

heaven is to prepare heaven for us, so our business on earth is to prepare and fit ourselves for heaven, to be providing and trimming our lamps against the bridegroom comes. So, to get evidences for heaven as well as dispositions—to get it certified and ratified to our souls every day more and more, this is a christian's employment—'To be laying up a good foundation against the time to come, that we may lay hold of eternal life,' 1 Tim. vi. 18; to get his evidences more cleared up every day, that we may take hold of eternal life, that is, that we may seize upon it as a man doth upon his own right and portion.

[4.] They declare plainly that they seek a country. There was not only a verbal, but a real confession; for by dwelling in tents they did more openly acknowledge their desires of another country. They did not go up and down, and tell men that they were strangers and pilgrims; but by dwelling in these poor movable habitations, when the Canaanites dwelt in cities, and built houses, hereby they declared to all that lived about them, that they looked for another country. So, christians, your business is to declare plainly that your journey lies towards heaven; you should discover your hopes more in your lives than you do, by walking suitably and answerably thereunto, and as those that are not ashamed of their country, that so you may draw in others to be companions with you in your journey to heaven. When all your cares, griefs, desires and endeavours are for civil and carnal things, you declare plainly that you savour of the world; but when the heart is taken up with better things, and the face of your conversation lies another way, then you declare plainly your journey is for heaven. And this is it which is meant everywhere by walking worthy of God and worthy of our vocation, that is, answerably and suitably to, and becoming your great hopes, and that kingdom and glory to which God hath called you. A christian should not live unsuitably to his hopes, but should discover them in his life, that all that see him may know that his heart and his hopes are above, and that God hath called him to his kingdom and glory: 1 Thes. ii. 12, 'That you would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.' This will discover whether you have a heavenly mind, yea or no.

## SERMON L.

*Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he hath prepared for them a city.—HEB. xi. 16.*

WHAT is the meaning of this—'God is not ashamed to be called their God?' This shame might be supposed to arise from the unworthiness of these patriarchs, or from the slenderness of their reward.

1. From the contemptibleness and unworthiness of these patriarchs; and so the sense would be that God is not ashamed to abase himself to, put honour upon his servants that honour him. Abraham, and Isaac and Jacob were persons of contemptible appearance, a few poor wan-

dering men, of small power and possessions, in comparison of the Amorites, who were lords of the soil and country where they were; and yet the great God of heaven and earth was not ashamed to take his title from them, and to be known in the world as the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. Or else—

2. From the slenderness of their present condition and reward which he had given them. If Canaan had been all the reward which they had, and if God had no better thing to give them, he would have been ashamed to be called their God; if we had had no other recompense, but what he gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in this life, it were a poor business. But now when they sought a heavenly country, God can own the title with honour, that he is the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. It is allurements enough to draw in the world to him, that they shall have the blessing of Abraham, and shall have such a country as Abraham has, and that they shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the heavenly kingdom. Hence it is that Christ proveth the resurrection from this title: Mat. xxii. 32. 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' The argument standeth on three feet.

[1.] To be a God to any is to be a benefactor, and to do them good. The tenor of the covenant on God's part is expressed by this, I will be their God; the tenor of the covenant on our part is expressed by this, They shall be my people. Now God cannot be called the God of any, but he must do them good.

[2.] To be a God to any is to be an eternal benefactor, not only in this life, but after this life was ended, that he had benefits for them in the other world. For it was after the death of the patriarchs that God assumed this title: Exod. iii. 6, 'I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' This argues that there shall be an eternal communication of glory to them.

[3.] This covenant was made with the whole man; not only with their souls, but with their bodies. As whole God in the covenant is made over to Abraham, so God will be a God to the whole of Abraham; and therefore he bore circumcision, which was the mark of the covenant, on his body. Now if Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had perished in their death, it had been a dishonourable thing for God to be called their God; and therefore as the soul hath a blessed immortality, so the body shall have a glorious resurrection.

By opening this place our text will receive some light. If the patriarchs had nothing to look for but what they had in this world, it had been a dishonourable thing for God to be called their God and their benefactor; but now he hath prepared for them a city. It is called a city with allusion to the walled towns of the Canaanites, they were not great lords as the Amorites, nor possessors of towns and cities, but they had a city above.

*Obs. 1.* Those that renounce the world for God's sake shall be no losers.

These patriarchs left their country, and wandered up and down at God's command; they had no settled abode, but God had prepared for them a city. Levi had no portion among his brethren, but God was his portion: James ii. 5, 'Hearken, my beloved brethren, hath not God

chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?’

*Obs. 2.* Heaven is fitly set forth under the notion of a city.

