

SERMONS UPON 2 CORINTHIANS, V.

SERMON I.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—2 COR. v. 1.

HAVING showed you how much of the true spirit of christianity lieth in looking to things unseen, because the apostle goeth on with that argument, I shall pursue it in the following verses of this chapter. Paul here rendereth a reason why he could so overlook things seen, whether crosses or comforts, and so resolutely venture upon the hope of things unseen—*For we know, &c.*

In which words there is not only a reason rendered of his courage and self-denying pursuit of unseen glory, but also an anticipation or secret prevention of an objection. Some might say to him, There may be a blessed state to come; but dost thou certainly know that thou shalt be a partaker of that glory? Yea, saith he, 'We know,' &c.

The words branch themselves into three parts:—

1. A supposal of the worst that could befall him in the world: *If our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved.*

2. A proposal of a glorious estate to be enjoyed after death: *We have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

3. An assertion of his own right, or the application to himself, or an assured expectation of this blessed and glorious estate: *We know that we have.* It is not a bare conjecture, but a certain knowledge, *οἶδαμεν*, 'We know.' And what is there known? Not the general truth only, that there is a *building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*, but that we have a particular confidence of our own blessed immortality.

The point is this—

That the difficulties, pressures, and dangers of the present life, even though they should end in death itself, are a matter of no great terror to those who have a sure confidence of their own blessed immortality.

I shall explain this point by these considerations:—

1. That the present life is frail, miserable, and transitory, and within a little while will surely come to an end.

2. That there is a much happier condition than this world is capable of, even an abiding estate of blessedness which God hath provided for his people. For the apostle, speaking of the present life, he calleth it a tent, but the other is an house: that is an earthly house; this eternal in heaven, out of the reach of all sublunary dangers. That is an house in which man is instrumental in raising it up, or sometimes pulling it down; this is builded without hands by God himself, and continued to us for ever by his gracious grant.

3. That a sure confidence of this happy and blessed condition may be had. For there is a sure right—'We have;' a certain confidence—'We know.' It is not, We think, We hope well, but, We know. It is propounded as a common privilege, you and I and all the suffering servants—'We know.'

4. That this sure confidence of our own right in it, and future possession of it, doth support and fortify the soul against all the dangers and pressures of the present life, yea, against death itself.

First, That the bodily life is frail and transitory, and within a little while will surely come to an end. The circumstances of the text explained will represent it to you.

1. The body of man is called an house. (1.) For the beauty and comely proportion that is between the parts, as set up by line or rule. There is an admirable piece of architecture in building and raising up the body of man, story after story, and room after room, contrivance after contrivance, so compact and set together, that the most curious piles in the world are but rude heaps compared to it: Ps. cxxxix. 15, 16, 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made,' &c. The serious contemplation of God's workmanship in our very bodies will force us to acknowledge his unspeakable wisdom; all things are so well disposed and ordered for profit and use. The greatest miracles are to be seen in God's common works. We wonder when we hear of any work exceeding the force of nature, or done beside the order of second causes. We wonder when we read that iron did swim, as 2 Kings vi. 6. Yet his hanging the world upon nothing is a greater miracle. There is nothing but the fluid air to support this vast body and consistence of earth that we tread upon. We wonder at the curiosities of art, whereas the Lord's ordinary works look very common-like in our eyes; as, to go no farther, the frame of our own bodies is very curious and exact; so many bones, arteries, veins, and sinews, &c. And all disposed in such a comely proportion! Well, then, the body in regard of the frame and structure of it is fitly called an house. (2.) With respect to an inhabitant. The soul dwelleth in the body, as a man in a house. It guideth and ordereth the body, as the inhabitant ordereth the affairs of the house, or as the mariner and pilot directs the motions of the ship. Not that the soul is in the body accidentally; we must not strain it so far. There is a formal union between the soul and the body. But the soul is the man, that is, the inhabitant. God began man at his body. He first built the house, and then put in the dweller: he formed and organised the body out of the dust of the earth, and then breathed into him the breath of life; and so man became a living soul, Gen. ii. 7. Well then, the immortal soul is the man, and that which should be chiefly regarded.

Most men are like those that take care to deck and adorn the house, but never regard the inhabitant; all their care is for the body, whilst the poor neglected soul hath cause to complain of hard usage. This is as if a man should trim his house and starve himself. In a body over cared for there ever dwelleth a neglected soul.

2. The specification of this notion, or what kind or sort of house it is: *οἰκία τοῦ σκήνου*, our earthly house of this tabernacle. A tabernacle or tent is a movable dwelling set up for present use, such as hath a roof or covering, but no foundation. *Tectum habet, fundamentum non habet*; a poor, sorry habitation, either left when the use ceaseth, or taken down, or suffered to fall a-pieces of its own accord. Paul himself was a tent-maker, and spiritual men converse with corporal things spiritually; they are improving common occasions to an holy use, and therefore doth he so often consecrate this notion of a tent, to signify our frail and flitting condition here. (1.) A tent or tabernacle is easily raised up, and as easily taken down. So men are described: Job iv. 19, 'They dwell in houses of clay; their foundation is in the dust; they are crushed before the moth;' a moth is but a handful of enlivened dust. (2.) A tent is set up for a short time of use, not for a fixed habitation. As there are principles of corruption in our bodies, so our use and end is but for a while; when we have done our part, and served our generation, according to the will of God, the stage is shifted, and the world furnished with a new scene both of acts and actors. (3.) A tent is destroyed by taking the parts asunder. Death is nothing but a dissolution of the parts whereof man is composed, a taking asunder of the soul from the body. Well then, if the body be but a tabernacle, always decaying of itself, though it should be preserved from external injuries; and if its use be short, and when that is over, the soul shall be plucked from the embraces of the body, let us do all the good that we can in this little time that we have to spend here: 2 Peter i. 13, 14, 'I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance, knowing that I must shortly put off this tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus hath showed me.' This should make us bestir ourselves while time and strength lasteth. Yea, the nearer our journey's end we are, the faster should we run. Natural motion is *in principio tardior*; when death is near, the best will think the great part of their business undone; while we are here, we have a cottage rather than a house, a ruinous cottage, yea, a tent; we spend all our time almost in repairing and keeping it up, and supplying the necessities of the body; so it is an impediment to us from better things. The body hindereth the operations of the life of grace for the present, and the manifestation of the life of glory. It hindereth the life of grace. The body, if it be sound and well, it kicketh against the spirit, 1 Pet. ii. 11; if ill, it afflicts and discomposeth the spirit, and then the life of glory. For till this shed be taken down, that glorious house which we expect from above will never be raised up.

3. The attribute or adjunct, 'If this house of our tabernacle.' It is *οἰκία ἐπίγεια*, an earthly tabernacle-house; and that in three regards,—in regard of its composition, sustentation, and dissolution.

[1.] In regard of its original and composition. We were made out

of the dust of the ground. That curious frame that we see, it is but dust moulded up into a comely shape; the matter out of which we were made was earth; all elements meet in mixed bodies; yet in gross and heavy bodies, such as ours are, earth is predominant. This speaketh the wisdom and power of God, to make such a curious frame out of dust. We read in the plagues of Egypt the magicians could not bring forth lice out of the dust of the ground, Exod. viii. 17-19. And yet God raised out of the dust of the ground such a noble creature as man is. And it serveth to humble us in the sense of our vileness, who are but dust and ashes, as to our original, Gen. xviii. 27; Isa. xl. 15. What should we glory in? The nobility of our birth? We were made out of the dust of the ground, as the worms are; yea, the worms are of the elder house, for every creeping thing was made before man. In our beauty or strength? Prov. xxxi. 30, 'Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain.' That part which we glory in is but dust well coloured. Or in pomp of living? High and low shall lie down in the dust alike, and the worms shall cover them, Job xxi. 26. But chiefly it should remember us of our frailty. It is not brass or iron, or stone or stiff clay that we were made of, but dust, which hath no coherence and consistence, but is easily dissipated and scattered with every puff of wind. So is our dusty tabernacle with every blast of God's displeasure.

[2.] In regard of sustentation and support. He bringeth food for them out of the earth, Ps. civ. 14. Things bred there and nourished there feed us. As the body is framed out of the earth, so the means whereby it is supported is the earth. Meat and drink, and such like accommodations, continue and repair this house from day to day.

[3.] In its dissolution it is resolved to earth again: Gen. iii. 19, 'Dust thou art, and to dust shalt thou return;' and Eccles. xii. 7, 'Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was;' that is, be resolved into the matter out of which it was made, dust in its composition, and dust in its dissolution. So it is said of a prince, Ps. cxlvi. 4, 'His breath perisheth, and he returneth to his earth.' The greatest potentate in the world can challenge kin and alliance of nothing so much as of the earth. Oh! then, let us long after that estate wherein these corruptible, earthly bodies shall be made heavenly and spiritual. The soul is now ill lodged; it dwelleth in an earthly house. Surely such a spiritual being was made for a nobler place; and, therefore, let us still be looking out for a more glorious mansion.

