

to exalt God, God will take care to honour him in the sight of the world when it is convenient.

4. God's approbation and testimony of us at the day of judgment, 1 Cor. iv. 5; 1 Peter i. 7, 'That the trial of your faith may be found to praise and glory.'

5. Eternal glory in heaven: Rom. ii. 7, 'To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life.'

Use 3. If your privileges be hidden, let your graces appear in their fruits and effects. Little of your happiness is seen, but your holiness should be apparent and visible; it is for the honour of God that his children should be like him, Mat. v. 16, and 2 Thes. i. 12. If your condition be obscured and darkened by afflictions, let it not be obscured and darkened by sins; and though you live not in a perpetual tenor of happiness, yet there must be a constant course of holiness; no greatness like that of a gracious spirit.

Use 4. Be contented with a mean condition; it is not the day of the manifestation of the sons of God: though others that are wicked have a larger allowance, God doth not misplace his hands, as Joseph thought of his father, that he did not place his hands on the right head, Gen. xlvi. when he saw Ephraim preferred before Manasseh. In what a poor condition was the only-begotten Son of God when he lived in the world! Though you do not enjoy the pleasures, honours, riches, and esteem that others do, yet if you enjoy the favour of God, it is enough; though mean, yet heirs of glory, James i. 5. God doth not esteem men according to their outward lustre, 1 Sam. xvi. 7.

Use 5. Judge not according to appearance, but judge righteous judgment, John vii. 24. Do not judge the people of God by their outside or worldly privileges: Moses could see an excellency in the people of God in their afflicted condition, Heb. xi. 25. Do not misjudge yourselves: I am a poor, afflicted, contemptible man; that may prove a temptation, Ps. lxxiii. 13, 14. Do not misjudge others because of some failings; a pearl may lie under a great deal of chaff.

SERMON III.

But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.—1 JOHN iii. 2.

FROM these words I observe—

That though for the present our adoption be obscured, yet when he shall appear the children of God are sure to enjoy a blessed and glorious estate.

For the clearing of this point I shall show you—

1. The nature of this blessedness.
2. The time when it shall commence.
3. The apprehension we have of it for the present.

Of these in order.

I. Of the nature of this blessed and glorious estate: 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' A transforming vision, or such a vision as changeth us into the likeness of God, is the true blessedness of the saints.

There are three things considerable in our happiness—(1.) The vision of God; (2.) A participation of his likeness; (3.) The satisfaction or delectation thence resulting.

Two of them are in the text: 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' The third is fetched from a parallel place: Ps. xvii. 15, 'When I awake, I shall be satisfied with thine image and likeness.' The words, 'when I awake,' note the same reason¹ with those in the text, 'when he shall appear;' that is, when we awake out of the sleep of death, at the day of the general resurrection; then we shall be satisfied, or at rest, as having attained our end.

First, For vision; that beginneth the happiness, and maketh way for all the rest: 'We shall see him as he is;' that is, we shall see God in our nature, Christ as he is now in glory, not as he was in the form of a servant. It is not meant of the essence of God, for that cannot be seen of any creature by the eyes of the body or the mind, but of the sight of Christ. It is usual in scripture to express our happiness by sight. We shall see him face to face, and we shall know as we are known; so John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory.' They shall see his face. This sight is either ocular or mental.

1. Ocular; for our senses have their happiness as well as our souls, and there is a glorified eye as well as a glorified mind: Job xix. 26, 27, 'And though after my skin, worms destroy this body; yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.' When our bodies are raised up again, we shall in our flesh see God; not our souls only, but our whole man shall enjoy this sight of God; not in another body, but in the same shall we see him. Though the qualities of the body be different and glorious, yet the substance is the same. We shall see the person that redeemed us, that nature wherein he suffered so much for us, and the glory that is upon him in our nature. Many out of curiosity desired to see Christ in the days of his flesh; as those Greeks that came to worship him at Jerusalem; they came to Philip and said to him, 'Sir, we would fain see Jesus;' and Zaccheus climbed up into a sycamore-tree to see him; and some choice apostles were admitted to see him at his transfiguration. But then it shall be the common privilege of all the faithful; they shall see him of whom they have heard so much, and of whose goodness they have tasted so much, and whose laws they have obeyed, and upon whose merits they have depended.