Heaven is expressed by several metaphorical names in scripture. Sometimes it is called paradise, or a garden of delight: 2 Cor. xii. 4, ‘How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words;’ and that you might not think he meant an earthly paradise, he calls it ‘the third heaven,’ ver. 2. Sometimes it is called a house: John xiv. 2, ‘In my Father’s house are many mansions.’ Sometimes it is called a kingdom: James ii. 5, ‘Heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him.’ And here it is called a city. All these notions do help one another. For the pleasantness of it, it is called a garden or paradise; but because in a garden there is not a fixed abode, therefore it is called a house. But a house may be too strait for the great number of the inhabitants, and therefore it is called a city; but a city hath not that splendour in it that a court hath, therefore it is called a kingdom. So that for the pleasantness it is called paradise; to note our abode and rest, a house; for the amplitude of it, a city; for the splendour of it, a kingdom. Take it again: in a kingdom there are many that never knew one another’s names, nor saw one another’s faces, therefore it is called a city, to show that in heaven all the saints are neighbours, and know one another; but then to note our constant and more entire familiarity, it is called a house; and to note the pleasantness of it, it is called a garden or paradise. And it is notable that all these names are given to the church; it is called a garden of spices: Cant. v. 1, ‘I am come into my garden, my sister, my spouse;’ the house of God: 1 Tim. iii. 15, ‘That thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God;’ the city of God: Ps. lxxxvii. 3, ‘Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God;’ and Eph. ii. 19, ‘Believers are said to be fellow-citizens of the saints, and of the household of God.’ And it is called the kingdom of heaven in many places, because here we are trained up for the kingdom that is above; the church is the seminary of heaven; here are the suburbs of the great city, where all the elect of God do meet to live and dwell for evermore.

The notion that I am to prosecute is a city. There are diverse resemblances between heaven and a city. In a city there is a multitude of inhabitants; so Christ’s people, take them all together, are a multitude which none can number. In a city there are plenty of all things; so in heaven there is no lack, for there God is all in all.<sup>1</sup>

But it differs from other cities in the world in this, that there are no wars, no tumults, no confusions, as there may be here below. When the nations are represented as in a tumult, it is said, God sitteth in the heavens, in a quiet posture: Ps. ii. 4, ‘He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh, the Lord shall have them in derision.’ All is quiet in heaven, when all the world is in a hurry, striving against Christ. This is a city where there is no death; in an earthly city, if a man be absent ten or twenty years, there is a new face of men and things, for all things below are obnoxious to change; but this heavenly city always

<sup>1</sup> See the resemblances between heaven and a city, Ver. 10.

hath the same face. There is no abiding city in a perishing world : Heb. xii. 14, 'For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.' There are no vicissitudes of night or day, calm or tempest, summer or winter, but all things are in an eternal spring of beauty and flourishing, where the inhabitants are preserved from all sin, misery, sickness, and grief. It is a city where there is no use of carpenters and masons, but 'whose builder and maker is God,' ver. 10.

*Use.* O ye that are citizens! put in for an interest in this great city; that you may go to a better city when you are called away from this; that you may go to the citizens above, and enjoy the freedom of that happy place. You who are countrymen, take heed you be not shut out of this city of God.

*Obs.* 3. This city is a city prepared. But how is it prepared?

1. It is prepared for us by God the Father in his decree: Mat. xxv. 34, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world;' so I Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him;' that is, intended for the heirs of promise. God hath designed the persons, the particular portion, and degree of glory which the saints shall enjoy, long before the world was.

2. It is prepared for us by Christ; for we hold heaven not only by gift, but by purchase. Christ hath been at great cost to prepare heaven, and furnish this city for us; he came from heaven to prepare it for us; he laid the foundation of it in his own merit, from whence our title groweth, and therefore it is called 'the purchased possession,' Eph. i. 14. Christ opened the door for us, that was before shut. And as he came from heaven to prepare the way, so he is gone to heaven to set all things to rights, from whence he will come, and fetch home his bride with triumph: John xiv. 23, 'I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself, that where I am, there ye may be also.' He is gone to heaven as our legal head, to seize upon it in our right, and to possess it in our name; and there he maketh intercession for us, that our sins may be no impediment to us. And as our mystical head, or author of grace, so he sendeth abroad the Spirit.

3. It is prepared by the Spirit. This concerneth the inhabitants. Heaven is not only prepared for us, but we are said to be prepared for heaven: Rom. ix. 23, 'And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory.' So as heaven is said to be kept for us, we are kept for it: 1 Peter i. 4, 5, 'To an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for us, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.' Christians! God is ready, if we are ready; there it stoppeth: old bottles will not hold the new wine of glory. We should soon be translated if once we were fit. As corn is gathered into the garner as soon as it is ripe, so if we were ripe for heaven, our translation would not be long deferred.

But I shall come to the main point.

*Obs.* 4. The top of all happiness is to have God for our God.

