

2 PET. i. 13, 14.

Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up, by putting you in remembrance.

Knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.

AT the tenth verse of this chapter, the apostle sums up his foregoing precepts and exhortations in one great and most important duty, the “making sure of their calling and election.” This exhortation he enforceth on them by a most solemn and weighty motive, ver. 11. “Even an abundant entrance into the “everlasting kingdom.” No work of greater necessity or difficulty, than to make sure our salvation, no argument more forcible and prevalent, than an easy and free entrance into glory at death, an *ευθανασία*, a sweet and comfortable dissolution, to enter the port of glory before the wind, with our full lading of comfort, peace, and joy in believing, our sails full, and our streamers flying: Oh! how much better is this, than to lie wind-bound, I mean heart-bound, at the harbour’s mouth! tossed up and down with fears, doubts, and manifold temptations, making many a board to fetch the harbour; for so much is signified in his figurative and allusive expression, ver. 11.

And for their encouragement in this great and difficult work, he engageth himself by promise to give them all the assistance he can, whilst God should continue his life; and knowing that would be but a little while, he resolves to use his utmost endeavour to secure these things in their memories after his death, that they might not die with him. This is the general scope and order of the words.

Wherein more particularly we have,

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

2. The consideration stimulating and provoking him thereunto.

1. His exemplary industry and diligence in his ministerial work.

In which two things are remarkable, viz. (1.) The quality of his work, which was ** to stir them up, by putting them in remembrance*, to keep the heavenly flame of love and zeal lively upon the altar of their hearts. He well knew what a sleepy disease the best Christians are troubled with, and therefore he had need to be stirring them up, and awaking them to their duty. (2.) The constancy of his work: *as long as I am in this tabernacle*; i. e. as long as I live in this world. The body is called a tabernacle, in respect of its

* *Διεγείρειν*, signifies to raise up, or awake, i. e. your minds, which are, as it were, sleepy or slumbering, and dull, &c. *Pool’s synopsis.*

moveableness and frailty, and in opposition to that house made without hands, *eternal in the heavens*. And it is observable how he limits and bounds his serviceableness to them, by his commoration in his tabernacle or body, as well knowing after death he could be no longer useful to them or any others in this world. Death puts an end to all ministerial usefulness: but till that time he judged it meet, and becoming him, to be aiding and assisting their faith: our life and labour must end together.

2. We have here the motive, or consideration, stimulating and provoking him to this diligence; “knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as the Lord Jesus Christ hath shewed me.” In which words he gives an account of, (1.) The speediness; (2.) necessity; (3.) voluntariness of his death, and the way and means by which he knew it. All these must be considered singly and apart, and then valued all together, as they amount to a weighty argument or motive to excite him to diligence in his duty.

(1.) He reflects upon the speediness or near approach of his death. “I must [* shortly] put off this my tabernacle;” which is a form of speech of the same importance with that of Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 6. “The time of my departure is at hand,” my time in the body is almost at an end.

(2.) The necessity of his death: It is not I *may*, but I *must* put off this my tabernacle; yea, I must put it off shortly; for so the Lord hath shewed him; Christ had signified it expressly to him, John xxi. 18, 19. And beside this, most expositors think this clause refers to some special vision or revelation which Peter had of the time and manner of his own death; so that besides the natural necessity, or the inevitableness of his death by the law of nature, he was certified of it by special revelation. We have here also,

(3.) The voluntariness of his death; for voluntariness is consistent enough with the necessity of the event. I must put off, or lay down my tabernacle; he saith not, I must be torn, or rent by violence from it; but I must *depose*, or *lay it down*. † Camero will have the word here used for death, properly to signify the laying down of one’s garments: he made no more of putting off his body than his garment.

Upon the consideration of the whole matter, the speediness of

* *Tav̄iv̄i brevi futurum*. Every Christian knows not the time of his death, as Peter did, by special revelation.—But though we know it not by a word spoken to us in particular, we know it by a word written for all in common, Eccl. ix. 5. “The living know that they must die.”

† He calls it a putting off or laying down, thereby signifying his willingness to die for Christ. *Pool*.

his death which he knew to be at hand ; the necessity of it, that when it came he must be gone from, and could be no more useful to them ; and his own inclination to be with Christ in a better state, being as willing to be gone, as a weary traveller to be at home ; he judged it meet, or becoming him, as he was called of Christ to feed his sheep, as he was gifted extraordinarily for the church's service, full of spiritual excellencies, all which in a short time would be taken away from them by death : I say, upon all these accounts, he could not but judge it meet to be stirring them up, and every way striving to be as useful as he could. Hence the note will be,

Doct. How strong soever the affections and inclinations of souls are to the fleshly tabernacles they now live in, yet they must put them off, and that speedily.

