

SERMONS UPON HEBREWS XI.

SERMON I.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. HEB. xi. 1.

IN the close of the former chapter the apostle had spoken of living by faith, and thereupon taketh occasion to show what faith is. He that would live by faith had need search out the nature of it; an unknown instrument is of little use. It is true, a man may act faith that cannot describe it artificially, as an infant may live, that doth not know what life is; but however, it is more comfortable when our thoughts are distinct, explicit, and clear, concerning the nature of those graces that are so necessary for us, and the christian life is much more orderly, and less at random and peradventure. And therefore the apostle, to teach them this holy art of exercising faith, and living by faith to more advantage, he gives them here an excellent description of it, 'Now faith is the substance,' &c.

In the words there is the thing described, and the description itself. The thing described is Faith; the description is this, 'It is the substance of things hoped for,' &c. The description is proper, according to the rules of art, *Habitus distinguuntur per actus, et actus per propria objecta*, habits are described by their formal acts, and acts restrained to their proper objects; so faith is here described by its primary and formal acts, which are referred to their distinct objects. The acts of faith are two; it is the substance, it is the evidence. Think it not strange that I call them acts, for that is it the apostle intends, therefore Beza says, in rendering this place, he had rather paraphrase the text, than obscure the scope; and he interpreteth it thus—Faith substantiates or gives a subsistence to our hopes, and demonstrates things not seen. There is a great deal of difference between the acts of faith, and the effects of faith. The effects of faith are reckoned up throughout this chapter; the formal acts of faith are in this verse. These acts are suited with their objects. As the matters of belief are yet to come, faith gives them a substance, a being, as they are hidden from the eyes of sense and carnal reason; so faith gives them an evidence, and doth convince men of the worth of them; so that one of these acts belongs to the understanding, the other to the will. By the one faith is a convincing demonstration, and by the other a practical application. By the one act it turns hope into some kind of present fruition and by the

other things altogether invisible are represented to the soul with clearness and certainty. In short, by faith things hoped for have a being; things not seen have an evidence.

I shall discuss the parts of the text as they lie in order.

First, I begin with the first act and object, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.'

1. Let me open the phrases. *Faith* is sometimes taken for the doctrine of faith, and sometimes for the grace of faith. Some take liberty to expound it of the former, the doctrine of faith, that is, the substance of things hoped for. I confess the words agree well, but not the scope; the doctrine of faith, *Fides quæ creditur*, is the substance of things hoped for; the word and faith do come under one description. But the apostle's drift here is to show, not what we do believe, but how we live by faith; therefore the grace is here understood, not the doctrine. Now the grace of faith is considered here, not as it justifies but rather as it sanctifies, as it is an instrument in the spiritual life. He speaketh of those acts which faith discovereth most in its use and exercise to baffle temptations, and to make us stand our ground under sore assaults, troubles, and persecutions.

Now this faith is the 'substance,' *ὑπόστασις*; that is, the word. Some difference there is about the rendering of it; the most usual significations of it are confidence and substance. Sometimes it is put for confidence, and for a firm and resolved expectation; as Heb. iii. 14, 'We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence firm, or steadfast unto the end,' *ἀρχὴν τῆς ὑποστάσεως*, it is the same word; but there we render it confidence; and it seems to be parallel with ver. 6, 'If we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end.' So 2 Cor. ix. 4, 'In this confident boasting,' *ὑποστάσει ταύτῃ τῆς καυχήσεως*, it is the same word. And thus the Septuagint translates the Hebrew word, which they render sometimes by *spes*, sometimes by *hypostasis*; and so in profane authors, Plutarch calls those that stand out after the field is won, *ὑφισταμένους*, because of their great confidence. Polybius calleth the valorous resistance of Horatius Cocles, *ὑπόστασις*, which use of the word is proper to the original of it, *ὑφίστασθαι, firmiter stare*.

2. The second explication is the *substance*. The word signifies substance or subsistence; because confident expectation gives our hopes a kind of present or actual being, and apprehends things to come as present and subsisting, and causes them to work, as if they were already enjoyed; therefore our translators, fitly I conceive, render it here substance, saith the Greek scholist, *τὰ ἐν ἔλπισιν*, &c. Though things in hope are absent and to come, yet in the certain firm expectation and persuasion of the believer, they are present and real; so that the meaning is, faith doth not only look out with cold thoughts about things to come, but causes them to work as if they had already a being, and the believer were in the possession and enjoyment of them. And in this sense it is the substance of things hoped for; it gives them a being, while it beholds them in their original fountain, which is the word of promise; and while it unites and joins the soul to them by earnest hope, which is as it were an anticipation of our blessedness, and a pre-occupation of the joys of the world to come, faith causeth

such a subsistence and fiducial presence of the things hoped for in the mind of a believer, as that he concludes not only that they may be, or shall be, but that they already are. Faith is the substance, and that 'of things hoped for;' so he calls all the blessings of the covenant which are not yet enjoyed. Many things indeed were hoped for by the patriarchs, and believers of the old testament, which are now past, which are matters of mere belief, and not of hope to us, and so come under the latter description of faith, the evidence of things not seen, as the incarnation of Christ: yet their faith made those things present to them: John viii. 56, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day.' Abraham saw that day, and had a distinct view of it, though they were to them things hoped for; yet we believe them, though we do not see them. But there are other things which are only promised by God, and not yet enjoyed, that are simple matters of hope—as the general resurrection, the happiness of the glorified estate. Now faith doth as it were give a real being to them as if they were present. But then there are other things that may be enjoyed in this world, though not for the present, yet in some season; as the gracious presence of God, and his favourable returns after absence, and some estrangement, and deep affliction; these things may also be comprised in this expression, being things we hope for according to promise, and though they be absent, faith gives them a being and presence. You will find faith to be a kind of prophetic grace; for to faith, when God is absent, yet then he is present; when he hides his face, faith can look behind the veil, and there see fatherly love, and a God of mercy. And in scripture upon this account the children of God answer themselves, and antedate their praises. When they ask anything of God in prayer, faith asks and answers itself; it makes the help and mercy present which we ask according to God's will: Ps. vi. 4, 'Return, O Lord, deliver my soul;' then he answers himself, ver. 8, 9, 'The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping; the Lord hath heard my supplication.' But chiefly the expression reflects upon and is meant of those blessings which are only in expectation, and never in actual and complete enjoyment in this world, as heaven and the glory of the everlasting state; faith gives a being and real subsistence in the soul to the glory that is yet to be revealed.

Obj. I have done with the exposition, only here is a doubt; does not this confound faith and hope, to make things hoped for to be the object of faith, for graces differ in their objects?

Sol. I answer, There is a link between the graces, but no confusion, they are akin, but not confounded one with another. Blessedness to come is an object of faith, and an object of hope; it is an object of faith as it is present in the promises, or present in our hearts; and an object of hope in regard of its futurity, as it is yet to come. Faith is the ground of hope. Faith believeth, and hope expecteth. Faith first closeth with *verbum Dei*, the word of God, that assures us of such a blessedness; then hope is carried out towards *rem verbi*, the thing promised. Faith makes all things certain, and in a sort already present; but hope looks out for a full accomplishment. Faith gives us a right, and persuades us of the truth of things promised, and hope looks after the manifestation of them in possession. Faith is the hand, and

hope is the eye of the soul. Faith lays hold upon the promise, and hope looks out after the things promised. Faith awakens hope, and hope cherishes faith, bringing in constant support to it.

Out of this first clause let me observe—

Doct. That a lively faith doth give such a reality, certainty, and present being to things hoped for and yet to come, as if they were already actually enjoyed.

And thus it is said of Abraham, John viii. 56, that ‘he saw Christ’s day.’ Though there were many successions of ages between Christ and Abraham, yet faith made it present, represented it as if it were before his eyes; ‘he saw my day,’ not by a naked supposition but by real prospect, such as wrought upon his heart, and ‘he was glad,’ and leaped for joy. And so in this sense a believer is said to have eternal life, John iii. 36. He is not only sure of it when he dies, but hath it here in some sense: Heb. xi. 13, ‘These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off.’ Without faith we cannot see things at a distance. Here I shall show—

1. How faith doth this.

2. The benefit and advantage of this property of faith in the whole business of the spiritual life, how this is the great ground of our living by faith.

First. How does faith give a subsistence or present being to things hoped for? How can we be said to have that happiness which we do but expect?

I answer: Faith takes possession four ways—(1.) *Spe*, by hope. (2.) *Promissis*, in the promises. (3.) *Capite*, in our head. (4.) *Primitiis*, in the first-fruits.

1. *Spe*. By a lively hope it doth as if they were sip of the cup of blessing, and preoccupy and foretaste those eternal and excellent delights which God hath prepared for us, and affects the heart with the certain expectation of them, as if they were enjoyed. It appears by the effect of this hope, which is rejoicing with joy unspeakable and full of glory, 1 Peter i. 8. Joy is proper to fruition and enjoyment. We delight in a thing when we have it, and we delight in a thing when we hope for it; for a christian’s hope being built upon certain and unerring grounds, it causeth the same effect also. Natural hope is the flower of pleasure and foretaste of happiness: so spiritual hope is the harbinger and forerunner of those eternal and unmixed delights which the Lord hath prepared for us. Hope must needs make things present; for mark, it is more than supposition and conceit. Heaven in the thoughts differs very much from heaven in our hope, as much as taste doth from sight, or longing from looking. Hope causeth rejoicing—an affection proper to present possession. Where it is anything strong, it diverts the mind from present wants and miseries and comforts us, and doth us good with the evidence of a future blessed estate reserved for us in the heavens. Hope is not a presumptuous conceit, like the supposition of a beggar imagining himself to be a king, and how much power and glory it will bring to him when he is arrived to it; but like the expectation of a prince who is the undoubted heir of a crown, and knows that one day he shall possess it. There is not only a naked supposal, but a real certainty and expectation; therefore it must needs cause

some present joy. Bare contemplation works a kind of union. There is a union between the thoughts and the object, as there is between the star and the eye; it is present in my eye, though the star be a thousand miles distant: so there is a kind of union between the thought and the thing thought of; but much more a union between hope and the thing hoped for. for the soul doth as it were sally out by desire, and the effect of hope is far more real than the effects of naked and fond imagination. It filleth the soul with lively comfort: 'Rejoice in hope,' saith the apostle, Rom. xii. 12. Joy or delight is the effect of fruition or present enjoyment, yet delight is given to hope; for delighting is the complacency of the soul in a thing obtained; now hope, where it is strong, gives us a sweet contentment and joy from the evidence of a future blessed estate: Heb. iii. 6, 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of hope firm unto the end;' and Rom. v. 2. 'We rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' Hope, by a mystery, and spiritual kind of magic, fetcheth heaven from heaven, and makes it exist in the heart of a believer. It doth not only, like the spies, bring us tidings, and a glorious report of that heaven, but makes heaven to stoop and earth to ascend, and brings the believer into the company of the blessed, and brings down the joys of the Spirit into the heart of a believer. We cannot hope for anything, but we must in part possess the thing hoped for; much more in spiritual things. Faith doth not only unite you to Christ, but puts Christ and heaven into the soul by hope. There is the Lamb, the white throne, the glorified spirits, the upper paradise, and the tree of life in the soul, made really present to us by faith through a lively and watchful hope.

2. Faith takes possession, and gives a being to the things hoped for—*promissis*, in the promises. There is not only the union of hope, but a clear right and title; God hath passed over all those things to us in the covenant of grace. When we take hold of the promises, we take hold of the blessing promised by the root of it, until it flows up to full satisfaction. Hence those expressions, believers are said 'to lay hold of eternal life,' 1 Tim. vi. 12-19, by which their right is secured to them; 'And he that heareth my words, and believeth in me, hath eternal life,' John v. 24. Christ doth not only say, He shall have eternal life, but, *jus habet*, he hath a clear right and title to it, which is as sure as sense, though not as sweet. Faith gives us heaven, because in the promise it gives us a title to heaven; we are sure to have that to which we have a title; a right is enough, though there be not always an actual feeling; he hath a grant, God's word to assure him of it. He is said to have an estate that hath the conveyance of it, but it is not necessary he should carry his land upon his back. The fee of heaven is made over to us in law though not in deed; it is ours before we possess it, because God hath passed his word that we shall have it. And we hold it by covenant right, though we have it not by actual possession. It is not only prepared for us in the desigment of God, but given in respect of the indefeasableness of our right and property: Luke xxii. 29, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom.' Now faith receives the kingdom. We take hold of the thing promised by the root of it, and then we are sure of it; the promise is not a dry root, and the hand of faith is not a barren soil; but when once the hand of

faith takes hold of the promise, your interest will grow up into stalk and bud, and flower, and bring forth the fruit of full contentment. Now this contents a believer for the present, because faith considers what the promises are, and whose they are.

[1.] What are the promises?

(1.) Partly thus: They are the eruptions and overflows of God's grace and love. God's heart is so big with love to the saints that he cannot stay till the accomplishment of things, but he must acquaint us beforehand what he means to do for us: 'Before they spring forth,' saith God, 'I tell you of them,' Isa. xlii. 9. God's purposes of grace are like a sealed fountain, but his promises like a fountain broken open; before his purposes be brought to pass, he will tell us of them. The Lord might have done us good, and given us never a promise; but love concealed would not have been so much for our comfort. Now faith, seeing the testimony of God's love, counts itself bound to rest on the promise, and doth in effect say to the soul, as Naomi to Ruth, 'Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing,' Ruth iii. 18. So faith saith to the soul, Sit still, until thou know how the matter will be; for God will not be at rest till he hath accomplished all that he hath spoken to thee. God accounts our purposes to be obedience, because they are the first issues of our love: Ps. xxxii. 5, 'I said I will confess my sin unto the Lord, and thou forgavest mine iniquity;' and Heb. xi. 17, 'By faith Abraham offered Isaac,' because he did it in vow and purpose; much more should we accept promises which are the declarations of God's purposes as performances: it will in time come to pass.