4. The event supposed; or, what will become of this earthly tabernacle-house. That is implied in the word *καταλυθῆ*, it will be dissolved, plucked asunder. And then 'the dust will be turned to the earth as it was, and the spirit to God that gave it:' Phil. i. 23, 'I desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ,' saith Paul. There is *ἀναλῦσαι*, to be resolved into his principles. Death is not a destruction of the party that dieth, but a separating of the soul from the body, a flitting from one place to another, a releasing of the soul from the captivity of the body wherein it was enclosed, or a setting it at liberty: it will come to this at length; the band of conjunction between these two parts is very weak. It is but our breath: Isa. ii. 22, 'Cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he

to be accounted of?' His breath is but like a puff of wind passing to and fro, and turned in and out by the nostrils. Well then, let this move us in the whole course of our lives to pass the time of our dwelling here in fear.

[1.] Let us always be ready to remove hence whensoever God shall call us. Stand with your loins girt, and your lamps burning, Luke xii. 35. But alas! how little is this regarded in the world. Men live as if they should never die, and then die as if they should never live; they live carelessly, and die uncomfortably. Surely thoughts of death should be more familiar with us, who have so many reasons to consider our own frailty, and so many instances to put us in remembrance; but we have eyes to see, but not a heart to see, Deut. xxix. 2, 4. Most men are loth to quit their earthly house; the most common lessons need special grace to enforce them: Ps. xc. 12, 'So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.' Why should you be mindless, when so many are surprised and snatched to hell, who as little thought of dying as you do? God is ready to judge, are you ready to be judged? 1 Pet. iv. 5, 'They shall give an account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead.' God's delay is not because he is not ready for the work, but you are not ready. Have you made up all your accounts between God and your soul, sued out your pardon?

[2.] Let us cease our immoderate care for outward things, which are in themselves of short continuance, and from which we may be taken we know not how soon: Luke xii. 20, 'Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee, and then whose shall these things be which thou hast provided?' He was a fool, because his barns were full and his soul empty; a fool in providing but for half, and the worsor part, for a short time, how short he knew not. When bees swarm and leave the hive, dust cast among them maketh them quiet, and pitch again. Oh, remember your dusty tabernacle!

[3.] Let us endeavour to make sure a state of continuance, a life that is hidden with Christ in God, a better part that shall never be taken from us, Luke x. 42. So Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad,'—no end of it; the commandment in the effect is not so much subjective as effective.

[4.] Let us forbear any dependence upon man, or fear of man, who cannot long continue to do us either good or evil: Ps. cxlvi. 3, 4, 'Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help; his breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth, and that very day his thoughts perish.' When a bough is stripped off from the stock and root, all the unripe grapes wither and come to nothing, 1 Kings i. 21. If we trust or fear any, let us trust and fear God, who liveth for ever, Heb. x. 31.

I come now to the second consideration.

Secondly, That there is a much happier condition than this world is capable of, even an abiding state of blessedness which God hath provided for his people, 'A building of God, an house not made with hands,' &c. First, this is called an house; secondly, and there are

divers epithets to show the eternity of this state. It is described, (1.) By the efficient cause, set forth negatively, in that word *οικίαν ἀχειροποίητον*, a building not made with hands; positively, *οικοδομήν ἐκ Θεοῦ*, a building of God. (2.) The adjunct, eternal. (3.) The place where it is situated, in the heavens. There is a state of eternal glory and happiness that remaineth for the people of God. 'A building of God, an house,' &c. Whether by this house is meant the joys of the soul in heaven, or the state of a glorified body, or both, as making up that complete house which the saints desire, I will not now dispute.

1. Let it suffice that the state of glory is called an house. Heaven is sometimes compared to a kingdom, for the glory and splendour of that estate, and sometimes to a city, for the beauty and regularity of it, and also sometimes to an house, because of our social and familiar converse with God and one another: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions.' Heaven is the house of God; wherein he will familiarly converse with his domestics, and they enjoy a full and clear sight of his glory, and live in all happiness, as being ever in the king's palace, glorifying and enjoying him: Ps. lxxxiv. 4, 'Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they will be still praising thee, Selah.' It is a secure and quiet habitation, beyond the reach of enemies: Ps. ii. 3, 'Though the heathen rage, the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us, he that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh,' &c., when there was a great tumult and bustle in the world. Sitting noteth a quiet posture; those blessed mansions are never disturbed and discomposed. In this life the saints are tossed up and down, but there is a quiet resting-place prepared for them, where the soul repositeth herself with all spiritual delights after her labour and travail. Here is our tent, there our house; our house is where our goods are. In heaven we enjoy the treasures which were laid up there before: Rev. xiv. 13; Luke xii. 33, 'A treasure in the heavens that fadeth not:' there is all our comfort. It is a capacious house: John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions;' that will hold all the children of God who at last shall be gathered together. There is abundance of room in heaven. It is not carnally to be conceived as if heaven were to be divided into so many cells, but to note that many shall be admitted into that blessed rest, through the love of God and the merits of Christ. Oh! let us often think of this blessed house. Here we have but a tent, the body is often afflicted; and after that dissolved, torn, and taken down; but then, an house that we shall never change, where we shall live sweetly and securely, without trouble of enemies.

This house is described, First, By the efficient cause, expressed negatively and positively. (1.) Negatively, the false cause is removed; 'an house not made with hands.' Not built by man, of terrestrial and feculent matter—not contrived with man's art and care or skill: things made by man are not comparable to things made by God; for, as the workman is, so is the work. Man being a finite creature, limited and confined, his work cannot be absolute, as God's is; the holy places made by Bezaleel and Aholiab had their glory, but they were nothing

comparable to the holy places not made with hands, Heb. ix. 24. Those were figures; these are true. Whatever God doth, it is done in a more glorious manner; he discovereth his magnificence in the work. (2.) The true cause is assigned—*οἰκοδομήν ἐκ Θεοῦ*, 'A building of God.' So it is called, Rom. v. 2, 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' God raised this house out of the greatest wisdom and highest love: an house to show the riches, and glory, and honour of him that made it. So, where heaven is compared to a city, it is said, Heb. xi. 10, 'He looked for a city which had foundations, whose builder and maker is God.' He is the builder or architect that doth frame and devise it according to model, and he is the workman that did set it together: man hath no hand in this at all; God contrived it and prepared it. It is so far above the art and power of man, that only God could make it. God is not only the principal, but sole efficient of it. Secondly, By the adjunct; it is an eternal house. All other houses moulder to dust; *cernimus exemplis oppida posse mori*. All other buildings are infirm and movable, obnoxious to change, decay, and ruin. Experience doth sufficiently prove this by the ruin of so many castles, palaces, cities, and kingdoms which have flourished in great splendour, power, and strength, yet now lie in the dust, and do not appear. But this city hath foundations, Heb. xi. 10. Nothing can be firm that is not firmly fixed upon an unmovable ground; but this hath foundations, the unchangeable law of God, and the everlasting merits of Christ. Thirdly, The place where it is situated: in the heavens. The place where God doth manifest himself in a more glorious manner than here on earth, which is a common inn for sons and bastards, a receptacle for sinners and saints; yea, for man and beast, where God showeth his bounty to all his creatures; a valley of tears, where is the place of our trial and exercise. But this is the place of our recompense; there God will manifest himself in the greatest latitude that the creature is capable of. We shall have a place agreeable to our state, and a state agreeable to the place. The pavement is very glorious; the starry heaven, we cannot look upon it without wonder and astonishment. Adam's happiness was in an earthly paradise, but ours is in heaven, Eph. i. 3. We have such a glorious place and glorious company. That happy region of the blessed, which is properly called the heavenly Jerusalem, doth as much excel all other countries in height, amplitude, and beauty, as the inhabitants excel the inhabitants of other countries in wisdom, nobleness, and grace. For sublimity. The stars seem to be like so many spangles for the distance. It is above all mountains, elements, sun, moon, and stars. So far is it distant from the place of vicissitudes and changes. And then for its breadth as well as height; some stars have a body bigger than vast countries, yea, than the whole earth. Then what is the capacity of heaven itself! For beauty. This world, that is a stable for beasts, the place of our exile, the valley of tears, hath a great deal of beauty; what hath God bestowed then upon heaven! Oh! when we shall meet with all the holy ones of God, then how shall we rejoice! And the innumerable company of angels that shall all join in concert! There is no pride or envy to divide us, or make us contemn one another; but love and charity reigneth, that the good of

