

visited thee in ordinances, supported thee in troubles, helped thee in temptations; his Spirit liveth, dwelleth, and worketh in thee; therefore always confident, ver. 6. There is some place for doubts and fears, till we be in full possession, from weakness of grace and greatness of trials.

[2.] To quicken our earnest desires and industrious diligence. The first-fruits are to show how good, as well as earnest how sure. This is but a little part and portion of those great things which God hath provided for us. If the earnest be so sweet, what will the possession be? A glimpse of God in the heart, how ravishing is it! Oh! how comfortable a more lively expectation!

[3.] To bind us not to depart from these hopes—the earnest of the Spirit convincing, comforting, changing the heart. Have you felt this in yourselves, and will you turn back from God after experience?

SERMON VIII.

Therefore we are always confident, knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.—2 COR. v. 6.

IN the words observe two things—

1. The effect of God's giving the earnest of the Spirit—*Therefore we are always confident.*

2. The state of a believer in this world—*Knowing that while we are at home in the body we are absent from the Lord.*

In the first branch take notice—

1. Of the effect itself—'We are confident.'

2. The constancy or continuance of this confidence—'Always.' To be confident at times, when not tempted or assaulted, is easy; but in all conditions to keep up an equal tenor of confidence is the christian height which we should aspire unto, for the strength of this confidence is discovered by manifold trials and difficulties.

3. The illative particle—'Therefore.' Why? Because God hath wrought us for this very thing, and given us the earnest of the Spirit.

For the effect itself. There is a twofold confidence—(1.) Of the thing; (2.) Of the person; for both are requisite, for the latter presupposeth the former; there can be no certainty to a person of a thing which is not certain in itself. An immortal state of bliss is to be had and enjoyed after this life; we are confident of that before we can be confident of our interest and actual enjoyment of it. We are confident of the thing, because God hath promised it, and set it forth in the gospel. But 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 and future enjoyment, 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. Now the serious performance of our duty evidenceth

itself to the conscience; and as our diligence increaseth, so doth our confidence. But so far as a man neglecteth his duty, and abateth his qualification, so far his confidence may abate also.

The illative particle—'Therefore.' The earnest of the Spirit hath influence both upon the confidence of the thing, and of our own interest.

[1.] Of the thing. If God never meant to bestow eternal life upon his people, he would not give earnest.

[2.] Of our interest and future enjoyment. For the Spirit of God convincing, comforting, and changing the heart, doth assure us that he hath appointed us to everlasting glory.

Well then, the full meaning of this clause is, that we certainly know that we shall be crowned in glory; and being assured by the earnest of the Spirit that we shall not fail of it, therefore we lift up the head in the midst of pressures and afflictions, knowing that if they should arise as high as death, they will bring us the sooner to the Lord, that we may live with him for ever.

Doct. They who have the earnest of the Spirit are, and may be, confident of their future and glorious estate.

Let me show you—

1. What is this confidence.

2. What is the earnest of the Spirit.

3. How this confidence ariseth from having the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.

First, What is this confidence—1. The nature of it; 2. The opposites; 3. The effects; 4. The properties.

1. The nature. It is a well-grounded persuasion of our eternal happiness. But I must distinguish again as before. There is a two-fold confidence: one which is proper to faith; another which may be called assurance, or a sense of our own interest.

[1.] There is a confidence included in the very nature of faith, usually called *affiance*. We have often considered faith as it implieth a firm assent, and again as it implieth a thankful acceptance of Christ. Now, as it implieth *affiance*, or a resting, relying, and reposing our hearts with quietness and peace upon God's promises; and so confidence is nothing but a firm and comfortable dependence upon God, through Jesus Christ, for the gift of eternal life, while we patiently continue in well-doing. Assent to the truth of the promise breedeth this confidence; but it is not it, for faith is not a bare assent, but a fiducial assent, or a trust and dependence upon the Lord in the appointed way of obtaining the effects of the promise. Faith is often described by the act of trust, both in the Old Testament and in the New. That there can be no doubt of this, no notion is more frequently insisted on in the Old Testament: Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings, his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord.' His adherence to God and dependence upon him is the great preservative against worldly fears and apprehensions of danger and misery; so that he is fortified not only for a patient, but cheerful entertainment of all that shall come, or may come. So Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou keepst him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' A man securely rests upon the promise of God, that all will

end well, while he keepeth to his duty. The New Testament also useth the same notion: 2 Cor. xiii. 4, 'Such trust we have through Christ to godward.' Confidence: 1 Tim. iv. 10, 'For therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God;' so Eph. i. 12, 13, 'Who trusted first in Christ: in whom also ye trusted.' When we are confident that God will save his faithful servants, and are encouraged thereby to go on with our duty. Our miscarriages, fainting, and apostasy, and discomfords, are made to arise from the want of this confidence. The miscarriages of the people in the wilderness, a figure of our estate in the world, came from hence: Ps. lxxviii. 22, 'They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation.' They were not confident of his conduct, that he would bring them into the land of rest. A man that doth not trust God cannot be long true to him; they who do not depend upon God for salvation, and for whatever is necessary to them for salvation, and to bring them out of every strait in a way most conducing to their welfare and his own honour, have not that true believing or sound faith which God requireth of them. Well then, this trust or confidence must be in all, and this is more than assent, or a bare persuasion of the mind that the promises are true; this noteth the repose of the heart, or the motion of the will towards them as good and satisfactory.

