

THE EXCELLENCY OF SAVING FAITH.

But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.—HEB. X. 39.

IN the verse immediately preceding there is a dreadful doom pronounced on apostates, that God will take no pleasure in them. Now lest they should be much affrighted with the terror of it, and suppose that he had too hard an opinion of them, he showeth, that though he did warn them, he did not suspect them, presuming other things of them, according to their profession: *But we are not of them that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.*

In the words two things are observable:—

1. The denial of the suspicion of their apostasy.
2. An assertion of the truth and constancy of their faith.

That clause I shall insist upon, *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. Where, first, take notice of their faith, *ἐκ πίστεως*; secondly, their perseverance, *εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*. The word signifieth their purchasing, acquiring, obtaining, finding the soul; meaning thereby, that though they lost other things, they did not lose their souls.

Doct. That a true and sound faith will cause us to save the soul, though with the loss of other things.

1 Peter i. 5, 'Ye are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' It is the power of God indeed that keepeth. He that reserveth heaven for us reserveth and keepeth us for heaven. But by what instrument or means? By faith. To depend upon an invisible God for a happiness that lieth in an invisible world, when in the meantime he permitteth us to be harassed with difficulties and troubles, requireth faith; and by faith alone can the heart be upheld, till we obtain this salvation. So ver. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, the salvation of your souls.' It is faith maketh us row against the stream of flesh and blood, and deny its cravings, that we may obtain eternal salvation at length. The flesh is for sparing and favouring the body; but faith is for saving the soul. That is the end and aim of faith.

To make this evident to you:—

1. I shall prove that all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul.

2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul but only faith.

1. That all other things must be hazarded for the saving of the soul: Mat. x. 39, 'He that findeth his life shall lose it; and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.' So it is repeated again upon the occasion of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 25, 26. The saving of the soul is more than the getting and keeping or having of all the world; for the world concerneth only the body and bodily life, but the saving of the soul concerneth eternal life. If life be lost temporally, it is secured to eternity, when we shall have a life which no man can take from us. And the case standeth thus: that either we must bring eternal perdition upon ourselves, or else obtain eternal salvation. They that are thirsty of life bodily, and the comforts and interests of it, are certainly prodigal of their salvation. But on the other side, if we are willing to venture life temporal, and all the interests thereof, for the saving of the soul, we make a good bargain: that which is left for a while is preserved to us for ever. In short, so much as God is to be preferred before the creature, heaven before the world, the soul before the body, eternity before time, so much doth it concern us to have the better part safe. And as men in a great fire and general conflagration will hazard their lumber to preserve their treasure, their money, or their jewels, so should we take care, that if we must lose one or other, that the better part be out of hazard; and whatever we lose by the way, we may be sure to come well to the end of our journey.

2. That nothing will make us hazard all things for the purchasing or acquiring the salvation of the soul, but only faith. The flesh is importunate to be pleased. Sense saith to us, Favour thyself, that is, spare the flesh; but faith saith, Save thy soul. Faith, which apprehendeth things future and invisible, will teach us to value all things according to their worth, and to lose some present satisfaction for that future and eternal gain which the promises of God do offer to us. Now faith doth this two ways: by convincing us of the *worth* and of the *truth* of things promised by God through Christ. The apostle, when he bloweth his trumpet, and summoneth our reverence and attentive regard to the gospel, in that preface, 1 Tim. i. 15, he saith, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' Salvation by Christ is worthy to be regarded above all things; and if it be true, all things should give place unto it. Now faith convinceth us of the worth and truth, and maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness, and the promise itself, or the word of God, for our whole security.

(1.) It maketh us to take the thing promised for all our treasure and happiness: Mat. vi. 19-21, 'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. But lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, nor thieves break through and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.' It highly concerneth us to consider what we make our treasure. Worldly things are subject to many accidents, and deserve not

our love nor esteem. Only heavenly things deserve to be our treasure. If our hearts be set upon these things, it is a sign we value what Christ hath offered. So 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' We make these things our end, and scope, and happiness. It is easy to prove the worth of these things in the general, as it is easy to prove that eternity is better than time; that things incorruptible are better than those which are subject to corruption; that things exempted from casualty are better than those things which are liable to casualty, and are not out of the reach of robbery and violence. But to creatures wedded to sense and present enjoyment, it is difficult and hard to cause them to set their hearts on another world, and to lay up their hopes in heaven, and to part with all things which they see and love and find comfortable to their senses, for that God and glory which they never saw. This is the business of faith, or the work of the Spirit of illumination changing their hearts and minds. This general truth all will determine, as that things eternal are better than things temporal. But we undervalue these gracious promises, whose accomplishment must with patience be expected, whilst their future goodness cometh in actual competition with these bodily delights which we must forego, and those grievous bodily afflictions which we must endure, out of sincere respect to Christ and his ways. Therefore, before there can be any true self-denial, faith must incline us to this offered benefit, as our true treasure and happiness, whatever we forego or undergo to attain it.