That was the ground of the patriarch's blessedness, that 'God is not

ashamed to be called their God ;' Ps. cxliv. 15, 'Happy is that people that is in such a case ; yea, happy is that people whose God is the Lord.' The judgment of the flesh is, Happy are those who have no complaining in their streets, no want in their families ; but the judgment of the flesh is corrected and retracted by the judgment of faith — 'Yea, rather, happy is the people whose God is the Lord.' So doth grace determine that this is the top of our happiness, to have God for our God. Here I shall inquire into three things—(1.) What it is to have God for our God. (2.) Who are they that have God for their God. (3.) How it may be improved.

*First.* What it is to have God for our God ? I will be a God to thee, is more than to say, I will be thy friend, I will be thy father, I will be thy benefactor. There is a greater weight and emphasis in this expression than if he should say, I will give thee heaven and everlasting life. 'Do this and live,' was the covenant made with Adam ; in the covenant of grace it is, 'I will be thy God,' and I will infallibly work whatever shall conduce to thy salvation. Here are three questions to be answered. (1.) Who is engaged ? (2.) To what he is engaged. (3.) How he will perform this engagement.

1. Who is engaged ? *Ans.* The infinite God, *quantus, quantus est*, as great and glorious as he is ; he is our portion. God loves to speak magnificently in the covenant ; therefore he doth not only say, I will give heaven, grace, and glory to thee, but I will be a God to thee : Gen. xvii. 7, 'I will establish my covenant between me and thee, and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.' Whatever he is, or hath, or can do, that is thine. We do not believe it, but we have God's word for it often in scripture—'I will be thy God.' All things in God are thine, the essence of God, and the subsistences in the godhead.

[1.] The essence of God is thine ; he will do all things answerably to an infinite power and goodness ; as glorious, as infinite, as mighty, as excellent as he is, it is wholly made over to us. His mercy, wisdom, love, power, justice, all this is thine ; his mercy is thine, to pardon thee ; his wisdom is thine, to provide for thee ; his love is thine, to bestow grace and glory, and all good things on thee ; his power is thine, to secure all to thee, and preserve thee to salvation ; his justice is thine, to fulfil all his promises to thee. Whole God is made over to us in covenant, and will be given to us as far as the proportion of the creature will stretch to receive him. If we be imperfective, the fault is in ourselves ; there is no fault in our portion ; it is able to perfect us in the way, if we were capable of perfection in it.

[2.] The subsistences in the godhead are ours. God the Father is ours to love us and to elect us—'The Father himself loveth you,' John xvi. 27. God the Son is ours to redeem us, to be born for us, to die for us, to rise again for us, to ascend up into heaven for us, and to sit at God's right hand for us : Isa. ix. 6, 'For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given ;' Cant. ii. 16, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.' And God the Holy Ghost is ours to dwell in us and work in us, and to conduct and guide us to glory : 1 Cor. iii. 16, 'Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ?' So that whatever Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

is or can do for your salvation, it is yours, and made over to you in covenant. Look, as when there was a covenant made between Jehoshaphat and the king of Israel, Jehoshaphat promised Ahab whatever he had and could do: 1 Kings xxii. 21, 'I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses;' so in this covenant, whatever God can do is ours; his power is ours; whatever God doth is for our good; his providence is ours. 'I will be thy God,' that is, I will do all that a God can do for thy everlasting happiness.

2. To what he is engaged? *Ans.* To give us a better thing than the world can afford, to give us all spiritual and eternal blessings, and other things in order thereunto. This is the first and fundamental promise, 'I will be thy God;' it implieth pardon, grace, glory, the conduct of providence, or the subserviency of all the accidents and emergencies of the present life for our spiritual good, all these are included in the covenant. In the covenant of works there is no such promise, for there God did not infallibly bind himself to conduct them to glory, as he doth in the covenant of grace. The tenor of the covenant of works was, 'Do this and live, sin and die.' God made not this promise to Adam so explicitly, 'I will be thy God.' When God saith, 'I will be thy God,' he means he will give us such blessings as are proper for a God to give, which none other can give; as to pardon and justify, and God is the supreme judge, his sentence is decisive; to sanctify, which is beyond the power of a creature; to bless providences, God is the disposer of all human affairs—'Of him, and through him, and to him are all things,' Rom. xi. 36; to glorify; and it is in his power alone to bestow heaven. These things God hath bound himself to: he will justify, which is an act of the highest judicature; he will sanctify, which is an act of divine power, or an act of the supreme cause; he will bless providences, which is an act of the sovereign Lord; and he will glorify us, which is an act of the chiefest good.