(2.) Faith looks upon them as the rule and warrant of our certainty. They show how far God is to be trusted, even so far as he is engaged; *promittendo se facit debitorem*, God hath entered into bonds, and made himself a debtor to his creatures by his promises. The purposes of God are unchangeable; but now when his purposes are declared in his promises, you have a further holdfast upon him. God will try our faith, and see what credit he hath with men, whether they will depend upon him when there is security put into our hands. Well then, faith takes hold of the blessing, the promise; why? God hath passed his word, the word is gone out of his lips, and he cannot in honour recall it, Ps. lxxxix. 34; we may challenge him by his promise. Saith Austin of his mother, 'Lord, she was wont to throw thee in thy hand-writing;' 'she was wont to plead promises. God hath entered into bonds, and you may come and plead, and put those bonds in suit: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' An usurer thinks himself rich, though he hath little money in the house, because he hath bonds and good security. He that hath a thousand pounds in good security is in a better case than he that hath only a hundred pounds in ready money. A christian accounts God's promises to be his estate and patrimony, to be his substance and inheritance.

(3.) The promise is a pawn of the thing promised, and must be kept till performance comes. God's truth and holiness are left at pledge with the creature, and he will set them free; his honour lies at

stake, and you may tell him of it: 'Lord, for thy mercy and truth's sake,' Ps. cxv. 1. God is interested to vindicate his name from calumny and reproach. Well then, faith, looking upon the promises as the eruptions of God's love, flowing from God's eternal love, as so many bonds and holdfasts upon God, and looking upon them as a pawn left us till the blessing come, upon all these advantages it serves instead of fruition; it entertains things to come with like certainty as if they were accomplished.

[2.] Faith considers whose the promises are; they are God's, who is faithful and able. The faithful and almighty God, he cannot say and unsay. We have it under assurance enough if we have it under his word. There is both Sarah's and Abraham's faith commended to us in scripture; Sarah's, 'because she judged him faithful who had promised,' Heb. xi. 11. That God who cannot lie, that God who hath been ever tender of his word, that God who will destroy heaven and earth rather than one iota of his word shall pass away, he hath left us promises, and is not this as good as payment? Then faith looks upon God's almightiness. This was Abraham's faith: Rom. iv. 21, 'Being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was also able to perform.' It is a difficult thing to see how we shall be secured from so many temporal dangers, and brought safe to eternal happiness. Aye, but God is able, and we have his word; his saying is doing; 'God spake the word, and it was done,' Ps. xxxiii. 9. What can let the all-sufficient God? His promises are performances.

3. We have it *in capite*, in our head. That is a christian's tenure; he holds all in his head by Christ. Though he be not glorified in his own person, he is glorified in his head, in Jesus Christ. When Christ was glorified, we were glorified; he seized upon heaven in our right: John xiv. 2, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' Christ is gone to heaven in our name, to possess it in our stead; therefore a believer is assured he shall share therein. Therefore as Christ's glorification is past, so in a sense a believer's glorification is past; the head cannot rise, and ascend, and be glorified without the members: Eph. ii. 6, 'And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.' The apostle speaks of it as a thing past. He doth not say, We shall rise, shall sit down with him; but we are risen, and are ascended, and are sat down with him in heavenly places. In the right, and by virtue of the head, all of us are already glorified—an expression which implies greater certainty than a single prediction and promise; and all this that our comfort might be more abounding, and our courage more strong against dangers, death, difficulties, and all that may befall us in the way to heaven. Look, as we say of an old decrepit man, such an one hath one foot in the grave, a believer hath more than one foot in heaven; his head is there; we have taken possession of it in Christ, or rather he hath taken possession of it in our name; and as soon as we are united to Christ we are interested in this comfort, even whilst we lie groaning under pressures and miseries. Nothing but faith can unriddle this mystery, that a believer should be on earth, and yet in heaven; converse with sinners, and yet be in the company of glorified saints; or humbled with the pressures and inconveniences of the present state, yet be ascended and sit down with Christ in heavenly places. Faith gives you an actual

right and investiture in regard of your head. As soon as we are sanctified we are in a manner glorified also, and have not only a title and right in ourselves, but an actual possession in our head. As the head is crowned to reflect a glory and honour upon the whole body, so Jesus Christ is crowned, and we are glorified with him; and this makes the right more strong; for nothing on earth can take that happiness from me which Christ keeps for me in heaven.

4. Faith gives being *in primitiis*, in the first-fruits. The Israelites had not only a right to Canaan given them by God, but had livery and seizin of Canaan, where the spies did not only make report of the goodness of the land, but brought the clusters of grapes with them, not only to encourage them to conquer, but actually to instate them in the possession of the land; so doth God deal with a believing soul, not only give it a right, but give it some first-fruits; there is not only a report and promise, but God hath as it were given us livery and seizin of heaven. A believing soul hath the beginnings of that estate which it hopes for; some clusters of Eschol by way of foretaste in the midst of present miseries and difficulties. This is the great love of God to us, that he would give us something of heaven here upon earth, that he will make us enter upon our happiness by degrees. Saith the apostle, 1 Cor. xiii. 13, 'Now abideth faith, hope, charity.' Belief in this life is instead of intuition: by faith we begin our glory, and hereafter it is perfected, and made up in sight and vision. We have something by way of advance and foretaste, in our wants and present dangers. In nature things do not arrive at once to their last perfection; so it is in grace. God carrieth us on by degrees to heaven's glory and happiness. We have something by way of essay and prelibation, before we possess and enjoy the sovereign good, and those riches and treasures, and that fulness of eternal glory which God hath provided for us. But what are these first-fruits? They are three—union with Christ, the joys of the Spirit, and grace.

[1.] Union with Christ. There is some enjoyment of God in Christ here, this is the chiefest part of eternal life. What is heaven but the eternal enjoyment of God in Christ? And it is in a sort begun here. Union makes way for presence; though we are not present with Christ, yet we are united to Christ; and faith makes way for fruition. Then it will be 'God all in all,' 1 Cor. xv. 28; now it is 'Christ in us the hope of glory,' Col. i. 27. Now he comes to dwell in our hearts by way of pledge, that once the soul shall come to be filled up with God; this is an earnest and beginning of our full enjoyment of him. And when once this is done, then we may be certain of glory. I say, eternal life is begun when we are united to Christ. It is the same in substance, though not in degree, with the life of heaven. When once we are united to Christ, we can never be separated. Christ is still a head, he can never leave his old mansion and dwelling-place. Saith Luther, 'You can as soon separate the leaven from the dough, when one is wrought into the other, as you may separate Christ and a soul that is once united to him:' 1 John v. 12, 'He that hath the Son hath life.' You have the fairest part of eternal life already when you have Christ in you.

[2.] The joys of the Holy Ghost. When a man hath received the consolations of the Spirit, he is in the skirts and suburbs of heaven, he

begins to enter upon his country and inheritance. Heaven begins in us, when the Holy Ghost comes with peace, confidence, and joy, and doth leave a sweet sense and relish upon the soul. Fulness of joy, that is the portion of the life to come, and is reserved for God's right hand; but here is the beginning of heaven; and peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost is but the pledge of that joy which the blessed spirits have. And therefore the comforts of the Holy Ghost which we have here in this world are called 'joy unspeakable and full of glory,' 1 Peter i. 8, because it tends and works that way towards our glorious and happy estate in heaven. As the odours and sweet smells of Arabia are carried by the winds and air into the neighbouring provinces, so that before travellers come thither they have the scent of that aromatic country; so the joys of heaven are by the sweet breathings and gales of the Holy Ghost blown into the hearts of believers, and the sweet smells of the upper paradise are conveyed into the gardens of the churches; those joys which are stirred up in us by the Spirit before we get to heaven are a pledge of what we may expect hereafter. God would not weary our hopes by expecting too much, therefore he hath not only given us his word, but he gives a taste and earnest here as part of the sum which shall be paid us in heaven; by these sweet refreshments of the Spirit we may conceive of the glory of the everlasting state. Look, as before the sun ariseth, there are some forerunning beams and streaks of light that usher it in; so the joys of the Holy Ghost are but the morning glances of the daylight of glory, and of the sun of happiness that shall arise upon us in another world.

[3.] There is grace also which is the earnest of glory; it is the livery and seizin, the turf that puts us into possession of the whole field. Grace is the beginning of glory, and glory is but grace perfected. Grace is glory in the bud, and moulding, and making; for when the apostle would express our whole conformity to Christ, he only expresseth it thus, 'We are changed into his image from glory to glory,' 2 Cor iii. 18, that is, from one degree of grace to another. It is called glory, because the progress of holiness never ceaseth till it comes to the perfection of glory and life eternal. The first degree of grace is glory begun, and the final consummation is glory perfected. All the degrees of our conformity to Christ are so called. It is a bud of that sinless, pure, immaculate estate which shall be without spot and wrinkle; the seed of that perfect holiness which shall be bestowed upon us hereafter. Thus the spiritual life is described in its whole flux; it begins in grace, and ends in glory. See the golden chain: Rom. viii. 30, 'Whom he hath called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' There is no mention of sanctification, for that is included in glory. Grace is but young glory, and differs from glory as an infant doth from a man; therefore by degrees the Lord will have you enter upon your everlasting inheritance. As the heir receives his estate by parcels, so do we; first God gives us a seed, and an initial fruition, then we are drawn on further and further to a full enjoyment. The new creature, like metal in the forge, it is heaven in the moulding and framing; and God gives us the draught here below, which glory will at length finish above. Upon all these grounds faith works as if the thing were enjoyed; while we

hope and have a certain expectation, it doth as it were taste the blessing; and whilst it looks upon them in the sure promises of God, and in our head; or that which Christ hath done for us in the first-fruits; so our hopes are made to work upon us as if they were already accomplished and enjoyed.

SERMON II.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for.—HEB. xi. 1.

Secondly, The benefit and advantage of this act, and the use of faith in the spiritual life.

1. It is very necessary we should have such a faith as should substantiate our hopes, to check sensuality, for we find the corrupt heart of man is all for present satisfaction. And though the pleasures of sin be short and inconsiderable, yet because they are near at hand, they take more with us than the joys of heaven, which are future and absent. A man would wonder at the folly of men that should with Esau sell his birthright for a morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 16, that they should be so profane as to sell their Christ and glory, and those excellent things which the christian religion discovers, to part with the joys of christianity for the vilest price. When lust is up and set agog, all considerations of eternal glory and blessedness are laid aside to give it satisfaction. A little pleasure, a little gain, a little conveniency in the world will make men part with all that is honest and sacred. A man would wonder at their folly, but the great reason is, they live by sense: 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,' 2 Tim. iv. 10; there lies the bait, these things are present with us; we can taste the delights of the creatures, and feel the pleasures of the flesh; but the happiness of the world to come is a thing unseen and unknown. 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die,' 1 Cor. xv. 32. This is the language of every carnal heart, let us take up with present things. Who will venture upon the practice of a duty difficult and distasteful to his affections, and forego what we see and enjoy upon the uncertain hopes of things to come? Present advantages, nay vanities, though they be small and very trifles, yet have more power to pervert us than good things at a distance, nay, than all the promises of God to allure and draw in our hearts to God. And here lies the root and strength of all temptations; the inconveniences of strictness in religion are present, there is a present distaste and present trouble to the flesh; and the rewards are future; here is the great snare: therefore how should we do to check this living by sense that is so natural to us? Why, faith substantiating our hopes provides a remedy; for that makes things to come to work as if they were already enjoyed; the day of judgment to work upon us, as if we did see Christ upon his white throne, and the books opened and heaven as if we were ready now to enter into it. Where faith is lively and strong, and is the evidence of things not seen, it baffles and defeats all

temptations. The war and conflict in men's hearts is carried on under these two captains, faith and sense. All the forces of the spiritual and regenerate part are drawn and led up by faith; sense on the other side marshals all the temptations of the world and the flesh; sense is all for enjoyment and actual possession. Now faith, to vanquish it, gives a substance, and makes things to come present to us, and makes us sensible of other satisfactions and contentments, which are far better; and there lies the strength of the renewed part; and the great success of the spiritual battle is in the liveliness of hope and in the certainty of faith, that it may make those things work as present which sense judgeth absent and afar off. That is the reason why faith and sense are so often opposed in scripture; faith forestalls the joys of heaven, and makes them to be in the mind and judgment, and upon the heart of a believer, that the restraint from present delights may seem less irksome; if it be laborious and difficult to serve God, yet it is for heaven. All that the devil can plead, who works by sense, is the enjoyment of a little present profit and pleasure; he cannot promise heaven and glory, or anything hereafter; now therein he thinks he hath the start of God—heaven is to come, but the delights and advantages of sin are at hand. Faith, to baffle the temptation, strongly fixeth the heart of a believer upon things to come, that in some sort it doth preunite their souls and their happiness together, and by giving them heaven upon earth confirms the soul in a belief of better things than the devil or the world can propose. Thus you see that to defeat the temptation there needs faith, that it may strongly fix the heart of a believer upon things to come and put him within the company of the blessed; that in some sort he may have heaven upon earth, and such a certain persuasion of better things, that he may look upon all that the devil, the world and the flesh do oppose to him as a weak and paltry thing.

2. It gives strength and support to all the graces of the spiritual life. The great design of religion is to bring us to a neglect of present happiness, and to make the soul to look after a felicity yet to come; and the great instrument of religion, by which it promoteth this design, is faith, which is as the scaffold and ladder to the spiritual building. It is useful to all the other graces, whether they be doing or suffering graces. We are assaulted on every side, both 'on the right hand and on the left,' as the apostle saith, 2 Cor. vi. 7; on the one side by the pleasures of the flesh, on the other side by the frowns of the world; and therefore the armour of righteousness must be fitted on both sides, that we may be strengthened on the right hand against the pleasures, profits, and honours of the world, and on the left hand against troubles, disgraces, and bitter persecutions. If we would stand our ground, and be faithful in the business of our heavenly calling, we must look for these two things, to do for God, and to suffer for God; for these two ways a christian approves himself to God; by suffering we declare our loyalty, by doing we perform our homage.

Ques. Indeed it is a pretty question, In which of these we manifest most love to God, either mortifying our lusts, or renouncing our interests—to which the chiefest crown of honour is due? whether to

be set upon the head of the suffering faith, or the active or doing faith ?