But you will say, How is this so great a privilege to the godly, since the wicked shall see him? Mat. xxvi. 64, 'Hereafter ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power and glory, and coming in the clouds.' They shall see him who spat on him, and buffeted him, and crucified him.

Ans. (1.) That sight they have of Christ shall be but a short glimpse

¹ Qu. 'season'?—ED.

of his glory ; for after their doom and sentence is past, they shall be immediately banished out of his presence : Mat. xxv. 41, ' Then shall he say to them on his left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed.' But this sight of the saints shall be perpetual : 1 Thes. iv. 17, ' We shall ever be with the Lord.'

(2.) They shall see him with shame and terror, looking upon him as to receive their just punishment: 1 John ii. 28, ' And now, little children, abide in him, that when he shall appear we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' Our vision shall be joyful and familiar ; but the wicked are not able to endure the sight of God. As a judge they shun it, and fly from it ; as Adam hid himself when the Lord God walked in the garden, Gen. iii. 8. But to believers, the sight of Christ is comfortable ; he cometh for their benefit, and to put them in possession of their everlasting happiness.

(3.) The consideration of the object is different ; the one look upon him as their inexorable judge, the other as their merciful saviour ; their interest in him maketh him dear to their souls. These look to receive from him the full effect of their redemption and salvation, and so rejoice in his favour and presence ; whereas the wicked shall see him as the God of others only, and to their eternal confusion. But to the godly it is comfortable when he shall appear in his glory ; it is the glory of their God : Ps. lxxvii. 6, ' God, even our God, shall bless us.' It is the glory of him whom they served, and loved, and pleased, even when this glory was under a cloud and concealed from the world. Now their faith and hope is justified, and their loyal service cometh to be rewarded. They shall see him in his glory, not as unconcerned spectators, but as the persons mainly interested therein.

2. Mental vision or contemplation. The angels, which have not bodies, are said to behold the face of our heavenly Father, Mat. xviii. 10 ; and when we are said to see God, it is not meant of the bodily eye, for a spirit cannot be seen with bodily eyes ; so he is still the invisible God, Col. i. 15. And seeing face to face is opposed to knowing in part. And therefore it implieth a more complete knowledge than now we have. The mind is the noblest faculty, and must have its satisfaction. Now we have dull and low conceptions of God, and are little transformed by them, or weaned from worldly and fleshly lusts. Could we see God in all his glory, nothing would be dreadful, nothing would be snaringly or enticingly amiable to us any more : 1 John iii. 6, ' Whosoever sinneth hath not seen God, neither known him.' We can hardly now get such a sight of God as will prevent wilful and heinous sin ; but then we shall see him, and sin no more. We shall see then the excellency of his person, the union of the two natures in the person of Christ more exactly : John xiv. 20, ' At that day ye shall know that I am in the Father, and you in me, and I in you.' The clarity of the human nature, and what honour the Father puts upon him as mediator, all that wisdom, goodness, and power in conducting and bringing the saints into glory, and the happiness God will bestow upon them ; it is no longer matter of faith, which is a darker sight, but matter of sense : 2 Cor. v. 7, ' We walk by faith now, and not by sight ;' by sight then, and not by faith. Now the more perfectly we understand these things, the greater impression they make upon us. In short, not to ravel into

all the particulars which then we shall know, our knowledge must needs be greater then, and more completely satisfying, if we consider what is necessary to such a vision and sight of God as the creature is capable of.

Now three things are necessary—(1.) A prepared faculty ; (2.) A suitable object ; and (3.) The conjunction of both these. Now in the state of glory all these concur. The faculty is more capacious, the object is more fully represented, and the conjunction and fruition is more intimate and close than it can be elsewhere.

[1.] The faculty is more prepared, as we are more purified and clarified from the dregs of carnal sense, and those worldly vanities and fleshly lusts which do so blind the mind and divert the heart from God : Mat. v. 8, ‘Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ;’ Heb. xii. 14, ‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord.’ The mind is now divided or distracted between God and other things ; now we have but transient glances of God, and a slight apprehension, but then a full view ; and it shall be our whole work to study divinity in the Lamb’s face. The more clear the glass is, the more clearly is the image reflected upon it, but the more dusky, the more imperfect is the representation ; so here our understandings are not refined as they shall be hereafter.