3. How God will perform this engagement? *Ans.* He will do all things answerable to the infinite power, greatness, and goodness of a God. As it was said of Arauna: 2 Sam. xxiv. 23, 'All these did Arauna, as a king, give unto the king.' Arauna was of the blood royal of the Jebusites, and he gave like a man of such extraction, with a royal mind. So in this promise, 'I will be thy God,' God hath promised that he will not only act for us, but act as a God; he will act by a firm covenant, we have an interest in all that he can do for our salvation; he will pardon as a God: Hosea xi. 9, 'I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger; I will not return to destroy Ephraim, for I am God, and not man, the Holy One in the midst of thee.' Alas! our thoughts are limited, our patience is soon tired; we soon grow weary of forgiving if we forgive seven times: What! must we forgive seven times a day? but now he will pardon as a God, as one that hath infinite mercy, love, and patience. And he will sanctify as a God; he will create a clean heart; and the divine power is set a-work to give us all things necessary to life and godliness: 2 Peter i. 3, 'According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness.' And he will as a God supply our wants; he will not only give us water out of the fountain, but out of the rock, when

he seeth it good for us. And he will glorify as a God; the apostle speaks of 'a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' 2 Cor. iv. 17. As God is an infinite God, so he will give an infinite reward; and as he is an eternal God, so he will give an eternal reward; for in heaven God doth act like himself. Thus he will do all things in a divine manner, all things that are a help and not a hindrance to bring us to our everlasting state.

*Secondly.* Who are the persons and the people whose God is the Lord? *Ans.* In regard of superiority and supremacy, God is the God of all the earth: Ps. xxiv. 1, 'The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.' Nay, in regard of common bounty, he is the God of all the earth, as he gives life, breath, protection, and maintenance to all creatures. But then there is a peculiar people, and so it is said more especially, the visible church is God's portion and heritage: Deut. xxxii. 9, 'For the Lord's portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance;' 1 Chron. xvii. 24, 'The Lord of Hosts is the God of Israel, even a God to Israel.' Mark how distinctly the scripture speaks; he is not only the God of Israel, in regard of supremacy, and superiority; but he is a God to Israel, in regard of his bounty, goodness, and communicative grace. But within the bounds of the church there are a peculiar people. There may be a great deal of bran in the visible church, for the visible church is too coarse a boulder to get these people severed; therefore God useth a finer searce: Zech. xiii. 8, 'Two parts therein shall be cut off and die, but the third shall be left therein.' There are *ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότερον*, the elect out of the elect, God's own peculiar people, who have a special interest in him, and not only a public interest, as the church hath in him. Now these people may be known (1.) By the manner of their coming into this relation; (2.) By their manner of living in this relation.

1. By their manner of coming into this relation; something God doth, and something they do, and so they are brought into this relation.

[1.] Something God doth to bring them into this relation. God calls them by an effectual calling: Heb. v. 4, 'No man taketh this honour to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.' By effectual calling God's election is put into act, and by his Spirit he taketh actual possession of the hearts of those who belong to the election of grace. And it is necessary that God should begin with us: God must choose us before we can choose him; he takes possession of our hearts by his Spirit before we can take possession of him as our God: Zech. xiii. 8, 9, 'Two third parts therein shall be cut off and die, and the third shall be left therein.' He will cut off some out of the church, and some in the church—'And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried. They shall call on my name, and I will hear them; I will say, It is my people, and they shall say, The Lord is my God.' First the Lord chooseth us for a people, and then he frames our hearts to choose him for the Lord our God: so Hosea ii. 23, 'I will say to them which were not my people, Thou art my people; and they shall say, Thou art our God.' God begins: he makes the first motion. The saints do not only choose God because of his alluring

worth, but from his attractive virtue and power, whereby he breaks in upon their hearts to draw them strongly and powerfully, yet freely and willingly, to himself. He turns out the devil, and brings them to the obedience of the gospel.

[2.] Something we must do. When God hath taken possession of the heart, we choose him for our all-sufficient portion, and resign, surrender, and give up ourselves to him.

(1.) We choose him for our all-sufficient portion and chiefest good: Ps. lxxiii. 25, 'Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides thee.' The blind world choose the gifts of God, and the meanest of his gifts, the honours, riches, pleasures of this world; but the saints choose God himself, in the sense of his love, and by the power of his grace. In the sense of his love; they know God as he knoweth them, and so love and choose him as he does them. And by the power of his grace. Turning from the creator to the creature was our first parent's sin, and corrupt nature goes on in that averseness. They that are strangers from the womb can never return to God that made them till they have another heart put into them; they run away from God, and are for temporal good things: Ps. iv. 6, 'Who will show us any good?' there is the worldling's blind choice. They are wandering and groping about for good; but the children of God cry out, 'Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.' This is their choice: they choose God for their portion, his favour for their happiness, and their souls are satisfied in him. Naturally all men are Gadarenes, who preferred their swine before Christ; they prefer their lusts, pleasures, profits, carnal satisfactions, pleasing of their senses, gratifying their corrupt desires, before the favour of God and the enjoyment of God. But now grace altereth the temper of the heart, that the saints choose God for their portion, and his testimonies for their heritage.