[2.] There is a confidence of our own good estate for the present, and so by consequence of our future blessedness: Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he that hath begun a good work in you will perfect it to the day of Christ;' when we make no doubt but that God who hath wrought faith and other christian graces in us will also consummate all in everlasting glory. This dependeth upon a sight of our qualification. This confidence is comfortable, the other absolutely necessary; this confidence is mainly built upon the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts, the other upon the promise of the gospel; by the one there is a crown of righteousness for the faithful, by the other it is laid up for them. The spirit and life of faith lieth more in the former; but the joy of faith, and our comfort, dependeth upon this. A christian that is confident that God will be as good as his word is mightily encouraged to wait upon God till that word be accomplished, and that breedeth courage and resolution and boldness. But a christian that knoweth his own interest is more cheered and pleased with it. By this latter confidence a christian hath a double ground of rejoicing: the certainty of God's promise, and the evidence of his own sincerity, or the truth of grace in his own heart: 1 John iii. 19, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' A christian is said to be before God three ways. Either (1.) In his ordinary conversation, Gen. xvii. 1; so our hearts are assured before him when we walk in holy peace and security. (2.) We come before him in prayer and other duties. Now a christian may assure his heart before him; our legal fears are revived by the presence of God, but a christian can look God in the face. (3.) We come before him at the day of judgment. We stand before his tribunal, that we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming: 1 John iv. 17, 'That we may have bold-

ness at the day of judgment.' Death is your summons: 2 Kings xxi. 3, 'Lord, thou knowest that I have walked before thee with a true and perfect heart.'

2. The opposites of it are disquieting doubts and fears.

[1.] Doubts are often opposed to faith, not only as it is strong assent, but as it is a quiet dependence upon God's nature and word; as James i. 6, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with every wind, and tossed;' 1 Tim. ii. 8, 'Lift up holy hands, without wrath and doubting;' Rom. iv. 20, 'He staggered not at the promise through unbelief, but hoped against hope;' Mat. xiv. 31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'—because he could not rest upon Christ's word.

[2.] So fears are opposite to this quiet and steady dependence: Mat. viii. 26, 'Why are ye so fearful, O ye of little faith?' In Luke it is, 'Where is your faith?' In Mark it is, 'How is it that you have no faith?' Luke viii. 50, 'Fear not, believe only.' Now the opposites of any grace do show the nature of it. If doubts and fears be so directly opposite to faith, therefore faith is a confidence as well as an assent. Now these doubts and fainting fears are everywhere opposed to faith: Ps. xxvii. 13, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living.' God's children are very obnoxious to temptations of fainting fears and diffidence when sharp troubles do assault them; and therefore they ought to strengthen their confidence. Strength of assent may remove speculative doubts, or errors of the mind; but strength of confidence, or quiet dependence, doth only remove practical doubts, which arise from the fears and terrors of sense, which may sometimes sorely shake us.

[3.] The immediate effects are such as are comprised in the very nature of it, as an holy boldness and courage, which is the very notion, and the same importance of the word in the text, 'We are confident,' or of good cheer and courage. This is seen in four things.

(1.) In our continuing faithful with Christ, and professing his truth and ways, notwithstanding opposition, in a bold profession, without any fears of persecutions and sufferings; as Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house we are, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of hope firm to the end;' and in ver. 14, 'For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' and again, Heb. x. 35, 'Cast not away your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.' In all which places confidence noteth a bold owning and avowing of Christ, or fearlessness and courage in our christian profession, arising from our certain persuasion of and dependence on Christ's rewards in another world. The great use of faith is to fortify us against all temptations and difficulties and inconveniencies that we meet with in our passage to heaven, even against death itself. Then are we confident, when borne up against all dangers and sufferings. There is a like word used, John xvi. 33, 'Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' God's children may be bold or of good cheer in the midst of all their afflictions, for faith assureth them the end shall be glorious. Therefore we are bold, perform our duty, and pass on in our pilgrimage with a courageous and quiet mind. This courageous, confident encountering with

trouble is the immediate fruit of faith ; because faith enableth us to look to the end of trouble and our salvation as sure and near.

(2.) It is seen also in a generous contempt of all the baits and pleasures of sense, and the delightful things in this world, and cheerfully carrying on our duty, though the flesh would tempt us to the contrary. Faith is an obediential confidence, and the strength of it is seen in checking of temptations, or an affiance on God, as it draweth our hearts after better things than the world offereth. We can more easily want and miss the contentments of the flesh, and the pomp and ease and gratification of the present life. So that to be confident is to be prepared and resolved to do those things which God commandeth, though with denial of those sensual good things which the flesh craveth ; as to endure what happeneth in the way to heaven, so to refuse and reject what hindereth us from it. For we are exercised with trials, both on the right hand and on the left, and we need the armour of righteousness, both on the right hand and on the left, 2 Cor. vi. 7. Our way to heaven lieth *per blanda et aspera*. As the terrors of sense are a discouragement to us, so the delights of sense are a snare to us ; confidence hath an influence upon both, it breedeth a weanedness from the baits of the flesh, and a rejection of what would divert us from the pursuit of eternal life, and is much seen in mortification ; 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27, 'I run not as one that is uncertain, therefore I keep under my body.' As if he had said, I am confident, therefore I am mortified, contemn the allurements of sense : as they dieted themselves for the Isthmic games. Hope to get a crown of laurel made them look to their bodies, that they were in fit plight for the race. There is much more confidence of an eternal crown.