every one is the good of all, and the good of all the good of every one. There is one body, one heart, one soul, and one God that is all in all. Whence is it that one citizen loveth another rather than a stranger, one brother loveth another rather than another man, that the head loveth the feet of his own body rather than the eyes of another? Namely, that citizens dwell in one common city, or they are one common house, and are of the same stock; members live by conjunction of the same life. What conjunction then, what love between the blessed, that have one God, one country, one palace, one life! How sweet will this friendship be, where there is no weakness to pervert or corrupt it! After we have gotten through a short life here in the world, this will be our portion. As soon as we do but step into this house, we bid our everlasting farewell unto all sin and sorrow; and step into it we do as soon as we die, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. But above all, what joy is in the sight of God! 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Oh, then, let us get a title to it, and be able with clearness to make out our qualification by two witnesses, conscience and the Spirit: Rom. viii. 16, 'The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God;' as in the mouth of two witnesses everything is established. God never giveth heaven but he giveth earnest: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.' God never giveth heaven to any but first he prepareth and fitteth them for it: Col. i. 12, 'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' There is some suitableness between the person and the state. Therefore what hath God done for you? Or what have you done for God? You must look to both. *Deus coronat dona sua.* Never think he will alter those eternal laws of justice to save you; you are to do something to take hold of eternal life: 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.' And then let us look for it, and long for it more, and seek after it with all earnestness. We have an house above, but we are not in it, therefore we should long to be at home, in the enjoyment of the house fitted for us. Your whole lives should be a continual motion and approach toward this eternal and glorious state of rest. Believers that look and long and groan for heaven are of a most noble and divine spirit. Can a man believe blessedness to come, and not long to enjoy it? Surely mind and heart will be set a-work; a taste will make a man long for more; it is but a little while and we shall have full possession. And the reason why we have not full possession sooner is not because heaven is not ready for us, but we are not ready for it. And then let us comfort ourselves with these hopes of blessedness: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end.' Oh! let us rouse this joy, and still keep it afoot to encourage our endeavours (Phil. iii. 13), to abate our fears (Luke xiii. 32), to moderate our sorrows (Heb. x. 34), to allay the fears of death. We do by it but change houses, and it is not an exchange for the worse, but for the better. Why should we then be so unwilling to it?

SERMON II.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—2 COR. v. 1.

I COME NOW to the third consideration, That a sure confidence of this happy and blessed condition may be had. For,

1. Here is a sure right—'We have.' A christian not only shall have heaven at last, but he hath it for the present; he is not only sure of it at the close of his days, but now he hath it. He hath not a possession of this upper house, but he hath a full right to it, and is expecting and waiting when God shall call him up thither, and is still preparing for his remove, and ripening for his everlasting estate. The scripture speaketh this in many other places: John iii. 36, 'He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life.' So John v. 24, 'Verily, verily, he that heareth my word, and believeth in him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' So John vi. 54, 'Whoso eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' How hath he it now? He hath it, (1.) In promise. In the promises of the gospel, when we take hold of the promise, we take hold of the blessing by the root. Therefore believers are said to take hold of eternal life, 1 Tim. vi. 12-19—namely, as they take hold of the promise by which their right is secured to them. As soon as he is converted to God, he is made an heir of eternal life; God hath made a charter and grant to him; he hath it upon such terms as he is out of the hazard of perishing. He hath *jus ad rem*, though not *in re*, as a man hath a title to the estate which he is to possess after the death of another. We have it and hold it by covenant right, though not by actual possession. (2.) He hath it *in capite*—in his head: Eph. ii. 6, 'He hath raised us up, and made us to sit together in heavenly places in Jesus Christ.' Though our glorification be yet to come, yet the apostle speaketh it all already past when the Father raised and glorified Christ. He hath it in Christ, who is the fountain, cause, and pledge of it. He rose again, and entered into heaven as our head. Christ seized upon heaven in our right, and possesseth it in our name: John xiv. 2, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Though for the present we lie groaning under pressures and miseries, and though we are not glorified in our persons, yet in Christ our head we are. The head is crowned for all the rest of the members, which showeth an undoubted certainty, a greater certainty than that of a simple prediction and promise, even such a certainty as the giving of a pledge or the suffering us to take possession in our name of an estate. (3.) They have it *in spe et fide*—in the sure belief and certain expectation of it: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' By faith and hope we preoccupy and foretaste those eternal and excellent delights which God hath prepared for us. The certain expectation in

some measure affecteth the heart, as if they were already enjoyed. This hope is not a fancy, like the supposal or bare imagination of a beggar, what an happy life he might lead if he were a king, but the expectation of a prince who is the undoubted heir of the crown, and knoweth that one day he shall possess it. (4.) *In primitiis*—in the first-fruits, which are grace and comfort, and begun communion with Christ, which are both a taste how good, and a pledge how sure, called the earnest, Eph. i. 13. Our present communion with Christ and delight in him, it is an heaven upon earth, as the sweet odours of Arabia are smelt in the neighbouring countries.

2. Here is a certain confidence—‘We know.’ It is not only we think, or we hope, but we know. No man calleth that knowledge which is but a conjecture. Therefore a certain knowledge is here understood, a knowledge not built upon probabilities, but certainties; only here will be the question whether this knowledge that I shall be saved or go to heaven when I die be the knowledge of faith or the knowledge of sense? I answer, It is both. The scripture sometimes expresseth it barely by knowing, sometimes by believing. (1.) By knowing, as 1 John ii. 3, ‘We know that we know him, if we keep his commandments;’ and 1 John iii. 14, ‘We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren;’ 1 John iv. 13, ‘Hereby we know that we dwell in him, and he in us, because we love the brethren.’ In all which places it implieth spiritual sense; we feel it, we find it to be so, by reflection upon ourselves. Again, (2.) sometimes our particular happiness, or the grace of God to us, is made to be a matter of faith: Rom. vi. 8, ‘If we be dead with Christ, we believe we shall also live with him.’ So 1 John iv. 16, ‘We have known and believed the love which God hath to us.’ Mark, it is a thing to be believed, and that with a divine faith. *Query*, But how can this be, you will say, since I have no divine testimony and revelation for it that I shall be saved? *Ans.* If I take anything upon man’s testimony, that is credulity; if I take it upon God’s testimony, that is faith. Now, I have God’s testimony in the general, that whosoever believeth shall be saved, and particulars are included in their generals. Look, as with that faith that believeth the commandments, Ps. cxix. 66, I believe that it is the will of God that I must not steal, I must not commit adultery, dishonour parents, because God hath said so to all and every one, though not to me by name; so with that faith which believes promises, I believe they belong to me, though my name be not expressed in Christ’s charter and deed of grace, if I have the qualification annexed. The qualification I discern by spiritual sense; the benefit of the promise I expect by faith, even salvation to me. It is a matter to be believed upon supposition that I am converted and brought home to God, &c. As in this syllogism, all the dead shall rise; Peter is dead; *ergo*, the conclusion is *de fide*, it belongeth to faith, though it be not expressly written in scripture. The first proposition is evident by faith, the second by sense, and yet the conclusion is *de fide*. So here, all that heartily come to God by Jesus Christ shall be saved, this is written in scripture; but I do so, that is evident by spiritual sense; the conclusion is *de fide*, I am bound to believe that I shall be saved. If it be so upon supposition, the con-

clusion doth arise from premises, one whereof is in scripture, the other evident by spiritual sense ; therefore it is of faith. Only let me give you these cautions. (1st.) The particular certainty of our eternal salvation is not equal in certainty and firmness of assent to that assurance which we have about the common object of faith, the promises of the gospel ; because some things are believed absolutely and immediately, other things are believed only mediately, and upon supposition as they suit with things believed immediately. The promises of the gospel are totally and immediately revealed in scripture. But that I shall be saved in particular dependeth upon an argument, whereof one part is in scripture, the other ariseth from reflection upon and observation of a man's heart and ways ; the conclusion is certain according to the verity of the second proposition. It is absolutely certain and evident by faith, that whosoever believeth in Christ shall not perish, but have everlasting life. But that I believe in Christ with a saving faith, it is not so certain, though certain it may be. I have greater assurance that God is faithful and true than that my heart is upright ; therefore greater assurance of the general truth, that the true believer shall be saved, than I can have of this, that I am a true believer. (2dly.) As our assurance of our own interest or particular salvation is not so strong as our assurance of the truth of the gospel, so it is not so absolutely necessary ; for firm adherence to gospel promises, with a resolution of obedience, is the qualification absolutely necessary to the pardon of sins, justification of our persons, or our acceptance with God ; but assurance of our own salvation, though it be comfortable, it is not absolutely necessary. The humble and broken heart God will not despise, Ps. li. 17. Many poor souls that want assurance are tenderly beloved of him, owned by him as heirs of salvation, and their good works accepted in Jesus Christ, that do only resolutely adhere to gospel promises, and seek after God in the way of an humble obedience, yea, though they write bitter things against themselves. (3dly.) Assurance of the word is sooner gotten than assurance of our interest ; as soon as the word entereth upon, yea, before it can have any thorough efficacy upon our hearts, we receive it as the word of God, or else it would not work upon us, 1 Thes. i. 5, and 1 Thes. ii. 13. Assurance of our own salvation is not usually got at once, but by degrees, after we have had some experience of a settled and habitual devotedness to God, and grace hath been well exercised and approved in manifold duties, trials, and combats : Rev. ii. 17, ' To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna ; ' and this establishment of heart will come after conquest, and some experience in afflictions.