The point lies very plain before us in the scriptures. That is a remarkable expression we have in Job xvi. 22. "When a few years are come, I shall go the way whence I shall not return." In the Hebrew it is, * "When the years of number, or my numbered years are come ; years so numbered, that they are circumscribed in a very short period of time." When those few years are past, then I must go to my long home, my everlasting abode, never more to return to this world : "The way whence I shall not return ;" elsewhere called "the way of all flesh," Josh. xxiii. 15. and "the way of all the earth," 1 Kings ii. 2.

"There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit ; neither hath he power in the day of death, and there is no discharge in that war," Eccl. viii. 8. By spirit understand the natural spirit, or breath of life, which, as I shewed before, connects or ties the soul and body together. This spirit no man can retain in the day of death. *We can (as one speaks) as well stop the chariot of the sun when posting to night, and chase away the shadows of the evening, as escape this hour of darkness that is coming upon us*†. A man may escape the wars by pleading privilege of years, or weakness of body, or the king's protection, or by sending another in his room ; but in this war the press is so strict, that it admits no dispensation ; young or old, weak or strong, willing or unwilling, all is one, into the field we must go, and look that last and most dreadful enemy in the face. It is in vain to think of sending

* *Anni numeri, (i. e.) qui numerati sunt adeo ut brevissima periodo circumscripti.*

† No diligence avoids, no happiness tames, and no power overcomes death, says Seneca.

another in our room, for no man dieth by proxy? or to think of compounding with death, as those self-deluded fools did, Isa. xxviii. 15. who thought they had been discharged of the debt by seeing the serjeant: No, there is no discharge in that war. *Nihil prodest ora concludere, et vitam fugientem retinere*, saith Hierom on that text; Let us shut our mouths never so close, struggle against death never so hard, there is no more retaining the spirit, than a woman can retain the fruit of her womb, when the full time of her deliverance is come. Suppose a man were sitting upon a throne of majesty surrounded with armed guards, or in the midst of a college of expert and learned physicians, death will pass all these guards to deliver thee the fatal message: Neither can arts help thee, when nature itself gives thee up.

The law of mortality binds all, good and bad, young and old, the most useful and desirable saints, whom the world can worst spare, as well as useless and undesirable sinners, Rom. viii. 10. "And if Christ (or though Christ) be in you, the body is dead "because of sin." Peter himself must put off his tabernacle, for they are but tabernacles, frail and moveable frames, not built for continuance; these will drop off from our souls, as the shells fall off from the bird in the nest; be our earthly tabernacles never so strong or pleasant, we must depose them, and that shortly; our lease in them will quickly expire, we have but a short term. James iv. 14. like a thin mist in the morning, which the sun presently dissipates; this is a metaphor chosen from the air: You have one from the land, where the swift post runs, Job ix. 25. So doth our life from stage to stage, till its journey be finished; and a third from the waters, there sail the swift ships, Job ix. 26. which weighing anchor, and putting into the sea, continually lessen the land, till at last they have quite lost sight of it: from the fire, Psal. lviii. 4. The lives of men are as soon extinct as a blaze made with dry thorns, which is almost as soon out as in. Thus you see how the Spirit of God hath borrowed metaphors from all the elements of nature, to shadow forth the brevity and frailty of that life we now live in these tabernacles; so that we may say as one did before us, *Nescio an dicenda sit vita mortalis, an vitalis mors*; I know not which to call it, a mortal life, or a living death.

The continuance of these our tabernacles or bodies is short, whether we consider them *absolutely*, or *comparatively*.

1. *Absolutely*. If they should stand seventy or eighty years, which is the longest duration, Psal. xc. 10. how soon will that time run out? What are years that are past but as a dream that is vanished, or as the waters that are past away? it is *in fluxu continuo*: there is no stopping its swift course, or calling back a moment that is past. Death set out in its journey towards us the

same hour we were born, and how near is it come this day to many of us? It hath us in chase, and will quickly fetch us up, and overtake us; but few stand so long as the utmost date.

2. *Comparatively.* Let us compare our time in these tabernacles, (1.) either with eternity, or with him who inhabits it, and it shrinks up into nothing; Psal. xxxix. 5. "Mine age is nothing unto thee." So vast is the disproportion, that it seems not only little, but nothing at all. Or (2.) with the duration of the bodies of men in the first ages of the world, when they lived many hundred years in these fleshly tabernacles. The length of their lives was the benefit of the world, because religion was then *απαγορευόμενον*, a thing handed down from father to son; but certainly it would be no benefit to us that are in Christ, to be so long suspended the fruition of God in the everlasting rest.

