
THE SAINT'S DESIRE

TO BE

WITH CHRIST.

PHILIP. i. 23. *For I am in a Strait betwixt Two, having a Desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.*

WE are met to solemnize the funeral of our friend deceased, and to perform the last office of love. A glass of mortality is here set before us, wherein we may see our own fragil condition. There is a sentence passed upon us all;—‘it is appointed unto men once to die,’ Heb. ix. 27. so that our life is but a short reprieve from death, which is granted to a condemned man.

A wise man’s life, saith Plato, is nothing else but a contemplation of death. The Lord would have us inure ourselves to dying thoughts, Dent. xxxii. 20. and, as it were by meditation, often to stretch ourselves upon our death-bed. God clothed our first parents with skins of dead beasts, and feeds us with dead-flesh, that so often as we see the death of other creatures, we might not forget our own.

The text presents to us saint Paul in an holy pathos, or fit of longing to be with Christ. His heart was with Christ, and he wanted only the swift wing of death to carry him thither. ‘I am (saith he) in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.’

I shall briefly explain the terms as they lie in order.

‘ I am in a strait betwixt two.’

I am hemmed in ; it may allude to a castle which is so straitly besieged and hemmed in, that it hath no way to make a sally out. It fared now with saint Paul, as with a woman that hath her children at home with her, and her husband beyond the seas, she would fain be with her husband, yet is loath to leave her children : So Paul would gladly have been with Christ, but was loath to leave the Philippians, his spiritual children.

‘ Having a desire to depart.’

1. The Apostle doth not say, I must depart, but I desire to depart. All men must depart.

There is a dying principle in all ; the frame and contexture of their body is earthly, and tends to a dissolution. Nebuchadnezzar’s image, though it had a head of gold, yet feet of clay, Dan. ii. 23. Take the strongest man, let him be Samson or Hercules, of him we may yet say, he stands upon feet of clay : he is but animated dust, and must moulder away in time ; death will come with an *habeas corpus* at last. Tamerlane, a Scythian captain, the terror of his time, died with three fits of an ague.

The grammarian, who declines all other nouns, knows not how to decline death. ‘ Is my strength, saith Job, the strength of stones?’ Job vi. 12. Suppose it were, yet the continual dropping of sickness would in time wear away this stone. There is no such thing as an earthly eternity ; death is called ‘ the house appointed for all living,’ Job xxx. 23.

But though death be in itself necessary, to saint Paul it was voluntary ; it was not so much a debt, as a vote ; not so much Paul’s task, as his choice ; he doth not say, I must be dissolved, but I would be dissolved : ‘ Having a desire to depart.’

2. The apostle doth not say, having a desire to die, but to depart; (a lenifying word) which doth much take off the sharp edge of death, and make it less formidable. This phrase [to depart] may refer,

1. To soldiers that pitch their tents in the field, and upon the least word of command from their general, loosen the cords of their tents, and pluck up the stakes and march forward. So death doth but 'loosen the silver cord' which fastened the soul in its earthly tent, and a Christian marcheth forward to the heavenly Canaan.

Or, 2. This word [to depart] may be a metaphor taken from mariners, who loosen anchor that they may sail from one port to another: so Paul desired to loosen anchor; death to a believer is but loosening the anchor, and sailing from one port to another, from earth to heaven.

Beza renders this word [to depart] a putting off the harness. The world is an inn, we are travellers who take up our lodging here for a night, Paul longed to be out of his inn,

'And to be with Christ.'

The apostle had three great desires, and they were all centred upon Christ. One was 'to be found in Christ,' Phil. iii. 9. the other was 'to magnify Christ,' Phil. i. 20. the third was 'to be with Christ,' Phil. i. 23.

Here observe two things.

1. Paul doth not say I desire to depart and be in heaven, but to be with Christ; it is Christ's presence makes heaven, as the king's presence makes the court. It is not the Cherubims or Seraphims which make paradise; 'the Lamb is the light thereof,' Rev. xxi. 23. ◀

2. From the connexion of the words, 'Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ; we clearly see that the soul of a believer doth not sleep in the body after death, (a drowsy opinion) but goes im-

mediately to Christ. Upon the divorce of the soul from the body, there follows an espousal of the soul to Christ, 2 Cor. v. 8. 'Absent from the body, present with the Lord.' It were better for believers to stay here, if they did not presently go to Christ after death: For here the saints are daily improving their graces, here they have many sweet tastes of God's love, so that it were better to stay here; and Paul wished that which would be to his loss, if the soul should sleep in the body, and not go immediately after death to Christ.