(3.) There is another branch of this boldness, that carrieth the name of this confidence also ; and that is, child-like freedom with God in prayer : Eph. iii. 12, 'We have access with confidence and boldness, through the faith of him ;' and 1 John iii. 21, 'If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God ;' and 1 John v. 14, 'And this is our confidence, that whatsoever we ask of him he heareth us ;' and Heb. x. 19, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest, by the blood of Jesus,' a holy boldness with God in prayer, or a filial, child-like access to God in prayer, for obtaining what he hath promised. There is a shyness of God. His presence reviveth our guilty fears ; as David, when he had sinned, hung off from the throne of grace, Ps. xxxii. 3 ; or as Adam ran to the bushes when he heard the voice of God in the garden. Now this is done away by faith in the promises. This holy, comfortable addressing ourselves to God by Christ is a great branch of this confidence ; it emboldeneth us to go to him in prayer, and to trust in him, and expect salvation from him. In the hour of his extremity he is not to seek of a God to pray to, or a mediator to intercede for him, or a spirit of adoption to enable him to fly for help, as a child to his reconciled father, having been frequently entertained and accepted by him.

(4.) The last and greatest of all is confidence at his coming : 1 John ii. 28, 'When he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.' We feel the comfort of it when we seriously think of death, or when God summoneth us into his pre-

sence : 2 Kings xx. 3, 'I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before thee in truth, and with a perfect heart.' We know that we shall receive a crown of righteousness at his appearing. Before they look for it, and wait for it with confidence. A christian should cherish no other confidence but what will be approved then, what will hold out then. If our confidence cannot bear the thoughts of it and supposition of it, how will it bear the day itself ?

4. The properties of this confidence.

[1.] It is an obediential confidence or affiance ; for he that hopeth for mercy is thereby bound to duty and obedience ; for mercy must be had in God's way, and we cannot depend upon his rewards unless we regard his precepts : 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing.' We come to the one by the other ; yea, the one breedeth the other : Ps. cxix. 166, 'Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and have done thy commandments.' Dependence certainly begets observance ; and if we look for all from God, certainly we will be faithful to him, and keep close to his ways. It is a lazy presumption, not a christian confidence, that consisteth with disobedience ; both the promises and the precepts are the objects of faith : Ps. cxix. 166, 'I have believed thy commandments.' Our believing the one breedeth confidence in the other ; our believing the other breedeth obedience, but they must both go together. If there be any difference in believing these by a right faith, it is weaker in the promises than in the precepts ; because the precepts commend themselves to our consciences by their own light and evidence ; the promises contain mere matter of faith, and lie farther out of the view of sense and reason. Well then, if we believe these laws to be God's laws, and these promises to be God's promises, our sense of duty will be at least equal with our hope of mercy. Certainly confidence, and relying upon the mercy of God for salvation, may be less than our care to walk in obedience ; ordinarily, greater it cannot be.

[2.] This confidence must be well rooted, that fear of persecution may not scorch it, nor the cares and pleasures of the world choke it : Col. i. 23, 'Continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel.' We must be thoroughly persuaded that it is the very truth of God, and venture our souls and all our concernments and interests upon this bottom, when we seriously consider what we do. There is a slight and superficial confidence which soon vanisheth away, as the seed that 'fell upon the stony ground soon sprung up, for it had not much depth of earth, but as soon withered, because it had no root,' Mat. xiii. 5, 6. Some may readily receive the offers of eternal life, but the word is not ingrafted in their hearts. No, the confidence of faith must be sound and permanent, such as is not easily shaken with the winds of temptation.

[3.] It must be predominant, and in some degree of sovereignty in the soul, not only over our doubts and fears, but over our lusts and carnal affections, subduing the heart to God, and vanquishing the devil, the world, and the flesh. The world : 1 John v. 4, 'For whosoever is born of God overcometh the world ; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith.' And taming the flesh : Acts xv. 9, 'Purifying their hearts by faith, and mastering our carnal desires

and affections. Resisting the devil, 1 Peter v. 9. It showeth us better things, with which our minds are wholly taken up. Every man's heart cleaveth most strongly to those things which he judgeth best. Now faith showing us the things of the other world, present things are lessened in our eyes, and our desires to them abated. A slight and superficial confidence soon vanisheth away; they are not able by it to vanquish temptations: John xii. 42, 43, 'Nevertheless, among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but, because of the Pharisees, they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue. For they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.' It is such a dependence upon the mercy of God in Jesus Christ as to count it 'better than life,' Ps. lxxiii. 3; such a value of the blessing promised as will counterbalance the temporal good or evil which the devil, the world, and the flesh oppose to their good or evil. Men may have some beginnings or dispositions to true faith, but they are weak and feeble, and so are soon overmastered by worldly and carnal respects, and cannot prefer the service of Christ before the glory of the world: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe, which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?'

[4.] It is growing. As our assent to the word of truth is more full and strong, so our adherence, confidence, and dependence increaseth also, and we cleave faster to the promises of Christ, and are better established in the practice of godliness, and have a more settled boldness against fears, and doubts, and temptations, so that they can bear better repulses from God: Mat. xv. 28, 'Great is thy faith;' grow more courageous in dangers and difficulties: Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' ver. 37, 'Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors;' and are the less shaken and troubled with cares and fears: Mat. vi. 20, 'Shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?' 'and believe in hope against hope,' Rom. iv. 20. The highest degree of confidence is not gotten at once, nor at first, ordinarily, but by degrees, after some continuance of waiting upon God, after many trials and conflicts, and experiences of his love and favour; therefore still we are to labour after this, that we may with greater quietness wait on God in the midst of pressures, overcome the world, condemn the pleasures of sin, curb our unruly passions, come to the throne of grace with more boldness and confidence.