The grounds and reasons of this necessity that lies upon all, to put off their earthly tabernacle so soon, are

1. The law of God, or his appointment.

2. The providence of God ordering it suitably to this appointment.

1. The law or appointment of God which came in force immediately upon the fall; Gen. ii. 17. "In the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die." And accordingly it took place upon all mankind immediately upon the first transgression, Rom. v. 12. *Death entered by sin.* The threatening was not his immediate, actual, personal death in the day that he should eat, but a state of mortality to commence from that time to him and his posterity; hence it is said, Heb. ix. 27. "It is appointed to all men once to die."

2. The providence of God ordering and framing the body of man suitably to this his appointment; * a frail, weak creature, having the seeds of death in his constitution: Thousands of diseases and infirmities are bred in his nature, and the smallest pore in his body is a door large enough to let in death. Hence his body is compared to a piece of cloth which moths have fretted, Psal. xxxix. 11. it is become a sorry rotten thing which cannot long hang together. And indeed it is a wonder it continues so long as it doth.

And both these, viz. the divine appointment and providence, are in pursuance of a double design, or for the payment of a two-fold debt, which God owes to the first and to the second Adam.

(1.) By cutting off the life, or dissolving the tabernacles of wick-

* We die daily, for some part of life is taken away daily, and then also when we increase, life decreases, for first we lose infancy, then youth, even to yesterday. Whatever part of time passes is lost.

ed men, God pays that debt of justice owing to the first Adam's sinful posterity, whose sins cry daily to his justice to cut them off. Rom. vi. 23. "The wages of sin is death." And indeed it is admirable that his patience suffers ungodly men to live so long as they do, for he endures with much long-suffering, Rom. ix. 22. He sees all their sins, he is grieved at the heart with them; his forbearance doth but encourage them the more to sin against him; Eccl. viii. 11. "Because sentence," &c. yet forbears: "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," Psal. xcv. 10. And it is wonderful that he hath so much patience under such a load. Habakkuk admired it, Hab. i. 13. "Thou art of purer eyes," &c. Yet he suffers them to spend lavishly upon his patience from year to year, but justice must do his office at last.

(2.) By cutting off the lives of good men, God pays to Christ the reward of his sufferings, the end of his death which was to bring many sons to glory, Heb. ii. 10. Alas! it answers not Christ's end and intention in dying, to have his people so remote from him; John xvii. 24. "He would have them where he is, that they might behold his glory." Two vehement desires are satisfied by this appointment of God, and its execution, viz.

1. Christ's.

2. The saints.

1. Christ's desires are satisfied; for this is the thing he all along kept his eye upon in the whole work of his mediation; it was to bring us to God, 1 Pet. iii. 18. Though he be in glory, yet his mystical body is not full till all the elect be gathered in by conversion, and gathered home by glorification, Eph. i. 23. The church is his fulness. He is not fully satisfied till he see his seed, the souls he died for, safe in heaven; and then the debt due to him for all his sufferings is fully paid him, Isa. liii. 11. He sees the travail of his soul; as it is the greatest satisfaction and pleasure a man is capable of in this world, to see a great design which hath been long projecting and managing, at last, by an orderly conduct, brought to its perfection.

2. The desires of the saints are hereby satisfied, and their weary souls brought to rest. Oh! what do gracious souls more pant after than the full enjoyment of God, and the visions of his face! the state of freedom from sin, and complete conformity to Jesus Christ! From the day of their espousals to Christ, these desires have been working in their souls. Love and patience have each acted its part in them, 2 Thess. iii. 5. Love hath put them into an holy ardour and longing to be with Christ: patience hath qualified and allayed those desires, and supported the soul under the delay. Love cries, come, Lord, come; patience commands us to wait the appointed time. This appointed time on which so great

hopes and expectations depend, is the time of dissolving these tabernacles; for till then the soul's rest is suspended; and if it were perfectly freed from all other loads and burdens, both of sin and affliction, yet its very absence from Christ would alone make it restless, for it is with the soul in the body, as it is with any other creature that is off its centre, it doth and must gravitate and propeud, it is still moving and inclining farther, and feels not itself easy and at rest where it is, be its condition in other respects never so easy. 2 Cor. v. 6. "Whilst we are at home in the body, we "are absent from the Lord." You have a little shadow, or emblem of this in other creatures: You see the rivers, though they glide never so sweetly betwixt the fragrant banks of the most pleasant meadows in their course and passage, yet on they go towards the sea; and if they meet with never so many rocks or hills to resist their course, they will either strive to get a passage through them, or if that may not be, they will fetch a compass, and creep about them, and nothing can stop them till by a central force they have finished their weary course, and poured themselves into the bosom of the ocean. Or as it is with yourselves, when abroad from your habitations and relations: this may be pleasing a little while; but if every day might be a festival, it would not long please you, because you are not at home.