'Which is far better.'

A believer is no loser by death. His change is for the better; a scion that is grafted into a stock, and planted in a better soil, is no ways damnified. A believer after death is set into a better Stock, Christ; and is planted in a better soil, Heaven; this can be no loss, but an advantage. Well therefore may the apostle say, to be with Christ is far better.

In the words there are these three parts. 1. Saint Paul's choice; to be with Christ. 2. The excellency of his choice; it is far better. 3. The strait he was in; I am in a strait betwixt two; this holy man was in a great *dilemma*, he was straitened between service and reward. He was desirous of glory, yet willing to adjourn his own happiness, and stay out of heaven a while, that he might be a means to bring others thither.

From the words thus opened, there are three observations.

1. It is the desire of a true saint to remove from hence, and be with Christ.

2. To be with Christ is far better; how much better it is, we shall better understand when we are in heaven; some angel is best able to speak to this point.

3. That which stays a saint here in the world,

is a desire of doing service; this did cast the balance with the apostle, and was the only tempting motive to keep him here a while; he looked upon his abode in the flesh, as an opportunity of service. Paul was willing to die, yet content to live, that he might be a factor for Christ upon earth.

I shall at this time insist upon the first proposition. That it is the desire of a true saint to remove from hence, and be with Christ; this proposition hath two branches; of each distinctly.

1. It is the desire of a true saint to be gone from hence; 'having a desire to depart.' What a wicked man fears, that a godly man hopes for. I desire, saith Paul, to depart; a sinner cries loath to depart, he doth not say 'Come Lord Jesus,' but stay Lord Jesus; he would live always here, he knows no other heaven but this, and it is death to him to be turned out of his heaven. It was the speech of Axiochus the philosopher when he was to die, Shall I be deprived of this light? Shall I leave all my sweet delights? David calls death a going out of the world, Psal. xxxix. 13. A wicked man doth not go out, but is dragged out; he is like a tenant who hath gotten possession, and will not go out of the house, till the sergeants pull him out. If a wicked man were put to his choice, he would never come where God is; he would choose the serpent's curse, 'to eat dust,' Gen. iii. 14. but not return to dust. If a wicked man might have his wish, he would serve no other God but his belly, and to this he would ever liberally pour drink-offerings.

But a soul enlivened and ennobled with a principle of grace, looks upon the world as a wilderness wherein are fiery serpents, and he desires to get out of this wilderness. Simeon having taken Christ in his arms, cries out, 'Lord now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace,' Luke ii. 29. He that hath taken Christ in the arms of his faith, will

sing Simeon's song, Lord, let thy servant depart. David prayed to know the measure of his days, Psal. xxxix. 4. because, saith Theodoret, he desired to hear the good news of death's approach.

The saints of God have looked upon themselves as imprisoned in the body, and have longed for a jail-delivery.

The birds desire to go out of the cage, though it be made of gold.

Hilarion chides himself that he was not more willing to die; go forth my soul, what fearest thou?

Ignatius was desirous of martyrdom, that he might gain the presence of Christ in glory.

A Christian of the right breed is ambitiously desirous to put off the earthly clothes of his body, and make his bed in the grave; how is this bed perfumed with Christ's lying in it? a pillow of down is not so sweet as a pillow of dust; a regenerate person looking upon himself as held with the earthen fetters of the flesh, and his soul put into a moveable sepulchre, cries out with David, 'O that I had wings like a dove, that I might flee away and be at rest,' Psalm lv. 6.

And indeed no wonder a true saint doth desire a dismissal, and is so earnest to have his pass to be gone from hence, if we consider how beneficial death is to a child of God; it puts a period to all his evils: in particular there are ten evils that death will put an end to.

1. Death will put an end to a believer's sins. Sin is the great incendiary, it doth us all the mischief. Sin may be compared to the planet Saturn, which hath a malignant influence; it is the womb of our sorrows, and the grave of our comforts.