3. It is propounded as a common privilege. You, and I, and all the suffering servants of God, we know. When we prove the possibility of assurance from the experience of the saints recorded in scripture, as put case Job xix. 25, 26, ' I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that I shall see him at the last day ; ' or David, Ps. xxiii. 1 ; or Paul, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8 ; from all which instances there ariseth this argument, That which hath been may be. The Papists answer, that these were extraordinary cases that they had by special privilege and revelation. But there is no reason for such exemptions ; for the

faith of every believer is as acceptable to God as the faith of a prophet or apostle : 2 Peter i. 1, ' Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us, through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' The object laid hold upon is the same, Christ's righteousness; there we are upon equal terms. So Exod. xxx. 15. The covenant by which we hold is the same. But chiefly take notice of these three things : (1.) They assert their own assurance upon grounds common to all the faithful : as the love of God in Christ, Rom. viii. 38; the righteousness of God, or his veracity in keeping promise, 2 Tim. iv. 8 ; God's power and all-sufficiency to maintain and uphold them in all tribulations, 2 Tim. i. 12. They that build upon the same grounds, they may have the same certainty. (2.) They speak as taking in believers together with themselves; to show that it is a common case, as here, *οἶδαμεν*, we are always confident. And St John taketh in others : 1 John v. 19, ' We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' So that here is nothing singular challenged or intimated. (3.) Whatever was written, was written for our comfort and learning, that we might be encouraged by the grace given to them to look up to God with the more hope for the same privileges. Paul, who was one of the instances, saith that he was set out as a pattern unto them that should afterwards believe, 1 Tim. i. 17. Though his humiliation were extraordinary, yet he had his comforts in an ordinary way by the ministry of Ananias. I come now to the fourth consideration.

Fourthly, That this sure confidence of our own right in it, and future possession of it, doth fortify the soul against all the difficulties, dangers, and pressures of the present life, yea, against death itself.

This last proposition I am now to make good. And first, I shall speak of the sure and certain confidence. Secondly, Of the force and strength of it.

First, The confidence is twofold. Of the thing, and of the person.

1. Of the certainty of the thing itself. 2. Of our own right in it, and future possession of it.

1. Of the certainty of the thing itself, for till that be rooted in the soul, it will have no predominancy in controlling and commanding the passions and affections. Now of the thing itself all true christians have, and should have, a certain and infallible knowledge; not a may be, not a bare possibility. It is not enough to say it is possible there may be an heaven and happiness hereafter; but it is certain: I know it is as true as the word of God is true, it is as true as if I saw it with my eyes, as true as the things which I daily see: Acts xxiv. 14, 15, ' I believe all things (saith Paul) which are written in the law and the prophets, and have hope towards God, which they themselves allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the just and unjust.' This is no doubtful thing to a believer; by the word of God it is more sure than if there were a message sent from the dead; for if men do not regard what is in Moses and the prophets, they would not regard what one saith to them who cometh from the dead, Luke xvi. 30, 31. If one should come from hell in flaming garments, or from heaven with all the brightness and glory which all the blessed saints might be thought to appear in, there were not a

greater credibility in these visions and apparitions than what is commonly offered in the scriptures. Why? how cometh the believer to have such a prospect into an unknown world, to be so sure and certain? I answer, partly by the internal grace of God's Spirit opening the eyes of his mind to see the truth and worth of things to come, Eph. i. 17, 18; and partly by the promise of God in his word, confirmed by his oath, and that giveth *ισχυράν παράκλησιν*, Heb. vi. 17, 18, strong consolation; and the seal of miracles, Heb. iii. 4; and fulfilled prophecies, 2 Peter i. 19, with 16, 17, 18. The Old Testament foretold the kingdom of the Messiah, and the privileges thereof, long before it came to pass. A transient voice is more easily mistaken and forgotten than a standing authentic record (as Samuel thought Eli spake, when the Lord first revealed his word unto him), and so¹ offereth a more sure ground for our faith to rest upon than a voice from heaven could be. Besides, this word of promise beareth God's image and superscription, as everything doth which hath passed his hand, even to a gnat and pile of grass, and so shineth to us by its own light, if man were not strangely depraved and corrupted by vile affections: 2 Cor. iv. 2-4, 'By the manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience. For if our gospel be hid, it is hid to those that are lost, in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. The truth of itself commandeth its own respect; if men were not strangely perverted and infatuated, they would see it. Cure the faculty, and the object is clear enough, and would evidence itself, as the sun is seen by its own light. Besides, this offer of pardon and life by Christ hath been blessed by God to the conversion of many souls, in all places, and throughout all succession of ages: Col. i. 6, 'The word is come unto you, as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit, as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it and knew the grace of God in truth.' That word which bringeth forth the fruits of a holy life in all those that heard of it and received it, is the very truth of God: John xvii. 17, 'Sanctify them through thy truth; thy word is truth.' In the first age Christ did swiftly drive on the chariot of the gospel; for within a few years after his death, in all the parts of the world it obtained its effect, and since, it hath held up its head against all encounters of time; and therefore we may safely venture our eternal interests on this bottom, and build upon the promise of eternal life given us by Christ. Besides, God hath given the Spirit, which is God's earnest, scaling us up to the day of final redemption, 2 Cor. i. 22, and 2 Cor. v. 5, and Eph. i. 13, 14. Now, the Spirit first confirmeth the scripture, before it confirmeth our particular interest; and its joys being dispensed to the most holy men, in their most sober and severest moods, cannot be a phantastical impression, but doth convince us of the reality and excellency of the unseen glory. And therefore upon all these grounds a believer is confident. We know there is a blessed state reserved in the heavens for all that believe in Christ and love God. We do not build upon the promise of a deceitful man, but upon the word of the everliving God, and

¹ The meaning evidently is that the record offereth, &c.—ED.

hence ariseth the strength of our comfort. Our interest is a thing rather supposed than apparently asserted and pleaded in scripture; and if men did not leap into faith by the advantage of their baptism and education, rather than take it up upon solid and certain evidence, there would not be such ado about it. As fire well kindled of itself bursts out into a flame; so if we did believe these things more firmly, our joy would soon be full: 1 John i. 4, 'These things write we unto you, that your joy may be full.' As if the certainty of religion well apprehended would soon make way for joy, and full joy.

2. The certainty of the person. We know that we have a present right, and shall have a future possession. The certainty of the thing itself dependeth upon the promise of God, who is able to give it, and hath decreed so to do, and to that end hath signified his purpose, and confirmed his promise by an oath; yet because the promise requireth a qualification and performance of duty in the person to whom the promise is made, therefore, before we can be certain of our own interest, we must not only perform the duty and have the qualification, but we must certainly know that we have done that which the promise requireth, and are duly qualified, and then our title to heaven is incomparably more sure than any man's title to his possessions, and inheritance here upon earth. Therefore,

I shall here first show what are the qualifications of those who shall have this blessed estate; secondly, the several degrees of certainty about our interests; thirdly, what reasons there are why we should attend upon this work with all diligence; that we may come to a full confidence.

[1.] What are the qualifications of those who shall have this blessed estate? It is the most important question which we can put to our souls: Ps. xxiv., 'Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? And who shall stand in his holy place?' Who shall be admitted into the place of his special residence? I answer,

(1.) Sometimes they are described by their faith in Christ, as John xi. 25, 26, 'He that believeth and liveth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die,' or not die for ever, as the word may be rendered. The true believer, that so believeth in Christ that he liveth in him, that is, who hath accepted of God's covenant, and is become Christ's disciple, observing his strict spiritual laws, and running all hazards for his sake, united to Christ so as to live in him. Bodily death shall not extinguish the life which is begun and maintained by faith in Christ: John vi. 40, '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.' This is God's express will. The poor sinner needeth not doubt of it; if you do see the Son, and believe on him; that is, see him and know him spiritually, see him in the light of the Spirit. Heretofore men saw him bodily, and had no benefit. And now many see him in the common report and tradition, by the light of human credulity, that have no benefit by him. But those that see him in the promise have a right and title; that see him so as to see beauty in him, that they can trample upon all things as dung and dross, renounce themselves and all worldly and fleshly lusts, and flee to him as their all-sufficient Saviour, and

can venture their souls in his hand, and give up themselves to keep his commandments and abide in his love; in short, those who so believe in him as to live in him and to him.

(2.) They are described to be new creatures, or the sanctified: John iii. 3, 5, 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God;' and again, verse 5, 'cannot enter into the kingdom of God.' Heaven is the inheritance of saints: Col. i. 12, 'Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light;' and Acts xxvi. 18, 'That they may receive forgiveness of sin, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me;' Heb. x. 14, 'By one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.' No unclean thing shall enter there. If thou hast the heavenly birth, will he deprive thee of thy birthright, to which he himself begot thee of incorruptible seed? 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' If holy, he will place thee among his holy ones. These are the terms to which we must unalterably stand. If we be not born again, it is but self-flattery that filleth us with vain conceits; like the madman in Athens, who challenged all the ships which came into the harbour to be his own.