(2.) For the truth of it the word of God must be our whole security, as being enough to support our hearts in waiting for it, however God cover himself with frowns and an appearance of anger in those afflictions which befall us in the way thither. The word of God is all in all to his people: 'Thy testimonies have I taken as my heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my soul,' Ps. cxix. 111. If a man hath little ready money, yet if he have a heritage to live upon, or sure bonds, he is well paid. So is a believer rich in promises, which being the promises of the almighty and immutable God, and built upon the everlasting merit of Christ, are as good to him as performances, and therefore cause joy in some proportion as if the things were in hand: 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;' and Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God will I praise his word, in God have I put my trust; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' Faith resteth upon God's word, who is able to save to the uttermost all that come to him by Christ.

Use 1. Is information concerning a weighty truth, namely, what the faith is by which the just do live. It is such a trust or confidence in God's promises of eternal life through Jesus Christ as that we forsake all other hopes and happiness whatsoever that we may obtain it.

To make good this description to you, let me observe:—

1. That faith looketh mainly to heaven, or the saving of the soul, as the prime benefit offered to us by Jesus Christ. For all attend to this: 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For a pattern to them who should hereafter be-

lieve on him to life everlasting.' This was that they chiefly aimed at, and therefore called 'the end of our faith,' 1 Peter i. 9. For this end 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 to direct us to know Christ aright, who is the kernel and marrow of all the scriptures, who is the great subject of the gospel; and that the chief benefit we have by him is eternal life, by which all our pains and losses for Christ are recompensed, and from whence we fetch our comfort all along during 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.

2. That the sure grounds which faith goeth upon is God's promise through Jesus Christ; and so it implieth:—

[1.] That there is a God, who is 'a rewarder of them that diligently seek him;' for the apostle, pursuing this discourse, telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, that a man must believe God's being and bounty before he can do anything to the purpose for him.

[2.] That this God hath revealed himself in Jesus Christ as willing to accept poor creatures who refuse not his new covenant and remedying grace, to pardon and life; for the guilty creature would stand at a distance, and not receive his offers with any comfort and satisfaction, had not God been 'in Christ reconciling the world to himself,' 2 Cor. v. 19. But now they may be invited to come to him with hope, ver. 20. And his gracious promises, standing upon such a bottom and foundation, are the sooner believed: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For the promises of God are in him, yea, and in him, amen, to the glory of God by us;' that is, the promises of God propounded in Christ's name are undoubtedly true; they are not yea and nay, but yea and amen. They do not say yea to-day, and nay to-morrow; but always yea, so it is, and amen, so it shall be, because they stand upon an immutable foundation, the everlasting merit and redemption of Christ.

[3.] It implieth that the scriptures which contain these offers and promises are the word of God. For though God's veracity be unquestionable, how shall we know that we have his word? It is laid at pledge with us in the scriptures, which are the declaration of the mind of the eternal God. The promises are a part of those sacred scriptures which were written by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and sealed with a multitude of miracles, and bear the very image and superscription of God (as everything which hath passed his hand hath his signature upon it, even to a gnat or pile of grass), and have been received and preserved by the church as the certain oracles of God, and blessed by him throughout all generations and successions of ages, to the convincing, converting, sanctifying, and comforting of many souls, and carry their own light, evidence, and recommendation to the consciences of all those who are not strangely perverted by their brutish lusts, and blinded by their worldly affections. For the apostle saith, 'By the manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience. For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those who are lost: the god of this world having blinded their eyes, lest

the light of the glorious gospel should shine unto them,' 2 Cor. iv. 2-4. Upon these grounds doth faith proceed, which I have mentioned the more distinctly that you might know how to excite faith; for besides praying for the Spirit of wisdom and illumination to open our eyes, we must use the means both as rational creatures and new creatures. And what means are more effectual than those mentioned?