Sin is the sinner's bond, Acts. viii. 23. and the saint's burden, Psal. lxxxiii. 3. How is a believer tired out with his corruptions? I am weary 'of my life' saith Rebecca, 'because of the daughters of

Heth,' Gen. xxvii. 46. That which makes a child of God weary of his life, is his proud, unbelieving heart: St. Paul could better carry his iron chain than his sins; 'O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?' Rom. vii. 24. When grace spurs the soul forward, the curbing bit of sin checks it, and pulls it back again. There is much of the old man in the new man; there is a party in every regenerate heart that is true to the devil; a party that will not pray, that will not believe. A christian is like a bowl with a double bias; he hath an earthly bias upon his will, and a spiritual bias, and these draw him several ways; 'The evil I would not, that do I,' Rom. vii. 19. Sin mingles itself with our holy things; we cannot act either our duties or our graces without sin; we are like children who cannot write without blotting! the sweet rose of grace doth not grow without its prickles. No wonder then a believer desires to depart; death will free him from his spiritual distempers; when he hath done breathing, he shall have done sinning.

2. Death will put an end to a believer's tentations. Our whole life, saith Austin, is nothing but a tentation; we tread upon snares: Satan is ever casting in the angle of a tentation, to see whether we will bite; he knows how to suit his tentations; he tempted Achan with a wedge of gold: he tempted David with beauty; we cannot lock the door of our heart so fast by prayer, but a tentation will enter: sometimes satan comes more furiously, as a red dragon; sometimes more slyly, as a serpent; sometimes he baits his hook with scripture, and tempts to sin under a mask of religion, as when he tempts to evil, that 'good may come of it.' Thus can he 'transform himself into an angel of light,' Rom. iii. 8.

Is it not a grievous thing for a virgin to have her

chastity assaulted? Is it not sad to have the devil's bullets continually flying about our ears? No wonder then a believer is willing to depart; death will set him out of gunshot, he shall never be troubled with Satan's fiery darts any more; though grace puts a child of God out of the devil's possession, it is death only frees him from the devil's tentation.

3. Death will put an end to a believer's fears. Fear is the soul's palsy; 'there is torment in fear,' Job iv. 18. Cicero calls fear one of the three plagues of mankind; and the best of the saints are haunted with this evil spirit; they cannot rejoice without trembling; the believer fears lest his heart should put a cheat upon him, he fears God doth not love him, he fears lest he should tire in his march to heaven; the best faith may sometimes have its fears, as the best stars have their twinkling. These fears, as Socrates saith, arm a man against himself; they are very afflictive, leaving sad impressions of melancholy behind. No wonder, then, a believer longs to depart out of this life: why should he fear that which frees him from fear? the king of terrors makes all fear vanish.

4. Death will dry up a believer's tears, Rev. vii. 17. 'And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes;' weeping is nothing but a cloud of sorrow gathered in the heart, dropping into water. A christian often hath none to keep him company, but his own griefs and sorrows; he sits as 'Israel by the rivers weeping;' as soon as the child is born, it weeps; when Moses was born, he was laid in an ark of bulrushes, where he did as it were baptize himself with his own tears, Exod. ii. 6. 'And behold the babe wept;' ever since we looked upon the tree of knowledge, our eyes have watered; there are many things to occasion weeping.

1. Our sins; who can look into his own heart with dry eyes?

2. Loss of relations, which is like the pulling a limb from the body; Joseph wept over his dead father, Gen. L 1. Well then, is it not to be admired that a believer desires to depart from hence; he shall leave the valley of tears; the bottle of tears shall be stopped; his water shall be turned into wine, his mourning into music, his lamentations into hallelujahs; death is the handkerchief to wipe off all tears.

5. Death will put an end to a believer's molestations; 'Man is born to trouble,' Job v. 7. he is the natural heir to it. This life is subject to injury; we do not, as Seneca saith, finish our troubles while we live here, but change them. Every one hath his cross to carry; sometimes poverty pincheth, sometimes sickness tortures, sometimes lawsuits vex: man is like a tennis-ball, bandied up and down by providence; while wicked men are in the world, never look for rest. These troubled seas, as the prophet calls them, will be casting forth their foam and mire upon the godly; and well then may a believer say, 'Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart.' Death gives a child of God his *quies est*, Isa. lvii. 20. it sends him a writ of ease, Job iii. 17. 'There (that is in the grave) the wicked cease from troubling, and there the weary be at rest.'