(2.) We resign and surrender ourselves to God. When the saints choose God for their portion, they give up themselves to God again. Look, as in the covenant that was made between the prophet and his wife: Hosea iii. 3, 'Thou shalt not be for another man, so will I also be for thee,' so in the covenant that is between the Lord and us; he is for us, and we are to be for him; we take him for our portion, and give up ourselves to him again as his people. All that is God's is ours, his grace, mercy, love, justice, truth, wisdom, all is made over to us; and all that is ours must be God's, our life, strength, reputation, time, parts, estate, interests, relations, our all is his: 2 Chron. xxx. 8, 'Yield yourselves unto the Lord,' or give the hand unto the Lord. God and we do as it were strike hands, and there is a bargain made between us; all that God is and can do, so far as we can receive it, is made over to us; and then all that we are and can do is altogether for God. We eat and drink to him, and trade to him, and set ourselves apart to live and act for God. There is a mutual taking and giving: Cant. vi. 3, 'I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine.' Thus they may be known by the manner of their coming into this relation.

2. By their manner of living and walking in this relation. They glorify him as God. It was the fault of the gentiles that 'when they knew God, they glorified him not as God,' Rom. i. 21. But the people



of God glorify him as God by subjection and dependence; in respect of his superiority and supremacy, so they profess subjection to God; and in respect of sufficiency and ability, so they profess dependence upon God.

[1.] By subjection to him. When God gave the law, he said, 'I am the Lord thy God,' Exod. xx. 2. Many would depend upon God when they would not obey him: they will lean upon the Lord, and say, 'Is not the Lord among us?' Micah iii. 11. But they are God's people that walk in obedience to him. God is our God whether we will or no, in point of supremacy; he hath a right to rule and govern us, and a power to punish and destroy us; but we own him as a God by a full, and free, and voluntary subjection and obedience to his laws. When the people of Israel entered into covenant with the Lord, you find: Exod. xxiv. 7, 'He took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people, and they said, All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' And you may observe that Moses sprinkled half the blood upon the altar and half the blood upon the people, vers. 6, 8. The covenant bindeth mutually. God doth come under an obligation to us: there is half the blood sprinkled upon the altar, and we come under an obligation to be subject to God; there was half the blood sprinkled upon the people. Subjection is a necessary respect from the creature to the creator: God never made any creatures but he put them under some law. The angels are under a law, and they must yield him homage, love, and service. The whole frame of nature is under a law and decree that they cannot pass; so are we under a law to God; but we would tread out the corn, and will not endure the yoke. But as we take God for our God, so we must yield him homage, love, and service.

[2.] By dependence. Trust is the creature's best respects, and proper to God. There is a moderate love that we have to other things, but if we trust in them, we rob God of his proper due; and this is idolatry, for we make that our God which we depend upon, and have recourse to in straits and extremities, as the 'mariners called every man upon his god,' Jonah i. 5. Love is an acknowledgment of God's goodness, but trust acknowledgeth many of his attributes at once, his power, his love, his truth, his justice, and so glorifieth God as God. In the covenant God requireth obedience, but chiefly dependence, because we depend upon him for strength to yield that obedience. We do not only depend upon him for blessings to be performed on his part, but likewise for strength to perform the duties that are required on our part. The great intent of the covenant of grace is that we may be nothing in ourselves, and look for all from God; and therefore those people whose God is the Lord, as they choose God, and give up themselves to him, so they live in subjection to him and dependence on him.

*Thirdly.* How is it to be improved?

1. To contentment and complacency in our portion. Surely we have cause to be contented. To our happiness there needeth no more than God. Can we find any want in him? Ps. xvi. 5, 6, 'The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance, and of my cup; thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen to me in a pleasant place; yea, I have a

goodly heritage.' He that hath God for his portion hath enough. All other portions have a want annexed to them, but this alone sufficeth: Rev. xxi. 7, 'He that overcometh shall inherit all things, and I will be his God, and he shall be my son;' therefore he shall inherit all things, because God is his God. *Possidet possidentem omnia*, he possesseth him that possesseth all things. God is sufficient to his own happiness, much more to ours: God is enough for himself, and that which will satisfy God will much more satisfy a creature; as that which will fill an ocean will fill a small vessel. You disparage the all-sufficiency of God when you have God for your portion, and yet are perplexed with base, earthly desires as others are, as if he that fills all things could not fill up thy heart. This is the misery of a worldly man's portion, that while he hath what he desires still there is a want, and still his sore runneth. Here is all that we can need or desire if we had eyes to see it.