Is there not a God? If there be not a God, how did we come to be? Thou wert not made by chance; and when thou wert not, thou couldst not make thyself. Look upon thy body, so curiously framed, whose workmanship could this be but of a wise God? Upon thy soul, whose image and superscription doth it bear? 'Give unto Cæsar the things which are Cæsar's, and unto God the things which are God's.' Nay, look upward, downward, within thee, without thee, what dost thou see, hear, and feel, but the products and effects of an eternal power, wisdom, and goodness? Thou canst not open thine eyes, but the heavens are ready to say to thy conscience, Man, there is a God, an infinite eternal being, who made us and all things else.

Now for the second: Hath not this God revealed himself gracious in Christ? Nature declareth there is a God, and scripture that there is a Christ. As there is one God, the first cause of all, infinitely powerful, wise, and good, therefore it is but reasonable that he should be served, and according to his own will. But we have faulted in our duty to our creator, and therefore are in dread of his justice. Certainly reasonable creatures have immortal souls, and so die not as the beasts; therefore there is no true happiness in these things wherein men ordinarily seek it. Is it not then a blessed discovery that God hath brought life and immortality to light by Jesus Christ; that he sent him into the world to be a propitiation, and to satisfy his justice, and to redeem us from our guilty fears? And shall we neglect this great salvation brought to us by Jesus Christ, or coldly seek after it? Surely God is willing to be reconciled to man, or else he would presently have plunged us into our eternal state, as he did the angels upon their first sinning. But he waiteth, and beareth with many inconveniences; he beseecheth us, and prayeth us to be reconciled. And 'how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation, which was first spoken by the Lord, and then confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?' Heb. 2-4. Would holy men cheat the world with an imposture, or would God be accessory in lending his power to do such marvellous things? It cannot be.

And then for the third: Is not this a part of the word of God, which holy men have written to consign it to the use of the church in all ages? 1 John ii. 25, 'This is the promise which he hath promised us, eternal life.' Is not this God's promise? And will not God be mindful and regardful of his word? He was wont to be tender of it: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'Thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name;' above all that is named, or famed, or spoken and believed of God. His truth and trustiness is most conspicuous. In the new covenant he hath given his solemn oath, as well as his word, that the heirs of promise 'might have strong consolation,' Heb. vi. 18. What

is the matter that my belief of these things is so cold and ineffectual? If this be God's promise, and he hath put in no exception against me to exclude me from the benefit of this promise, what is the reason why I can no more encourage myself in the Lord to seek after this salvation, but am disturbed so often by distracting fears and cares, and so easily misled by vain delights? Thus should we excite our faith.

But I digress too long.

3. The nature of this faith I express by a trust and confidence. There is in faith an assent, which is sufficient when the object requireth no more. As there are some speculative principles which are merely to be believed, as they lead on to other things, Heb. xi. 3, there an intellectual assent sufficeth. But there are other things which are propounded, not only as true, but good. There, not only an intellectual assent is required, but a practical assent, or such as is joined with consent and affiancing; as suppose when Christ promiseth eternal life to the serious Christian or mortified believer; there must be not only an assent, or a believing that this proposal and offer is Christ's, and that it is true; but there must be a consent to choose it for my portion and happiness, and then a confidence and dependence upon Christ for it, though it lie out of sight, and in the meantime I be exercised with sundry difficulties and temptations. Trust is not a bare opinion of Christ's fidelity, but a dependence upon his word. I do believe there is a God, and that there is a Christ, I do well. I do believe that this God in Christ hath brought life and immortality to light, I do well still; but I must do more. I believe that he hath assured his disciples and followers, that if they continue faithful with him, they shall have eternal life: John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation.' I know that Christ hath fidelity and sufficiency enough to make good his word. This is well, but I must go farther; that is to say, I must choose this eternal life that is offered to me for my felicity and portion; this is consent: and I must continue with patience in well-doing, depending upon his faithful word whilst I am in the pursuit of it; this is trust or confidence. As this world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the hopes which Christ hath given me of a better life, so I choose it for my happiness. But as I judge him faithful that hath promised, and depend upon him that he will make good his word, though this happiness be future, and lieth in another, an unseen, an unknown world, to which there is no coming but by faith, this is the trust, and by that name it is often expressed in scripture. It is nothing else but a sure and comfortable dependence upon God through Jesus Christ, in the way of well-doing, for the gift of eternal life: Ps. cxii. 7, 'His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' So Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepest him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' The New Testament also useth this term, 2 Cor. iii. 4, 'Such trust have we through Christ to Godward;' and 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God.' Well, then, this trust is more than an assent or bare persuasion of the mind that the promises are true; yea, it is more than a motion of the