6. Death puts an end to a believer's cares. Care is vexatious and anxious, it eats out the comfort of life; the Greek word for care (*merimna*) comes from a primitive that signifies to cut the heart in pieces; care doth fret as a canker, it excruciates the mind, it breaks the sleep, it wastes the spirits, this is the rack which the soul is stretched upon. It is hard, I had almost said impossible, to shake off this viper of care while we live; all our comforts are careful comforts: care is to the mind as a burden to the back, it loads the spirits, and with overload-

ing sinks them ; care is a fruit of the curse ; Adam's want of care hath brought us to care ; have you not sometimes seen the briar growing by the honey-suckle, so that you cannot well gather the honey-suckle but you are scratched with the briar ? Thus in gathering riches, how is the head and heart pricked with care ? and is there not great reason why a child of God should desire to depart ? is it good being among the briars ? death is the cure of care ; we are thoughtful and solicitous how to get such an estate, how to provide for such a child ; now death comes to a believer as a friend, and saith, Never perplex and distract thy mind thus, I will free thee from all these heart-killing cares ; I will strike but once, and that stroke shall relieve thee.

7. Death will put an end to the night of desertion ; thou ' didst hide thy face, and I was troubled,' Psal. xxx. 7. The soul in desertion is within an inch of despair ; in affliction the world is against a man, in temptation satan is against a man, in desertion God is against a man. Alstead calls desertion an agony of conscience ; this made the prophet Jonah call the whale's belly the belly of hell, because he was deserted there ; Jonah ii. 2, 4. ' Out of the belly of hell cried I, then I said I am cast out of thy sight.

Heman grew distracted upon the suspension of God's favour, Psal. lxxxviii. 16. ' While I suffer thy terrors, I am distracted ;' but death will free from desertion : a believer after death shall never see any more eclipses ; God will draw aside the curtain, and pull off his veil, and the soul shall be for ever sunning itself in the light of God's countenance.

8. Death will put an end to the imperfections of nature. Our natural knowledge is very imperfect ; the most perceptive, intelligent person, may say as Agur, Prov. xxx. 2. ' I have not the understanding

of a man.' Since the fall, the lamp of reason burns dim; there are knots in nature that we cannot untie. Why Nilus should overflow in summer, when, by the course of nature, waters are lowest; why the loadstone should incline to the polar star; why the sea should be higher than the earth, yet not drown it; 'How the bones grow in the womb,' Eccl. xi. 5. Many of these things are riddles and paradoxes; by eating of the tree of knowledge, we have lost the key of knowledge; now we are maimed in our intellectuals! by the fall we have lost our head-piece; there are some diseases which would make Galen's head ach to find out. The river Euripus was too deep for Aristotle.

Socrates said on his deathbed, there were many things which he had yet to learn; our knowledge is like the twilight, dim and dusky: the greatest part of our knowledge, is not so much as the least part of our ignorance; all which considered, no wonder to hear this language from a saint, 'I have a desire to depart;' death crowns a christian with fulness of knowledge; when he is snuffed by death, the candle of his understanding will burn brighter; at death a child of God doth perfectly recover the use of his reason.

9. Death will put an end to the imperfections of grace; our graces are our best jewels, but here they are in their infancy and minority: therefore the saints are said to receive but 'the first-fruits of the Spirit,' Rom. viii. 23. The best christian is like a child put out to nurse, he is very weak in grace; faith is feeble, love lukewarm; grace though it be not dead is sickly, Rev. iii. 2. 'Strengthen the things which are ready to die;' grace is like gold in the ore, drossy and impure; the most refined soul hath some dregs; this motto may be written upon a christian's graces—*Plurima desunt*—he that shoots farthest in holiness, comes short of the mark

of perfection, Eccl. vii. 20. well then may a believer desire to be dissolved, death will free him from all the imperfections of his holiness; it will make him pure as the angels, not having spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27.

10. Death will put an end to a weary pilgrimage; we are here in a pilgrim condition, 1 Pet. ii.

11. A christian walks with his pilgrim's staff in his hand, the staff of the promise in the hand of faith; now death will put an end to this pilgrimage; it takes away the pilgrim's staff, and sets a crown upon his head: no wonder that the gracious soul cries out with saint Paul, 'having a desire to depart.'