Sol. It may be pleaded on the one side, that in holiness, or the active part of duty, we only give away our ill-being for Christ by crucifying our lusts, which are enemies to our peace as well as to the crown of heaven ; but by suffering, we lose being and well-being, our lives and livelihood, and all for Christ ; therefore it seems there should be more love in that. But on the other side, it may be pleaded thus, that there are many that suffer for Christ, who sacrifice a stout body to a stubborn mind ; and because they are engaged they will suffer, yet are not able to quit a lust for him. And it may be pleaded, the victory is less over outward inconveniences, than inward lusts which are rooted in our nature, and so more hard to be overcome ; and the enduring trouble and hardship is more easy than subduing of sin, and that it is the sharpest martyrdom a man can endure to tame his flesh, *majus in castitate vivere, quam pro castitate mori*—it is a harder thing to be a holy person than to be a martyr. Thus you see each part indeed hath its difficulties, which I have mentioned ; partly to satisfy them that are not called to suffer, yet thou hast employment enough by faith to mortify thy lusts, and indeed there is the harder work ; it is more easy to withstand an enemy than a temptation. When we conflict with an enemy, we do but conflict with an arm of flesh and blood ; but when the apostle speaks of the inward warfare, he saith, Ephes. vi. 12, ‘ We fight not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers.’ And partly to show, that there are inconveniences on both hands, and a great deal of difficulty, and there is need of all the strength that possibly we can have, both for doing and suffering. We need faith on either side, that we might be holy and willing to do for God ; and that we may be courageous and willing to die for God.

But why should I debate this difference ? Let me compound it rather ; holiness and suffering must both go together, for no one can suffer for Christ, but they whose hearts are drawn forth to love him above all things. The priests under the law were to search the burnt-offering, and if it were scabby, or had any blemish upon it, it was to be laid aside and not offered. The Lord doth not desire a scabbed carnal man should suffer for him. He that keeps the commandments is best able to suffer for them. In Mat. v., first Christ saith, ‘ Blessed are the pure in heart,’ ver. 8, then, ‘ Blessed are they that suffer for righteousness’ sake,’ ver. 10. The blessing of martyrdom is put in the last place, implying that a martyr must have all the precedent graces of meekness, humility, poverty of spirit, &c. Therefore we must look for doing the will of God, and suffering the will of God, before these promises be accomplished, and the things we hope for brought about.

[1.] To suffer for God. It is oftentimes a crime to be faithful to Christ’s interests, and a matter of danger to be a thorough christian ; when men are exposed to affronts, and troubles, and disgraces, they need all the wisdom and grace that possibly they can get together. Now faith is ‘ the substance of things hoped for ;’ there will be our best furniture ; why ? for this will teach us to counterbalance our temptations with our hopes. It puts your hopes in one balance, when the devil puts the world with all terrors, disgraces and losses in the

other; and then the soul triumphs, and says, that our losses are no more to be compared with our gains, than a feather is to be set against a talent of lead. 'I reckon,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18, 'that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' and the bitterness of the cross is allayed and sweetened by comparing our hopes with it. Thus Moses sets the recompense of reward against the loss of the pleasures, treasures, and honours of Egypt, Heb. xi. 24, 25. And those forty martyrs Basil speaks of that were kept naked in the open air in a cold frosty night, and to be burnt the next day, they cried out, 'Sharp is the cold, but sweet is paradise; troublesome is the way, pleasant is the end of the journey; let us endure the cold for the present, and the patriarch's bosom shall soon warm us,' &c. These passages will truly open the meaning of the apostle, that 'faith is the substance of things hoped for,' &c., when we can really set one against the other, and bear the hardest lot that can befall us upon expectation of our blessed hopes. And that of the apostle doth notably open it, 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For this cause we faint not,' &c., why? ver. 18. 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal;' that is, when we are supported and fortified by a remembrance and certain expectation of our blessed hopes. When the Jews were full of fury against Stephen, Act. vii. 56, 'he saw the heavens opened;' and so he fortified himself against the anger, and shower of stones from the people. There was somewhat of miracle and ecstasy in that vision, the glory of heaven being represented not only to his soul, but possibly to his senses by some external representation. But as to the substance of the comfort itself, it is that which falls out ordinarily in a way of believing; faith opens heaven to a believer, and brings him to the company of the blessed; and when the soul is taken up with the thoughts of another world, it can better digest trouble here. Faith is the perspective of his soul, he seeth heaven opened and glory prepared for him, and then the temptation vanisheth. This is the reason believers can endure plundering 'and spoiling of goods,' Heb. x. 34. 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for.' Let goods go, saith a believer, so he may keep his interest in the better and more enduring substance. The christians in the primitive times were first exposed to the rapine and malice of the rude people, before actions at law or any legal process was formed against them by the persecuting edicts of the Roman emperors for their profession. And the Jews were most fierce against christians in that kind; they would spoil them, and they could have no advantage against them. Now 'they took joyfully,' they were willing to part with them as Joseph with his coat to keep his conscience; and to quit all worldly possessions, because they had an assurance of a better and a more enduring substance. So that it is of great use to support suffering graces, as fortitude and self-denial.

[2.] To do for God. As to the doing part, those graces serve for doing the will of God, which is our constant trial. Look to the several parts of our duty.

(1.) For the destructive part, or the work of mortification. When

heaven is in the eye and heart of a believer, when it is preoccupied by his faith, sin hath less power upon the heart. When faith gives substance and being to your hopes, it will appear in your lives; you will mortify corruption, and study holiness, while you can set the pleasures on God's right hand against the pleasures of sin; and you can reason thus, Rom. viii. 13, 'If I live after the flesh, I shall die; but if I, through the Spirit, mortify the deeds of the body, I shall live.' You will be more able to bear with the difficulties of religion, when you see you do not act upon an uncertain futurity; you do not fight as those that are uncertain; as the apostle speaks, Heb. x. 36, 'That after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise.' Nay, before we have done the whole will of God, faith receives the promise; we have the root, though not the blossom. It is true, Christ calls to suffer unpleasing austerities; aye, but heaven makes amends for them all. Therefore whenever sensitive desires insinuate themselves, faith can see carnal pleasures are base, and but the happiness of beasts; and they are short, 'pleasures of sin for a season,' Heb. xi. 25, and they issue themselves into unspeakable torments; 'they shall mourn at last,' Prov. v. 11. When the devil would make you faint and lazy in the work of the Lord, faith can represent the short continuance of the present difficulty; so when the devil would beget irksome thoughts of duty, faith can represent endless delights that will follow; and then the believer determines, it is better to go to heaven with labour, than to hell with pleasure. This is that which made Moses, who had an eagle eye, so victorious: Heb. xi. 26, 'He had respect to the recompense of the reward,' which made him despise the pleasures, and treasures, and honours of Egypt. The looking upon the recompenses makes hope to have such an influence on the life; for those views and foretastes of heaven will beget such a strong persuasion in the heart of a believer, that all the reasons in the world shall not alter, or break the force of his spiritual purpose. When the devil tempts to filthiness, uncleanness, wantonness, faith presents hopes of being consorts and followers of the unspotted and immaculate Lamb. When we are tempted to neglect duty for worldly advantages, faith doth oppose the glory of our inheritance, the riches of the new Jerusalem, and what is the hope of our high calling, and the good treasure God hath opened to us in the new covenant. If we are tempted to hunt after worldly honour, faith proposeth a crown of righteousness which the just and righteous God will give us at that day. If the fear of disgrace make us loosen and slacken our duty, faith proposeth the confusion of face wherewith the wicked shall appear before the throne of the Lamb, and the disgrace that shall fall upon the wicked at the great day. So when we are tempted to murmuring and repining under the cross, faith will assure that though the way be rough, the end of the journey will be sweet. So that the promises are like cordials next the heart, and keep the poison from seizing upon the vital spirits, and preserve the soul in a holy generousness and bravery for God; they tell us of rivers of pleasure that stream out of the heart of Jesus Christ, and the sweet content we shall enjoy with God for evermore.

(2.) For diligence and seriousness in a holy life. The nearer things are, the greater and the more they work upon us, and the further off

the less. Those never thought of repentance that put far away the evil day, Amos vi. 3. A star at a distance, though of great magnitude, seems like a spark or spangle. We are sensible of things more, the nearer they are; distance doth much alter our apprehensions of things; we have not the same notions of eternity, living as we shall have when we come to die. Oh! when time begins to draw to an end, and we are going into the other world, what would we give to live over our lives again? Oh, how diligent, watchful, serious should we be if we had the sense of eternity upon our hearts! Now how shall we do to make things at a distance to be near to us? Thus, faith is the perspective of the soul. As by a perspective glass we see things at a distance as if they were present and near at hand; so faith apprehends things at a distance, and makes them work upon us. Certain expectation produceth industrious prosecution: Phil. iii. 14, 'I press on to the mark,' saith Paul, 'for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.' We make the world believe that heaven and hell are things spoken in jest, whilst we are so careless about them; but when we apprehend them in good earnest, and have a true sense of them, then we fall a-working out our salvation with fear and trembling; we see that all the diligence and holy care we can use is little enough to carry away this great prize of the eternal enjoyment of God. By faith you look within the veil, and lift up the heart to the heavenly joys, and this keeps the heart watchful over the blessed hope. It is the description of a believer: Jude ver. 21, 'Looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.' Now we have no other eye but faith, and faith stands you in stead, as it confirms you in the certainty of your hopes. Heaven is in the heart by faith, and therefore the heart is in heaven by spiritual meditation; all their thoughts are about their country: Phil. iii. 20, 'For our conversation is in heaven;' and all the business of their lives is to approach nearer to their hopes. Paul was taken up into the third heaven. Faith giveth you a temperate and deliberate view, though not by such a rapid motion, yet by serious and solemn thoughts, and so keeps the soul in a heavenly frame and expectation. It puts your head above the clouds, and in the midst of the world to come. The apostle biddeth us to lay up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come, 'that we may lay hold of eternal life,' 1 Tim. vi. 19. Now faith doth not only lay the first stone, but the whole heap is increased, the work of holiness is carried on by the help and assistance of faith, which keepeth heaven and eternal life in the view of the soul, and so encourageth heavenly motions and endeavours.

(3.) For contentation, that is a necessary part of the holy life. This contentation is two-fold; under the difficulties and inconveniences of the present life, and under the want and distance of our future comfort.

(1st.) Under the difficulties and inconveniences of the present life. Faith sweetens all the afflictions of this life by presenting the advantages of the future, and balanceth what we feel with what we do expect. The shortest life is long enough to be sensible of inconveniences and many calamities. But though the way is rough, faith seeth heaven at the end of the journey, and so it conveyeth real sup-

port and comfort into the soul and heart of a believer. A christian may live in the sweetness of tranquillity in the midst of all outward disturbances, because the presence of his hopes makes amends for all, and giveth him a happy desolency that he feels nothing; whereas when faith is weak we soon faint: Ps. cxix. 92, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I had perished in my affliction.' There is such a sweetness in the word, that when faith takes hold of it, the sense of worldly misery is overwhelmed and quenched. Faith is like a cordial that keeps off the poison of affliction from the vital spirits, and the poison of the encumbrances of the present life from the soul: Ps. xxvii. 13, 'I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of God in the land of the living,' that is, without the sense of eternal happiness I had been utterly lost. Heaven is properly the land of the living, and that he respecteth. To see God in the land of the living is as much as to enjoy God in heaven; and so the Chaldee explaineth it, in the land of life eternal.

(2dly.) It helps us to contentation under the want and distance of our future comforts. Let it not seem a paradox, that here the conflict is hardest. It is easier to bear the evil than wait for the promised good, for sorrows are better and sooner allayed than desires. Desires are the vigorous bent of the soul, and they are impatient of check, chiefly when they are drawn forth upon reasons of religion, and usually after much mortification. It is very hard to tarry the Lord's leisure for the enjoyment of their hopes, when their hearts are weaned from the world; their pulse then beats strongly towards Christ, and it is a hard matter to cool and restrain the vehemency of their desires, especially towards our latter end. The nearer we are to the enjoyment of any good, the more impatient we are of the want of it; as a stone moveth faster, when nearest the centre. All natural motion is swifter in the close; so a christian's motions, though slow in the beginning, are swift in the close; therefore their hearts beat with longing desires, ready to break within them for the enjoyment of Christ. And this burden is the greater, because faith gives a partial enjoyment; but the same faith, which stirs up those desires, also yields the remedy against the vehemency of them. Desire is not only the fruit of hope, but patience: 2 Peter iii. 12, 'Looking for,' or waiting for, and yet 'hastening to the coming of the Lord.' The word in the original, 'looking for,' notes a patient bearing: now these two words seem contrary, waiting, yet hastening. This is the disposition of the people of God, they look for, and they hasten to the Lord's coming. They covet the everlasting state, and yet wait God's leisure. There is a vehemency and yet a regularity in their expectations, and both are promoted by this act of faith: for faith gives certainty, and that quiets the soul, though there be not present enjoyment. The first effect of faith is a present interest and title, and 'He that believeth maketh not haste,' Isa. xxviii. 16. Those prelibations of heaven we have in the world, the scripture gives us under a double notion; the first-fruits, and earnest; the first-fruits or tastes how good; and an earnest or pledge, how sure. Under the quality of the first-fruits, so they do awaken desires and vehement longings: Rom. viii. 23, 'We that have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to

wit, the redemption of our bodies.' A christian hath tasted how sweet God is in Christ, therefore he groans after the full enjoyment of him. As they are an earnest, 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath sealed us, and given us the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts;' so it is a ground of waiting. We may trust God if he hath given us an earnest. It is not for the comfort of a man to carry his inheritance at his back, it is enough that he hath a right and title. Faith is every way as sure, though not as sweet as sense; and therefore a believer waits as long as God hath anything for him to do in this world upon this security of faith. It is true, he is in a strait, his desires press him, yet he will wait. Thus St. Paul, Phil. i. 23, 24, 'I am in a strait between two, having a desire to be dissolved, and be with Christ; but to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.' A christian is thus divided between his own profit and God's will, and God's glory; but at length faith casts the scales, and brings him to a holy contentation with the pleasure of God. The first-fruits beget longings; and the earnest keeps us from murmuring and discontent; so the sureness sweetens the pain which the remoteness occasions.