will towards them as good and satisfying; for it noteth a quiet repose of the heart on the fidelity and mercy of God in Christ, that he will give this blessedness, if we do in the first place seek after it. The more we cherish this confidence, the more sure we are of our interest, both in Christ and the promise: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence, and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and ver. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and Heb. x. 35, a little before the text, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' In all which places confidence noteth our resolute engaging in the heavenly life, because we depend upon Christ's rewards in another world. In our passage to heaven we meet with manifold temptations; we are assaulted both on the right hand and on the left with the terrors of sense, which are a discouragement to us, and the delights of sense, which are a snare to us. Confidence or trust fortifieth us against both these temptations, the difficulties, dangers, and sufferings which we meet with in our passage to heaven, yea, though it should be death itself; for faith seeth the end glorious, and that the salvation of our souls is sure and near if we continue faithful with Christ. On the other side, affiance or trust draweth the heart to better things, and we can easily want or miss the contentments of the flesh, the pomp, and ease, and pleasure of the present life, because our hearts are in heaven, and we have more excellent things in view and pursuit. This breedeth a weanedness from the baits of the flesh, and a rejection and contempt of what would take us off from the pursuit of eternal life: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27, 'I run not as one that is uncertain;' as if he had said, I am confident, therefore I am mortified to the world.

4. The immediate fruit and effect of it is a forsaking all other hopes and happiness for Christ's sake, and for the blessedness which he offereth. That forsaking all belongeth to this affiance and trust is plain, because I can neither trust God nor be true to him till I can venture all my happiness upon this security; and if God calleth me to it, actually forsake all upon these hopes. This will appear to you by these arguments:—

[1.] By the doctrinal descriptions of the gospel-faith. Our Lord hath told us that the kingdom of heaven is like a merchantman: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman seeking goodly pearls, who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.' And certainly he knew the nature of that 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. No; you must have such a sense of the excellency and truth of salvation by Christ, that you must choose it, and let go all that is inconsistent with this choice and trust. You must be resolved to let go all your sinful pleasures, profit, and reputation, and your life itself, rather than forfeit these hopes. So Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come unto me, and hate not father and mother, and wife and children, and brethren and sisters, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' So ver. 33, 'Whosoever he be that forsaketh not all that he hath, 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, and that the covenant will be modelled and brought down to our humours? Christ's service will bring trouble with it. All that is precious in the world must be renounced, or else we shall not be able to hold out. The same is inferred out of the doctrine of self-denial, Mat. xvi. 24. It is the immediate fruit, yea, the principal act of our trust; for if God be trusted as our felicity, he must be loved above all, and all things must give way to God. The same is inferred out of the baptismal covenant, which is a renouncing the devil, the world, and the flesh, and a giving up ourselves to Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, as our God. This renouncing implieth a venturing of all, that we may obtain this blessedness, or eternal life.

[2.] By all the extraordinary calls and trials that are propounded as a pattern to us. Faith was ever a venturing all, and a forsaking all, upon the belief of God's veracity. Let us see Noah's faith: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God concerning things not seen as yet, prepared an ark for the saving of his house.' That warning that God gave him of the flood was extraordinary, but they were 'of things not seen as yet;' whilst these things were in the mind of God, no man or angel could know them; and after God revealed them, there was nothing but his bare word for it. But Noah believed, and what then? At God's prescription, with vast expense, he prepareth an ark, and that was selling all. He was of a vast estate, or else he could not have prepared such a fabric, so many years in building, and so furnished; but this was the prescribed means to save his household. In the next place, let us consider Abraham's trial, who was the 'father of the faithful.' His first trial was, Heb. xi. 8, 'By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out to a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed, not knowing whither he went.' Here was trusting and venturing all upon God's call. He forsook his kindred, and father's house, and all, to seek an abode he knew not where. Therefore we must forsake the world, and all things therein, yea, life itself, having our thoughts and affections fixed on heaven. There must be a total resignation of heart and will to God. We owe God blind obedience. To forsake our country, kindred, friends, inheritance, is a sore trial; yet this was done by him, and must be done by all that will be saved: we must deny ourselves, take up our cross, and forsake father and mother, wife and children, all relations. All this he did for a land which he neither knew where it was nor the way to it. Our God hath told us, he will bring us into the heavenly Canaan. His second trial you have recorded, ver. 17, 'By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that received the promises offered up his only son.' God would try Abraham, that he might be an example of faith to all future generations, whether Abraham loved God or his son Isaac more. But he did not shrink upon trial; he offered him up; that is, in his heart he had parted with him and given him wholly unto God, and made all ready for the offering, being assured of God's fidelity; even Isaac, upon whom the promises were settled, must be offered. Children, dear children, everything must be given up to God. In the next place, consider we the Israelites in the Red Sea;