2. Improve it for comfort in deep distresses. When all is gone, yet if we have a covenant-interest in God left, that is enough to support the heart. David was plundered at Ziklag, and lost all he had, yet David 'encouraged himself in the Lord his God,' 1 Sam. xxx. 6

Sometimes a poor christian hath no friends in the world, but God is his friend; though all be gone, yet God is not gone; God is alive still, and God is mine still; as one said, *Deus meus, et omnia mea*—God is mine, and all things are mine. So Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls; yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' If the oil in the cruse and the meal in the barrel be spent—if the creatures have spent all their allowance, yet God is not spent. This is the life of heaven, to live immediately upon God, for in heaven God is all in all. It is an anticipation of heaven when we can see all things in God—house, home, life, food, maintenance, and protection; as they in the wilderness, when they wanted houses: Ps. xc. 1, 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' This expoundeth Paul's riddle: 2 Cor. vi. 10, 'As having nothing, and yet possessing all things;' as having nothing in our own hands, but all things in God's. If God bear the purse for us we cannot be poor. Surely they do not know what it is to have God for their God who are wholly dejected with worldly losses, as if there were no God in heaven, as if there were no covenant, no such engagement of God to us. Who would complain of the loss of a candle when he hath the sun? To live altogether upon outward supplies is the mere life of sense; but when we have no friend in the world, no help in the creature, none to stead us or stand by us, then are we put to prove the virtue of our portion. God takes away the creature that we may have an experience of the goodness of our interest in him, what it is to have God for our God.

3. It must be improved to dependence upon God for the future supplies of the present life, till our work be done, and we come to heaven: Ps. xxiii. 1, 'The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want.' We have a God who hath the command of all things. If God carry the purse in his own hands, we are never in the worse condition; he is our father,

and will give us what is necessary for us. He is worse than an infidel that will not provide for his own. If we are God's, he will provide for us; and therefore when we are in any doubt, conflicting with unbelief, we may plead with God, and say, 'I am thine, save me,' Ps. cxix. 94. And you may plead with yourselves, and say, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God; for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God,' Ps. xliii. 5. Thus may christians improve their interest, as an encouragement to trust.

4. We must improve it especially to a hope and expectation of a better happiness than the world yields—to give us hope in life and in death, that we may expect all those things which God hath promised. We must shoot the gulf before we can pass into the land of promise, where God will indeed show himself to be our God; and therefore when death begins to hasten upon us, let us remember that he is our God, and that he hath better things to give us, else he would be ashamed to be called our God. The world is not a fit place wherein to give us our portion; it is a fit place for dogs to have their portion, but not for children. Now our interest must keep up our hopes. Surely our God hath some better thing than the world yields to bestow upon us; as the patriarchs went to their graves professing their hopes of a better state: Ps. lxxiii. 26, 'My flesh and my heart faileth, but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever.' When the decays of nature creep upon you apace, say, I have an interest in God, and I look for an eternal portion; when my flesh begins to fail, and consume, and waste away—when the heart and life is even spent, and the lamp is ready to go out, yet thou art my God, and my portion for ever. As Olevian comforted himself, My hearing is gone, and my smelling is gone, and my sight is a-going, and my speech and feeling is almost gone; but the lovingkindness of God shall never depart from me. When worldly men see the vanity of their portion, and begin to discover how the world hath cheated them, then you see the happiness of yours. The error of their choice is best seen at death: when their portion is gone, then yours remaineth; their good things are past, yours are to come: Jer. xvii. 11, 'As the partridge sitteth on eggs, and hatcheth them not; so he that getteth riches, and not by right, shall leave them in the midst of his days, and at his end shall be a fool.'

#### *Application.*

*Use 1.* Information; It informs us of two things.

1. Of the great love of God, that he would be our God, and take us for his people. The apostle saith, Heb. vi. 13, 'Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.' So when God had no greater thing to give us, he gave us himself. There is nothing more infinite and glorious than himself, and he hath bestowed himself on us. If we had all things else, and should want God, it would not perfect us. Oh, the greatness of his love, that he would take us to be his, and that he would be ours! Christ shed his blood for us to this end. These are the two great things that set forth the love of God; the covenant, and the death of Christ; the death of Christ, by which he got a new title to us; and the covenant, by which we have an interest in him.

2. Of the happiness of the children of God above wicked men. Wicked men may have Ishmael's blessing and Esau's portion; they may have the world to be theirs, but they have not God to be theirs, as the saints have. You think it is a great matter when a carnal man can say, This house is mine, this estate is mine, this lordship is mine, this kingdom is mine; but a christian can say more, 'This God is mine, this Christ is mine, this Holy Spirit is mine. Alas! riches, honours, and worldly greatness are poor things to God, made ours by a covenant interest; these things may suit better with our present humours, but they can never yield us solid contentment.