Secondly, What is the earnest of the Spirit? See the sermon on the former verse.

Thirdly, How this confidence ariseth from having the earnest of the Spirits in our hearts. Three ways—

1. As an argument.
2. By way of effectual influence.
3. By way of gracious improvement.

1. As a confirming argument against all our doubts and fears, which are apt to assault and hurt us, till we be in full possession, especially in great trials. The Spirit is an argument, strong and full, to confirm us in the truth and worth of the promised glory. The truth is plain, so the worth, as before. It is an argument in our own

bosoms; other things are without us, but this is within. That which before was written in books or spoken by men is now transcribed upon our hearts, and so nearer at hand for our use: 1 John v. 10, 'He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself.' When I go to my Bible, there I find promises of eternal life, which are the ground of my confidence. I go to my heart, and there I find the beginnings of eternal life; and so my confidence is much increased. A believer hath that within which assureth him of a better state to come; he hath a taste of it in his soul, a spiritual sense.

That which is within us, and lieth as near as our own hearts, is more sensible and affecting, and more likely to work upon us effectually than that which is without us.

It is a very engaging argument to bind us not to depart from these hopes; shall we turn the back upon God after experience? It is their great aggravation: Heb. vi. 4, 5, 'It is impossible for those that have been once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted of the good word, and the powers of the world to come, if they should fall away, to renew them again unto repentance.' There may be some kind of taste and preparation towards this earnest, from whence men may fall away: 2 Peter ii. 20-22, 'For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world, through the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning; for it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb—The dog is turned to his own vomit again, and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.' Some knowledge, and some experience, some common work of the Spirit. This argument doth increase our confidence, because it doth evidence our right and interest, as well as the truth of the thing itself, that there is an immortal blessed estate, and that it is ours. An earnest is given to secure the party that hath it. This earnest is the Spirit, convincing, comforting, changing the heart: 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'But we have not received the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.' If I have this, I am safe; the carnal cannot say so, they have no earnest.

2. By way of effectual influence. The Spirit is given as an earnest of blessedness to come, and causeth all the motions and inclinations of the soul to tend that way in the heart; he is as a Spirit that came from heaven, exciting the soul to look and long for and prepare for that happy estate. The life of grace, begun and maintained by the Spirit in our hearts, wholly tendeth to this, to carry up our hearts thither. The Spirit mortifieth the earthly and sensual disposition, Rom. viii. 13; but raiseth in us hopes, desires, and endeavours after the other world: Phil. iii. 20, 'But our conversation is in heaven;' inclineth us to drive on a trade for another country and another world; yea, our very confidence is wrought by him, and increased by his influence. The devil, the world, and the flesh do continually assault it, but the Spirit maintaineth it. Therefore the more of his Spirit, the more

confident. It is his work within us to promote it and to maintain it. This cometh of the Spirit of God; he causes us to live in peace and hope and joy, and die in hope and peace and joy.

3. By way of gracious improvement on our part. For if God giveth the Spirit as an earnest, we must make use of him as an earnest. The Spirit and grace of Christ is not only given us to subdue corruption, to carry us on delightfully to converse with God, but as an earnest, that we may live in hope. But we may reason within ourselves, God hath not only offered me this happiness when I had no thought of it, but followed me with incessant importunity, till my anxious soul was troubled, began to make a business of it. By the secret drawings of his Spirit he inclined my heart to choose him for my portion, since given me the comfort of the pardon of my sins, bound up my broken heart, visited me in ordinances, supported me in troubles, helped me in temptations. His Spirit still liveth, dwelleth, and worketh in you; therefore I am confident, and wait on him: 2 Cor. i. 20, 21, 'For all the promises of God are yea and amen, in Christ Jesus, to the glory of God by us. Now he that hath established us with you, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.'

Use 1. Is to show us that true confidence is not a devout sloth or idle expectation, but breedeth in us a noble, choice, excellent spirit, maketh us vigorous in our duty, watchful against sin, patient under the cross, longing and breathing after more of God, and hastening our preparation for the enjoyment of him.

Use 2. To put us upon self-reflection.

1. Have we the earnest of the Spirit? His comforts are not so sure an evidence as his sanctifying influence. Are our hearts changed? God giveth earnest before he giveth heaven.

2. Do we improve it to a holy confidence, such as showeth itself in diligence? 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Wherefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord;' and courage? Phil. i. 28, 'And in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.' A spirit of courage under sufferings, which is the same with confidence here, so as not to be driven from our duty, or to take any sinful course for our safety.

Use 3. To press us to seek after this confidence with diligence; it may be kept up: Heb. vi. 11, 'And that you do show forth the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.'

END OF VOLUME XII.

SERMONS UPON 2 CORINTHIANS V.

SERMON IX.

Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.—2 COR. v. 6.

FROM the connection with the former branch, you see a christian's condition in the world is mixed; he is comforted, but not satisfied; his faith is satisfied, for he is confident, but his love is not satisfied; for 'while he is at home in the body he is absent from the Lord.' And that not for a little time only, but for his whole course, as long as his life shall last, all the while that he is at home in the body. This is added to show the reason,—1. Of groaning. 2. Of confidence. Of groaning, because we are absent from Christ's presence and full communion with him in glory. Of confidence; we must be sometime present with the Lord. Now we are not; therefore we have a certain persuasion, that there shall be granted to us a nearer access after death. Then we look cheerfully upon death, as that which bringeth us home to God, from whom these earthly bodies keep us as strangers.

