Christ.

[3.] The prime benefits which faith respecteth I make to be two—reconciliation with God, and the everlasting fruition of him in glory.

(1.) Reconciliation is necessarily eyed and regarded by the guilty soul.

First, Because there hath been a breach by which we have lost God's favour and happiness. We have to do with a God whose nature engageth him to hate sin, and whose justice engageth him to punish it. And before we can be induced to treat with him, such a reconciliation is necessary for all mankind as that he should be willing to deal with them upon the term of a new covenant, wherein pardon and life might be offered to penitent believers. This reconciliation is spoken of, 2 Cor. v. 19, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses: and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation;' that is, upon the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice, ransom, and satisfaction, there was so much done towards an actual reconciliation with God, that he offered a conditional covenant to as many as were willing to enter into his peace. He provided a sufficient remedy for the pardon of sin, if men would as heartily accept of it as it was freely given them; and the office of ambassadors was appointed

to beseech men so to do. And unless this had been done, a guilty soul could never be brought to love a holy, sin-hating God, engaged by justice to damn the sinner. But it must be a loving, reconciled God, that is willing to forgive, that can be propounded as an object of faith and love, or as an amiable God to us: Ps. cxxx. 4, 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

Secondly, Reconciliation is necessarily eyed by the penitent believer, because this reconciliation and recovery by Christ consists both in the pardon of sin and the gift of the sanctifying Spirit.

1st, One branch of the actual restitution of God's favour to us is the pardon of sin, without which we are not capable of life and happiness, Eph. i. 7. The possible conditional reconciliation consists in the offer of pardon, and the actual reconciliation in the actual pardon and forgiveness of our transgressions, and then the man beginneth to be in a blessed estate, Ps. xxxii. 1, 2.

2dly, The other branch is the gift of the sanctifying Spirit, which is the great testimony and pledge of his love; then is our pardon executed, or actually applied to us, and we receive the atonement, Rom. v. 11; and 2 Cor. v. 18, 'All things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;' that is, all things which belong to the new creature, ver. 17. And that is the reason why God is said to sanctify as a God of peace, that is, as reconciled to us in Christ: see 1 Thes. v. 23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly;' and Heb. xiii. 20, 21, 'Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do his will,' &c. And in all God's internal government with the saints, he showeth his pleasure or displeasure with the saints by giving or withholding and withdrawing the Spirit, as it were easy to prove to you. Well, then, you see the reasons why, in believing in Christ, we reflect the eye of our faith on reconciliation, as the prime initial benefit.

(2.) The next great consummating benefit is the everlasting fruition of God in glory; for Christ's office is to recover us to God, and bring us to God, which is never fully and completely done till we come to heaven. Therefore the saving of the soul is the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ, to which all other tend, as justification and sanctification, and by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from which we fetch our comfort all along the course of our pilgrimage, and upon the hopes of which the life of grace is carried on, and the temptations of sense are defeated. So that this is the main blessing which faith aimeth at: see the scriptures, 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter believe on him to everlasting life.' Wherefore do men believe in Christ, but for this end, that they may obtain everlasting life? Wherefore were the scriptures written? John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' The scriptures are written that we might know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of them; and the chief benefit we have by him is life, or the salvation of our souls; and therefore well may it be called in the text 'the end of our faith.'

[4.] In the next place, I add the immediate acts and effects of it:—

(1.) Such as maketh us to forsake all things in this world; and—

(2.) Give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit, for the obtaining this happiness.

(1.) To forsake all things in this world. As soon as we address ourselves seriously to believe, we turn our backs upon them—namely, upon the pleasures, and honours, and profits of this world. We forsake them in vow and resolution when we are converted and begin to believe, for conversion is a turning from the creature to God. As soon as we firmly believe, and hope for the fruition of God in glory, as purchased and promised by Christ, our hearts are weaned and withdrawn from the false happiness, not perfectly, but yet sincerely. And we actually renounce and forsake them at the call of God's providence, when they are inconsistent with our fidelity to Christ, and the hopes of that happiness which his promises offer to us. Now that our faith must be expressed by forsaking all, yea, that it is essential to faith, and nothing else is saving faith but this, as appeareth—

First, By the doctrinal descriptions of it in the gospel (which I shall describe to you according to my usual method). Our Lord hath told us, Mat. xiii. 45, 46, that 'the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' And surely he knew the nature of faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but they do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it. Faith implieth such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ that you must choose it, and let go all which is inconsistent with this choice and trust. All your sinful pleasures, profit, reputation, and life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not father and mother, and brother and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple;' and ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' After such express declarations of the will of Christ, why should we think of going to heaven at a cheaper rate? Christ must be preferred above all that is nearest or dearest, or else he will not be for our turn, nor we for his. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' For self-denial hath a greater relation to faith, and is nearer of kin to faith, than the world imagineth; it is the immediate fruit of our trust. If God be trusted as our supreme felicity, he must be loved above all things, and all things must give way to God. If Christ be trusted as the way to the Father, all things must be counted dung and loss that we may gain Christ, Phil. iii. 8. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a choosing Father, Son, and Holy Ghost for our God. If there be a choosing, there must be a renouncing. The devil by the world tempts our flesh from the Christian hope; therefore idols must be renounced before we can have the true God for our God: Josh. xxiv. 23, 'Put away the strange gods which are among you, and incline your heart to the Lord God of Israel.' Naturally our god is our

belly while carnal, Phil. iii. 19. Mammon is our god, Mat. vi. 24. The devil is our god, Col. i. 13; and Eph. ii. 2, 3, 'Wherein in times past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in times past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others.' Besides the nature of the thing, baptism implieth this renunciation, 1 Peter iii. 21; and this renunciation is nothing else but a forsaking all that we may have eternal life by Christ.