*Use 2. Caution.* Take heed of those things that may withdraw God from us. Sin in the general makes God stand at a distance from us: Isa. lix. 2, 'Your iniquities have separated between you and your God.' It robbeth us even of God himself; and in robbing a man of God, it robbeth him of all other things; for in God we have all; his favour is life; better never have been born than to live out of the favour of God: Ps. lxxiii. 3, 'Thy lovingkindness is better than life. He is house and home to us: Ps. xc. 1, 'Lord, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations.' He is wealth, and honour, and pleasure to us, his face maketh heaven—'In thy presence there is fulness of joy,' Ps. xvi. 11. Let us then walk more watchfully; especially let us take heed of making bold with God to please men. Doth your happiness depend upon them or upon God? Upon having their favour or God's favour? Carnal compliance is a very provoking sin, and most contrary to the duties of the covenant.

*Use 3. Exhortation.* It exhorteth us (1.) To take God for our portion; (2.) To make it sure that God is our portion.

1. To take God for our portion. We are known by the choice of our portion. There is nothing distinguisheth man and man so much as this—what do we choose for our happiness and portion? A worldly man is not dainty in his choice, anything contents him, that which comes next to hand, which yields a present satisfaction. But a godly man cannot be so contented; he is more dainty in his choice; he must have a portion to satisfy the desires of that divine nature that is infused into him—a portion that must endure for ever; he must have his soul contented, his conscience as well as his affections; he must have something that will stead him when he comes to die, otherwise he cannot be contented. Let me urge two or three arguments.

[1.] There is none so fit as God to be our portion; he is the best and greatest, and he is the most durable and lasting portion.

(1.) He is the best portion; there is none greater than he, none better than he. It is never well with us till we subscribe Christ's conclusion: Mat. xix. 17, 'There is none good but one, that is God.' God is good of himself, the fountain of good; other things, whatever good they have is of him, and it is infinitely greater and better in him than in them; and that small good that other things have is not to hold us on them, but to lead us to God who is originally good, infinitely good, and communicatively good. He is good of himself, which nothing else is—good in himself, yea, goodness itself. The heart is never in a good frame till we see that none is good but God—no good above him, besides him, or beyond him; unless it cometh from him, it is not

good. Oh! be not of a Gadarene spirit, to prefer a seeming good before a real, the stream before the fountain, the shadow before the substance.

(2.) He is the most durable portion. The good things of this life are perishing; our life is short and they serve for this life only; they do not go down with us to the grave; it were well if they did continue to the grave. We are mortals, and they are more mortal—'Riches make themselves wings; they fly away as an eagle towards heaven,' Prov. xxiii. 5. There are many wings by which an estate flies away; there is the winds, the sea, the fire, the bad debtor, the displeasure of the magistrate, and the fury of the times. Experience hath taught us, that these things are not mere speculations, but real things. Many a man's estate hath died before himself, and then he hath lived like a neglected stalk when the flower is gone. But now God endures for ever; he was before the world was, and he will be when the world shall be no more. God will stand us in stead in death and after death.

(3.) He is most able to give us contentment, for he is sufficient to himself. Conscience cannot take contentment in the world, though the heart may be besotted with the world. The conscience is a sore place, and all the world cannot give us a plaster for it. Worldly things, the more we enjoy them, the more we see the vanity of them; but the more we enjoy God, the more we see the worth of God, and the more will the heart be ravished with him. You see what a sufficient durable good God is; but 'what hope hath the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' Job. xxvii. 8. The error of wicked men will be seen in death; when their portion is taken away from them, their grief will surpass the joy they took in it. What do wicked men think of their portion in hell when their good things are past? Are they more angry with it, or with themselves for choosing it? the folly of their choice is a part of their torment: Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things.' All their happiness in the world doth but yield matter for the worm to gnaw upon, that worm of conscience that shall never die. What would they give for one day of God's patience! But there they bewail themselves for choosing so unfit a portion for their souls. But then a godly man hath his portion at the full, whereas he hath but the beginnings here. There was a great deal of difference between Dives and Lazarus in this world, and there is much more in the other world.

[2.] As God is only fit, so there is none more willing to be taken for our portion. The Lord is not only goodness itself, but a communicative goodness; he communicates himself to us in Christ: Isa. lv. 2, 'Wherefore do ye spend your money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? Hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.' Before we come to take God for our portion, we taste his common goodness; he beginneth with us with common bounty. Many hunt after the world, and miss it; but who ever failed that resolved to take God for his portion? He complains that men would not take him for their God: Ps. lxxxii. 11, 'My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me.' He offereth himself to the world, but the world refuseth him.