Use 1. To examine whether you have this kind of faith or no, which is the substance of things hoped for. To discover how little of this faith there is in the world, consider—

1. Many men say they believe, but alas, what influence have their hopes upon them? Do they affect them? Do they engage them as things present and sensible do? Alas, in the general, things temporal work more upon us than things eternal, and things visible than things invisible. A small matter will prove a temptation; a little pleasure and profit, how doth it set you a-work? We have not half that seriousness in spiritual business that we have in earthly. Surely men do not believe heaven, because they are so little affected with it; because they mind and care for it and labour for it so little. Alas! they live as if they never heard of any such thing, or believe not what they hear; every toy and trifle is preferred before it. If a poor man understood that some great inheritance was bequeathed to him, would not he often think of it, and rejoice in it, and long to go and see it, and take possession of it? There is a promise of eternal life left with us in the gospel, but who puts in for a share? Who longs for it? Who takes hold of it? Who gives all diligence to make it sure? Who desires to go and see it? Oh, that I might be dissolved, and be with Christ! Because these hopes have so little influence on us, it is a sign we do not make them exist in our hearts.

2. You may discern it by your carriage in any trial and temptation. When heaven and the world come in competition, can you deny present carnal advantages upon the hopes of eternity? do you forsake all as knowing you shall have a thousand times better in another world? So did Moses, Heb. xi. 24, 25; the reason is rendered—'For he had respect to the recompense of reward; then is the best time to judge of your spirit; then God puts you to it; therefore they are called temptations and trials. Certainly it is of much profit to observe the issue and result of these deliberate debates and conflicts that are in the conscience. Now where faith is the substance of things hoped for, there will be a denial of present carnal advantages; heaven will be as present as the temptation,

and you will see Jesus Christ outbidding the world ; nay, that momentary sufferings are not meet to be named the same day with your hopes. If the world should come in competition with glory, to violate conscience for a present satisfaction, faith comes away from the contest with an holy disdain and indignation at such a comparison. In vain is the snare laid before the bird that is of so high and so noble a flight. The servants of the Lord were tortured, Heb. xi. 35 ; in the original it is *ἐτυμφανίσθησαν*, they were stretched out as a drum, yet they would not accept of deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. Will you be taken off the rack ? No. The world offered them a release, but faith offered them a resurrection, the raising of the body out of the grave to the glory of God. The world suggests earthly enjoyments, present advantages, You may have such and such preferments for the violating of conscience ; then faith comes with the treasures of the covenant. We are put to our choice many times either to wrong conscience, or accept of the world's profits ; outward conveniences are put into one scale, faith puts your hopes into the other ; one is present, the other is absent. Now observe the workings of your spirits in such cases. I confess there may be a resistance sometimes out of stubbornness, but if there be faith, it will work thus, by presenting your hopes, and casting the balance by an exceeding weight of glory. We can lose nothing, saith faith, but we shall have better in heaven ; we can gain nothing, but Christ will be more advantage to us. Upon this a believer sells all to purchase the pearl of price.

3. If faith do substantiate your hopes, though you do not receive present satisfaction, you may discern it by this, you will entertain the promises with much respect and delight. Are they dear and precious to you ? You would embrace the promises if you looked upon them as the root of the blessing. It is said of the patriarchs, Heb. xi. 13, that 'they saw the promises afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' When they were to go out of the world, they took their leave of the promises with embraces ; though they came not to possession, they were persuaded of the possession ; though they lived many years before the promises concerning the Messiah took effect, yet they embraced them. Such ceremonies and compliments pass between friends ; we hug them and commend them to the Lord ; so faith hugs the promises, and commends them to God's power. Oh ! these are sweet promises ; these one day will bring a Messiah, and yield a saviour to the world. Old Jacob, when he took leave of his sons, he blessed them ; he saith to one—' His bow shall abide in strength,' Gen. xlix. 24 ; this shall be a victorious warrior ; to another, so and so. Or, as we do, when we part with children of great hopes, just so did these holy patriarchs deal with the promises when God had given them but an obscure signification of heaven and a Christ ; they were embracing these sayings as the comfort and strength of their souls ; when they went down to the grave ; they could not with Simeon hold Christ in their arms, yet they held the promises in the arms of their faith. So it will be with you ; you will rejoice in God because of his word, Ps. lvi. 4. When you take hold of the promise, you have the blessing by the root, and this should fill you with holy joy, oh, these are great and precious promises ! 2 Peter i. 4. Here is a promise that will yield me heaven ; this complete holiness,

this the fruition of God. By this promise I can expect to meet the faithful of God in heaven; by this promise I can expect to sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; by this promise I can look for the abolition of sin; by this for the bruising of Satan under my feet; by this for a freedom from all temptations, desertion and trouble. And they will cherish a little spark of grace; here is a bud of glory; here are some morning glances, some forerunning beams of the light that shall shine upon us in heaven.

4. You may discern it by this, the mind will often run upon your hopes. Where the thing is strongly expected, the end and aim of your expectation will still be present with you. Thoughts are the spies and messengers of the soul. Hope sends them out after the thing expected, and love after the thing beloved; therefore it stands upon you to see how your thoughts and principal desires are fixed. Where the thing is strongly expected thoughts are wont to spend themselves, and to be set a-work in creating images and suppositions of the happiness we shall have in the enjoyment; and so the future condition will often run in your mind, and be present with you. For instance, if a poor man were adopted into the succession of a crown, he would please himself in the supposition of the honour and splendour of the royal and kingly state that is set up in his own thoughts. And did we believe we are heirs of the kingdom of heaven, co-heirs with Christ, we would often think of the happy time when we shall come to heaven, and see Christ in the midst of his blessed ones; when we shall see Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, that are sat down at the feast of God, and see Paul with his crown of righteousness upon his head. But alas! it may be said of many, heaven is not in their thoughts, their hearts dwell in this world, because they do not expect a better: therefore they are always transported with admiring thoughts of worldly greatness; always thinking what it is to enjoy thousands, and to have no complaining in their families; thinking of pulling down barns, and raising greater, and advancing their posterity. We are thinking of our pleasures, lusts, profits. These are the pleasing thoughts wherewith we feast our souls. We should still observe what it is we meditate upon most, which way the contrivances and deliberations of your souls do tend. Are your thoughts taken up with these carnal projects? with those whose character it is, Phil. iii. 19, 'That they are enemies of the cross of Christ, who mind earthly things?' or 2-Peter ii. 14, 'A heart exercised with covetous practices,' always running upon some worldly designs, plotting how to get the world into their net? Christ describes the worldly person: Luke xii. 17, 18, 'He thought within himself,' &c. He created images and suppositions in his soul of barns, possessions, and heritages; for that is the Holy Ghost's word of the carnal man, *διαλογίζετο*, he dialogised and discoursed with himself. But on the other side heaven will be more in the eye and mind of a christian; and these provisional thoughts are the spies sent out to welcome our hopes. I will tell you what such an one is doing; he is framing suppositions of the welcome he shall receive of Jesus Christ at his first coming to glory; he is thinking of the joy between him and his fellow-saints, when they shall meet in heaven; there is a stage set up, and a sweet representation and acting over of heaven in their thoughts.

5. You may discern it, by your weanedness from the world. They that know heaven to be their home, reckon the world a strange country. There is a more excellent glory sealed up to them in Christ, and they do the less care for worldly advantages; certainly they do not lay out their strength and their care upon them. Who would purchase a rattle with the same price that would buy a jewel? or dig for iron with mattocks of gold? They will not wear out their affections on carnal things; faith acquainteth them with nobler objects. The woman, when she knew Christ, left her pitcher, John iv. 28, 29. When Christ told Zaccheus that 'salvation was come to his house,' then 'Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor,' &c. Luke xix. 8, 9. But now when men only relish and favour earthly things, and live as if their hopes were only in this world, they either have no right to heaven, or believe they have none.

6. There will not be such a floating and instability in their expectation. You have already blessedness in the root, in the promises; and though there be not assurance, there will be an affiancing, and repose of the mind upon God: if there be not rest in your souls, yet there will be a resting upon God, and a quiet expectation of the things hoped for. Faith is satisfied with the promise, and quietly hopes for the performance of it in God's due time: Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord.' Belief is often intermixed with doubtings, yet there will be the patience of hope, that is the least; we should not entertain jealousies and suspicions of God. There is a free promise, though not a certain evidence, and there will be longing, where there is not comfort.

Use 2. To exhort you to work up faith to such an effect, that it may be the substance of things hoped for.

1. Work it up in a way of meditation. Let your minds be exercised in the contemplation of your hopes: Mat. vi. 21, 'Where your treasure is, there will your heart be.' There is nothing that you prize but your minds will run upon it. How, freely and frequently can we think of other things, our lusts, our pleasures, our ordinary occasions! and shall we have never a thought of that place where our treasure is? Our God, our Christ, our happiness is there; should not our hearts be there too? Oh! take a turn now and then in the land of promise; see what is made over to you in Christ, think of the beauty and glory of that happiness; surely if we did believe and esteem it, we would have freer thoughts of that heaven, and that happiness God hath made over to us.

2. Work it up in a way of argumentation. Faith is a reasoning grace: Heb. xi. 19, *λογισάμενος*, 'Accounting that God was able to raise him even from the dead.' Reason with yourselves thus: Is there not a blessed estate reserved in heaven for all that come to God in Christ? and so for me if come to Christ? Others have the possession, and thou hast the grant; the deed is sealed, and thou hast the conveyances to show; hast thou it not under God's hand and seal? hast thou not a promise made to all that believe and repent of their sins, and are willing to walk with God, and are fruitful in good works? Is not heaven made over to such? and God's promises were ever made good: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him amen.' Nay, hath not Christ seized upon heaven in the name of all such as

come to God by him? And hast thou not had some first-fruits, O my soul, some foretastes, some earnest of the Spirit? Hath not God given thee a little comfort, a little grace, as an earnest to assure thee of the greater sum?

3. Work it up in a way of expectation. Look for it, long for it, wait for it: Tit. ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope:' and Jude, ver. 21, 'Looking for the mercy of God unto eternal life.' I have a gracious God, and a tender-hearted Saviour in heaven; I am therefore looking and longing till I am called up to the enjoyment of them.

4. Work it up in a way of supplication. Put in thy claim—Lord! I take hold of the grace offered in the gospel; and desire the Lord to secure thy claim: Ps. lxxiii. 24, 'Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory;' and Ps. xliii. 3, 'O send out thy light, and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacle.'

5. Work it up in a way of close and solemn application. In the Lord's supper, there thou comest by some solemn rites to take possession of the privileges of the covenant, and by these rites and ceremonies which God hath appointed, to enter ourselves heirs to all the benefits purchased by Christ, and conveyed in the covenant, especially to the glory of heaven: there you come to take the cup of blessing as a pledge of the 'New wine in your Father's kingdom,' Mat. xxvi. 29. God here reacheth out to us by deed, or instrument, what was by promise due to every believing sinner before.

6. Work it up in your conversations by constant spiritual diligence. Is heaven sure, so sure as if we had it already, and shall I be idle? Oh what contriving, carking, striving, fighting, warring is there to get a step higher in the world! How insatiable are men in the prosecution of their lusts! and shall I do nothing for heaven, and show no diligence in pursuing my great happiness? Oh, let me 'work out my salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12. Shall men rise early, and go to bed late, and all for a little maintenance to support a frail tabernacle that is ever dropping into the grave, and crumbling to dust? and shall I do nothing for my God and everlasting hopes? Certainly if we did believe these things, we should be more industrious.

Use 3. To press you to get this faith. There are some means and duties that have a tendency hereunto.

1. There must be a serious consideration of God's truth, as it is backed with his absolute power: 'I change not, therefore you are not consumed,' Mal. iii. 6. If either the counsel or the being of God change, it must be out of forgetfulness or weakness. It cannot be out of forgetfulness, for all things past and to come are present to God; it cannot be out of weakness, for his truth is backed with an absolute power; therefore a hope founded upon his promise is not liable to distrust. Truth cannot deceive, nor be deceived. Princes and potentates may often break their word out of weakness, lightness, or imprudence, they cannot foresee inconveniences; their light is bounded as well as their power; but in God there is no error or mistake; no weakness and therefore no change: 2 Tim. i. 12, 'I know whom I have believed, and I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.' I know I have given up my soul to an

able God; and I have waited for the accomplishment of the will of an able God; and Jude, ver. 24, 'To him that is able to keep you.' Faith stands upon these two supports, God's truth and power; his mercy is engaged by his truth, and dispensed by his power; therefore take this truth and power of God, and cast it into the lap of the soul by faith; and then you may be as certain of the event as if it were already exhibited.

2. You must relieve faith by experiences: by considering what is past we may more easily believe that which is to come.

[1.] Cast in experiences of what is past. The patriarchs believed Christ's coming in the flesh, as we believe and own: John viii, 56, 'Your father Abraham saw my day;' and one miracle doth facilitate and prepare belief for another. The belief of our future greatness is facilitated by the example of his own abasement. When Christ was apparelled with flesh, we may easily believe we shall be clothed with glory. Our misery cannot hinder us from being glorified with God, since Christ's glory did not hinder him from being abased with men. If Christ could die, then a sinner might live. If he can suffer upon a cross, then we may reign in glory. If the greatness of promises raise any doubt, let us look to Christ; for, lest high promises should find no credit with our understanding, God clears up faith by this wonderful instance.

[2.] God hath taken you into an estate of grace and marvellous light; it is a wonderful thing that God should call poor sinners. God hath given us not only promises, but assurances; an earnest as well as his word. All that is past is but a foundation; he that spared you will much more save you; glory and pardon issue out of the womb of the same grace. Nay, glory is a lesser thing than reconciliation, or the first act of pardon. The apostle puts a much more upon it: Rom. v. 10, 'For if when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son: much more being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life.' When a sinner comes to be accepted into grace, there is the greatest conflict, for there is a great conflict between justice and mercy: therefore it is harder to get the guilty sinner to be absolved, than a pardoned sinner to be blessed. If he has called me, will he not glorify me? As among men it is easier to keep a pardoned man from execution, than to get a guilty man to be pardoned; so the apostle makes it an easier thing to give glory, than it is to give grace and pardon.

[3.] Compare your hopes with carnal hopes. When you look upon your own hopes, you may say with David, Ps. xxxi. 19, 'Oh, how great is thy goodness which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee!' We may say we have a great deal laid up, and a great deal laid out; somewhat in hand, and more in hope. In spiritual matters our expectation comes far short of enjoyment, but in carnal matters the hope is far above the comfort; therefore they are called vanity and vexation of spirit; we expect more, and therefore are vexed with disappointment. Carnal hopes are but like dreams of waking men, that make way for fear and for sorrow. If you live in the hope of much from the world you will be but like dreamers, that have an imaginary content in their sleep, but they meet with real disappointment when

they awake; so when we expect much from the creature, we meet with nothing but burden, vanity, and vexation.