The main motives that persuade gracious souls to abide here, are to finish the work of their own salvation, and further other men's; but as their evidences for heaven grow clearer to themselves, and their capacity of service less to others, so must their desires to be with Christ be more and more enflamed.

Now the case so standing, that Christ's condition in heaven, being a condition of desire and longing for the enjoyment of his people there, and all the glory of heaven would not content him without that; and the condition of his people on earth being also a state of longing, groaning, and panting to be with him, and all the pleasures and delights and comforts they have on earth, will not content them without it: How wise and gracious an appointment of heaven is it, that these our tabernacles shall and must be put off, and that shortly! For hereby a full and mutual satisfaction is given to the restless desires both of Christ's heart and of theirs: See the reflected flames of love betwixt them, in Rev. xxii. "The spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that is athirst "come; Behold, I come quickly. Even so, Lord Jesus; Come "quickly." Delays make the heart sad, Prov. xiii. 12. should our commoration on earth be long, our patience had need be much greater than it is; but under all our burdens here, this is our relief, it is but a little while, and all will be well, as well as our souls can desire to have it.

Inf. 1. Must we put off these tabernacles? Is death necessary and inevitable? *Then it is our wisdom to sweeten to ourselves that cup which we must drink; and make that as pleasant to us as we can which we know cannot be avoided.* Die we must, whether we be fit or unfit, willing or unwilling: It is to no purpose to shrug at the name, or shrink back from the thing. In all ages of the world, death hath swept the stage clean of one generation, to make room for another, and so it will from age to age, till the stage be taken down, in the general dissolution.

But though death be inevitable by all, it is not alike evil, bitter, and dreadful to all. Some tremble, others triumph at the appearances of it. Some meet it half-way, receive it as a friend, and can bid it welcome, and die by consent; making that the matter of their election, which, in itself, is necessary and unavoidable; so did Paul, Phil. i. 23. But others are drawn, or rent by plain violence from the body, Job xxxvii. 1. when God draws out their souls.

That man is happy indeed, whose heart falls in with the appointment of God, so voluntarily and freely, as that he dare not only look death in the face with confidence, but go along with it by consent of will. Remarkable to this purpose, is that which the apostle asserts of the frame of his own heart, 2 Cor. v. 8. "We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord." Here is both confidence and complacency, with respect to death, *Θαρσζόμεν*. The word signifies courage, fortitude; or, if you will, an undaunted boldness and presence of mind, when we look the king of terrors in the face. We dare venture upon death, we dare take it by the cold hand, and bid it welcome. We dare defy its enmity, and deride its noxious power, 1 Cor. xv. 55. "O death! where is thy sting!" And that is not all, we have complacency in it, as well as confidence to encounter it. *Ευδοκούμεν*, *we are willing*; the translation is too flat, *We are well pleased*; it is a desirable, a grateful thing to us to die; but yet not in an absolute, but comparative consideration, *ευδοκούμεν μάλλον*, *we are willing rather*, i. e. rather than not see, and enjoy our Lord Jesus Christ; rather than to be here always sinning and groaning. There is no complacency in death; in itself it is not desirable. But if we must go through that strait gate, or not see God, we are willing rather to be absent from the body. So that you see death was not the matter of his submission only, he did not yield to what he could not avoid, but he balances the evils of death, with the privileges it admits the soul into, and then pronounces, *ευδοκούμεν*, *we are content, yea, pleased to die.*

We cannot live always if we would, and our hearts should be wrought to that frame, as to say, we would not live always if we could, Job vii. 16. "I would not live always;" or *long*, saith he.

But why should Job deprecate that which was not attainable? "I would not live always; he needed not to trouble himself about that, it being impossible that he should: both statute and natural law forbid it. Ay, but this is his sense: supposing no such necessity as there is, if it were pure matter of election; upon a due balancing of accounts, and comparing the good and evil of death, I would not be confined always, or for any long time to the body. It would be a bondage unsupportable to be here always.