[2.] The object is manifested and dispensed in a greater latitude ; for there God is all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28, without the intervention of means. When God discovereth himself by means, we know no more of him than can be represented by these means. If a pipe should be put to a great ocean or river, the cistern or conduit can receive no more than the pipe can convey ; but there we see him not in a glass, but converse with God immediately : ‘We see him face to face.’

[3.] The conjunction is more intimate between the object and faculty. Here the conjunction is by faith and imperfect love, there by clear vision and perfect love : ‘He that is joined to the Lord by faith and love is one spirit.’ Oh, but what a conjunction will this be, when we shall be joined to the Lord by clear immediate sight and perfect love ! Our sight is clear : 1 Cor. xiii. 12, ‘Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face.’ Vision shall then succeed faith, and possession hope, and the soul adhereth to him by love, without weakness, weariness, and distraction. Surely then our vision and fruition must needs be greater, and the soul filled up with all the fulness of God, Eph. iii. 19. Well, then, gather up the severals of this argument. The understanding is sanctified ; God is near to us, and liveth with us and in us ; and we live near to him, and in him. We see him whom we love, and love him whom we see. Heaven and earth doth not yield one tempting object to divert us from him : Ps. lxxiii. 25, ‘Whom have I in heaven but thee ? and there is none on earth I desire besides thee.’ And therefore our sight is clearer and more comfortable and full. Surely the mind is filled with as much light, and the heart with as much love and joy, as the capacity of it is able to contain. Here we are in an expecting, waiting, longing posture ; but there is presence, vision, union, and fruition, our light and love being then perfect.

Secondly, Assimilation or transformation into the image of God and Christ.

Here I shall show—(1.) What likeness is; (2.) How it is the fruit of vision; for it is rendered as a reason of it, it being said, We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.’

1. What this likeness is. This was man’s first ruin, this aspiring to be like God: Gen. iii. 5, ‘Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil;’ not in a blessed conformity, but in a cursed self-sufficiency. This was the design of the first transgression: Isa. xiv. 14, ‘I will ascend above the height of the clouds, and will be like the Most High.’ It was the cause of the fall of Lucifer: I will be like the Most High; who was therefore brought down wonderfully. The men of the world aspire to be like God in greatness and power, but not in goodness and holiness. We affect or usurp divine honour, and to sit upon even ground with God. Christ came not to gratify our sin, but to make us like unto God, not equal with God. The creature is not deified, but glorified; and that glorification lieth in such a likeness and conformity as is proper to the creature. Man was at first made like God: Gen. i. 26, 27, ‘Let us make man after our own image and likeness.’ Now, when we fell from that, Christ came to repair what Adam lost, and to restore the image of God again, which was defaced in us; yea, to put more glory upon us than ever we had or could have had in Adam. This work is begun in us in this world: 2 Cor. iii. 18, ‘Beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, we are changed into his image and likeness from glory to glory.’ But it is perfected in heaven; we are there made more like to God. Briefly, we shall be like him in two things—in holiness and felicity.

[1.] In holiness and purity; for that is the chief thing wherein God will be resembled by his creatures. We are made holy as he is holy. Now at that day this is accomplished in the most perfect degree; for it is said, ‘He will present us faultless before the presence of his glory,’ Jude 24; and ‘holy, unblamable, and unreprouvable in his sight;’ Col. i. 22, ‘Or without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that ye should be holy, and without blemish,’ Eph. v. 27. There is a complete similitude and transformation. Here sin is mortified, but there it is nullified; here grace is mingled with corruption; we are like God by the first-fruits of the Spirit, but unlike him by the remainders of sin; but in heaven we are wholly like him. Here we resemble Christ, but we also resemble Adam, yea, and often show forth more of Adam than Jesus; but there we only show forth the holiness and purity of Christ; his image shineth in us without spot and blemish.

[2.] We are like him in happiness and glory, that is, in a glorious condition: 1 Cor. xv. 49, ‘And as we have borne the image of the earthly, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.’ Now the image of the heavenly is glory and immortality. So in the parallel place: Col. iii. 4, ‘We shall appear with him in glory;’ that is, not only as pure and holy creatures, but as glorious and happy creatures. And more particularly it is said, Phil. iii. 2, ‘That this vile body shall be fashioned like unto his glorious body, for splendour, beauty, and immortality. This is a consequent of the former; for if we be like him in holiness, we shall be like him in felicity; for God, that is a pure and holy being, is also a perfect and happy being: ‘And Christ will be glorified in his saints, and admired in them that believe,’ 2 Thes. i. 10.