[4.] Make it the work of your lives to get your own title confirmed, and assured to the conscience. Christians are to blame for continuing so long in uncertainties, because they do not get their own title confirmed: 1 Tim. vi. 20, 'Laying up in store for yourselves a good foundation against the time to come, that you may lay hold of eternal life.' If you would make eternal life present to the soul, then lay up solid evidences. And mark, he speaks 'laying up' to note this work is always a doing; always we must be laying this foundation.

SERMON III.

And the evidence of things not seen.—HEB. xi. 1.

I come now to the second part of the description—'And the evidence of things not seen.' In which you have—

1. The act—*it is the evidence.*
2. The object—*of things not seen.*

[1.] The act, which belongs chiefly to the understanding, as the other doth to the will. By the first act, faith is the hand of the soul to lay hold of eternal life; by this act, faith is the eye of the soul to look towards it, and represent it to us.

[2.] The object—'Things not seen:' it is of a larger extent than the former. All matters of faith are not future, and the objects of hope, 'things not seen,' is a term more capacious and comprehensive than 'things hoped for.' We believe past and present things as well as future, but we cannot be said to hope for them; as the creation of the world, the deluge, the deliverance of the church out of Egypt and Babylou; Christ's incarnation and passion, his glorious ascension, the effusion of the Holy Ghost upon the apostles; all these things are past, and cannot be called things hoped for; but are here in a more comprehensive expression said to be 'things not seen.' Many present things we believe, as God's providence, the intercession of Christ, the influences of his grace upon the hearts of believers, pardoning mercy; these, because they could not be comprehended in the former 'things hoped for,' are delivered to us in this latter expression, 'things not seen.'

My business mainly is to discourse of the object, 'Things not seen.' But in my way,—

First, Concerning the act. Faith is said to be *ἔλεγχος*, 'the evidence.' The word is by some rendered the argument of things not seen; by others the demonstration; by us the evidence, and that not altogether unfitly. For though the original word hath a special emphasis, which I shall open by and by; yet this word 'evidence' is of great significancy. Evidence is most proper to objects of sight, and notes clear, distinct, and full apprehension of objects present; there-

fore the testimony of eye-witnesses in matters of fact, we call it the evidence; and hence it is translated to signify the clear sight of the mind; the clear and satisfactory apprehension is called an evidence, when the object is represented so as the desire of knowledge is fully satisfied concerning the truth and worth of it; for this end doth faith serve in the soul, to give us a satisfactory knowledge of truths delivered in the word. This doth somewhat clear the text.

But we must a little examine the original word: *ἔλεγχος* is a term of art, and implies a conviction by way of argument and disputation. Aristotle saith, it is *συλλόγισμος τῆς ἀντιφάσεως*, a convincing argument or dispute, which infers conclusions contradictory to those which we held before. And in this sense it is said in scripture: John xvi. 8, 'The Spirit *ἔλεγει* shall convince,' or reprove; so that *ἔλεγχος* is a confutation of an opinion which men were possessed of before. So it is used Titus i. 9, where, speaking of the office of a minister, *ἐλεγγειντούς ἀντιλεγοντας*, to convince gainsayers, that is, confute their cavils and prejudices against the truth. Again, the philosopher describes this conviction to be such an arguing by which we prove *τὸ μὴ δύνατον ἄλλως ἔχειν ἀλλ' οὕτως ὡς ἡμεῖς λέγομεν*—the thing is impossible to be otherwise than we represent. Therefore this was a fit and chosen word by the apostle, to show it was a clear or infallible demonstration of eternal verities delivered in scripture, that the man to whom it is made cannot think otherwise than as it is represented to him. Out of all which we may gather that there is in conviction—

1. A representation of clear grounds.
2. These drawn forth in argument and discourse.
2. A confutation of prejudices.
4. A sweet constraint of the mind to assent and subscribe to the truths delivered. All these are in faith—

[1.] A clearness and perspicuity of light.

[2.] A seriousness of arguing and dispute.

[3.] Confuting of prejudices.

[4.] A sweet consent, or rational enforcement of the mind, a compulsion of the soul by reasons; an answerable assent to the truth of religion as certain and worthy; as I shall declare in this following discourse.

I shall wind up all in this doctrine,

Doct. That true faith is an evidence or convincing light concerning eternal verities. Or take it thus:—It is a grace that representeth the things of religion with such clearness and perspicuity of argument, that a believer is compelled to subscribe to the truth and worth of them; as a man yieldeth, when he seeth clear evidence to the contrary.

There are in faith four things:—

1. A clear light and apprehension. As soon as God converteth the soul, he puts light into it. In the old world you know the first thing that God made was light; so in the new creation, when he comes to convert sinners he infuseth light, brings in a stock and frame of knowledge into the soul; therefore it is said, Heb. viii. 10, 'I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts'—the first

and great privilege of the covenant. There is a double allusion. 'I will put my law into their minds;' that alludes to the ark, as the tables were kept in the ark; 'I will write it upon their hearts;' as the law was written upon the tables, so God writes it upon their hearts; so doth God do at first conversion; and therefore wherever there is faith, there must be light. It is true, this change is not so sensible; light enters, like a sunbeam, gently and without violence; God opens the window, and draws the curtain. This is a most necessary act. Yet there is a sensible difference afterwards: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.' The devil carrieth on his kingdom by blindness and darkness, and Christ governs by light. The devil keeps men in bondage and captivity by blinding their eyes, by casting a veil of prejudices before their eyes: 2 Cor. iv. 4, 'The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not.' And God recovers them out of this captivity by opening their eyes: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God.' There cannot be any act of a rational soul about an object without knowledge or light. And therefore when God would draw our consent to his covenant, he begins with the understanding, and the light of the glorious gospel shines in upon us. That which is unknown is neither believed, nor hoped for, nor desired, nor laboured after. When Christ saith to the blind man, John ix. 35, 36, 'Dost thou believe in the Son of God?' he answered, 'Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?' Certainly that which we believe we must have a thorough sight of. I say, a man must understand things before he will close with them, and receive them. And therefore the first thing that God doth is to give us a mind to know him: 1 John v. 20, 'And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding that we may know him that is true:' and the new creature is created in knowledge, Col. iii. 10, that so it may be able to act with reason and judgment towards objects proper for it: for, according as things are known, so they powerfully draw and attract the heart. The understanding is the great wheel of the soul, and guide of the whole man; therefore there must be something done to satisfy that; grace will begin there, and there the Lord sets up the light of faith. As sense is the light of beasts, and reason the light of men, so faith is the light of christians. And as there is a distinct light, so there is much argument and discourse. God lays up principles, and faith lays them out; it is a prudent steward and dispenser of the knowledge which God hath treasured up in the heart; therefore when unbelief makes opposition, and when the heart is careless, then faith fetcheth the law out of the ark, and pleadeth and argueth with the soul. As upon the approach of an enemy against a country they draw out their forces; so doth faith bring forth the force of the soul, use reason and discourse, and draw conclusions out of the principles of the word, that it may beat its enemy. Reason is the great enemy of faith; and when it is sanctified it is the great servant of faith; by discourse and disputing it doth convince the soul: Rom. vi. 11, 'Reckoning yourselves,' or reason yourselves by argument, 'that you are dead to sin, and alive to God;' Rom. viii. 18, 'I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are

not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us; that is, I reason thus. And it is said of Abraham, Heb. xi. 19, 'He accounted that God was able to raise him;' he reasoned the case thus within himself, There is nothing impossible to God. This is the great advantage of a believer when he can draw out particular discourses and arguments, and fortify himself by such conclusions as are opposite to his particular distrust and trouble, when he can reason from his happiness to come, his interest in Christ. By this means faith doth set on either the promise or the threatening; as suppose, if the heart be backward, and loath to come to the work of mortification. If it be given to carnal pleasure, faith comes and reasons thus, Rom. viii. 13, 'If you live after the flesh, you shall die,' but you do live after the flesh, therefore you shall die; but if you through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live—if you will take pains in the exercise of religion, though severe for the present, yet it shall be sweet for the time to come, you shall live. That is the reason why the word is full of syllogisms and discourses; they are but copies of what faith doth in the heart.

2. Faith is a convictive light, that findeth us corrupt and ill-principled, and full of prejudices against the doctrine of the gospel; and it is the work of faith to root out of the soul those carnal prejudices, carnal counsels, carnal reasonings, and carnal excuses which rise up, and exclude and shut out that doctrine which the gospel offereth to us.

[1.] Against the truth of the gospel. The heart of man is naturally full of malice and atheism. Man is not white paper, he is prepossessed with thoughts 'that exalt themselves against the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus,' 2 Cor. x. 6. The truths of religion are opposite to corrupt desires, and these desires have leavened the soul with carnal prejudices, and this begets jealousies and suspicious reluctations. Now it is the work of faith to captivate and subdue those thoughts, to batter down those prejudices that lift up themselves against the knowledge of God and obedience of Christ. And therefore one great work of the Spirit is, to reprove and convince the world not only of sin, but of righteousness and judgment, John xvi. 8; the Spirit doth it as the author, and faith as the instrument. We are leavened with these evil maxims, that sin is not so dangerous as it is represented to be; that holiness is not so necessary; that the doctrines of Christ are but fables; and therefore the apostle saith, 2 Peter i. 16. 'We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;' implying that there is such a thought in the heart of man. Man hath a great many sottish conceits of all these things, but especially of the gospel; for conscience will sooner yield to moral truths than truths evangelical, and the doctrine which concerns the happiness of another world. We are by nature sooner convinced of sin than of righteousness, our thoughts being more presagious of evil than of good, because of the guilt; conscience seeing nothing but sin, can infer nothing but punishment; but we had need be convinced of all three, sin, righteousness, and judgment. It is notable that there is no figure so common in scripture as a *prolepsis*, or

anticipation of objections. Divine doctrine findeth us full of prejudices, and there is an aversion, or bearing off in the intellective faculty, as well as a dissent. Now faith never leaveth till it bringeth in other principles.

[2.] Great prejudices there are against the worth of the gospel: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.' If we be convinced that there are such things as the scripture sets forth, we are not convinced of their worth, when we do acknowledge their being; we think it a folly to be troubled about things that are to come; that a man may be saved without so much ado; and why should he venture himself upon the displeasure of the world, and the consequences of it on things that will fall out we know not when? These conceits we are leavened with: but faith is a convincing light that will disprove those corrupt and carnal principles we drink in.

3. It is an overpowering and certain conviction, that is, such as dispossesseth us of our corrupt principles and grounds, and argueth us into a contrary opinion and contrary belief. Men may have some knowledge of the gospel, and yet not have faith; they may have some smitings of heart, and disapprove of the principles wherewith they are led, and practices wherein they walk, and yet have not faith, but only a loose and wavering opinion of the things of God. Then is the soul convinced, when it is rationally, and above all cavil and contradiction, constrained to consent to the truth and worth of the things propounded in the covenant; when there is a subduing and silencing of all those carnal principles and reasonings which were wont to prevail against the truth. What the apostle saith of the great truth of the gospel, the grand article of the christian faith, Christ's dying for sinners, is true of the whole frame: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners.' These things are propounded by faith, so as to beget a firm assent to them as true, and a consent to embrace and pursue them as good. In these two expressions, 'faithful and worthy of all acceptance,' the apostle showeth what faith aims at; it represents the whole frame of religion as true; and it representeth religion as worthy of all acceptance, and then the sanctified will doth embrace it. So that the first part of the conviction of faith is a subscription to the truth. The conviction of faith bringeth the soul to a certain assent, how contrary soever it seem to sense or reason; though it seeth nothing in sense, yet it seeth a clear certainty in the word. For though there can no reason be given of the things believed, yet faith seeth reason enough why we should believe them, and so close with them upon the authority of God speaking in the word. Faith, as the substance of things hoped for, resteth upon the power of God: but as it is the evidence of things not seen, so it resteth upon the truth of God. By this firm assent the soul doth so close with truth, that it can never be divorced: 1 Thes. i. 5, 'Ye received the word with much assurance, and with much affliction,' ver. 6. Though it be contrary to inward dispositions, and though it expose to outward troubles, yet they had much assurance and evidence within themselves. Alas! men may talk of Christ and

heaven, and have some cold opinions about things to come ; they may deliver this to others, but still their evil scent remaineth with them, and their evil principles taint their hearts, and sway their practices all this while ; ‘ and they do not know the grace of God in truth,’ Col. i. 6, and have not any sense of that they seem to know. No, a natural man cannot be brought to look upon the things of religion as every way certain, and above all contradiction, and to say with the apostle : Phil. i, 9, ‘ That their love abounds yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.’ As cooks may dress meat for the master of the family, and his friends and children, but themselves taste not of it ; so carnal men may learn things in a disciplinary way ; they may know the literal meaning and sense of the promises, but are not convinced of the truth, and of the spiritual real worth of them ; that is, they have not a thorough sound persuasion and solid apprehension of the sinfulness of sin, of the beauty of holiness, of the excellency of Christ, of the preciousness of the covenant, of the rich treasures of grace ; *Hæc audiunt quasi somniantes*. Carnal men hear them as if they were in a dream ; they look upon and entertain these things as fancies, or dreams of golden mountains, or showers of pearl falling out of the clouds in a night dream.