Obj. But against this it may be objected—Some of the saints have prayed against death; Hezekiah, when the message of death was brought, prayed against it, and 'wept sore,' Isa. xxxviii. 2, 3. so that Hezekiah had not a desire to depart.

Ans. 1. Hezekiah did not pray simply against death, but in a limited sense, at that time; there might be several reasons assigned why at that time death was not welcome to him.

As, 1. Hezekiah desired to live a while longer, that he might do more work for God, verse 38. 'The dead cannot praise thee?' intimating that if he had been then taken off by death, he was capable of doing God no more service; he was loath to be cut down till he had borne more fruit. Besides, had he then died in the infancy of reformation, the adversaries of God would have exulted, and made songs of triumph at his funeral.

2. Hezekiah was unwilling to die at that time, because he wanted issue. God had promised to David, 1 Kings viii. 25. that those of his line which were godly, should not want some of their seed to succeed them in the throne; now in this respect it was a great discomfort to Hezekiah to die childless;

for he might have thought himself no better than an hypocrite, inasmuch as God had promised issue to the kings of David's line that feared him. Upon these, and other considerations, Hezekiah might pray against death at that juncture of time.

And whereas it may be said that many of God's children are unwilling to die; I answer, a christian is a compounded creature, flesh and spirit, and from this composition there may be a conflict between the fear of death and the desire of death; but at last the spiritual part prevails; and as faith grows stronger, fear grows weaker; thus it was with Paul, having a desire to depart.

So much for the first branch of the doctrine, that it is the desire of a true saint to be gone from hence, [*'having a desire to depart.'*]

2. I proceed now to the second branch of the doctrine, that it is a saint's desire to be with Christ. St. Paul longed to lie on that soft pillow where John the beloved disciple did, viz. the bosom of Jesus: There had been little comfort in departing, if the apostle had not put in this word, *'to be with Christ.'* Death will make a glorious change to a believer; it is but crossing the dead sea, and he shall be with Christ. Death to a child of God is like the whirlwind to Elijah, it blew off his mantle, but carried the prophet up to heaven. So death is a boisterous wind which blows off the mantle of the flesh, (for the body is but the mantle the soul is wrapped in,) but it carries the soul up to Christ; the day of a believer's dissolution is the day of his coronation. Tho' death be a bitter cup, here is sugar at the bottom, it translates the soul of a believer to Christ; though the flesh calls death *'the last enemy,'* 1 Cor. xv. 26. yet faith calls it the best friend, it brings a man to Christ, which is far better.

These words *'to be with Christ,'* imply three things.

1. Intuition. 2. Fruition. 3. Duration.

1. To be with Christ implies, Intuition, 1 John iii. 2. 'We shall see him as he is;' here we see him as he is not: he is not mutable, he is not mortal; in heaven we shall see him as he is. When Socrates was to die, he comforted himself with this, that he should go to the place where he should see Homer and Musæus, and other worthies who lived in the ages before him. A believer may comfort himself with this, that he shall see Christ; here we see him but through a glass, darkly; but what will it be when he shall be bespangled in all his embroidery, and shall shew forth himself in his full glory to his saints! He in Lucian said to his friend, I will shew thee all the glory of Greece; when thou hast seen Solon, thou hast seen all: So he that sees Jesus Christ, sees all the glory of paradise, Christ being the mirror of beauty, the quintessence of happiness.

Some ask the question, how and in what manner we shall see Christ, whether we shall see his Godhead with bodily eyes? It is not good to be wise above what is written; thus far I think may with modesty be asserted, that we shall, with our bodily eyes, behold Christ's human nature. His glory as a Mediator shall be visible to the saints, and shall be beheld by glorified eyes; in this sense that scripture is to be understood, Job xix. 25. 'With these eyes shall I see God;' great and amazing will that glory be which shall sparkle from the human nature of Christ; if his transfiguration was so glorious, what will his inauguration be! Austin wished that he might have seen three things before he died; Paul in the pulpit, Rome in its glory, and Christ in the flesh; but what were that to this sight of Christ in heaven? we shall behold not a crucified body, but a glorified body.