Two points offer themselves to us:—

1. That a christian is not in his own proper home, while he sojourneth in the body, or liveth here in this present world in an earthly tabernacle.

2. The main reason why a christian counteth himself not at home, is because he is absent from the Lord.

Doct. 1. That a christian is not in his own proper home, while he sojourneth in the body, or liveth here in this present world in an earthly tabernacle. The Greek words run thus: We, indwelling in the body, dwell forth from the Lord; that is, from the Lord Jesus, the beholding of whose glory and presence we must want so long, which is grievous to a christian. Instances; Abraham, who had best right by God's immediate donation: Heb. xi. 9, 'He sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country;' as in a place wherein he was to stay but a while, and to pass through it to a better country. David, who had most possession, an opulent and powerful king; Abraham inherited or purchased nothing in the land of Canaan, but a burying-place; but David counted himself a stranger too: Ps. xxxix. 12, 'I am a stranger and a pilgrim, as all my fathers were.' He that bore so full a sway in that land, did not look upon the world as a place of rest and

stability. But it may be he spoke this when he was chased like a flea, or hunted like a partridge upon the mountains. No; in the midst of all his wealth and opulency, when he had offered many cart-loads of gold and silver for the building of the temple. See 1 Chron. xxix. 15, 'For we are strangers and sojourners before thee, as were all our fathers.' Nay, Jesus Christ, who was lord-paramount, telleth us, John xvii. 16, 'I am not of this world.' He that was Lord of all, had neither house nor home; he passed through the world to sanctify it as a place of service, but he settled not his constant residence here as in a place of rest. We do not inhabit, only pass through to a better place.

Reasons—

1. Our birth and parentage is from heaven. Everything tendeth to the place of its original: men love their native soil; things bred in the water delight to return thither; inanimate things tend to their centre; a stone will fall to the ground, though broken in pieces by the fall; air imprisoned in the bowels and caverns of the earth causes terrible convulsions and earthquakes, till it get up to its own place. All things seek to return thither from whence they came; grace that came from heaven carrieth the heart thither again. Jerusalem from above is the mother of us all. Heaven is our native country, but the world is a strange place; and therefore, though the man be at home, yet the christian is not; he is out of his proper place. Contempt of the world is usually made the fruit of our regeneration: 1 John v. 4, 'Whosoever is born of God overcometh the world.' There is something in them that entitleth itself to God, and worketh towards him, and carrieth the soul thither where God showeth most of himself. So, 2 Peter i. 4, 'We are made partakers of the divine nature, and escape the corruption which is in the world through lust.' The world will not satisfy the divine nature; there is a strong inclination in us, which disposeth us to look after another world, 1 Peter i. 3. As soon as made children, we reckon upon a child's portion; another nature hath another aim and tendency. There is a double reason why the new creature cannot be satisfied here. (1.) Here is not enough dispensed to answer God's love in the covenant. *I will be your God*, noteth the gift of some better thing than this world can afford unto us: Heb. xi. 16, 'God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.' That title is not justified till he give us eternal rewards, for to be a God to any, is to be an infinite, eternal benefactor. Compare Mat. xxii. 32, with the fore-mentioned place. (2.) Here is not enough to satisfy the desire, expectation and inclination of the renewed heart. The aim of it is carried after two things—perfect enjoyment of God, and perfect conformity to God. There is their home, where they may be with God, and where they may be free from sin. Their love to Christ is such, that where he is there they must be: Phil. i. 23, 'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ:' Col. iii. 1, 'If ye be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God.' And there is a final, perfect estate, to which the new creature is tending; when it shall never dishonour God more, but be made like him, and completely subject to him; when never troubled with sin more.

2. There lieth their treasure and their inheritance. It is said, Eph.

i. 3, that Christ hath 'blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places.' He hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in earthly places, hath he not? Here he hath adopted, justified, and sanctified us in part, but the full accomplishment is reserved for the world to come. God would not dispense the fulness of our blessedness in the present world; that is an unquiet place; we are not out of gunshot and harm's way, nor in an earthly paradise. There Adam enjoyed God among the beasts, but we shall enjoy him in heaven among the angels. In the world God would show his bounty to all his creatures—a common inn for sons and bastards; the place of trial, not of recompense; the place where God hath set his footstool, not his throne, Isa. lxvi.; it is Satan's walk, the devil's circuit: 'Whence comest thou? From compassing the earth to and fro,' Job ii. 2; a place defiled with sin, and beareth the marks of it, given to all mankind in common: Ps. cxv. 16, 'The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's, but the earth hath he given to the children of men;' the slaughter-house and shambles of the saints, for they are slain upon earth; a receptacle for elect and reprobate.

3. There are all our kindred. There is our home and country, where our Father is, and our Lord Jesus Christ, and all the holy ones of God: *Ubi pater, ibi patria*. We pray to him, 'Our father which art in heaven.' It is heaven that is our Father's house, and the everlasting mansions of the blessed. There is our redeemer and elder brother, Col. iii. 1; 'the heaven of heavens doth contain him.' There are the best of the family, Mat. viii. 12; there is Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It is a misery to be strangers to the commonwealth of Israel, to be shut out from the society of God's people; but in heaven there are other manner of saints there. To be shut out from the company of the blessed is a dreadful excommunication indeed.