4. It is a practical conviction. He that believeth is so convinced of the truth and worth of these things, that he is resolved to pursue after them, to make preparation for his eternal condition. Answerable to the discovery of good and evil in the understanding, there is a prosecution or an aversation in the will ; for the will necessarily follows the ultimate resolution of the judgment. Now many men have a partial conviction, but they are not thoroughly possessed of the truth and worth of heavenly things ; there is a simple approbation, but not a comparative approbation, so as to draw off the heart from other things, and ultimately to incline and bend the heart to look after them ; that is, by a simple approbation they may apprehend that it is good to be in covenant with God, but they do not like the terms. But now the last and practical conviction is, when it draweth the soul to an actual choice, when it begets not only a simple approbation, but a practical decree, when the soul saith, ‘ It is good for me to draw nigh to God,’ Ps. lxxiii. 28 ; when, all things considered, a man is convinced that he ought to look after heaven upon God’s terms. It is one thing to desire a commodity simply, another thing to accept of it at such a rate and price. Many men like pardon of sin, and eternal life, and come and cheapen the great things of the gospel, but they do not go through with the bargain. This is the conviction of faith when it makes us sell all to buy the pearl of great price, and sways the whole man to pursue and look after those things God hath propounded. Thus faith brings the soul to a consent ; it convinceth not only of the truth, but the worth of religion, and proposeth it as fit for choice. This is the end of all knowledge and understanding : Ps. cxl. 10, ‘ A good understanding have all they that keep his commandments.’ Those that know God aright, they love him also ; they know him as they are known of him. Now God knows us to love us, and to choose us, and to assume us to himself in Christ ; so we know him, when we love him, and choose him for our portion. There cannot be a greater

despite done to God, than to know God and choose the world: saith Christ, John xv. 24, 'You have both seen, and hated both me and my Father.' This is a hatred of God, when we have known God and yet turned aside to the world. Faith draweth altogether unto choice; doth not merely fill the head, but enters into the heart; it is a prudent and full consent. And that is the reason why faith is not only opposed to ignorance but to folly: Luke xxiv. 25, 'O fools, and slow of heart to believe,' &c, for there may be folly where there is not ignorance. Every wicked man in Solomon's sense is a fool. Then do we believe matters of salvation indeed, when we consent to them as good and worthy to be embraced: Rom. vii. 16, 'I consent to the law, that it is good.' They see the ways of God are best and most satisfactory, then the practical judgment is gained.

Use. To put us upon examination and trial, whether we have such a faith or no, as is an evidence or convincing light; you may try it by the parts of it. There is the assent of faith and the consent of faith; a clear light and firm assent, and a free consent to the worth of the things of God.

1. There is a clearness and perspicuity in the light of faith, which doth not only exclude the grossly ignorant, but those that have no saving knowledge. All wicked men, though never so knowing, and never so learned, and never so well accomplished with the furniture of gifts, they are under the power of darkness. There is 'a form of knowledge,' Rom. ii. 20, as well as 'a form of godliness;' there is but a model of truth in their brains, a naked speculation; they may be able to discourse of the things of God, yet they cannot be said to have the life of God. A wild plant and a garden plant have the same name and common nature, yet differ much in their operations and virtues; so do common knowledge and the light of faith. There are two differences.

[1.] The light of faith is full of efficacy, the other not. Common water and strong water are alike in colour, but much differ in their efficacy, virtue and taste; so the common knowledge of men, though for the object it may reach as far as the light of faith, a carnal man may know all that a believer knows, yet there is not such an efficacy. This light doth not discharge its office to encourage to confidence, to quicken to obedience, to fill the heart with gladness; this light never enters upon the affections—'Wisdom entereth not upon his heart,' Prov. ii. 10. Though they have knowledge, yet they are 'barren and unfruitful in the knowledge of Christ,' 2 Peter i. 8. It is light, but it doth little good, it is idle and ineffectual, it doth not ascend to the affections or practice.

[2.] The light of faith is full of practical discourses, always reasoning and improving the truth. The devil diverteth wicked men; though they have eyes, yet there are no holy arguings. The heathens are described to have 'a vain mind, and a dark heart,' Eph. iv. 17, 18. The apostle means they are full of vain principles, dark in their understandings, corrupt in their inferences. Their heart was blind which should have directed them in the ordering their conversations. A wicked man doth not discourse of things in the time and season of them. The mind of a christian is stirred up by faith to holy reasonings: This will be your portion, and the fruit of such doings. It is said of Mary,

Luke ii. 19, 'She kept these sayings, and pondered them in her heart;' she traversed them in her mind by reason and discourse.

2. We may know whether faith be an evidence by the firmness of our consent. Most flatter themselves in this, they think they do not doubt of the principles of religion, but surely close with the truth of the word, yet this evidence is wanting; for if men were more convinced, there would be a greater conformity in their practices to the rules of religion. Our consent is very weak; how does it appear? Partly, because sense is more believed than the word. We build more upon assurances of our own devising, than upon that which God hath given us. Our Saviour impersonates all our thoughts in that speech, Luke xvi. 31, 'If one went unto them from the dead, they will not repent;' we think the prophets have not spoken so feelingly and mournfully, as one from the dead would, if they should come from the flames. When we will indent with God, as the Jews, Mat. xxvii. 40, 'If he be the Son of God, let him come down from the cross, and we will believe in him;' or, as the devil himself, who proposed such terms to Christ, Mat. iv. 3, 'If thou be the Son of God, command these stones to be made bread.' Partly, because temporal things do work far more with us than spiritual; we fear temporal death more than spiritual, and will lose spiritual contentments for fleshly. And partly, because we are not affected with the things of religion as we would be, if they were before our eyes; if we had with Stephen a sight of heaven, or if we could behold Christ in his glory, or coming in his majesty, these things would make us more careful.

But we may know whether the light of the gospel doth shine into our minds with such a convincing overpowering light; and our hearts are possessed of the truth and worth of what God propounds in his covenant, by three effects of faith; the mind, the heart, and the life will be altered.

[1.] The judgment will be altered. Thou wilt have other apprehensions of God, Christ, and eternity; heaven and hell will seem to you other things than they did. Before they were looked upon but as fancies, and as things talked of in jest; but now they will be apprehended as high and important realities, about which the soul is deeply concerned: Eph. i. 18, 'The eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' When our natural blindness is removed, there is another manner of discerning things, and a sounder belief of them than before; then a man was in darkness, now he sees by another light, now he hath eyes indeed. As they say in nature, *non dantur pure tenebræ*, there is no such thing as pure darkness; so it is true in moral things also. In a state of nature there is not pure darkness; there are some glimmerings of an everlasting state, and some superficial apprehensions more or less in men according to the advantages of their education. But now their eyes are opened; they have another judgment about these things; they are clearly discerned, so as to shake and move the heart, and pierce the soul to the quick.

[2.] The heart will be altered. When faith gives us a sight of things, the heart is warmed with love to things so seen; 'Being persuaded, they embraced,' Heb. xi. 13. Affection follows persuasion. When we

are soundly persuaded, then the heart embraceth, closeth with them, and entertaineth them with the tenderest welcome of our souls; whereas before we talked of heaven and hell in jest, now we mind them in downright earnestness. The light and knowledge of heaven and hell that we had by education, tradition, customary talking, reading and hearing, it never pierceth the soul to the quick, never warmeth the affections; but when we have this evidence concerning things to come and things unseen, then the heart is affected.

[3.] The life will be altered. Art thou taken off from earthly things and wordly vanities, and seriously set a-work to make provision for eternity? I tell you, the most visible and sensible effect of a sound conviction is a diligent pursuit, when a man is set a-work by the notions he hath of God, Christ, and eternity; 1 Cor. ix. 26, 'Therefore I so run, not as uncertainly: I so fight, not as one that beats the air.' Oh then, there is running, striving, fighting. The man is certainly persuaded of things to come, and he will be taken off from those trifles and childish toys which did engross the former part of his life; and then all thy thoughts, and serious cares, and fears will be diverted into another channel, and taken up about those better things which thou art convinced of by faith. Faith hath light in it, such a light as finds us corrupted, but dispossesseth us of those evil affections, and sways our practice. Therefore, are your judgments, your hearts, and your lives altered? by this you may know whether you have been acquainted with this work of faith namely, as it is 'an evidence of things not seen.'

SERMON IV.

And the evidence of things not seen.—HEB. xi. 1.

Secondly, I come to the object, 'Things not seen.' Faith is an evidence, but what kind of evidence? of things that cannot be otherwise seen, which doth not disparage the evidence, but declare the excellency of faith. 'Not seen,' that is, not liable to the judgment of sense and reason.

What are those 'things not seen'? Things may either be invisible in regard of their nature, or of their distance and absence from us. Some things are invisible in their own nature—as God, angels, and spirits; and all the way and work of the Holy Ghost in and about the spiritual life. Other things are invisible in regard of their distance and absence; and so things past and to come are invisible; we cannot see them with our bodily eyes, but they are discovered to us by faith. In short, these 'things not seen,' are either matters of constant practical experience, which are not liable to outward sense, or principles of knowledge, which are not suitable to natural reason.

1. Matters of practical experience. The blessings of religion as the enduring substance, Heb. x. 34, the benefit of affliction, the rewards and supplies of the spiritual life, answers of prayer, they are things

not seen in regard of the bodily eye and carnal feeling; but faith expects them with as much assurance as if they were corporeally present, and could be felt and handled, and is assuredly persuaded of them, as if they were before our eyes.

2. Principles of knowledge. There are many mysteries in religion above reason; until nature put on the spectacles of faith, it cannot see them; as the incarnation of Christ, the doctrine of the trinity, natural parts cannot discern the truth or worth of them; they find no sap, or savour in the truths of the gospel. They are unseen to reason, but faith makes them clear to the soul.

Doct. That the evidence of faith is conversant about things unseen by sense or natural reason.

The point admits of much speculative debate, but I shall handle it only in a practical way.

That faith is conversant about things unseen I shall prove by three reasons taken from the differences of time.

1. Because much of religion is past, and we have bare testimony and revelation to warrant it: as the creation of the world out of nothing, the incarnation, life, and death of Christ; these are truths not liable to sense, and unlikely to reason—that the vine should grow upon one of its own branches, that God should become a man, and die. Now upon the revelation of the word, the Spirit of God makes all evident to faith. As the centurion, when he saw the miracles of Christ's death said, 'Truly this was the Son of God,' Mat. xxvii. 54; so by the Spirit in the hearts of believers, they are convinced, surely this is no other than the word of God. Faith can see God veiled under a curtain of flesh, and Christ the Son of God hanging and dying on a cross. Yea the more impossible the thing is to nature, the fitter object of faith, when it is accompanied with divine testimony. If carnal reason object against these things, we must renounce and give it the lie when it contradicts divine truth; for though the truths of the gospel are hidden and strange to reason, they are open and evident to faith. There are several lights God hath set up in the world, and they must keep their place; there is sense, which is the light of beasts; reason, which is the light of men; faith, which is the light of saints; and vision, which is the light of glory: now all these lights are not contrary, but subordinate. If we should examine all things by sense, we should lay aside many things evident to reason; as to sense a star is no bigger than a spangle, or spark; but reason knows, because of the distance, we must much otherwise conceive of them. So if we should lift up reason against faith we should discard many principles and articles of religion which are of greatest concernment. It is an old error to oppose the course of nature to God's word. Those mockers in Peter erred, because they examined things by sense: 2 Peter iii. 4, 'All things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation.' When men will believe nothing above their reason, and above their sense, it is a sign they want the light which God hath set up in the church, the light of faith, Jude 19, 'Sensual, not having the Spirit.' Men that go according to reason only, go most against reason; nothing can be more irrational than to consult with nature about supernatural things, and to fetch the judgment of spiritual things from sense; it is all one

as if we should bring down all rational affairs to the judgment of sense, and seek a law for man among beasts; reason must not be captivated to fancy, but to faith. Much of religion is past, and consists of articles unknown.

2. Much of religion is yet to come, and therefore can only be discerned by faith. Fancy and nature cannot outsee time, and look beyond death: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things,' that is, that lacketh faith, and other graces that do accompany it, 'is blind, and cannot see afar off;' unless faith hold the candle to hope, we cannot see heaven at so great a distance. Heaven and the glorious rewards of religion are yet to come; faith only can see heaven in the promises and look upon the gospel as travailing in birth with a great salvation. Faith must supply the room of sense, and believe heaven though it see it not, and look for it though we enjoy it not. As reason must not jostle out faith, so faith must not be uncertain, though it cannot aspire to the light of glory. The apostle saith, 'We walk by faith, not by sight,' 2 Cor. v. 7; that is our light here. Graceless souls may be sharp-sighted in all things that concern their temporal interest, and talk of the affairs of the present world; but as for the things of the other world they are stark blind.

3. That of religion which is of actual and present enjoyment, sense or reason cannot discern the truth or worth of it; therefore faith is still the evidence of things unseen.

[1.] It cannot discern the truth of it. There are few things in religion but the truth of them is contradicted by carnal sense. Eternal life is promised to us, but first we must be dead; the resurrection of the body, but first we must moulder to dust in the grave. Blessedness is promised to us at last, but in the meantime we are of all men most miserable; a comfortable supply of all things, but in the meantime we hunger and suffer thirst. God saith he will be a present help in a time of trouble, but he seems to be deaf to our prayers; therefore faith is conversant about things present. The carrying on the work of grace is a thing invisible: Col. iii. 3, 'Our life is hid with Christ in God.' I say, the secret power and influence, by which grace is fed and maintained, is carried on from step to step in despite of devils or men. Therefore the apostle begs, Eph. i. 18, 'That their eyes might be opened;' why? what should they discern?—'that they might know the hope of their calling, and the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' The power that goes to the maintaining of grace, till we come to the possession of the rich and glorious inheritance which God hath provided for us, it is a matter of faith not of sense. What would become of us, if faith did not supply the place of sense, and the promise did not make amends for enjoyment? That phrase of 'living by faith,' is always used in opposition to present feeling. It is mentioned in four places of scripture, twice in the case of justification, Rom. i. 17, Gal. iii. 11, when we are dead in law, lost in the sense of our own consciences; then when we can cast ourselves upon the mercies of God in Christ, this is living by faith. And it is used twice in the case of great troubles and anxiety; when we have nothing else to live upon but our own sorrows and tears, when the destroyer in the land wasted and devoured all they had, then 'the just shall live by faith,'

Hab. ii. 4. So when their goods were plundered, Heb. x. 34, then 'the just shall live by faith,' ver. 38, so that the whole life of a christian is made up of riddles; and faith is still opposite to sense. This indeed is living by faith, to see that in God which is wanting in the creature. The whole business of christianity is nothing else, but a contradicting of sense; God's dealing seemeth often to make against his promise, and his way is contrary to the judgment of the carnal mind. Where would religion be were it not for faith?