2. To be with Christ, implies Fruition; we shall

not only see him, but enjoy him : therefore in scripture the saints are said not only to behold him, but to be glorified with him, Rom. viii. 17. and glory is said not only to be revealed to us, but in us; Rom. xviii. 8. And ' Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord,' Matt. xxv. 21. not only see it, but enter into it. A man may see a fair arbour drawn upon the wall, but he cannot enter into it; this glory of heaven may be entered into; as the sponge sucks in the wine, so there shall be a libation and sucking in of glory; from this fruition of Christ; a torrent of divine joy will flow into the soul.

3. To be with Christ implies duration, 1 Thess. iv. 17. ' So shall we ever be with the Lord;' the fashion of the world passeth away, 1 Cor. vii. 31: Earthly comforts though they may be sweet, they are swift; Plutarch reports of Alexander, that he caused to be painted on a table a sword within a wheel, implying, that what he had gotten by his sword, was subject to be turned about with the wheel of providence; if we had the longest lease of these things, it would soon be run out; but this privilege of being with Christ, runs parallel with eternity: ' so shall we be ever with the Lord.'

Use 1. Inform. Branch 1. See from hence the difference between a believer's departing, and a wicked man's departing; to a believer it is an happy departing, to a wicked man it is a sad departing, there is nothing but departing; he departs out of this life, and he departs from Christ, ' depart from me ye cursed;' he departs from beams of glory, into flames of fire; he departs from the society of angels, into the fellowship of devils, Matt. xxv. 41. He hath never done departing; the wicked shall be ever consuming, yet never consumed; they may tremble to think of departing; well may the mourners go about the street when a wicked man dies;

hell may rightly be called Bochim, the place of weepers, Matt. vii. 12.

Branch 2. See how little cause a child of God hath to fear death, when it carries him to Christ. This is a death-bed cordial; we are naturally possessed with a strange kind of palpitation and trembling at the thoughts of death, as if we were in a shaking palsy, whereas there is nothing more really advantageous to a Christian; death is a bridge that leads to the paradise of God; all the hurt that death doth to a believer, is to carry him to Christ, and is not that far better? death pulls off the rags of the body and puts Christ's robes upon the soul. The serious consideration of this would make a believer above the desire of life, and the fear of death.

Obj. But may a child of God say, I could rejoice at the Gain of death, but I fear the Pain of death. I desire the haven, but I tremble at the voyage.

Ans. 1. In other cases we do not refuse pain; there is pain in the setting of a bone, in the lancing of a sore, yet we endure the pain contentedly, because it is in order to a cure. Death is an healing thing, it will cure a Christian of all his wounds: by making one issue, it cures all the rest.

Do we endure no pain at all in our life? Job felt so many miseries, that he did choose rather to die than to live, Job vii. 5, 15. 'My flesh is clothed with worms, my skin is broken and become loathsome, so that my soul chooseth strangling, and death rather than life;' the life of man is a continual catastrophe, and is interwoven with miseries: some have felt more pain in their life, than others have at their death.

3. What are a few pangs of death compared with the pangs of a guilty conscience, or with the flames of hell, which God hath freed a believer from? how light is death, compared with the weight of glory? 1 Cor. iv. 17. how short, in respect of eternity? 'the

present suffering is not worthy of the glory which shall be revealed in the children of God.' Rom. viii. 18.

4. We make death more than it is; as the Moabites thought the waters had been blood, when they received only a colour and tincture from the sun-beams, 2 Kings iii. 32. we fancy death worse than it is, we look upon it through a multiplying glass; fear makes a Christian see double; shut the eye of sense and open the eye of faith, and death will appear less formidable.

Use 2. Trial. Let us then put ourselves upon a scrutiny and trial whether we are persons that shall go to Christ when we die; it is certain we shall depart, but the question is, whether shall we go to Christ?

Quest. How may that be known?

Ans. If we are in Christ while we live, we shall go to Christ when we die; union is the ground of privilege; we must be in Christ before we can be with Christ; many hope to go to Christ when they die, but they are not in Christ; are they in Christ that do not know him? are they in Christ that hate him in his ministers, in his ordinances? O labour to be in Christ.

Quest. How is that?