Indeed those that have their portion, their all, in this life, have no desire to be gone hence. They that were never changed by grace, desire no change by death; if such a concession were made to them, as was once to an English parliament, That they should never be dissolved, but by their own consent, when would they say as Paul, "I desire to be dissolved?" But it is far otherwise with them, whose portion and affections are in another world; they would not live always if they might; knowing, that never to die, is never to be happy.

Quest. If you say, *This is an excellent and most desirable temper of soul; but how did these holy men attain it? or what is the course we may take to get the like frame of willingness?*

Sol. They attained it, and you may attain it in such methods as these.

1. They lived in the believing views of the invisible world, and so must you, if ever death be desirable in your eyes, 2 Cor. iv. 18. "It is said of all that died comfortably, that they died in faith," Heb. xi. 13. You will never be willing to go along with death, except you know where it will carry you.

2. They had assurance of heaven, as well as faith to discern it. Assurance is a lump of sugar, indeed, in the bitter cup of death; nothing sweetens like it. So 2 Cor. v. 1. so Job xix. 26, 27. This puts roses into the pale cheeks of death, and makes it amiable, 1 Cor. xv. 55, 56. and Rom. viii. 38, 39.

3. Their hearts were weaned from this world, and an inordinate affection to a terrene life, Phil. iii. 8. all was dung and dross for Christ; they trampled under foot what we hug in our bosoms. So it is said, Heb. x. 34. "Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves," &c. And so it must be with us, if ever we obtain a complacency in death.

4. They ordered their conversations with much integrity, and so kept their consciences pure, and void of offence; Acts xxiv. 16. "Herein do I exercise myself," &c. and this was their comfort at last, 2 Cor. i. 12. "This is our rejoicing," &c. So Job xxvii. 5. "My integrity will I not let go till I die:" Oh! this unstings death of all its terrors.

5. They kept their love to Christ at the height: that flame was

vehement in their souls, and made them despise the terror, and desire the friendly assistance of death, to bring them to the sight of Jesus Christ, Phil. i. 23. So Ignatius, *O how I long*, &c. Thus it must be with you, if ever you make death eligible and lovely to you, which is terrible in itself. There is a loveliness in the death, as well as in the life of a Christian: "Let me die the death of the "righteous," said Balaam.

Inference 2. Must we put off these tabernacles of flesh? *How necessary is it, that every soul look in season, and make provision for another habitation?* * If you must be turned out of one house, you must provide another, or lie in the streets. This the apostle comforted himself with, that "if unclothed, he should not be found "naked," 2 Cor. v. 1. a building of God, an house not made with hands. You must turn out, and that shortly, from these earthly habitations. Oh! what provision have you made for your souls against that day? The soul of Adrian was at a sad loss, when he saw he must be turned out of this world; *O animula vagula, blandula, heu quo vadis!* But it was Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob's privilege, that God had prepared for them a city, Heb. xi. 16.

I know it is a common presumption of most men, that they shall be in heaven, when they can be no longer on earth. *Presumendo sperant, et sperando pereunt.* But a few moments will convince them of their fatal mistake; their poor souls will meet with a confounding repulse, like that, Matth. vii. 22. There is indeed a city full of heavenly mansions prepared for some; but who are they that are entitled to it, and may confidently expect to be received into it? To be sure, not the presumptuous, who make a bridge of their own shadows, and so fall and perish in the waters. Brethren, it is one of the most solemn enquiries you were ever put upon: and therefore I beseech you, see whether your characters set you among those men, or no.

1. Those that are new-born, shall be clothed with their new house from heaven, when death unclothes them of these tabernacles: the *New Jerusalem* hath none but new-born inhabitants, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. and Christ tells us, John iii. 3. *all others are excluded.* Glory is the privilege of grace. Let nature be adorned, and cultivated how it will, if not renewed by grace, there is no hope of glory. You must be born again, or turned back again from the gates of heaven disappointed. You must be regenerated, or damned. This alters the temper of thy heart, and suits it to the life of God, which is indispensably necessary to them that shall live with him.

* Many cry out on a death-bed, O send for ministers and Christians to pray! Alas! what can they do then? Is that a time for so great a work to be shuffled up in a hurry, amidst distractions, and agonies.