(3.) They are described by their heavenly mind, affections, and conversations, Mat. vi. 19-21. They who make it their work to lay up treasure in heaven, have chosen heaven for their portion; that seek it in the first place, Mat. vi. 33; that groan, long, wait for it, in the verses next the text; whose conversation is in heaven, Phil. iii. 20. *Deus nihil facit frustra*. If he hath given thee an heavenly mind and affections, he will give thee heaven itself. He would not stir up these desires in vain, set his servants a-longing after that which he never meaneth to give them or bestow upon them, when there is a suitableness between the person and the state, when our affections are weaned from the world and set upon heavenly things. This house is fitted for us if we are fitted for it: Rom. ix. 23, 'That he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy which he had afore prepared unto glory.' There is a meetness, Col. i. 12. As soon as we are new born, and do believe in Christ, we have a right and title; in short, if your whole lives be a continual motion and nearer approach towards this state of rest.

(4.) They are described by their fruitfulness in good works, and acts of self-denying obedience, Mat. xxv. 34, 35, &c.; 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19, 'That they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life;' 1 John iii. 19, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' Hereby? By what? If we love not in word and in tongue only, but in deed and in truth. Heaven is esteemed but a fancy to them, that men will venture nothing for the hopes of it. What have you done to show your thankfulness for so great a mercy tendered to you? A religion that costs nothing is worth nothing; I am sure it will yield you no comfort and hope; good words are not dear, and a cold profession costs little or

nothing. Do you think religion lieth only in hearing sermons, or a few cursory prayers or drowsy devotions? We should mind those things about which we shall be questioned at the day of judgment. Have you visited, have you clothed, owned the servants of God when the laws frown upon them—comforted them in their distresses? Wherein really have you denied yourselves for the hope of glory?

[2.] The several dispositions and persuasions in point of certainty as to their interest in this state of blessedness. To some it is but a bare possibility. To others there is a probability. A third sort have gotten so far as conditional certainty. Others have an actual certainty, or firm persuasion of their interest.

(1.) To some the hope of heaven is but a bare possibility. As to the careless christian who is yet entangled in his lusts, but God continueth to him the offer of salvation by Christ; these may be saved if they will accept this offer. It is impossible in the state wherein they are, but their hearts may be changed by the Lord's grace: Mark x. 27, 'With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible.' He can make the filthy heart to become clean and holy, the sensual heart to become spiritual and heavenly. There are many bars in the way, but grace can break through and remove them. It is night with them for the present, but we cannot say it will never be day. The possibility removeth prejudices, aggravateth their evil choice: Jonah ii. 8, 'They that observe lying vanities forsake their own mercies;' they are called their own because they might have been theirs. By following vain courses they deprive themselves of happiness which might have been theirs. It is their own by offer. God did not seclude or put them away, but they did seclude and put away themselves; 'Judge themselves unworthy of eternal life,' Acts xiii. 46. And it is an encouragement, when their consciences are touched with any remorse, salvation is yet possible. When there is but a slender possibility, yet use the means: Acts viii. 22, 'Repent and pray,' &c. If perhaps, or if it be possible.

(2.) To others there is a probability, or a probable hope of eternal life. This is more than possible; as when men begin to be serious, or in some measure to mind the things of God, but are conscious to some notorious defect in their duty, or have not such a soundness of heart as may warrant their claim to everlasting blessedness—almost a christian, not far from the kingdom of God. As those that have the grace of the second or third ground, they receive the word with joy, but know not what trials may do; they have good sentiments of religion, but they are choked or obstructed by voluptuous living or the cares of this world. Now, some such things may befall weak believers; they dare not quit their hopes of heaven for all the world, though not actually to claim it or say it is theirs. Now, probabilities must encourage us till we get a greater certainty, for we must not despise the day of small things; this state must not be despised; Christ will not despise smoking flax.

(3.) A conditional certainty, which is more than probable, or possible; that is, when we set ourselves in good earnest to perform the conditions required in the promises of the gospel, and upon the hopes offered to us, deny ourselves, sacrifice our interests, heartily exercise

ourselves to godliness. Such a certainty is described Rom. ii. 7, and Rev. ii. 10. I am sure to find salvation and eternal life if I continue in this way, and, by the grace of God, I am resolved to continue. Much of the life of christianity lieth in this kind of certainty. I do not doubt of the rewards of godliness, *ex parte Dei*; no, I know that the rewards of godliness are sure and steadfast by his promise; to doubt of that would detract from the truth, goodness, and power of God. But *ex parte nostri*, my own qualification is not so positive and clear that I can determine my own right, but I have support and some comfort in this way. This conditional hope and certainty is absolutely necessary to all acts of grace.

(4.) There is an actual certainty, or an assured sense, of our qualification, and so of our interest, which admits of a latitude; it may be not only full or not full, firm or not firm, but interrupted or continued. The full hope removeth all doubts and fears, and that which is not full hath some doubts accompanying it; but the certainty prevaileth, and is more than the doubtings. We should sail to heaven with full sails, and get as much sense of the love of God and hope of eternal life as possibly we can—an abundant entrance. We should clear up our right and title, and be able to say, 'We know,' and, 'I am persuaded,' Rom. viii. 38. We should come and take possession of the blessings of the covenant, and say, 'All this is mine by the promise of the faithful God. We use to say, I know where I am, but I know not where I shall be. A believer who hath assured his estate before God knoweth where he shall be, as truly as he knoweth where he is. He knoweth by faith that he shall live with God for ever, and what he will do for him to all eternity in the performance of his holy covenant.

[3.] What reasons there are why we should attend upon this work.

(1.) Because it is for our greater comfort, not only to be safe, but to know that we are safe. Some have salvation belonging to them, but they know it not; as the child liveth before he knoweth that he liveth; as Jacob said of Bethel, Gen. xxviii. 16, 'God was in this place, and I knew it not.' So it may be said of many christians—Christ is in them, and they know it not, are not aware of it. Oh! how happy they, if they knew their own happiness! What delight would the hope of glory raise in their hearts! How full of tears and despairs was Hagar when yet there was a well nigh her, Gen. xxi. 16. How pensive were the two disciples going to Emmaus, when yet Christ walked with them, but they knew him not, Luke xxiv. 15-17. How bitterly did Mary weep at the sepulchre, when yet Jesus stood by her, John xx. 14, 15. So many poor disconsolate christians apprehend that Christ is at a distance, when as yet they will not or cannot see him. Therefore, though our condition should be safe, it is not so comfortable till we get assurance.

(2.) This certain confidence of our actual right and future possession cannot be had without diligence. Such a jewel will never drop into the mouth of the lazy, negligent soul, 2 Peter i. 10; iii. 14; Heb. vi. 11. If we would have not a groundless, but a rational hope; not a rash and probable, but a firm and certain hope; not a certain only, but a full hope, and this to continue without interruption, we

must buckle to it, serve God in good earnest. It will never be gotten and kept with sloth; it may be gotten and kept with diligence. As you neglect your duty, so far the sense and comfortable assurance of your qualification may abate. God's best children are sometimes remiss, whereupon follow clouds and desertions, to their great discomfort. God in wisdom withdraweth comfort, to quicken them to their duty. Well then, it will not come with a cold wish, or a slight prayer, or a hasty sigh, or a faint and lazy pursuit. Grace needeth to be much exercised that shall bring peace. Exercised in duties, John xiv. 21, 23; exercised in afflictions. Those lazy pretenders that never made a business of it, and yet hope to go to heaven as well as the strictest, they do but deceive themselves with a hope that will at length leave them ashamed. Foolish presumption costs a man nothing; like a mushroom that groweth up in a night, or as Jonah's gourd; behold thou didst not labour for it. The less men exercise themselves unto godliness, the more confident; for exercise would discover their unsoundness. A peace that groweth upon us we know not how, and is better kept by negligence than diligence, is not right.

(3.) We should attend upon this work with all diligence, because, though we get it not, we shall not labour in vain; the very endeavour will keep us awful and serious, and it may be we shall get heaven whilst we are clearing up our title to it. The same things serve to enter into heaven that serve to assure us of our interest in it. Fulfil God's conditions which he hath annexed to the new covenant, and you may be sure, and the same is necessary to have, as well as to be sure; all the difference is, some make a hard shift to go to heaven, others enter abundantly, 2 Peter i. 11. They that make it their business to know they have eternal life have this above others, that they go more seriously to work, and do more attend upon it.

Secondly, The force and virtue of this sure confidence.

1. It is of great force to support us under the difficulties of obedience. In the context Paul is discoursing of what supported him and kept him from fainting under the labours of his apostolate. It was a toilsome life to go up and down, venturing upon all hazards and uncertainties, and to travel far and near, and all to draw souls to Christ. A blessed work in itself! but toilsome to the flesh. 'But we know,' &c. The same holdeth in all other duties of our general and particular calling. Nothing puts us upon such a willing industry, and ready, constant watchfulness as this—confidence that, after we have gone through a short life here in this world, this everlasting blessedness will be our portion: 1 Cor. ix. 26, 'I run, not as one that is uncertain.' An assurance of the end sweeteneth the race, and allayeth all the difficulties of the way. A poor beast will go home cheerfully. How pleasant is it to know that we shall be with God for ever! When we are assured that every step sets us nearer heavenward, it will make us mend our pace. Doubtfulness is a torment to an understanding creature, and blind guesses and dark hopes cannot animate us so much as a cheerful and confident expectation. The more assured our hope, our endeavours are the greater: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord.'