He will set the world a-wondering at the honour he will confer upon those that have honoured him in the world; they shall see him in full glory, sitting upon his throne of judgment, and afterwards at the right hand of his Father for evermore. So that we have honour conferred upon us in the judgment, and shall then abide with him for evermore in a state of glory.

(1.) A relative and adherent glory, as the saints are admitted into a participation of his judicial power: 1 Cor. vi. 2, 'Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world, even angels?' They are not only judged, but judges, and that not only of men, but evil angels, who though they had a long time ago a particular punishment on them, yet then they shall have their solemn doom and sentence and whole punishment. And in this judgment the saints shall be associated with Christ. Christ judgeth by way of original authority, but the saints by consent and suffrage, which is a part of the kingdom and dominion which the upright receive in the morning, Ps. xlix. 14; that is, in the morning of the resurrection. Those who were slighted, persecuted, and hated in the world, shall then be owned by Christ, and sit with him on the throne. Here the saints judge and condemn the world by their conversations, Heb. xi. 7; there by their vote and suffrage.

(2.) Internal and inherent, viz., the glory revealed in us, put into us. Now it is revealed to us, then in us. Our ear hath received a little hereof, but then it shall be fully accomplished in our persons, in our bodies and souls. The body shall be a glorious immortal body, shining as the sun for brightness; not decayed with age, nor wasted with sickness, nor needing the supply of food; in short, freed from all weakness and imperfection, and united to a soul fully sanctified, from which it shall never more be separated, and both together shall be the eternal temple of the Holy Ghost.

2. How it is the fruit of vision? for so it is given as a reason, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

I answer—There is between light and likeness a circular generation, as there is in most moral things; and on the one side it may be said we shall be like him, therefore we shall see him as he is, and also on the other side, as in the text, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.'

[1.] The first is certainly a truth, that they that are like God shall see God as he is; such are included within the promise: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' And others are excluded out of it: Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.' And as they are included in the promise, so they are disposed and prepared for the enjoyment of this privilege, by the holy constitution of their souls for the vision and fruition of God. They are suited to this happiness by their love of God and their desire to enjoy him. If they had the happiness of heaven and did not see God, it would not satisfy them. They count it a great mercy to meet with anything of God in the ordinances. Now if you can suppose them to come to heaven, and not meet with God there, and Christ there, it would be a trouble to them in their glorified estate. So much as is pure and holy in their soul

carrieth them to God, so much as is base, drossy, fetulent, disposeth them to the world and worldly things. Their hearts would be disaffected and unsuitable to this blessed estate if there were not purity there.

[2.] Vision maketh way for this likeness, which is the thing asserted in the text; take this likeness either for holiness or for glory and immortality.

(1.) For holiness. The work of likeness to God is begun in regeneration, and it entereth into the heart by knowledge or sight: Col. iii. 10, 'Renewed after the image of God, by the knowledge of him.' Sight begets likeness; so beholding the glory of the Lord as in a glass, we are changed into his image and likeness, 2 Cor. iii. 18. Now as begun, so it is perfected; when we see better, we shall become better. If sight doth transform us now, much more will it hereafter, when the veil of the flesh doth no more interpose, and we are no more blinded with the delusions thereof. When things now reported to our faith shall be under view, and not only known by hearsay, but by sight, they must needs make a deeper impression upon us.

(2.) If you interpret this likeness of glory and immortality, the glory of God in Christ is represented to us, and impressed upon us; for it is represented that we may participate thereof; and Christ doth appear that we may appear with him in glory, that the whole mystical body may carry a suitableness and conformity to the head. Moses' face shone when he saw God, Exod. xxxiv. 29. How much more will it be so in heaven! The object is unspeakably efficacious, the act of intuition is full of vigour, and the subject is prepared and fitted to be receptive of it. Christ in his vehemency of prayer was transfigured, Luke ix. 29, having in his natural body a more than ordinary sight of his God: 'As he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered.'