Heb. xi. 29, 'By faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land.' God commands Moses, when in straits, to strike the sea with his rod, and Israel to pass forward, and expect the salvation of God, promising to deliver them. They did so, and the sea was divided, and the waters stood like walls and mountains, as if they had been congealed and turned to ice, and the bottom, which never saw sun before, is made like firm ground, without mud and quicksands. Thus entirely will God be trusted by his people, and they must put their all into his hands. If God will have it so, faith must find a way through the great deep. No dangers so great that we must decline. Come we now to the New Testament; Christ's trial of the young man: 'Jesus said unto him, Go thy way, sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,' Mark x. 21. But he could not venture on Christ's command, and went away sad. The promise of eternal life and treasure in heaven could not part the young man and his great estate, and therefore he continued incapable of eternal bliss. This young man is set forth in the Gospel as a warning to others. So in Peter's trial, Mat. xiv. 29, 30. If Christ bid Peter come to him upon the waters, Peter must come, though the storm continueth, and he be ready to sink at every step.

[3.] By all the instances of faith in the ordinary and common case of salvation. Moses had faith, therefore he forsook all honours, pleasures, and treasures, for he trusted God, and waited for the recompense of reward, Heb. xi. 24-26. It is endless in instancing in all: take these, Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have a better and more enduring substance.' They were not discouraged, but took this rapine joyfully, which argued a lively faith in Christ, and a sincere love to him. It goeth near to the hearts of worldlings to part with these things; but they valued Christ as infinitely more precious than all the wealth of the world. If they lost their goods, yet if they lost not Christ, they were happy enough; for then they still kept the title to the enduring substance. Thus you see what is faith; such a trusting in God for eternal life as maketh us willing to forsake all, rather than be unfaithful to Christ. Others may delude you, enchant your souls asleep with fine strains of ill-understood and abused grace. But if you would not be deceived, take the faith and Christianity of Christ's recommendation, which is the faith now described. Are we in the place of God, that we can make heaven narrower or broader for you? Surely it is grace, rich grace, that God will pardon us, and call us to eternal life by Jesus Christ. Now, if you will have it, you must believe to the salvation of the soul, so believe, as to quit all other things to obtain it.

Use 2. Is for examination. Let us examine our spiritual condition, whether it be good or bad, whether our faith be sincere, our profession real, whether we tend to perdition or to salvation, whether we believe to the saving of the soul; that is, if we care not what we lose, so we may obtain the heavenly inheritance. Have you such a trust as that you can venture the loss of something which is dear to you for this trust; yea, not only something, but all things? Certainly we have not a true belief of the promise of eternal life if we can venture no-

thing upon it, hazard nothing for it. Now we venture things upon the account of God's promise four ways:—

- [1.] In a way of mortification.
- [2.] In a way of self-denial.
- [3.] In a way of charity.
- [4.] In a way of submission to providence.