[2] As the truth of religion is not always visible to sense, so the worth of religion is checked by carnal reason: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit, neither can he receive them, because they are spiritually discerned.' Carnal reason judgeth it to be a foolish thing to renounce present delights and present advantages. Suffering zeal seemeth peevishness and frowardness to a carnal judgment and active zeal a fond niceness. Look, as astronomers have invented names of bears, lions, dragons, for those things which are glorious stars in the heavens; so doth carnal reason miscall all the graces of the Holy Spirit. When a man makes conscience of his ways, carnal reason says that which carnal men do, We shall have you turn fool now! So that he that will be wise to salvation, must become one of the world's fools, that he may be wise, 1 Cor. iii. 18. Therefore that we may be sincere and strict in religion, and faithful with God, willing to do and willing to suffer, there is need of faith, that we may quit visible conveniences for invisible rewards, and despise things that are seen for things that are not seen: 2 Cor. iv. 18. 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.' That made the apostles renounce worldly interests, and mortify carnal affections. Faith discovered a worth and beauty in things not seen to reason and sense.

Having showed that faith is an evidence, and such an evidence as falls upon things that are not seen, I shall show now what is the advantage of this in the spiritual life; for to that end doth the apostle bring this description, that they may live by faith. The use of it is exceeding great.

(1.) To embolden us against the difficulties and inconveniences of our pilgrimage. When we look to things seen, we may desery as many enemies as creatures, and are ready to cry out, as the prophet's man, 'Alas, Master, what shall we do?' 1 Kings vi. 15. Now faith presents invisible supplies in visible dangers. If Satan be at our left hand ready to resist us, God is at our right hand ready to strengthen us. If men pursue us with their hatred and displeasure, faith represents God following us with his love and kindness. It is said of Moses: Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.' Moses would run the hazard of Pharaoh's wrath, would turn his back upon such a fertile land as Egypt was, to go with the people of God into the wilderness, and all because he saw invisible things. Faith sees God assisting in a spiritual manner, and then all difficulties are reconciled and all terrors that arise from visible things are mitigated and made more comfortable by invisible supplies.

(2.) To help us to bear afflictions, out of a hope of a comfortable

issue. Faith can see fruit budding out of the dry rod of affliction. Ask sense, and it will tell you of nothing but aches and smart: Heb. xii. 11, 'No affliction for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous.' For the present it is a grievous thing to lie under the strokes of God's providence. If we should consult with present feeling, we should be like children, nothing but howl; but now faith can prophesy glad tidings at midnight, and see quietness and pleasantness in the midst of smart, and rich incomes of grace and purposes of love, when God seems to deal roughly with us.

(3.) It is of use to unfold the riddles of providence. The dispensations of God are full of mysteries; the way is shame when the end is glory. There is a handwriting of providence which is like Belshazzar's, we cannot read it; usually like the Hebrew tongue, it must be read quite backwards. Christ brews the water of life out of gall, wormwood, and blood. Joseph must be sold, then honoured; first a slave, then a favourite; cast into the dungeon, that he may be preferred at court. When God meant to bless Jacob, he makes him halt and lame, for he breaketh his thigh. The empty bucket goes down into the pit that it may come up full. Now nothing is out of order to providence, therefore nothing is out of order to faith. In the saddest providences, faith expects a good issue: Ps. lxxiii. 1, 'Truly God is good to Israel.' At the end of the six days God saw all that he had made, and behold it was very good; so for these six thousand years all his works of providence are good, very good. Faith, ploughing with God's heifer, comes to learn his designs: Job xi. 6, 'And that he would show thee the secrets of wisdom, that it is double to that which is; know therefore that God exacteth of thee less than thine iniquity deserveth.' Divine providence hath two faces; that which is visible and outward is full of rigour, and God seems to be against us. Ay, but there is that which is not seen, and there is love, and sweetness, and clemency, like a picture, here the face of a virgin, there the form of a serpent. That which is not seen to sense is a thousand times more comely than the surface. Common light can discern nothing of this mixture: Eccles. viii. 14, 'In the day of adversity consider.' Some lessons are easy to sense, but others are hard enough to faith. Sense judges only of the outside, and bark, and rind of God's dispensations, and therefore we are perplexed and at a stand: but faith goes into the sanctuary, Ps. lxxiii. 17, and consults with God's word, and looks within the veil, and engageth us to wait, and teacheth us how to solve the dark riddles of providence. There are secret and invisible things which God maketh known to waiting souls.

(4.) To help us in duties of charity, that we may be rich in good works. The loss and detriment that cometh to our estates by large distributions, in doing worthily for God in our generation, by helping the poor, relieving the needy, promoting the ordinances of God; the loss is visible; ay, but faith sees it made up again, and that there is no such usury as lending to God. This is a duty where faith is most sensibly acted; here God proveth faith, and here we prove God. 1. We prove God—'Prove me, saith the Lord, by riches and offerings:' Mal. iii. 10. 'If I will not open you the window of heaven, and pour you out a blessing.' Here faith maketh sensible experiments, and adventureth upon God's word. God giveth us a bill of exchange; we have

nothing but a promise for what we lay out upon a work of religion : Prov. xix. 17, ' He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord ; and that which he hath given will he pay him again.' Charity and alms is a kind of traffic, and there is a great deal of faith and trust exercised in it, if he lay out a sum upon his word and bond. A carnal mind thinks all lost and gone because he will not take God's word ; but now he that believes can see profit temporal and spiritual to arise out of this. 2. Here also God trieth us—' Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' You see no profit, but can you believe it ? Eccles. xi. 1, ' Cast thy bread upon the waters ; for thou shalt find it after many days.' When a man goes about doing good, such liberal distributions to a carnal mind are but like sowing the seed in a moorish ground, or like ploughing the sea ; as foolish and as vain a course as if a man should cast his bread, that is, his bread corn, upon the waters. The vulgar read it *super transeuntes aquas*, cast it upon the running stream. We cannot look for a crop out of the water ; it is carried down the stream, and a man shall never see it again. Ay, but faith, which is an evidence of things not seen, will help us in this case even to distribute our substance, for God will make it up again. When you can wait upon God contrary to sense and experience, then you have the true kind of faith.

(5.) In desertion, when God hides himself, faith only can find him out. When all comforts are lost to sense, they are present to faith. Faith can see God under his mask and veil : Isa. xlv. 15, ' Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel, the Saviour.' When God means to be a saviour, he may hide himself, but faith waiteth upon him in the deepest and blackest desertion. John ii. 4, Christ rebukes the Virgin Mary—' Woman, what have I to do with thee ? mine hour is not yet come ;' yet ver. 5, ' His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it.' She had received a sharp rebuke from Christ, yet she knew he would do something, and therefore saith, ' Fill the waterpots.' True faith can pick love out of God's angry speeches, and draw gracious conclusions from the blackest and hardest premises. Saith Job, if he shall kill me, and lay more terrors upon me, ' Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him,' Job xiii. 15 ; and saith David, Ps. xlii. 11, ' Hope in God, for I shall yet praise him.' When there are no apparent evidences, all comforts and graces are spent, there is not a drop of oil in the cruse, nor a dust of meal in the barrel ; yet hope can hang upon a small thread. They will wait, trust, and look for something of favour from God.

(6.) This faith is necessary to believe the spiritual mysteries of religion. So faith sees a virtue in Christ's death : Gal. ii. 20, ' Nevertheless I live ; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me ; and the life which I live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.' This is a mere riddle to sense, so to believe the salutary and gracious fruits and effects of christian ordinances, which are to appearance mean and poor, but the worth and fruit of them is unseen. Saith Tertullian, *Nihil adeo ac offendit hominum mentes, quam simplicitas divinorum operum*, there is nothing offends men's minds so much as the simplicity of his ordinances. Plain preaching seems a poor, useless thing ; a vain artifice to catch souls, it is as much despised by carnal reason in the heart, as it is by vain men

in the world, yet this is God's way to convert the soul: 1 Cor. i. 21, 'It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.' The waters of baptism heathens were offended at, when christians talked of such glorious things as to be born again, united to Christ, possessed of the Spirit, and they could see nothing but going down into the water. To find spiritual comfort and ravishing joy in the Lord's supper, when we see nothing but a piece of bread and a draught of wine; for ordinances that have no pomp and splendid appearance in them, yet to be sanctified to the most high and mysterious uses of our religion, this is that which is matter of faith.

(7.) That we may look for life in the hour of death. When sense and understanding is departing, oh! then to comfort ourselves with the love of God that shall never depart; to look for life and resurrection among dry bones, and to look on the grave as a place not of destruction, but of delivery—these are all things unseen, and require faith to believe them. Who would think such a pale horse as death should be sent from Christ to carry us to glory? and that the funerals of the body shall not be the funerals of the christian, but only of his sin and of his frailty? *Miseria moritur, homo non moritur*; it is but a shed taken down, that it may be raised in a better structure; that the way to live for ever is to die first, that we may be killed and not hurt; to believe that the morsels for the worms should be parcels of the resurrection: Job xix. 26. 'Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:' and then to send our flesh in hope to the grave: Ps. xvi. 9, 'My flesh also shall rest in hope;' to go to the grave as a bed of ease and chamber of rest, of which Christ keeps the keys; all this is matter of faith. Our Saviour saith, John xi. 25, 'He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet he shall live;' he puts the question, 'Believest thou this?' ver. 26; nothing else will assure it you. But have you faith? David puts the supposition: Ps. xxiii. 4, 'Though I walk in the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me;' though I walk side by side with death; though my bones be cast into a common charnel, and I converse with skulls, yet Christ will look after this dust, and those rotten relics of mortality. Faith must assure and persuade us of all this.

(8.) To believe a change of the greatest flourish and outward prosperity. When men have such a high mountain as seems to stand strong, who would think that it can ever be removed? Wickedness regnant and triumphant is ruinous and tottering in the eye of faith: Micah iv. 11, 12, 'Many nations are gathered together against Zion, that say, let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion; yet they know not the thoughts of the Lord, nor understand his counsel.' In private cases, to look upon unjust gain that comes in plentifully upon us as a certain loss, and to see God's curse upon great and ill-gotten revenues; to determine, that 'better is a little with righteousness, than great revenues without right,' Prov. xvi. 8. How better? If we consult with sense, there is no such thing; but faith assures us. Would men make haste to be rich if they had this rich faith? it would tell them, This is the way to bring ruin upon themselves and their posterity: to see ruin in the midst of abundance, and loss in the midst of gain; that righteousness is the only way of gain, and scattering the ready

way to increase, is the work of faith: Prov. xi. 24, 'There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, and it tendeth to poverty.' Thus you see this faith runs through all religion, and hath an influence upon every practical thing almost.

Use 1. Information. I shall draw from hence four practical corollaries.

If the object of faith be things unseen, then,

1. Christians should not murmur if God keep them low and bare, and they have nothing they can see to live upon. As long as they do their duty, they are in the hands of God's providence. If God exercise them with troubles, humble them with wants, and delay their hopes, they have a faith which should be instead of vision and enjoyment; and when they want all things, they should be as 'possessing all things,' 2 Cor. vi. 10. They have an all-sufficient God to trust to, a God that bears the purse for them. If you are reduced to hard short allowance, live upon the promise—a believer has all things in the promise, though nothing in possession. This is the happiness of heaven, that God is all in all without the intervention of means. This life of faith is heaven antedated and begun, to see all in God in the midst of greatest wants.

2. In the greatest extremity that can befall us there is work for faith, but no place for discouragement; your faith is never tried till then. The church could bring one contrary out of another: Micah vii. 9. 'Though I fall, I shall arise;' and, saith Jonah, chap. ii. 7, 'When my soul fainted in me, then I remembered God.' In a spiritual death, when our comforts are spent, and all fail, then is a time for faith. Faith can traffic with Christ in the dark, and take his word for that of which we have no appearance at all. As Rom. iv. 18, 'Abraham believed in hope against hope;' that is, in hope according to promise, though against hope contrary to the course of nature, when all natural arguments, appearances, and grounds of hope are cut off.

3. That a christian is not to be valued by his enjoyments, but by his hopes. 'He hath meat and drink which the world knows not of,' John iv. 32, and can go to the rock when creatures have spent their allowance. To appearance his life is worse than other men; ay, but his better life is hidden with God, he hath invisible things to live upon, his main portion lieth in things not seen. The whole christian life is nothing else but a spiritual riddle full of mysteries and wonders; he can see things not seen, fulness in want, special love in common mercies, grace in a piece of bread. A wicked man's enjoyments are sweet to sense, ay, but they are salted with a curse: but now in the deepest expressions of hatred, a child of God by faith can see God's love.

4. Christ may be out of sight, yet you not out of mind. He consults not with sense, for that makes lies of God—'I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.' If God will not look to me, I will look to him. The dam leaves her nest, but she leaves her heart behind, and she will return. The sun at midnight seemeth low, but it will rise again: Ps. xcvii. 11, 'Light is sown for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart.'

Use 2. Reproof to those that are all for sense and for present appearance.

1. Such as do not believe without present feeling.

2. Such as cannot wait upon God without present satisfaction.

[1.] There are some gross sensualists that examine all things by experience, and will not take God's word for truth, unless they feel it; whereas feeling is left for the life to come; here God will try us by faith. There are atheists in the church, but none in hell. The devils and damned spirits tremble at that which you doubt of. Here we have the light of conscience, reason and faith; but there men are left to feeling and experience; and therefore those that measure all things by present sense, and so disbelieve the world to come, they are hence to be reprov'd. Foolish men may go to school and learn of the ant. Since they will not learn of God, they may learn of the creature: Prov. vi. 6-8, 'Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.' There is a natural providence and instinct in these creatures to provide for their future state. Oh then, what a sot is he that will not think of his state to come, nor of any condition beyond that which he now enjoys? they are worse than the ant—than the meanest and the lowest creature, that because they see not God or Christ, or heaven or hell, therefore question whether there be indeed any such thing, yea or no: I say many such there are in the world that say, as Thomas did out of weakness, John xx. 25, 'Unless I see in his hand the print of the nails,' &c., 'I will not believe;' they will not believe that God hath provided such a deplorable and miserable estate, where the wicked shall be tormented for ever and ever, and cast out from the presence of the Lord to the devil and his angels, because they see not these things.

[2.] It reproveth those that cannot wait upon God without present satisfaction, that faint if the appearance of things suit not with their mind and expectation. We are all apt to be led by sense, and to plead natural improbabilities; and when any difficulty ariseth that checketh our hopes, we question the promises of God, and say with Mary, Luke i. 34, 'How can these things be?'