Thirdly, The third thing is satisfaction, not mentioned in the text, but implied and supplied from a parallel place; for we having the sight and presence of God, must needs be ravished with it: Ps. xvi. 11, 'In thy presence,' or face, 'is fulness of joy, and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore.' The fruition of God's immediate presence must needs exceed all the joy which the heart of man is capable of. If this breedeth not true contentment and felicity, what will? So our admission into the everlasting estate is called 'an entering into the joy of our Lord,' Mat. xxv. 41. There must needs arise an incredible delectation from the vision of God, as also from our fruition of him, or being like unto him, and our possession of the whole estate of happiness thence resulting. Our great business will be to love what we see, and our great happiness to have what we love. This will be a full, perpetual, and never-failing delight to us. The vision hath an influence upon this joy. If the light of the sun be pleasant, how comfortable will it be to see the Sun of righteousness shining forth in all his glory? Now, when the mind is a little raised in the thoughts of God, what a delightful thing is it! Ps. civ. 34, 'My meditation of him shall be sweet; I will be glad in the Lord.' Yet how tasteless to our souls are thoughts of God now in comparison of what they will be then? There is something in us which carrieth us off from God, which liketh not to

retain God in our knowledge. Now, when our hearts are more suited and prepared for that sight, our thoughts must needs be glorious and ravishing.

Again, this likeness conduceth to this satisfaction. Take it for holiness, God himself is 'glorious in holiness,' Exod. xv. 11. Now to have the beauty of our God upon us is the greatest gift that can be bestowed upon us. When there was a debate in Ahasuerus's court, 'What should be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour?' Esther vi. 8, it was resolved, 'Let the royal apparel be brought which the king useth to wear, and the horse that the king rideth upon, and the crown royal which is set upon his head.' Or take it for glory and immortality: 1 Peter iv. 13, 'That when his glory shall be revealed, we may be glad with exceeding joy.' This is the soul's rest in God, as satisfied with the full and perfect demonstration of his love; it is the best estate we can be in, for we are not capable of a better. It is the end of our faith, and hope, and labours. Of our faith, 1 Peter i. 5; the end of our hope, Acts xxvi. 7. Now when a man hath obtained his end, then he is satisfied, as being in his perfect estate.

2. It is the utmost period of perfection men can be advanced unto, to enjoy God and be like him. Beyond God and above God nothing can be enjoyed; with God nothing can make us miserable, and without God nothing can make us happy. If a man should enjoy all the world, there is something without him and above him that can make him miserable; if the world smileth and God frowneth, what will you do? Ps. xxxix. 11, 'When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity.' None can obstruct God's vengeance, or stop his wrath; as when the sun is gone, all the candles and torches in the world cannot make it day.

3. If a glimpse of God's love be so precious to the saints, what will the sight of his face be? Ps. iv. 6, 7, 'Who will show us any good? Lord, lift up the light of thy countenance upon us: thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and wine increased.' If imperfect holiness be so precious, what will complete holiness be?

II. The season when we shall enjoy this, 'When he shall appear.'

1. I take it for granted that the soul before is not only *in manu Dei*, in the hand of God, which all assert, but admitted *in conspectum Dei*, into the sight and presence of the Lord, and to see his blessed face; which opinion the scripture befriendeth in divers places; but it would divert me now to dispute it. The term fixed here is, 'When Christ shall appear;' that is, at the general resurrection; for it concerned the apostle, to comply with his present argument, to mention this season rather than another; for the matter in debate was about the inconspicuousness of the privileges of the gospel. He saith, hereafter it will be glorious and conspicuous, namely, 'When he shall appear.' There are many that had never seen Christ, when he lived upon earth, he lived in a state of obscurity; his godhead sometimes looked out through the veil of his flesh, and discovered itself in a miracle, but generally our Christ was a hidden Christ. Therefore the Jews would not believe him, because he came in such a manner as not to satisfy his own countrymen: John i. 11, 'He came to his own, and they received him not.' In the ordin-

ances we see him, but darkly, as in a glass : 'His kingdom cometh not with observation,' Luke xvii. 20. It was not set up as other kingdoms are, with warlike preparations and visible power and glory ; his people were hated, scorned, reproached, but then he shall appear himself in all his glory.