Else heaven would be no heaven to us, Rom. viii. 7. and therefore we must be brought this way to it, 2 Cor. v. 5. No privilege of nature, no duties of religion avail without this, Gal. vi. 15. If morality, without regeneration, could bring men to heaven, why are not the Heathens there? If strictness in duty, without regeneration, why are not the Pharisees there? Believe it, neither names, nor duties, no, nor the blood of Christ, ever did, or shall bring one soul to glory without it. O then, thou that boastest of a house in heaven, lay thine hand on thy heart, and ask it; Am I a new creature, i. e. Am I renewed, (1.) In my state and condition? 1 John iii. 14. past from death to life. (2.) In my frame and temper? Eph. v. 8. "Once darkness, now light in the Lord." (3.) In my practice and conversation? Eph. ii. 12, 13. 1 Cor. vi. 11. If not, my soul is destitute of an habitation in the city of God; and when I die, my body must lie in the lonely house of the grave, that dark vault and prison, and my soul be shut out from God into outer darkness.

2. Those that live as strangers, and pilgrims on earth, seeking a better place, and state, than this world affords them; for them God hath made preparations in glory, Heb. xi. 13, 16. If you be strangers on earth, you are the inhabitants of heaven. Now there be six things included in this character. 1. They look not on this world as their own home, nor on the people of it, as their own people, 2 Cor. v. 8. *ἐκδημησαι*, to be unpeopled. These are none of my fellow-citizens, we must go two ways at death. 2. They set not their affections on things present, as their portion, 2 Cor. iv. 18. Psal. xvii. 13, 14. Their bodies are here, their hearts in heaven. 3. Their carriage, and manner of life, not like the men of this world, 1 Pet. iv. 4. *ξενίζονται*. So the rule guides them, Rom. xii. 2. and so their course is steered; at least intended, Phil. iii. 20. *οὐρ το πολίτευμα*, our trade is in heaven. (4.) Their dialect and language differ from the natives of this world. Their language is earthly, 1 John iv. 5, 6. but these have a pure lip, Zech. iii. 9. (5.) Their society, and chosen companions are not of this world, Psal. xvi. 3. They are a company of themselves, Acts iv. 21. (6.) Their spirit, and temper of heart are not after the world, 1 Cor. ii. 12. They have another spirit, Numb. xiv. 24. These things discover us to be strangers on earth, and consequently, the men for whom God hath prepared heavenly habitations when we die.

3. Those that live and die by faith, shall not fail to be received into a better habitation by death. This is another character of them that shall be received into glory, laid down in the same place, Heb. xi. 13. They lived by faith, and when they died, they died em-

bracing the promises, which is characteristic of those that shall dwell in that heavenly city; and implies, (1.) Intimate acquaintance with the promises, they are things well known, and familiarized to them. The word *ασπασαμενοι*, *Salutantes*, saluting them, is a metaphor, from the manner of parting betwixt two dear and intimate friends. The faith of a Christian embraces the promises in its arms, as dear friends use to do at parting, and saith, Farewell, sweet promises, from which I have sucked out so much relief and refreshment in all the troubles of my life; I must now live no more by faith on you, but by sight: O you have often cheered my soul, and been my song in the house of my pilgrimage. (2.) It implies the firm credit that a believer gives to things unseen, upon the grounds of the promises, as if he did sensibly take and grasp them in his very arms and bosom. They take Christ, and all the invisible things in the promises, into their sensible embraces, 1 Pet. i. 8. Faith is to them instead of eyes. (3.) It implies the sincerity of a believer's profession, who dares trust to that at the last gasp, which he professed to believe in the midst of life, and the comforts of this world. As he professed to believe in health, so you shall find his actings, when his eye and heart-strings are cracking, Rom. xiv. 9. Christ, in the promises, was his professed joy and life, and this is what he grasps at death, and lays his last hold on. (4.) It shews you whence all a believer's comforts come, in life and death. O, it is from the promises, Christ in the promises is the spring of their consolation. This they fetch their comfort from, when the world cannot administer one drop of refreshment to them. There be two great works faith performs for the saints, one in life, the other in death: in life, it is the principle of mortification to their sins; in death, it is the spring of consolation to their hearts; it makes them die whilst they live, and live when they die.

4. Those that love the person and appearance of Christ, have a mark that sets them among the inhabitants of heaven, and glory, 2 Tim. iv. 8. but then this love must be, (1.) Sincere, and without hypocrisy. (2.) Supreme, and above all other beloveds. (3.) Conforming the soul to Christ; if sincere and supreme, it will be transformative. (4.) Longing to be with him. Such love is a mark of souls for whom heaven is prepared.

Inf. 3. Must we put off our tabernacles, and that shortly? *What a spur is this to a diligent redemption, and improvement of time?* This is the use Peter made of it here, and every one of us should make. It was said of Bishop Hooper, he was spare in his diet, spare in his words, but most of all spare of his time. You have but a little time in these tabernacles; what pity is it to waste much out of a little?