4. There we abide longest. An inn cannot be called our home; here we abide but for a night, but there for ever with the Lord. The world must be surely left; if we had a certain term of years fixed, yet it is very short in comparison of eternity. Therefore since we live longest in the other world, there is our home: Mic. ii. 10, 'Arise, depart hence, this is not your rest.' God speaketh it of the land of Canaan, when they had polluted it with sin. It is true of all the world; sin hath brought in death, and there must be a riddance. This life is but a passage to eternity. Israel first dwelt in a wandering camp, before they came to dwell in cities and walled towns; and the mysteries of their religion were first seated in a tabernacle, and then in a temple; so here first in a mortal, frail condition, and then come to the place of our eternal rest. There is an appointed time for us all to remove: Job vii. 1, 'There is an appointed time for man upon earth; his days are as the days of an hireling.' An hireling when he hath done his work, then he receiveth his wages, and is gone. Actors when they have finished their parts, they go within the curtain, and are seen no more. So when we have served our generation and finished our course, our place will know us no more, and God will furnish the world with a new scene, both of acts and actors.

5. The necessary graces that belong to a christian show that a christian is not yet in his proper place; as faith, hope, and love.

[1.] Faith hath another world in prospect and view ; and our great aim is to come at it. Sense showeth us we have no abiding city upon earth, but faith points at one to come, where Christ is, and we shall one day be. Now this faith were but a fancy, if we should always abide in this earthly tabernacle, and there were no other life to be expected when this is at an end. The salvation of our souls is called the end of our faith ; 1 Peter i. 9, that is the main blessing we look for from Christ. So 1 Tim. i. 16, 'We believe on him to life everlasting.' So Heb. x. 39, 'We are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of their souls.' The great satisfaction that the immortal soul hath by faith is, that it seeth a place of eternal abode, and therefore it cannot settle here, it must look higher than the present world. Faith persuadeth us that the end of our creation and regeneration was far more noble than a little miserable abode here. There is no man in the world, but if he follow the light of reason, much more if he be guided by the light of grace, will seek a place and an estate of rest, wherein he may finally quiet his mind. Therefore faith cannot be satisfied till we reach our heavenly mansion ; he is unworthy of an immortal soul that looketh no further than earthly things.

[2.] Hope was made for things to come, especially for our full and final happiness. God fits us with grace as well as with happiness ; he doth not only make a grant of a glorious estate, but hath given us grace to expect it. Hope would be of no use, if it did not look out for another condition : Rom. viii. 24, 'Hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it ?' No ; there is something to come ; and therefore because we have it not in possession, we lift up the head, and look for it with a longing and desirous expectation. It is said, Col. i. 5, 'That our hope is laid up for us in heaven.' A believer's portion is not given him in hand ; he hath it only in hope. He hath it not, but it is safely kept for his use, and that in a most sure place in heaven, where 'thieves cannot break through and steal.'

[3.] Love. The saints have heard much of Christ, read much of Christ, tasted and felt much of Christ ; they would fain see him, and be with him : 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen ye love.' Many love Jesus Christ, whom they have not seen in the flesh, or conversed with him bodily ; but though they have not seen him, they desire to see him ; for love is an affection of union, it desireth to be with the party loved. The 'Spirit and the bride saith, Come,' Rev. xxii. 17. The adulteress saith, Stay away ; but the loving spouse and the bride saith, Come. Carnal men will not give their vote this way, but the soul that loveth Christ would have him either come to them, or take them up to him ; their souls are not at ease till this be accomplished.

Use 1. Let us give in our names among them that profess themselves to be strangers and sojourners here in the world. This confession must be made, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. We must carry ourselves as strangers and pilgrims.

1. Let us be drawing home as fast as we can. A traveller would be passing over his journey as soon as may be ; so should we be hastening home in our desires and affections. It is but a sorry home

to be at home in the body, when all that while we are absent from the Lord. There is a tendency in the new nature to God, a perfect enjoyment of God, and a perfect subjection to God; therefore our desires should still draw homewards: Heb. xi. 16, 'They desire a country, that is, an heavenly.' All that have gotten a new heart and nature from the Lord, their hearts run upon the expectation of what God hath promised; they cannot be satisfied with anything they enjoy here.

2. By making serious provision for the other world: Mat. vi. 33, 'But first seek the kingdom of heaven, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added unto you.' Men that bestow all their labour and travail about earthly things, and neglect their precious and immortal souls, they are contented to be at home in the body, and look no further; but when you are furnishing the soul with grace, and grow more heavenly, strict and mortified, you are more meet: Col. i. 12, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' They that wallow in the delights and contentments of the flesh, dislike strictness and holiness. What should they do with heaven? they are not fit for it. Every degree of grace is a step nearer home: Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 'They shall go on from strength to strength.' Get clearer evidences of your right to everlasting life: 1 Tim. vi. 19, 'Laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may lay hold of eternal life.' The comfort of what you have done for God will abide with you; therefore let it be your care and great business not so much to live well here, as to live well hereafter; our wealth, and honours, and dignities do not follow us into the other world, but our works do. Consider the place you are bound for, and what commodities grow current there, what will stead you when other things fail.