2. Then we have our solemn absolution from all sins : Acts iii. 19, 'Repent, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' And our pardon is pronounced by the judge sitting upon the throne. It is great mercy now that he is pleased to pass by our many offences, and take us into his family, and give us a right to his heavenly kingdom ; but then it is another manner of grace and favour indeed when our judge shall acquit us with his own mouth, and own us as his faithful servants. Christ himself shall then appear to reward them. There were many that never had a sight of his glorious person ; his bodily presence is withdrawn from us for wise reasons, and is contained within the heaven of heavens ; and though this doth not hinder his spiritual influence, but we feel his operations ; yet at his second coming, then shall his people be pronounced blessed by their king, sitting upon the throne in all his royalty.

3. Then shall we have glorified bodies restored unto us, wherein Christ shall be admired : 2 Thes. i. 10, 'When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.'

4. Then Christ will present us to God by head and poll, and give an account of all that God hath given him, that they may be introduced into their everlasting estate, not one wanting : John vi. 40, 'And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life ; and I will raise him up at the last day ;' and Heb. ii. 13, 'Behold I and the children which God hath given me.' Man by man he will confess and own them before his Father : Luke xii. 8, 'Whosoever shall confess me before men, him shall also the Son of man confess before the angels of God.' This is one of mine : these are those in whom I have been glorified upon earth ; and then followeth the eternal kingdom.

III. The apprehension that we should have of it for the present : 'We know.' Knowledge signifieth both acts of the understanding, apprehension and dijudication. It is usually said that truth is the proper object and good of the understanding. Now when any truth is propounded to the understanding, there are two acts about it ; we apprehend the nature and tenor of it, and we judge of it whether it be true or false. Now the first act is usually called knowledge, and when we are sufficiently informed of the nature of anything ; the second is called faith and assent, either upon the natural evidence of the thing or the fidelity of the witness ; but faith is not so void of evidence as not to be called knowledge also : Job xix. 25, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth ;' and 2 Cor. v. 1, 'We know that if this earthly house of our tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens ;' 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Wherefore, my beloved, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour shall not be vain in the Lord.' Invisible things revealed by God are certainly known, though we never saw them. Well, then—

1. It is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge ; it is not only we think, we hope well, but we know. No man calleth that knowledge which is but a conjecture. It is not a may-be or a bare possibility ; it is possible there may be a heaven and happiness hereafter ; but it is true, it is as true as the word of God is true ; we have his own hand and seal and earnest for it.

2. It is not a probable opinion, but an evident and infallible truth, as sure as if we saw it with our eyes. How cometh the believer to have such a sure prospect of a future estate ? An unseen world is an unknown world ; how can we be so sure of it ? It is set before us by his precious promises who cannot lie : ‘ And if we receive the witness of man, the witness of God is greater ; ’ Heb. vi. 18, ‘ That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us ; ’ Heb. xii. 2, ‘ Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.’ That word is not only confirmed by his oath, but also by his seal or miracles, Heb. iii. 4 ; and fulfilled prophecies : 2 Peter i. 19, ‘ For we have a more sure word of prophecy.’ The old testament confirmed the kingdom of the Messiah and the privileges thereof long before it came to pass. The doctrine of the scripture, which assureth us of this estate, bears God’s image and superscription, which everything doth that hath passed his hand, even to a gnat and pile of grass ; and so shineth to us by its own light, if men were not strangely depraved and corrupted by worldly affections : 2 Cor. iv. 2–4, ‘ But by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost : in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.’ Besides, God hath blessed that doctrine to the converting, comforting, and quickening of many souls in all ages and places of the world : Col. i. 6, ‘ The word is come to you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth in you, since the day ye heard of it, and knew the grace of God in truth.’ That doctrine which bringeth forth the fruit of a holy life, and breedeth a heavenly mind in all that hear it and receive it, that is the truth of God. In the first age Christ did swiftly drive on the chariot of the gospel ; for within a few years after his death it obtained its effect in all parts of the world ; and ever since it hath held up its head against all encounters of time and revolutions of the world. Well, therefore, since we do not build upon the promise of a deceitful man, but the word of the everlasting God, why should not we be confident ? ‘ We know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.’