Ans. By faith; faith is the uniting grace; it is the vital, radical, cardinal grace; this gives the interest. Faith is the queen of the graces; by faith we take Christ as a husband, and give up ourselves to him as a Lord; faith is a Christ appropriating grace; it hath both a relying and an applying faculty; Christ is the ring, faith is the finger that puts on this ring; faith opens the orifice in Christ's sides, and drinks his blood; faith is both justifying and sanctifying; it fetcheth blood out of Christ's sides to pardon, and water out of his sides to purge, † John v. 6. O with all gettings get faith.

Quest. But there is much deceit about this grace ; The Cyprian diamond, saith Pliny, looks like the true Indian diamond, but it is not of the right kind, it will break with the hammer. The devil hath his bad wares and counterfeit graces to put off; how therefore shall we know a true faith from a false and spurious?

Ans. I shall give you two different notes.

1. True faith is ever found in an heart deeply humbled for sin, Acts ii. 37. 'They were pricked at their hearts;' here was the first budding of faith; you never saw a flower grow out of a stone, nor faith out of an heart of stone. Faith is an herb that grows always in a moist soil, in a weeping eye and a broken heart, Mark ix. 24. 'The father of the child cried out with tears, Lord I believe.' This flag of faith grows in the water.

2. True faith is operative: The lapidaries say there is no precious stone but hath some virtue latent in it, so we may say of precious faith, it hath hidden virtue in it, it is very operative, it works out sin, Acts xv. 9, It works by love, Gal. v. 6. it is full of good works, James ii. 17. it makes the tongue speak for Christ, the head study, the hands work, the feet run 'in the ways of his commandments;' faith comes with power upon the heart, 2 Thess. i. 11, 'The work of faith with power:' it hath a restraining and constraining power; by this we may know whether ours be a true faith or no. I have read of a father who had three sons, and being to die, he left in his will all his estate to that son who could find his ring with the jewel which had a healing virtue; the case was brought before the judges; the two elder sons counterfeited a ring, but the younger son brought the true ring, which was proved by the virtue of it, whereupon his father's estate went to him: to this ring I may compare faith; there is a counterfeit faith in the world,

but if we can find this ring of faith which hath the virtue in it, both purgative and operative, this is the true faith which doth interest us in and entitle us to Jesus Christ; and if we are in Christ while we live, we shall be with Christ when we die; where faith gives a propriety, death gives a possession.

Use 3. Comfort. Here then is comfort in the death of our religious friends, though they depart from us, yet they go to Christ, which is far better; we should mourn for them who are living, yet dead in sin; and rejoice for them who are dead, yet live with Christ: This our dear brother interred*, had holy pangs of desire which seemed no less strong than the pangs of death; he panted after God as his ultimate and supreme perfection; he did often with joy repeat the words of the text, and seemed to roll them as honey under his tongue; we may therefore entertain good hopes of him that is placed in that paradise of God which he thirsted after. I wished him to look up to the merits of Christ; I must, saith he, rest there or no where.

O what a comfort is this to think that our friends are not only 'taken away from the evil to come,' Is. lvii. 1. but that they are with Christ! why should we be sad at their preferment? They have their crown, 2 Tim. iv. 8. their throne, Rev. iii. 21. their white robes, Rev. vii. 9. Why should we weep immoderately for them who have 'all tears wiped from their eyes? they enter into the joy of their Lord;' and why should we be swallowed up of grief for them who are swallowed up of joy! they that die in the Lord are not lost, but sent a little before; we shall shortly overtake them. It is but a while when godly friends shall meet in heaven, and feast together at 'the supper of the Lamb.' Rev. xix. 9. It is but a while when the saints shall lie together in

* Preached at the Funeral of Mr. Jacob Stock.

Christ's bosom, that hive of sweetness, that bed of perfume. 'Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord.' Rev, xiv. 13. Why should we mourn excessively for them who are blessed? O let us not weep at the felicity of our friends, but rather long 'to depart, and be with Christ,' when we shall 'drink of these rivers of pleasures which run at his right hand for evermore.'

DISCOURSES

UPON

CHRIST'S SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

MATT. v. 1, 2. *And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain : and when he was set, his disciples came unto him,*

And he opened his mouth, and taught them.

CHAP. I.

The Introduction to the ensuing Discourse.

THE blessed evangelist saint Matthew, the penman of this sacred history, was at first by profession a publican or gatherer of toll ; and Christ having called him from the custom-house, made him a gatherer of souls. This holy man in the first chapter sets down Christ's Birth and Genealogy, in