3. Mortify carnal desires: 1 Peter ii. 11, 'As strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.' The flesh-pots of Egypt made Israel despise Canaan. Fleshly lusts do only gratify the body, as corrupted with sin; and therefore they must be subdued and kept under by those who have higher and better things to care for. If we were to live here for ever, it were no such absurd thing to gratify the flesh, and please the body; though even so it were not a practice so suitable to the rational life, yet not altogether so absurd, as when we must be gone, and shortly dislodge, and when we have great and precious promises of happiness in another world: 2 Cor. vii. 1, 'Having therefore these promises, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness both of flesh and spirit.' That bindeth it more upon us. These lusts blind the mind, besot the heart, burden us in our journey homeward, divert our thoughts and care; yea, being indulged and allowed, they make us forfeit heaven, and will prove at length the ruin of our souls. Sowing to the flesh cuts off the hopes of happiness, Gal. vi. 8. Well then, bethink yourselves, if you look for heaven, will you cherish the flesh, which is the enemy of your salvation? Do you expect a room among the angels, and will you live as those who are slaves of the devil? The world is not your country, and will you wholly be occupied and taken up about worldly things, what you shall eat and drink, and what you shall put on?

4. Patiently endure the inconveniences of your pilgrimage. Strangers will meet with hard usage. It is no news that all things do not succeed with the heirs of promise according to their heart's desire here in the world: 'The world will love its own, but they are chosen out of the world,' John xv. 19. Christ died not for this, that we should be dandled upon the world's knees. As long as the end shall be happy, let us bear the inconveniences of the way with the more patience. A christian, that is convinced of a life to come, should not be greatly dismayed at any temporal accident. The discourse between Modestus, a governor under Valence and Basil the Great, in Nazianzen's twentieth Oration, is very notable to this purpose. When he threatened him with banishment, 'I know no banishment that know no abiding-place here in the world. I cannot say that this place is mine, nor can I say the other is not mine, wherever God shall cast me; rather all is the Lord's, whose stranger and pilgrim I am. Every place is alike near to heaven, and thither I am tending.' This is to carry ourselves as strangers and pilgrims. Indeed, to be more indifferent as to the good things of this life, and to take them as God sendeth them; but heaven will make amends for all. Many times the world proveth a step-mother. The ground that bringeth forth thistles and nettles of its own accord will not bear choicer plants. But it is your comfort you shall be transplanted, Heb. x. 34. From whence do you fetch your supports in any cross? 1 John iii. 1. A prince that travelleth abroad in disguise, may be slighted and ill treated, but you have a glorious inheritance reserved for you; therefore this should be your comfort and support.

5. Beg direction from God, that you may go the shortest way home: Ps. cxix. 19, 'I am a stranger upon earth, hide not thy commandments from me.' It concerneth a stranger to look after a better and a more durable estate; there is no direction how to attain it but in the word of God, and there is no saving understanding of it but in the light of his Spirit. This we must earnestly seek, that in everything we may understand our duty, that we be not found in a false way: 'Saved as by fire,' 1 Cor. iii. 13. Make a hard shift to scramble to heaven.

6. Get as much of home as you can in your pilgrimage, in the earnest and first fruits of the Spirit: Rom. viii. 23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.' In ordinances; Mat. xxvi. 29, 'But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of the fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.' Meditation, word, prayer and communion of saints.

Doct. 2. The main reason why a good christian counteth himself not at home, is, because he is absent from the Lord, while he is in the body.

I shall here inquire,—

1. How believers are absent from the Lord.

2. Why this maketh them look upon the world as a strange place, and heaven as their house.

1. How are believers absent from the Lord, when he dwelleth in them, as in his temple, and there is a near and close union between

him and them? And he hath promised, that where two or three are gathered together in his name he is in the midst of them?

I answer, Christ is with us indeed, but we are not with him. He dwelleth in us by his grace, and influenceth us with quickening and strength, but he is at a distance: we can have no personal converse with him, though there be a spiritual commerce between us. But in heaven we shall be translated to Christ, and enjoy the fulness of his grace; here 'we walk by faith, and not by sight,' as it is in the next verse. In short, our communion with Christ is—(1.) not immediate; (2.) nor full; (3.) often interrupted.

[1.] It is not immediate. We see him now as covered and veiled in ordinances and providences, but then we shall see him face to face. In providences we enjoy him only at the second or third hand: Hos. ii. 21, 22, 'I will hear the heavens, and they shall hear the earth; and the earth shall hear the corn, and wine, and oil; and they shall hear Jezreel.' The mercy and goodness of God passeth from creature to creature before it cometh to us. So in ordinances, all that we have from him is by the means of the word and sacraments; there we shall enjoy him without means, and without these external helps, for there God will be all in all, 1 Cor. xv. 28. We shall then ever be before him, in his eye and presence; and 'in his presence is fulness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11. Our communion with him is not a fancy, but indeed: 1 John i. 3, 'Truly our communion is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.' But this commerce is maintained at a distance; he is in heaven, and we are upon earth; it is maintained by faith, but then all is evident to sense.

[2.] Now it is not full. There is a defect both in the pipe and the vessel; we cannot contain all that he is able to give out, nor can the means convey it to us. The means are as narrow conduits from the fountain, or as creeks from the sea. The fountain could send forth more water, but the pipe or conduit can convey no more. The sea could pour a greater flood, but the creek can receive no more. When God dispenseth himself by means, either in a way of punishment or blessing, he doth not give out himself in that fulness and latitude as when he is all in all. In punishing the wicked here, he punisheth us by a creature. A giant striking with a straw cannot put forth his strength with it. So in blessing, no creature nor ordinance can convey all the goodness of God to us. Therefore now we have an imperfect power against sin, imperfect peace and comfort in our consciences, an imperfect love to God; but when our communion is immediate, then will it be full. We converse with Christ without let and impediment, and he maketh out himself to us in a greater latitude and fulness than now.