3. It is not a general belief, but a particular confidence : ‘ I know that my Redeemer liveth ; ’ and here, that we shall be like him ; he speaketh upon the supposition that we are God’s children. Now to make this evident, we must have more than a word of promise ; we must have the spirit of holiness opening the eyes of our mind, in seeing the truth and worth of this glorious and blessed estate : Eph. i. 17, 18, ‘ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory,

may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of the inheritance of the saints in light;’ quickening us in the love of God and heavenly desires, to carry us to this blessed estate, as our only happiness: 2 Cor. v. 5, ‘Now he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing, is God, who hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.’ Causing us to groan after it, to delight in it, to continue with patience in the pursuit of it: Gal. v. 5, ‘We through the Spirit wait for the hope of righteousness by faith.’ Filling us with joy as we get any hope of it, or sight of our interest in it: 1 Peter i. 8, ‘Whom having not seen, we love; in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.’ First faith seeth the feast, then love tastes it; those joys being afforded to us in our most sober and serious moods as cannot be a fantastical impression.

Use. To show how much it concerneth us to get it evident that we are the sons of God, if there be such a glorious estate reserved for them. Now this will be made evident—

1. By regeneration; this is our legal qualification and preparative disposition. First, our legal qualification: John iii. 3, ‘Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;’ 1 Peter i. 3, ‘Who hath begotten us to a lively hope.’ Therefore, till this change be wrought in us, we are altogether without any true and well-grounded hope of eternal life; but having gotten this new life and a new nature, we may expect this glory and blessedness as our inheritance. Now it is not only our legal qualification, or that which doth constitute our right and title, but, secondly, it is our preparative disposition. The sanctified understanding is only able to behold God, and the sanctified will and affections only capable to enjoy him. These are made meet; as Col. i. 10, ‘Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the saints in light.’ This concurs conditionally and dispositively. What should a sensual heart do with God and heaven? If they cannot receive or savour spiritual things, what shall they do with heavenly things? Now that they cannot receive and savour them is plain from 1 Cor. ii. 14, ‘The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;’ Rom. viii. 5, ‘For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh, but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.’ Either heaven must be another thing, or we must be other manner of creatures than we are. Oh, then how much doth it concern us to see whether we have this new life and being; then the first principles of blessedness are introduced into the soul; the soul is a form for this very thing, that it may be like unto God. To pretend to desire heaven and dislike renovation is to pretend you would have that perfected which you cannot endure should ever be begun; therefore see that it be a thorough change, not some faint inclinations to God and the heavenly life.

2. When converted and regenerated, we have the spirit of adoption inclining us to God as a Father: Gal. iv. 6, ‘And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;’ Rom. viii. 15, ‘But ye have received the spirit of adoption,

whereby we cry, Abba, Father.' So that a man is another man to God than he was before. He hath holy longings after him, delights much in converse and communion with him, especially in prayer: Zech. x. 12, 'I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications.' And Paul is an instance of this; for as soon as converted, he falleth a-praying. God's children have a childlike love to God, and it endeth in a childlike obedience to him, and a childlike dependence upon him for daily supplies: Mat. vi. 32, 'Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of these things.' They likewise depend upon him for an everlasting inheritance: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath, according to his abundant mercy, begotten us to a lively hope.' A child looketh for a child's portion. The soul loveth God, mindeth him in all things, inclineth to the ways of God, and delighteth in them as they tend to God, that he may get nearer to him, and be fitted and prepared to love him, and enjoy him for ever.

3. A holy conversation, and suitable walking: 1 Peter iv. 14, 15, 'As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts of your ignorance: but as he that hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation.' A sincere endeavour of keeping all your Father's commands, and devoting yourselves wholly to his work, is the best way to demonstrate yourselves to be truly the Lord's children: Eph. v. 1, 'Be ye followers of me, as dear children.'

SERMON IV.

And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.—1 JOHN iii. 3.

WE have showed you—

1. That the love of God, in acknowledging us for his children, cannot be sufficiently considered and admired by us.

2. That though God hath admitted us into the glorious estate of his children, yet little of this glory is seen in our present condition in this world.

3. That though the glory of adoption be now obscured, yet we are certain that at the appearing of Christ we shall see him as he is, and be like him.

Now having showed what knowledge and certainty of it we have for the present, the apostle comes here to show how this hope worketh; and so this first argument receiveth new strength. If God hath made us children, and children that may expect so great a happiness for their portion, we should endeavour to purify ourselves more and more, that we may both be like our heavenly Father, and also show our thankfulness for so great a privilege: 'And every man that hath this hope in him,' &c.