Secondly, It appeareth by reasons:—

First, For faith cannot be without this forsaking.

Secondly, Nor this forsaking without faith.

First, Faith cannot be without this forsaking; for faith implieth a sight of the truth and worth of those blessed things which are to come, and so to take the thing promised for our happiness, and the promise for our security. (1.) There is no true sound faith till we take the everlasting fruition of God in glory for our whole felicity; till our hearts be set upon it, and we do desire it, intend it, wait for it, as the chief good and blessedness. The upright heart is known by its treasure: Mat. vi. 20, 21, 'Lay up treasure in heaven; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' Now, if this be so, other things will be lessened; all other hopes and happiness is nothing worth, and will appear so if compared with this better part, with what we account our treasure; you will see all this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the salvation of our souls. (2.) There is no true faith where the word and promise of God is not taken for our security, so as our trust in his word may quiet and embolden us against temptations, and give us stronger consolation than all the visible things on earth, Ps. cxix. 111, and Heb. vi. 18. We should do more and go farther upon such a promise, than for all that man can give unto us. Earthly pleasures and possessions should be small things in regard to the promise of God. This should make us row against the stream of the flesh, and cross its desires and appetites, and deny the conveniences of the world, and all because we have God's promise of better things.

Secondly, This forsaking cannot be without faith; because the flesh is importunate to be pleased with present satisfactions, and loth to part with things which we see and love for that God and glory which we never saw, to quit what is present for what is future, and with patience to be expected. The flesh is for pleasing the body, but faith is for saving the soul: Heb. x. 39, *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*: purchasing the soul with the loss of other things. So that this is faith, nothing but faith, and other faith is not true and sound.

(2.) It maketh us to give up ourselves to the conduct of the word and Spirit for obtaining this happiness. I add this, because the word is our rule, Gal. vi. 16; and the Spirit our guide, Rom. viii. 14. And faith is not only an apprehension of privileges, but a consent of subjection. And the sound believer devoteth himself to the love, fear, service, and obedience of God, 2 Cor. viii. 5: 'They first gave up themselves to the Lord, and to us by the will of God;' that is, to the

apostles as Christ's messengers, to be directed in the way to heaven: P's. cxix. 38, 'Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.' This now is saving faith.

The use is, to exhort you to believe to the saving of the soul.

To this end:—

1. Because faith is the gift of God, beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, that your eyes may be opened, that you may see what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,' &c., Eph. i. 17, 18. That you may be convinced of the truth and worth of the blessedness promised, and know and see it, not by a traditional report, but in the lively light of the Spirit, such as may affect and engage your hearts. Naturally we are purblind, 2 Peter i. 9; have no acute discerning, but in back and belly concerns. We know what is noxious or comfortable to the present life, pleasing or displeasing to the flesh; but are little affected with the danger of perishing for ever, the need of Christ, or the worth of salvation. And till God make a change, how slight and sensual are we!

2. Think often and seriously how much the saving of the soul is better than the saving, or getting, or keeping all the world: Mat. xvi. 26, 'What will it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' So much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, eternity before time, the soul before the body; so much must this business of saving the soul have the pre-eminence, and be preferred before the interests of the body and the bodily life. But, alas! what poor things divert us from this happiness; the satisfying of the flesh, the pleasures of sin for a season; a little ease, or profit, or vainglory—this is all for which we slight heaven and our own salvation.

3. Put yourselves into the way of salvation, by seeking reconciliation with God by Christ. You are invited in the universal conditional offer, John iii. 16. It is offered to all that will repent and believe, and there is no exception put in against you to exclude you; why then will you exclude yourself? Therefore, come forward in the way of faith, and God will help you.

4. Mind often the genuine effect of the true faith. It makes you forsake all, that you may be obedient to Christ, and resolved upon it.

Therefore consider—(1.) The necessity of it. You can neither trust God nor be true to him till your heart be loosened from the pleasures and profits and honours in the world, and you can venture all upon the security of his promise. Other hopes and happiness will divert us from the true happiness, and the good seed will be choked by the cares of this world and voluptuous living, that you can bring nothing to perfection. Either you will turn aside by open defection or apostasy, or else be a dwarf and cripple in religion all your days. Either in mortification, in denying the sinful pleasures of the senses, you will slight the fulness of joy at God's right hand for a little vain pleasure, which, when it is gone, it is as a thing of nought—(it is the pilgrim abstaineth from fleshly lusts—he that runneth not as uncertain, that keepeth down his body, 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27)—or in a way of self-denial, run few hazards for Christ. It may be they may make some petty losses, but do not

sell all for the pearl of great price ; or, in a way of charity. How else can you lend to the Lord upon his bond, or the security of his promise ? Prov. xix. 17, 'He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will he pay him again.'

(2.) Consider the profit. Whatever a believer loseth by the way, he is sure to have it at the end of his journey : Mat. xix. 28, 'Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, that ye which have followed me in the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.' You will be no losers by God at the last.