[3.] Our communion with Christ is often interrupted; but in glory we shall enjoy his company for ever, and shall have constant and near fellowship: 1 Thes. iv. 17, 'We shall be ever with the Lord.' That day is never darkened with cloud or night; we shall meet, and never part more; all distance is gone, and weakness is gone, and we shall everlastingly abide before his throne.

2. Why God's children count themselves not at home till they are admitted into this perpetual society with Christ.

[1.] Because this is the blessedness which is promised to them.

And therefore they expect it, and thirst after it : John xii. 26, 'Where I am, there shall my servant be.' It is our duty to follow him wherever he leadeth us here, and it is our happiness to be with him for ever hereafter. We often look upon the happiness of heaven, as it freeth us from all pains and torments. No, the chiefest part is to be with Christ. Our glory and happiness consists much in being in his company. So when he maketh his last will and testament : John xvii. 24, 'Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me may be where I am, and behold my glory.' That is it ; he prayeth they may be brought safe there, and be happy for evermore.

[2.] This is that which is highly prized by them, to be where Christ is. Why is this so much prized by true christians ?

(1.) Out of thankfulness to Christ's delighting in our presence. Therefore much more should we delight in his. He longed for the society of men before the creation of the world : Prov. viii. 31, 'I rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth, and my delights were with the sons of men.' Christ delighted in all the creatures, as they were the effects of his wisdom, and goodness, and power ; but chiefly in men, as they were the objects of his grace, capable of God's image and favour. Thus he longed for the company of men before the world was. When the world was once made, he delighted to appear in human shape before his incarnation ; as Gen. xviii., a man appeared to Abraham, and he is called Jehovah ; and Zech. i. 10, 11, 'And the man that stood among the myrtle-trees, answered and said, These are they whom the Lord hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.' As if he would try how it would fit him to become bone of our bone, and flesh of our flesh. When the fulness of time was come, John i. 4, 'the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us' as long as it was necessary. When he departed, he had a mind of returning ; before he went away, and removed his bodily presence from us, his heart was upon meeting and fellowship again, and getting his people to him : John xiv. 2, 'In my Father's house are many mansions ; I go to prepare a place for you ; I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am you may be also.' Until the time that the meeting cometh, he vouchsafeth his powerful presence to us : Mat. xxviii. 20, 'Lo, I am with you to the end of the world.' He would never have gone from us if our necessities did not require it ; it was necessary that he should die for our sins. That nothing might hinder our believing and coming to him, it was necessary that he should go to heaven. If our happiness had lain here, he would have been with us here ; but it doth not, it is reserved for us in the heavens : therefore he must go there to prepare a place for us. Before he went he desired we might be there where he is ; as if he could not take content in heaven till he hath his faithful with him. Now he is gone away, he will tarry no longer than our affairs require. To have our souls with him, that doth not content him, till he come and fetch our bodies also, that we may follow him in our whole person, and then we and he shall never part, when all the elect shall meet in one common rendezvous and congregation. Now shall not all this breed a reciprocal affection in us ?

(2.) Out of love to Christ. We would fain get near him who is our great friend : Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee ?'

And the saints are described to be those that 'love his appearing,' 2 Tim. iv. 8. If we have heard him, if we be christians indeed, if we loved him when we saw him not, and delighted in him, and tasted his grace in truth, and felt his power, we shall long to be near him, and see him, and converse with him intimately.

(3.) Taste. Communion begun maketh us long for communion perfected: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 2, 'O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land where no water is: to see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary.'

(4.) Their complete happiness dependeth upon it: 1 John iii. 2, 'We shall see him as he is, and be like him:' John xvii. 24, 'That they may be where I am, and behold my glory.' Christ cannot be fully seen on this side time.

Use 1. Is to condemn and disprove them from being true christians that cannot abide the presence of Christ. The Gadarenes desired him to depart out of their coasts, Mat. viii. Yet carnal men have such a spirit, Job xxii. 17, 'which say unto God, Depart from us;' cannot abide Christ in their neighbourhood, that he should come near their consciences.

Use 2. Is to press us to two things.

1. To prize the communion and fellowship of Christ for the present. It is constant and habitual; that 'he may dwell in your hearts by faith,' Eph. iii. 17. Where Christ taketh up his abode, there his Spirit is the fountain of life, Gal. ii. 20; our defence against temptations: 1 John iv. 4, 'Greater is he that is in us than he that is in the world;' 'The seed and hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. Solemn and actual in holy duties; there is heaven begun, there we 'behold his face in righteousness,' Ps. xvii. 15; 'And a day in his courts is better than a thousand elsewhere,' Ps. lxxxiv. 10.

2. Let us long to be with him, to get out of the pesthouse of the world, and the prison of corrupt nature. I allude to that, Gen. xxiv. 57, 58, 'And they said, We will call the damsel, and inquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said to her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.' Wilt thou go to Jesus? Lord, I will go with thee. Hindrances are these.

[1.] A surfeit on the sinful pleasures and contentments of this world. This weakens your desires, and taketh off the edge of your affections. Lot lingered when he was to go out of Sodom, Gen. xix. 16.

[2.] Do not darken your confidence by your sin and folly. Then you will as a malefactor fly from him as a judge, rather than rejoice to be with him as a saviour.

SERMON X.

For we walk by faith, and not by sight.—2 COR. v. 7.

IN this verse a reason is given why we are said to be absent from the Lord while we are at home in the body; because all things are