[1.] In a way of mortification. Denying ourselves the sinful pleasures of the senses. Our sins were never worth the keeping; these must always be parted with, other things but at times; therefore I can venture but little upon the security of eternal life, if I cannot deny my fleshly and worldly lusts, and a little vain pleasure, for that fulness of joy which is at God's right hand for evermore. I have God's word for it, that if I mortify the deeds of the body I shall live, Rom. viii. 13. It is yet hard to abjure accustomed delights; and to hearts pleasantly set, the strictness of a holy life seemeth grim and severe; but a believer, that hath a prospect into eternity, knoweth that it is better to deny the flesh than to displease God—to take a little pains in rectifying our disordered hearts and distempered souls, than to endure pains for evermore; and that a little momentary delight is bought too dear, if it be bought with the loss of eternal joys. No; let me lose my lusts rather than lose my soul, saith he. Every man's heart cleaveth to those things which he judgeth best, and the more it cleaveth to better things, the more it is withdrawn from other things. Therefore faith, showing us the truth and worth of heavenly things, and taking God's word for its security, it mastereth our desires and carnal affections. It is the 'stranger and pilgrim' (whose mind is persuaded of things to come, and whose heart is set upon them) that 'abstaineth from fleshly lusts,' 1 Peter ii. 11. Upon the assurance of God's word he is taking his journey into another world. Though the flesh will rebel, yet he counterbalanceth the good and evil which the flesh proposeth, with the good and evil of the other world which the word of God proposeth, and so learneth more and more to contemn the pleasures of sin and curb his unruly passions. 'Mortify your members upon earth, for your life is hid with Christ in God,' Col. iii. 3-5. And they that look for a life of glory hereafter will choose a life of purity here upon earth. It is the unbeliever findeth such an impotency in resisting present temptations; he hath not any sense, or not a deep sense, of the world to come.

[2.] In a way of self-denial. What! can you venture and forego that way upon the security of God's promise? Mortification concerneth our lusts, and self-denial our interests. What interest can you venture upon the warrant of the promise? Christ saith, 'He that denieth me before men, I will deny him before my Father in heaven,' Luke xii. 9; and again, 'Whosoever will save his life shall lose it,' &c., Luke ix. 24; and once more, ver. 26, 'Whosoever shall be ashamed of me and my words, of him shall the Son of man be ashamed when he cometh in his glory.' Now urge the soul with the promises. Am I willing to hazard my temporal conveniences for the enduring substance? to incur shame and blame with men, that I may be faithful with God, and own his interest in the world? and do I so when it actually cometh to a trial? The heart is deceitful, and a temptation in conceit and imagination is nothing to a temptation in act and deed.

Therefore, when your resolutions are assaulted by temptations of any considerable strength, do you acquit yourself with good fidelity? Can you trust God when he trieth your trust in some necessary point of confession, which may expose you to some loss, shame, and hazard in the world?

[3.] In a way of charity and doing good with your estates. That religion is worth nothing that costs nothing; and when all is laid out upon pomp and pleasure and worldly ends, as the advancing of your families and relations, and little or nothing for God upon the security of his promise, or only so much as the flesh can spare, to hide your self-pleasing and self-seeking in other things. Can you practise upon that promise, and try your faith: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell that you have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens that faileth not.' What have you ventured in this kind? Do you believe that 'he that giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord'? and that he will be your paymaster? Do you look upon no estate so sure as that which is trusted in Christ's hands? And are you content to be at some considerable cost for eternal life? Most men love a cheap gospel, and the flesh engrosseth all. Faith gets little from them to be laid out for God. Do not these men run a fearful hazard? And while they are so over-careful to preserve their estates to themselves and families, do they believe to the saving of their souls? Or if they do not preserve their estates, but waste them, and are at great costs for their lusts, they do nothing considerably or proportionably for God. This is saving to the flesh, and they shall 'of the flesh reap corruption.'

[4.] In a way of submission to providence. Whether you will or no, you are at God's disposal, and cannot shift yourselves out of his hands, either here or hereafter. But yet it is a part of your duty voluntarily to surrender yourselves to be disposed of and ordered by God according to his pleasure: to be content to be what he will have you to be, and to do what he will have you to do and suffer, is included in selling all. You must submit to be at God's finding, which is that poverty of spirit spoken of Mat. v. 3, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit;' such whose minds and spirits are subdued, and brought under obedience to God. You must be content to enjoy what God will have you to enjoy, and to want what he will have you want, and to lose what he will have you lose: 2 Sam. xv. 26, 27, and Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Many seem to resign all—goods, life, and all—to the will of God. But it is because they secretly think in their hearts that God will never put them to the trial, or take from them what they resign to him; but they are not prepared for a submission to all events. Like those that make large promises to others, when they think they will not take them at their words. So their hearts secretly except, and reserve much of that they resign to God. But this is false-dealing, and is shown in part in murmuring when God taketh anything from us.