(2.) It is of great force to quiet our minds in the midst of all the cares, sorrows, and crosses of the present world. The soul that hath this anchor needeth not to be tossed with all those tempests and anxieties of mind which worldly men are subject unto, for whatever uncertainty there may be in their outward condition, there is a sure estate laid up for them in heaven: Col. i. 5, and 1 Peter i. 4, 'Reserved for us in heaven.' There we shall fully enjoy our God, and all things in him; we know it and are sure of it; a certain durable treasure which is above the reach of danger, and beyond all possibility of loss.

3. It is of great force to enable us to bear the greatest sufferings, not only with a quiet, but with a joyful mind: a duty often pressed upon us in scripture, and a christian height which we should all aspire unto; and we can hardly attain to it till we have a confidence of our own blessedness in another world, for it is this maketh light the greatest sufferings, Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 17; Heb. x. 34. One that hath the promise of eternal life in the hand of his faith, this glory and blessedness in the eye of his hope, can look through all tribulations, and see sunshine at the back of the storm; that the tribulation is working out means to help on and hasten this glory. He knoweth in himself, hath assured grounds of confidence in his own soul, that he shall have better things from God than he can lose in the world; that to be persecuted for righteousness' sake is the nearest way to heaven. He hath the promises to show for the certainty of the thing, and evidences in his heart of his own right and title.

4. It is of great force to support us against death itself, which is the king of terrors. Certainly a christian should get above the fears of death, and be willing to be dissolved and to be with Christ. Now, we shall be so far from desiring to die, that we can hardly venture to die, without assurance of a better estate. Alas! how bitter is the thought of death to that soul that must be turned out of doors shiftless and harbourless, and is not provided of an everlasting habitation, or a better place to go to. But now get this once certain, and then death will not be so terrible, whether it come in a natural or violent way. (1.) Natural; when sickness is ready to fret life asunder, then you are at the gates of heaven, waiting every moment when you shall be called in. When death shall draw aside the veil, and show you the blessed face of God, you are just ready to step into immortal pleasures. You do but change houses when you die, and it is not an exchange for the worse, but for the better, a cottage for a palace; do but step into this house, and you bid an everlasting farewell to all sin and sorrow in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye. (2.) Violent, Rom. viii. 35, 36. The sword is but the key to open the prison doors to let out that soul which hath long desired to be with Christ: Heb. xi. 35, 'Were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection;' contented to die by the hands of the tormentor, because they would have God's deliverance, not his.

SERMON III.

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.—2 COR. v. 1.

Use 1. Is an exhortation to press you to several duties: as—
First, To believe the promised glory.

Here I shall first show the necessity of this; secondly, how faith worketh as to the other world; thirdly, how we shall rouse up our faith to a more firm belief of the promised glory.

1. The necessity. We had need press this much.

[1.] Because eternal life is one of the principal objects of faith, and the first motive to invite us to hearken after the things of God. The apostle telleth us, Heb. xi. 6, 'That without faith it is impossible to please God, for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' He that would have anything to do with God must be persuaded of his being and bounty. In the choosing of a religion, we first look after a right object, whom to worship, and a fit reward, what we may expect from him. For that is the great inducement to make up the match between our hearts and that object. Now God, that knoweth the heart of man, and what wards will fit the lock, doth accordingly deal with us. He proponndeth himself as the first cause and highest being, to be revered, worshipped, and obeyed by us, so also as the chiefest good, to be enjoyed by us in an everlasting state of blessedness. All the doctrines of the christian faith tend to establish this hope in us: John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have eternal life in his name.' All that is written in the gospel is to establish faith in Christ as the Messiah, and that in order to eternal life. The whole sum of the christian religion is, that 'God hath chosen us to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth, whereunto he hath called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,' 2 Thes. ii. 13, 14. All the parts of religion harmoniously concur to establish this hope. The whole covenant of God implieth it. A covenant is a transaction of God as the sovereign with his subjects, and consists of precepts and laws, invested with the sanction of promises and threatenings. His commands all of them imply such an estate. Some express it; all imply it; for they are work propounded to us in order to wages, or a reward to be given, and it is not fit we should have wages before our work be over. Some express it: as John vi. 27, 'Labour not for the meat which perisheth, but for that meat which endureth unto everlasting life,' &c.; and Mat. vi. 19, 20, we are commanded not to lay up treasures upon earth, but in heaven, &c.; and Luke xiii. 24, 'Strive to enter in,' &c. And if there were no such estate, all these laws were in vain. And would the wise and faithful God give us laws in vain? His threatenings would be but a vain scarecrow if there were not a world to come; his promises but flatter us with a lie. All the doc-

trines concerning Christ point out such an eternal condition to us, whether they concern his person or estates; his coming from heaven, the place of souls; his going thither again, or sitting down on the right hand of God, and then his coming to judgment. Wherefore was Christ apparelled with our flesh, but that we might be clothed with his glory? If Christ were in the womb, why not we in heaven? It is more credible to believe a creature in heaven than a god in the grave. Therefore he came into the world to purchase a right for us, and he went to heaven again to plead, prosecute, and apply that right, Rom. v. 10. He is gone thither with the names of the tribes on his breast and shoulders, Heb. ix. 12. All the benefits of Christ tend to this: justification, our release from the curse, that we may be capable of life, Rom. v. 18; sanctification, to prepare, fit us for it, and to begin this life in us, 'for he that hath the Son hath life,' 1 John v. 12; all ordinances; the word, Isa. lv. 3, 'Hear, and your souls shall live;' the supper, Luke xxii. 20; all graces; faith to see it, 1 Peter i. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls;' love to desire it, hope to wait for it; the comforts of the Spirit to give us a taste of it. So that this is the great object of faith, and to which all the rest tend.

[2.] The believing of this constituteth a main difference between the animal and spiritual life; by which the world of mankind are distinguished. The animal life is that which is supported by the comforts and delights of the present world, such as lands, honours, pleasures, riches, and when these are out of sight, they are at loss, and utterly dismayed. But the spiritual and divine life is supported by the comforts and delights of the world to come, by reflecting upon everlasting happiness, and the glory and blessedness we shall enjoy there; as in the verses before the text, in the close of the former chapter. When we believe these things, another kind of spirit cometh upon a man, and hath such a life and strength derived into his heart, that he can bear up with joy and courage, when the outward and animal life is exposed to the greatest difficulties and decays, because he is a man of another world. And therefore we are said to live by faith, because we apprehend those great and glorious things which are kept for us in heaven: 2 Cor. iv. 13, 14, 'We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken: we also believe, and therefore speak, knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with you.' Oh! it is a mighty thing to have a spirit of faith; in the lowest condition such an one can hold up his head and avouch his hopes. He can own Christ, how dear soever it cost him. None are of such a noble and divine spirit as they. Without it a man that wholly loveth the animal life is but a wiser sort of beast. Not only the sensualist or the covetous, but even the ambitious, who aspire after crowns and kingdoms and great fame by their gallantry and noble exploits, are but poor, base spirits in comparison of those in whose breasts the sparks of this heavenly fire do ever burn, and carry them out in the zealous pursuit of the world to come.

[3.] We need press this sound belief of the world to come; because whatever men pretend, eternal life is little believed in the world. The

most part of those men who live in the common light of christianity are purblind, and cannot see afar off, or look beyond the grave. God's own children have too cold and doubtful thoughts of this estate, not such a lively, clear, and firm persuasion of things to come, but that it needeth to be increased more and more. The apostle prayeth for the converted Ephesians, '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,' &c., Eph. i. 17, 18. That is, more clearly see, and more firmly believe, those good things which they should enjoy in heaven. Alas! we are so taken up with trifles and childish toys that our faith is very weak about these excellent blessings.

The evidences that it is little believed are these:—

[1.] Because we are far more swayed with the promises of small temporal advantages than we are with the promise of eternal life. The blessings we expect in the other world are far more excellent, and more glorious in their nature and certain in their duration, yet they have less influence upon us than poor, paltry, perishing vanities. What should be the reason? I answer, When a thing of less weight weigheth down a greater, we judge then the balances are not equal. The soul doubteth of things to come, but readily closeth with things present. Who would prefer a cottage before a palace? a lease for a year before an inheritance? There is no comparison between the things themselves, but we are not equally persuaded of things to come, and things in hand, and of a present enjoyment. Cyprian bringeth in the devil vaunting against Christ. *Ostende tuos tales munerarios, O Christe, &c.*—'I had not heaven to bestow upon them, nor eternal happiness to propound to them, only a little carnal satisfaction in the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season: yet among all thy pensioners, O Christ, show me one that is so ready to follow thee as they are to follow me.' If we had faith as Moses had, we would 'choose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season,' Heb. xi. 25. But alas! those that believe as christians live as heathens, a little profit and a little pleasure in the world is enough to sway with them to run the hazard and forfeiture of all their hopes in the world to come.