(1.) Great is the worth and excellency of time, all the treasures of the world cannot protract, stop, or call back one minute of time. O what is man that the heavenly bodies should be wheeled about by Almighty Power in constant revolutions, to beget time for him! Psal. viii. 3.

(2.) More precious are the seasons and opportunities that are in time for our souls; those are the golden spots of time, like the pearl in the oyster-shell, of much more value than the shell that contains it. There is much time in a short opportunity. There is a day on which our eternal happiness depends, Luke xix. 41, 42. Heb. iv. 7.

(3.) Invaluable are the things which God doth for men's souls in time. There are works wrought upon men's hearts in a seasonable hour in this life, which have an influence into the soul's happiness throughout eternity. There is a time of mercy, a time of love, viz. of illumination, and conversion; and on that point of time, eternal life hangs in the whole weight of it.

(4.) Lost opportunity is never to be recovered by the soul any more, Ezek. xxiv. 13. Rev. xxii. 11. To come before the opportunity, is to come before the bird is hatched; and to come after it, is to come when the bird is flown. There is no calling back time, when it is once past. See this in the examples you find, Luke xiii. 26. Eccl. ix. 10.

(5.) It is wholly uncertain to every soul, whether the present day may not determine his lease in this tabernacle, and a writ of ejection be served by death upon his soul to-morrow, James iv. 13. Luke xii. 20.

(6.) As soon as ever time shall end, eternity takes place. The stream of time delivers souls daily into the boundless ocean of vast eternity. *Ab hoc momento pendet æternitas.* We are now measured by time, hereafter by eternity.

(7.) In eternity all things are fixed and unalterable. We have no more to do, all means and works are at an end, John ix. 4. and Eccl. xi. 3. "As the tree falls, so it lies." Oh that these weighty considerations might lie upon your hearts, as long as you are in these tabernacles! If they did, (1.) The unregenerate would not so desperately hazard their eternal happiness, by trifling away their precious seasons under the gospel. Oh how many aged sinners, gray-headed sinners, hear me this day, who in fifty or sixty years never redeemed one solemn hour, to take their poor souls aside out of the clutter and distracting noise of the world to ask and debate this question with them, *Oh my soul, how stands the case with thee in reference to the world to come!* They have found no time to bethink themselves in what world their souls shall be landed, when time shall deliver them up into eternity. Their whole life

hath been but a continual diversion from one trifle to another: they have been serious in trifles, and trifled in things most serious; this will afford horrid reflections in the world to come. (2.) The regenerate would not cast away the comfort of their lives, in the evidences of eternal life, at so cheap a rate as they do. May I not say to you as the apostle doth, Heb. v. 12. for the time you have had under the gospel you might have attained a rich treasure, both of grace and comfort; *Turpe est esse senex elementarius*. Is it not shameful and inexcusable, to be where you were twenty years past? Oh! let these things sink deep into every soul.

Inf. 4. Must we shortly put off these our tabernacles? *Then slack your pace, and cool yourselves; be not too eager in the prosecution of earthly designs.* O what bustling is here for the world, and for provision for futurity, whereas far less would serve the turn! We need not victual a ship to cross the channel to France, as if she were bound to the Indies. Most men's provisions, at least their cares and thoughts, are far beyond the preparations of their abode in this world. The folly of this, Christ discovers in that parable, Luke xii. 19. and on this very account gives him the title of a fool, who provided for years, many years; when poor soul, he had not one night to enjoy these provisions.

Oh the multitude of thoughts and cares this world needlessly devours! We keep ourselves in such a continual hurry and crowd of cares, thoughts, and employments about the concerns of the body, that we can find little time to be alone, communing with our own hearts about our great concernments in eternity. It is with many of us, in respect of our souls, and their great interests, as it is with a man that is deep in thoughts about some subject that wholly swallows him up, he seeth not what he seeth, nor heareth what he heareth of any other matter: his eyes seem to look upon this or that, but it is all one as if he did not. So it was with Archimedes, who was so intent upon drawing his mathematical schemes, that though all the city was in an alarm, the enemy had taken it by storm, the streets filled with dreadful cries, and dead bodies, the soldiers came into his particular house, nay, entered his very study, and plucked him by the sleeve, before he took any notice of it: even so many men's hearts are so profoundly immersed, and drowned in earthly cares, thoughts, projects, or pleasures, that death must come to their very houses, yea, and pull them by the sleeve, and tell them its errand, before they will begin to awake, and come to a serious consideration of things more important.