[3.] In having God for our portion we have all things else, so far as it conduceth to our happiness. We have the worldly man's portion, and that upon better terms. When God gave Solomon liberty to ask what he would, he asked not riches and honours, but wisdom, and he had other things too: 1 Kings iii. 13, 'I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches and honour, so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days.' It is acceptable to God, when we pass by other things and choose himself; and when we choose him, we have other things with a blessing: Mat. vi. 33. 'Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and the righteousness thereof, and all these things shall be added to you.' God doth not promise outward things so as to make against our spiritual good; he promiseth them with himself and with his Christ, not against himself and against Christ. You would not have them to hinder you from your main portion, but so far as they are blessings you shall have them.

2. It presseth us to make it sure that God is our portion. This is our greatest business in the world, yet we take least pains to get it, and evidence it. *Tolle meum et tolle Deum*. If we cannot say that God is ours, it will be our torment, as it is the devil's, to think of God. Let us not be quiet till we can say, God is my God. Many say God is their God, but they are not his; he doth not own them for his people; therefore we must have some evidences, something to show for it: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power,' *ἐξουσίαν*, this privilege, 'to be called the sons of God.' We must have a grant and evidence to show for it, that God is our God. And if we have God for our portion, and do not know it, it is a great weakening of our comfort.

*Quest.* But how shall we know whether God be our God?

1. Did you ever enter into contract and covenant with him? Upon what terms and considerations did you enter into covenant with God? None but God has a right by conquest; God has a right and title to us every way; but when he comes to convert a sinner, he has another title; then he has a title by conquest. Was your spirit ever subdued to yield to him? Do you remember when you were bond-slaves of Satan, that God broke in upon you with a mighty and powerful work of grace, subduing your heart, and causing you to yield, to give the hand to him, to come and lie at his feet, and lay down the weapons of defiance? Didst thou ever come as a guilty creature, willing to take laws from God, and cry, Lord, what wouldst thou have me to do? Though it be God's condescension to capitulate with us, yet we do not capitulate with him as equals, but as a subdued creature, who is taken captive and ready to be destroyed every moment, and is therefore willing to yield and cry quarter.

2. How do you behave yourselves in the covenant? Do you love God as the chiefest good? Do you seek his glory as the utmost end? Do you obey him as the highest Lord? Do you depend on him as your only paymaster? For this is to give God the glory of a God.

[1.] Do you love him as the chiefest good? After marriage there is embracing; so when we enter into contract with God, we love God. Every one will say, They love God it were pity they should live else; but what dost thou do for him? Dost thou do more for him than any

else? What is it you desire in the world? his favour, or outward things? What is your care to get and keep most? What are those things about which you find joy and grief most exercised? These are the signs of love; if the enjoyment of God's favour be the greatest joy and contentment of your souls, and if the offending of God, and grieving of his Spirit, and the loss of the light of his countenance for that, be the greatest grief of your heart, then you love God as the chiefest good.

[2.] Do you seek his glory as the utmost end? God would have us in all things we do, to aim at his glory: 1 Cor. x. 31, 'Whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' We are set apart for this end and purpose; and therefore, is your living, a living to God?

[3.] Do you obey God as the highest lord and law-giver? Obedience is necessary; God will be glorified in his sovereignty, and that is a great evidence of your interest in him.

[4.] Do you depend upon him as your paymaster and benefactor? When you do all things as looking for your reward from God, it is a great evidence: Rom. ii. 29, 'He is a Jew which is one inwardly, whose praise is not of men, but of God.' Is your heart taken up with the praise of God, the approbation of God, and the rewards of God?

But if all this will not help you to judge your hearts, there are but two things will give you comfort, and that is your own choice, and your own resignation. Your choice—Do you choose God for your portion? though you cannot say, God hath chosen you, and that he is yours, yet will you choose him? Are you resolved you will not be satisfied without him? Will you not be put off with anything besides God? And then, do you resign up yourselves to him? Do you say, Lord! I will be thine, I will not be mine own? As that nation that came to the Romans, and they refused to help them, they came with this plea, If you will not look upon us as your allies, look upon us as your vassals and subjects, as we resolve to be; so do you by an importunate faith thus fasten yourselves upon God, and say, Lord! if thou wilt not honour me, love me, bless me as thine; I am resolved to be thine, and if I perish, one must perish that desires to be thine. When you thus force yourselves as it were upon the Lord, that is all that is left for the relief of your souls, and to evidence your happy state.

## SERMON LI.

*By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac; and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure—HEB. xi. 17-19.*

THIS chapter is the chronicle of faith, or a record of the heroical acts which that grace had produced in all ages; or, if you will, the history of the most eminent believers, that ever have been in the world. When