[2.] Surely men do not believe heaven, because they are so little affected with it. Affections follow persuasion: Heb. xi. 13, 'Being persuaded of them, embraced them.' We would find more considerable stirrings of joy and thankfulness when we hear of these promises, or read of them, or think of them. If a poor man did understand of some great inheritance bequeathed to him, he would often think of it, rejoice therein, long to go and see it, and take possession of it. There is a promise of eternal life left with us in the gospel, of being heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; who putteth in for a share, thinketh of it, rejoiceth in the hopes of it, longeth for it, is earnestly stirred up to put in his claim.

[3.] Because we do so little labour after it. Negligence is the fruit of unbelief. That is evident. Because when the Holy Ghost would cure our neglects, it doth not so much discourse of the worthiness of

our hopes as of the certainty of them, Heb. ii. 3, 4. And when it would provoke us to diligence, it thinketh it is enough to say the gospel is no fable, 2 Peter i. 5-10, with the 16th. There is the argument. For outward advantages, be they certain or uncertain, men will endure great pains. For certain: a man toileth hard all day for a small piece of money, for a shilling or so; do we seek heaven with a-like earnestness, do we serve God instantly day and night that we may come to the blessed hope? Certainly if we were more persuaded of it we would think all pains too little, nothing more than needeth. Nay, for uncertain gains, as merchants, how many hazards do they run, to increase their substance by traffic? We are not uncertain, as we pretend, why do not we more abound in the work of the Lord? Why do not we seek heaven in the first place?

[4.] Because we are contented with so slight assurance as to our title and interest. In matters of weight men would be upon sure terms, and labour to bind the bargain as strong as they can by earnest, by covenants, by witnesses. Do we labour to make all so sure and clear as to heavenly things, to get the earnest of the Spirit, to have certain evidences to show? 2 Peter i. 10; Heb. iv. 1, 'Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' We should put it out of all question, as not come short, so not seem to come short, or give any appearance of coming short. Alas! any fond presumption or slight hope serveth the turn, or we leave things at six and seven, at a mere hazard. If our belief were more strong, this could not be.

[5.] The pretended strength of our faith about the future recompenses doth in some measure show the weakness of it, and that it is but a slight and overly apprehension. I demonstrate it thus: most men will pretend to be able to trust God for their heavenly inheritance, and yet cannot trust God for their daily maintenance; they find it difficult to believe in temporals, and yet very easy in spirituals or eternal. What should be the reason of this? Heaven and things to come are greater mercies, and the way of bringing them about is more difficult, and they are not so commonly dispensed by God as temporals are. There lie more natural prejudices against them, when men are serious. What! can you easily believe that you shall live though you die? John xi. 26; that your scattered dust shall be re-collected, and raised up into a beautiful and glorious body? that a clod of earth shall shine as the stars? What! more easily believe this than that God will give you daily bread? The whole earth is full of his goodness, and God feedeth all his creatures, openeth his hand and supplieth the desire of every living thing; not a worm but is sustained by his providence; he pardoneth but a few, saveth but a few, blesseth but a few with spiritual and eternal blessings; and in dispensing them God requireth qualifications. But here is the mistake, bodily wants are more pressing, and faith about them is put to a present exercise; usually men are careless of their souls, and content themselves with some general desires of ease and hopes of eternal welfare, and therefore is it they say they find no difficulty in believing salvation and eternal life. Eternal life is sought in jest, and talked of as a plausible fancy, but worldly things are desired in good earnest. It fareth with them as with Martha:

John xi. 24, 'I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day.' Compare ver. 39, 'Lord, by this time he stinketh, for he hath been dead four days.' It is not strange things that are afar off, and about which they have no present exercise, when yet their faith is weak in the matter of the present trial, though less difficult than that which they profess to believe. Martha can profess to believe the resurrection of all men, yet staggereth at his being raised presently. But it is but a pretence, the strength of our faith about eternity is not seen in health so much as in sickness, and in a sickness unto death.

[6.] Because we will venture so little upon our everlasting hopes. Where men have a great expectation, there they will make great adventures, because they know it will turn to a good account. God hath made us many great and precious promises; he hath told us, 'Give alms, and ye shall have treasure in heaven,' Luke xii. 33; leave anything for his sake, 'and you shall have an hundredfold in this world, with persecutions, and in the world to come eternal life,' Mark x. 30; again, Rom. viii. 13, 'Mortify the deeds of the body, and you shall live.' Now when we will not venture anything upon God's bond, it is a sign we do not count him a good paymaster: not an interest, not a lust: you make him a liar in all his promises.

2. How faith worketh as to the other world. It giveth us a sight; it giveth us a taste.

[1.] A sight; for it is described to be, Heb. xi. 1, 'The substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;' it realiseth our hopes, and showeth us the other world as in a glass. As the devil showed Christ the glory of the world as in a map and representation, so doth faith represent the glory of the world to come as in a map; it giveth us a kind of Pisgah sight or view of the promised land. Other men have but a general guess and tradition about heaven, talk at the same rate other christians do, but have not a lively affective sight of it; a believer hath a sight of it; others an empty notion, he a real prospect. Many hang between believing and unbelieving, neither assent to the truth of the promise, nor directly deny it. Oh! could we by faith lift up the eye of the soul to view those everlasting mansions, by faith see heaven in the promise, we should be other manner of christians than we are; but most never thought seriously of it, to make their assent more firm and strong. Keep the eye of faith clear, the world is a blinding thing, 2 Cor. iv. 4.

[2.] Faith giveth not only a sight, but a taste. It is a delightful confidence, a strong assent, and therefore they are said to 'taste the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi. Faith is an anticipation of our blessedness, or a preoccupation of our everlasting estate. It is such a sight as ravisheth the heart and filleth it with joy: John viii. 56, and Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them' (hugged the promises); and 1 Peter i. 8, 'In whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing (that is, believing for eternal life) ye rejoice, with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' To others the promises are as dry chips and withered flowers: Luke vi. 23, 'Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy, for behold your reward is great in heaven.'

3. How shall we rouse up our faith, and more firmly believe the promised glory?

Foundation stones can never be laid with care and exactness enough. None of us believe it so, but we may believe it again with more certainty and assurance of understanding; at least we need to revive it often, as when the picture waxeth old we refresh the colours. The motives of credibility I have given you in former discourses. I shall only now mention its own intrinsic grounds, which have a more direct influence on the confidence of a believer. A blessed estate is very sure to the heirs of promise.

[1.] Partly as being appointed to them from all eternity: Mat. xxv. 34, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.' A purpose so long ago thought of, and prepared with such solemnity, and designed to us in Christ, will not easily be broken off: 2 Tim. i. 9, 10, 'He hath saved us with an holy calling, according to his purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who hath abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light in the gospel.' It seemed good to God from everlasting to decree within himself concerning us, to give us eternal life by Christ Jesus, who came to free poor creatures from eternal death, and the wrath of God abiding on them, and to make the offer of a glorious estate to them in the world to come, as the fruit of his merit. Here was the first stone laid towards this eternal building, even the foundation of God, which standeth sure.

[2.] It is secured to them by the promise of the faithful God, 1 John ii. 25. And what needed God to promise what he would not perform? In other parts of scripture we own God's authority; why not in the promises? The same God which gave the commands which you find so powerful on your consciences, the same God gave the promises. In all other promises God standeth to his word, and is very faithful and punctual in them, as in those which are of a present accomplishment, *in ultimo non deficiet*. God hath entered into covenant with us. A covenant supposeth both parties engaged; it doth not leave one bound and another at large; the precept doth not leave us free, and the promise maketh God a debtor. Therefore if he hath promised, he will be as good as his word.

[3.] The third ground which raiseth this confidence is the raising and glorifying of Christ, who is entered into heaven as our forerunner: Heb. vi. 20, and 1 Peter i. 21; God raised him, and gave him glory and honour, that your faith and hope might be in God. Heaven is possessed by our head, and surely in our name, John xiv. 2, which is a sure pledge that the members shall be glorified; if our head be raised, he will not leave his members under the power of death. He hath carried our nature into heaven, our flesh thither, and advanced to the Father's right hand in glory; let us follow him, and we shall get thither also. Well now, these are the grounds of confidence, whereby we know that there is a blessed estate reserved for us.

Secondly, Hope for it. Next to a sound belief of such things, there must be an earnest expectation of them. For having a promise, hope with it for the accomplishment of the thing promised, and looketh not

to see it a-coming. There is a twofold hope—the one necessary to grace, the other very profitable, but not absolutely necessary to the life and being of a christian. The one is the immediate effect of regeneration, 1 Peter i. 3; the other the fruit of experience, Rom. v. 4. The one dependeth upon the promises of God, which are proposed to men to beget in them a hope of the greatest good they can expect from God; the other dependeth upon our own qualification. The one is antecedent to acts of holiness; the other followeth after it, and resulteth from it.

1. An antecedent hope there must be, before the effect of the holy life can be produced; for since hope is the principle of all human endeavours and actions, it is hope that sets every man a-work in the world. The merchant tradeth in hope, the husbandman plougheth in hope, the soldier fighteth in hope; so it is hope that sets the christian a-work. The twelve tribes serve God instantly day and night, that they may come to the blessed hope. Before a man can engage in the spiritual life, he must have some hope; and indeed this hope dependeth upon the conditional offer of eternal life, according to the terms of the gospel. This conditional offer is very comfortable to hunger-bitten sinners who do seriously mind their own happiness. Of this hope the apostle speaketh: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.' This is the first taste of the pleasures of the world to come.