Inf. 5. If we must shortly put off these tabernacles, *then the groaning and mourning time of all believers is but short; how heavy*

soever their burden be, yet they shall carry it but a little way. It is said, 2 Cor. v. 4. "We that are in this tabernacle do groan, being "burdened." Good souls, in this state, are every where groaning under heavy pressures. Their burdens are of two sorts, sympathetic, whereby they grieve with, and on the account of others, and so every true member of the church of God ought to sympathize, both with God, Psal. cxxxix. 21. "Am not I grieved with them "that rise up against thee?" Psal. xlii. 10. "It is as with a sword "in their bones;" and with the people of God, Zeph. iii. 18. sorrowful for the solemn assembly; so 2 Cor. xi. 29. "Who is "offended, and I burn not?" And indeed, it is an argument of rich, as well as true grace, that we can, and do heartily mourn with, and for the interest and people of God, though our own lot in the world, as Nehemiah's, be never so comfortable. Or else our burdens are idiopathical, i. e. such as we bear upon our own proper account and score. And where is the Christian that hath not his own burden, yea, many burdens on him at once? Some groan under the burden of sin, Rom. viii. 24. Scarce one day are the tears off from some eye-lids on this account. And who groans not under the burden of affliction, either inward upon the soul, Prov. xviii. 14. Job vi. 1, 2, 3. or outward upon the body, state, relations, &c. These things make the people of God a burden to themselves, Job vii. 20, 21. Yea, under these burdens they would sink, did not the Lord sustain them, Psal. lv. 22.

But God will put a speedy and final end to all these things. When you put off this tabernacle, you put off with it all those burdens, inward and outward. The soul presently feels a great load off his shoulders; it shall never groan more, God shall thenceforth wipe away all tears from their eyes; for why are those burdens now permitted and imposed by the Lord upon you, but (1.) To prevent sin, Hos. ii. 6. They are your clogs to keep you from straying. (2.) To purge out sin, Isa. xxvii. 9. (3.) To make you long more for heaven, and the rest to come. But all these ends are accomplished in that day you put off your tabernacles, for then sin is gone, and the rest is come.

Inf. 6. Must you shortly put off those tabernacles? *Then spare them not whilst you have them, but employ them for God with all diligence.* Shortly they shall be useless to you, yea, meat for worms; now they may be serviceable, and their service is their honour: you received them not for such low ends as you employ them for. See 1 Cor. vi. 20. "Glorify God in your souls and bodies, which "are his:" You expect to have their glorious bodies one day; O then let them be serviceable bodies now! Be not fond of them to that degree many are, who chuse rather to have them *eaten up*

with rust, than worn out with service *. It is your present honour to be active, and will be your singular comfort another day. What greater comfort, when you come to put them off at death, than this, that you have employed them faithfully for God

Inf. 7. Look beyond this embodied state, and learn to live now as you hope to live shortly; begin to be what you expect to be. You know the time is at hand, that you shall live above all bodily concerns and employments, the soul shall be a drudge to the body no more. You shall be as the angels, Matt. xxii. 30. not marrying, nor giving in marriage, which is, by a *synecdoche*, put for all carnal employments and enjoyments; eat no more, drink no more, sleep no more, buy and sell no more. Now suit yourselves as much as your state and the duties of religion will suffer you to that state before hand. The sum of what I aim at is in 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30. Be in all your relations as if you had none. Look on those things as if already they were not, which shortly must be none of yours; and both acquaint and accustom your thoughts to the life of separation from the body, which you must shortly leave. Which brings me home to the next point, *viz. The condition of human souls in the state of separation.*



HEB. xii. 23.

—ΚΑΙ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ ΔΙΚΑΙΩΝ ΤΕΤΕΛΕΙΩΜΕΝΩΝ.—*And to the spirits of just men made perfect.*

THE particular scope of this context falls in with the general design of the whole gospel, which is to persuade men to a life of holiness. The matter of the exhortation is most weighty, and the arguments enforcing it most powerful: He doth not talk, but dispute; he doth not say, but prove, that greater and more powerful engagements unto holiness lie upon those who live under the gospel, than upon the people who lived under the law. And thus the argument lies in this context.

If God, at the delivering of the law upon *mount Sinai*, strictly enjoined, and required so great purity and holiness in that people, signified by the ceremonies of two days preparation, the washing of their clothes, abstinence from conjugal society, &c. Exod. xix. 10. much more doth he require, and expect it in us, who are come under a much more excellent and heavenly dispensation than theirs was.

* Ambrose said of Valentinian,—No man was ever such a servant to his master, as Valentinian's body was to his soul.