2. There is another hope, which cometh after much exercise in godliness, which requireth a great diligence, sobriety, and watchfulness before we can have it: 1 Peter i. 13, and Heb. vi. 11, 'We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' The first hope may be accompanied with some doubts of our salvation, or the rewards of godliness, *ex parte nostri*, as it belongeth to us, not *ex parte Dei*, as promised by him. For this hope apprehendeth all there as sure and steadfast, but our own qualification is not so evident. In short, the conditional hope is absolutely necessary in all christians; the latter is very desirable, that we should have an assurance on our part of the thing hoped for, but that always cannot be. Now hope showeth itself both by looking and longing.

[1.] Looking. Hope is often described by that act: Jude 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life;' so Tit. ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope;' and in many other places. *Ἀποκαταδοκία τῆς κτίσεως*, stretching out the head, Rom. viii. 19, as Sisera's mother and her ladies looked through the lattice. We should dwell more upon the thoughts of the world to come, and live in the constant expectation of it. The vigour of the spiritual life is abated as this act is abated; for when our thoughts of heaven grow cold, heartless, raw, and unfrequent, we grow remiss in our duty.

[2.] Longing. Can a man believe blessedness to come and not long to enjoy it, have a house above and not come at it, desiring to be at home? The saints are groaning, longing for it, Rom. viii. 23; 2 Cor. v. 2–5. Mind and heart are both set a-work by hope; a taste will make us long for more.

Thirdly, Prepare and diligently seek after it in the way of holiness.

A christian's life is a continual pursuit or seeking after eternal happiness: Heb. xii. 14, 'Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord;' Col. iii. 1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek the things which are above;' Mat. vi. 33, 'Seek first,' &c. This is his work and his business. His whole life is a continual motion towards this eternal and glorious estate, every step an approach nearer, Rom. xiii. 11, and the nearer the more earnest, *quo propius fruimur*; as natural motion is the swifter the nearer the centre. Faith and hope set all the wheels a-going, 'I press onward, because of the high prize of the calling of God in Christ,' Phil. iii. 14, still getting more grace, more fitness. We have no reason to begrudge God's service, when we consider what wages he giveth. We do but talk of eternal life, not believe it, when we do no more in order thereunto. What labour and hazards do men expose themselves unto for a little of the present world! and surely, if men did believe the world to come, our industry, care, and thoughts should be more laid out upon it. A man that spendeth all his time and care in repairing the house he dwelleth in for the present, but speaketh not of another house, nor sendeth any of his furniture thither; will you say such a man hath a mind or thought to remove, that spendeth the strength of his life and cares on worldly things? Surely he doth not believe a blessed eternity. We work as we do believe; if indeed we are persuaded of such an estate, why do we no more prepare for it?

Fourthly, Clear up your own interest. 'We know we have,' and 'henceforth there is laid up for me,' &c., 2 Tim. iv. 8. There are many necessary duties which can hardly be done without a sense of your interest; therefore you should not be satisfied in the want of it; as to 'rejoice in the Lord always,' to bear the afflictions of the present life, not with a quiet but with a joyful mind, which the scripture often presseth. Now, who can rejoice in afflictions, who is not persuaded they work for eternal good? They are bitter to sense; nature and grace teach us to have a feeling of our interests, and to be affected with God's providence when he maketh a breach upon us. The afflictions cannot be improved if we have not some sense of them. But now, not to be broken with difficulties and crosses, yea, to rejoice in them, surely that requireth some interest in better things. If God will whip us forward that we may mend our pace towards heaven, the christian seeth that he hath no cause to complain. 'None of these things move me,' saith holy Paul, 'so I may finish my course with joy,' Acts xx. 29. Another duty is to 'love the appearing of Jesus Christ,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. Who can long for this appearance but those that are assured of welcome at his coming, to whom he cometh as a redeemer, and not as a judge? They say, 'Even so come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Another duty is to desire to be dissolved, to get above the fears of death. How can they desire to be dissolved who have not made sure of another place to go to? Well then, you must give all diligence to clear up your own interest.

Fifthly, Improve it to the vanquishing of temptations.

1. Those which arise from the delights of sense, or the pleasures, honours, and profits of the world. The proper notion of a christian is that of a stranger and pilgrim, and the duty of strangers and pilgrims

is to 'abstain from fleshly lusts,' 1 Peter ii. 11. And the force and strength of it ariseth from our confidence in the promises, Heb. xi. 13. The great use of faith is to teach us to reject those sordid and bewitching pleasures which would withdraw us from looking after those pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore—those deceitful riches which would beguile us of the better and enduring substance, those slippery and vanishing honours which would bereave us of the glory from whence we shall never be degraded; to beget a holy weanedness and moderation in us to all these things.

Use 2. To comfort and support us under all the afflictions and sorrows of the present life, of what nature soever they be. (1.) Against all fears, Luke xii. 32. We must look for hardships here in the world, but all will be made up when we get home to God; therefore bear up with a generous confidence. (2.) When pained in sickness, and full of the restless weariness of the flesh, consider, I shall shortly be in heaven, and there everlastingly at ease: Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' (3.) Against imprisonment. When shut up in a strait, nasty room, oh, what a comfort is it to consider I shall be with Christ! 'In my Father's house are many mansions,' John xiv. 2. (4.) Against loss of fading riches: Heb. x. 34, 'That took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' My solid estate lieth elsewhere, out of the reach of thieves and flames. (5.) Against loss of love and respect from men. If we shall everlastingly enjoy the love of God, nothing should trouble us, Rom. viii. 37, 38. Nay, at length we shall meet all the holy ones of God, Heb. xi. 13, and shall all join in concert there. There is no pride or envy to divide us, or to make us contemn one another; but love and charity reigneth so that the good of every one is the good of all, and the good of all the good of every one. They all make up one body, and have one heart and one soul and one God, who is all in all. (6.) Against persecution: Mat. v. 11, 12, 'Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for my sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven; for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you;' and 1 Thes. i. 6, 7, 'Having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.' (7.) Against exile. When cast out of cities, towns, driven from house and home, consider, We shall abide with Christ for ever. (8.) Against death of friends, 1 Thes. iv. 14–18. He concludeth, 'Wherefore, comfort one another with these words.' They are not genuine comforts of christianity which are not fetched from the world to come. (9.) Against sin. It is our trouble here, it must be mortified. There it will be nullified; our inheritance is incorruptible and undefiled, and fadeth not away, 1 Peter i. 4. Our carnality will be for ever gone, our temptations will be over; there is no serpent in the upper paradise. (10.) Against spiritual wants. There all desires will be accomplished, our expectations fully satisfied, and the soul filled up with all the fulness of God. And lastly, Against death, which is the last enemy. This Christ hath conquered, and will conquer for you: 1 Cor. xv. 56, 57, 'The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but

thanks be to God which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.' Death is yours: 1 Cor. iii. 22, 'All things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours; and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.'

SERMON IV.

For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.—2 Cor. v. 2.

IN the former verse the apostle had asserted his confidence of a blessed estate, both in his own name and the name of other believers. Now he speaketh of his readiness to enter into it, or his desire of getting out of this life, that he might enjoy this immortality and blessedness; *for in this we groan*. In this, *ἐν τούτῳ*, or in the meantime. In the words observe—

1. The greatness of the affection here mentioned, expressed by the words *στυνάζομεν*, *we groan*; by which he meaneth not the groans which come from sorrow, but from desire and hope. 2dly, The other word is *ἐπιποθοῦντες*, not desiring only, but *earnestly desiring*.

2. The object or thing affected—*To be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven*, where our glory and blessedness is set forth by a double metaphor—a house, and a garment. Men do not clothe themselves with houses; but this is such a house as is so fitted for us, and we for it, as apparel is for the body. Well then, the state of glory is called a house with respect to the deliverance which we have from the pressures which the bodily life is subject unto; as in a house we are sheltered and defended from the injuries of wind and weather. And then it is compared to an upper garment, to hide our blemishes and imperfections. Because the apostle used the word *ἐπενδύσασθαι*, some have thought the apostle's meaning to be, that he would have that life clothed upon this life, as the tunic upon the vest; that he would not put off the body, or die at all, but go to heaven by that sudden change spoken of, 1 Cor. xv. 51, 52, and 1 Thes. iv. 17. Indeed, many of the expressions of the context seem to look that way. But I shall adjourn the debate till I come to open the third and fourth verses.

Doct. Those that sincerely believe and wait for a blessed immortality do also groan for it and earnestly desire it.

The reasons for this groaning are—

1. Because of the pressures and miseries of the present life, 'Being burthened, we groan,' verse 4. We are pressed under a heavy weight, burthened both with sin and misery, and both set us a-groaning very sorely.

[1.] With sin. To a waking conscience and a gracious heart this is one of the greatest burthens that can be felt; see that Rom.