(1.) This is a great dishonour to God, to trust him no further than we see him. You trust the ground with your corn, and can expect a crop out of the dry clods, though you do not see how it grows, nor which way it thrives in order to the harvest. It is a great folly to distrust the Lord, because the mercies we expect do not presently grow up and flower in our sight and apprehension. Abraham gave glory to God 'by believing in hope against hope,' Rom. iv. 18. That is an honour to God indeed, when in defiance of sense, and all outward probabilities, we can depend upon him for the accomplishment of his promise: whereas otherwise, when we confine God to present likelihoods, and must have satisfaction to our senses, or else we will not believe nor take things upon God's bare word; nor stay ourselves upon the name of God—'Except we see signs and wonders we will not believe,' John iv. 48. It is a great dishonour to God; 'we limit the holy one of Israel,' Ps. lxxviii. 41, confining him to our circle of means.

(2.) It is contrary to all the dispensations of God's providence. Before he gives in any mercy there are usually some trials. Abraham had the promise of a numerous issue, but first Sarah's womb was long barren. Nay, after that God tried him again when he hath a child, he must sacrifice Isaac, the child of the promise. It was a hard thing

for faith to interpret how he should offer Isaac, and yet believe that 'in Isaac all nations should be blessed.' Their obedience was to conflict not only with reason but with faith, and to find out an expedient to reconcile the precept with the promise; but yet he had a faith to believe it: Gen. xxii. 5, 'He said to his young men, abide you here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.' It was neither a lie nor equivocation, but words proceeding from the assurance of faith; for though Abraham knew not how, yet he tells Isaac, ver. 8, 'God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering.' And as he used Abraham the father of the faithful, so he doth all his children. Christ's kingdom is described thus: first he comes as a root out of a dry ground, Isa. liii. 2. When the tree of Jesse was withered and dried up, when it was worn down to its root and stumps, God makes it to scent and bud again; then comes Jehovah the branch; then afterwards, Luke xvii. 20, 'The kingdom of God comes not with observation.' When the kingdom of Christ was to be set up, what appearance was there? a crucified man, and a few fishermen to begin this glorious empire! What should we have done if we had lived in Christ's time, and seen the despicable beginnings of his kingdom—we that are so amazed at every difficulty and cross providence? David was first hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, that he might be settled upon a throne. Thus God is still wont to try our faith before he satisfy our sense, and to leave some weakness upon the means that the mercy may be more glorious. Consult the whole course of God's providence, and all the experiences of the saints, and you will find it to be so: Isa. xlvi. 7, 'They are created now, and not from the beginning, even before the day, when thou heardest them not, lest thou shouldst say, Behold I knew them.' Things raised out of the earth, a man could not have thought there had been any such means and instruments in the whole creation. 'He hath chosen'—*τὰ μὴ ὄντα*—things that are not,' 1 Cor. i. 27; that is, things that seemed to have no such use and efficacy, 'to confound things that are.' Micah v. 7, 'And they shall be as the dew from the Lord, as showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men.' The herbs of the garden have visible means of supply, they are watered by hand, they tarry for man, and depend upon man's industry and providence; but they shall be as the grass in the wilderness, which thrive by dews and showers from heaven, that come without man's thinking and care. Those that are acquainted with the usual traverses and ways of providence cannot but trust God. Usually we look on God's works by halves and pieces, and so distrust. There is a great deadness upon the means, when God will employ them to the highest uses and purposes. A painter draweth half a man, and then there is no beauty. When we look into the fiery furnace, and see nothing but devouring flames, who would think God could bring forth a vessel of honour from thence? God's dispensations have not left their wonted course, he tries us with such unlikelihoods.

(3.) It is contrary to the nature of faith—'Hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' Rom. viii. 24. Faith gives over work when we come to fruition; the trial of it is in difficulties. Faith is faith indeed, when it can expect in the midst of

dissatisfactions, and hath no relief from sense, nor help from outward things: John xx. 29, 'Blessed are they that have not seen, and yet believe.' That is true faith, when we can expect blessings upon God's warrant; though we cannot discern the way, manner, nor means, yet we hold fast the conclusion, all will work for good. Instruments miscarry; but faith looketh not to instruments, but to the promise: Esther iv. 14, 'If thou altogether hold thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place.' Her petitioning was the only visible likely way; but if God would not use it, he was satisfied with his word. Nay, sometimes the word of God seems to be tried as well as we: Ps. xiii. 6, 'The words of the Lord are pure words, as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.' He speaks not only of the purity and excellency of the word, but of the stability and certainty of it; when the promise is cast into the fire, and seems to lie a-burning, it is not consumed, but comes out with greater brightness and lustre. There are many, if God give them health, peace, plenty, and all manner of prosperity, then they believe him to be their God; but if they see no external evidences of his favour, they will not believe in him; this is to live by sense, not by faith; for faith is the evidence of things not seen, it can raise us above sight, and support us against sense.

(4.) It will weaken our hands in duty when we look to every present discouragement. Solomon saith, Eccles. xi. 4, 'He that observeth the winds shall not sow; and he that regardeth the clouds shall not reap.' He that is deterred from sowing his seed by every wind, and reaping his corn by every cloud, will never do his business; so he that looketh to every discouragement can never act worthily for God, but is marred by every difficulty; he is off and on, as outward things succeed or miscarry: James i. 8, 'A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways,' full of distractions and faintings, up and down with hopes and fears, as worldly things ebb and flow.

SERMON V.

And the evidence of things not seen.—HEB. xi. 1.

Use. 3. If faith be such an evidence of things not seen, then let us examine—have we this faith that can believe things not seen? This is the nature of true faith. Hope built upon outward probability is but carnal hope; but here is the faith and hope we live by, that which is carried out to things not seen with the bodily eye. Take these directions to discover it.

1. How doth it work as to Christ now he is out of sight? His visible presence is long since removed, and he is withdrawn within the veil and curtain of the heavens, there to perform his ministration before the Lord. Can you love Christ, and enjoy Christ, and converse with him in heaven at the right hand of the Father, as if you did see him, and converse with him bodily in the days of his flesh? It was the

commendation of their faith: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.' Though you never saw him, yet can you repair to him to solve your doubts and answer your scruples, depend upon the merit of his death, and embolden yourselves in your addresses to God upon the account of his satisfaction? Though he died sixteen hundred years ago, yet can you conceive hope by his blood as if it were shed afresh, and running before your eyes? for so should believers do: Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness, and access with confidence, by the faith of him.' Alas! to most christians Christ is but a name, a fancy, or an empty conceit, such as the heathens had of their topical gods, or we of tutelar saints, some for this country and some for that. Do you pray as seeing him at God's right hand in heaven pleading your cause, and negotiating with God for you?

2. How doth it work as to his coming to judgment? Is the awe of that day upon your hearts? and do you live as those that must give an account even for every idle word, when the great God of recompenses shall descend from heaven with a shout? Rev. xx. 12, 'I saw the dead small and great stand before God,' &c. Have you such a sight as St John had? Indeed he saw it by vision, or by the light of prophecy; but the light of faith differs but little from the light of prophecy. They agree in many things, as in the common ground. What is the ground of the light of prophecy? the foundation of it is divine revelation, and the same ground hath faith. And they agree in the evidence. What is prophecy? a certain foreknowledge of things to come; and what is faith? an evidence of things to come. Thus they agree. They differ in these things: the light of prophecy depends upon special grounds, which is extraordinary revelation; but the light of faith hath but that common ground, the ordinary revelation God hath made of his mind in scripture; and they differ somewhat in the degree. Indeed there is more of ecstasy and rapture of mind that accompanieth the light of prophecy; but in the light of faith there is some answerable affection, some impression left upon us. They differ something too in the duration and continuance with us; the light of prophecy is but at times, when God will show such a sight or vision; but the light of faith is a constant, steady view. Well then, what John saw once by the light of prophecy we see constantly, and are persuaded of it as certainly as if the trumpet were now sounding; as if the throne were set, and the books were already opened, and the trembling sinners were all summoned before the Lord, expecting their doom and sentence. Have you a sight of judgment to come? It is a thing unseen, but as faith gives you an evidence of it, doth it quicken your desires and your longings after this day? doth it awaken your diligence? doth it make you awful and serious in the whole course of your conversation, both in your outward carriage and secret practices, as if all were seen? for you have seen the day of the Lord.

3. How can you comfort yourselves in the midst of all your straits and sorrows with the unseen glory of another world? Do not you faint in your duty, but bear up with that courage and constancy which becomes christians: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'We faint not,' why? He gives you the reason of it, ver. 18, 'While we look not at the things that

are seen, but at the things that are not seen.' This is an evidence of our looking to things not seen, when we faint not, but go on with courage and constancy, as it becomes the heirs of the grace of life, upon sight of the invisible world. So 1 John iii. 2, 'It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but this we know, that when he shall appear, we shall be like him.' And so you are no more affected with the disgraces and scorns of the world than a prince in disguise, who travels abroad unknown, if he meets not with respect and reverence answerable to his quality; he knows he is his father's heir, and this comforts him; and the unseen glory in the world to come puts comfort and strength into your hearts.

4. How doth it work as to the threatenings of the word? Can you mourn for a judgment in its causes, and foresee a storm when the clouds are but a-gathering? As Josiah had a tender heart, and trembled when the curses of the law were read: 2 Chron. xxxiv. 19, 'When the king heard the words of the law, then he rent his clothes.' It is not said when he heard news of Pharaoh Necho's invasion: no, all was quiet and composed, no trouble then had a foot in his kingdom: 'but when he heard the words of the law, he rent his clothes,' then he is solicitous to get things redressed. This general description that faith is the evidence of things not seen, the apostle exemplifies in the instance of Noah: Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark,' when there was no visible preparation towards the deluge; when the world was eating, drinking, marrying, giving in marriage, building, planting, and all things went on as they were wont to do. Are you humbling your souls and fighting in secret when anything is done to bring you or your nation in danger of a threatening? God describes a gracious heart thus—'He trembles at my word,' Isa. lxvi. 2; he not only trembles at my judgment, but at my word, before the smoke or the flame of judgment breaketh out. Alas! most men are not moved with these things till the curse of God seize upon them. They know not that they which do such things as they do are in danger of the curse of God. There are threatenings against their practices everywhere, yet who lays it to heart? Ps. xc. 11, 'Who knows the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.' The word of God moveth us not till we smart in our flesh. This faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, it is to be referred to the threatenings as well as to the promises. And all our diligence and caution, our watchfulness, our humiliation, that we may avert God's judgments, ariseth from this faith.

5. How doth your heart work upon the promises in difficult cases? Thereby God tries you, and thereby you may try yourselves: John vi. 5, 6, 'When Jesus lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he said unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread that these may eat? and this he said to prove him.' God often useth the like kind of dispensation to his people. There are many mouths, and no bread; great troubles, and no means of escape; this he doth to prove you, but God knows how to order this for your comfort. When we judge by sense, and reason, and outward probabilities, in such kind of extremities we are driven to our wits' end. Now faith, which lives above sense,

will be a support and strength to your souls. In such cases reason and faith, and sense and faith, come in competition. How, which way do the workings of your spirits incline—to reason, or faith? Faith can take God's word in the midst of all difficulties; and when sense seeth nothing but hazards, wants, sorrows, then faith holds with the promise against these appearances, and rests on God whatever we feel to the contrary: Hab. iii. 17, 18, 'Though the fig-tree shall not blossom,' &c., 'yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation.' Those hopes which hang upon the life and presence of the creature, when the creatures fail, they fail; when bread and outward supplies are gone, they are lost and undone; but the children of God have built upon a promise, and when creatures have spent their allowance, when they can no longer live upon bread, they can live upon the promise and word of God. Therefore God will prove him, and exercise him with straits and troubles; but then can he depend upon the Lord. A believer can say yea with a promise, when all the world saith no to him. The apostle saith: 2 Cor. i. 20, 'All the promises of God are in him yea, and in him amen.' The promises say yea to our hopes, and amen to our desires; and in all difficult changes still the promises keep their note, they are yea and amen. You desire such a thing according to the will of God—Amen, saith the promise, so it shall be. May I hope for such a mercy or comfort?—Yea, saith the promise. Now in straits you will find the comfort of such a truth. You ask of creatures and present appearances, May I look for good? and they answer no, but the promise still saith yea: now a believer is contented with the promises, yea, though all the world say no. Christians! there needeth nothing to your comfort but this, first to establish a regular hope, and then to trust the affirmation of the promise. Now hereby may you discern your spirits. Can you with certainty depend upon the promise, and with a quiet and calm expectation wait for the blessing of the promises in the midst of all pressures whatsoever? Carnal men limit God, and give laws to providence: Ps. lxxviii. 41, 'Yea they turned back, and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel.' They bind the counsels of God by their outward appearances: 1 Peter iv. 19, 'Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well-doing, as unto a faithful creator.' They give up their souls to God, and all their affairs to his disposal. He is faithful, and will be mindful of them, and he is a creator and hath power to help them, and this quiets and calms their souls under all providences.

6. You may try your assent to the promises by the adventures you make upon God's word. The promises are so many bills and bonds which God hath taken upon himself. Now what will you venture upon the warrant and encouragement the word gives? Certainly he that will venture nothing thereupon doth not believe what God hath said, 'Whoso shall confess me before men, him shall the Son of man confess before the angels of God; but, he that denieth me before men, I will deny him before my Father, and before his holy angels,' Luke xii. 8, 9. Can you adventure upon Christ's word to confess him, though you should deny your present interest? so Luke ix. 24, 'Whosoever shall save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his

life for my sake, the same shall find it.' Now urge the soul with this promise, Can I be willing to fall a sacrifice upon the interest of religion upon such a hope, or quit temporal conveniences for the enduring substance? Now lest your heart should deceive you, because every one is not called to suffer, and resolution in cold blood may faint when they come to trial, therefore look to such things as are of present use and experience. Practise upon that promise: Luke xii. 33, 'Sell all that you have, and give alms: provide yourselves bags that wax not old, a treasure in the heavens which faileth not.' Now say, What have I ventured upon this promise? can I look upon no estate so sure as that which is trusted in Christ's hands? Do I indeed count this the best way to entail a blessing upon me and my children and family afterwards, not to purchase house to house, and field to field, but to found a covenant interest, and lay up a treasure for them in Christ's hands, by a large, liberal, and free distribution to the poor? But if this seems hard though it be a clear precept in the gospel, and everywhere we are called upon to lend unto the Lord, what lusts can you renounce upon the security of eternal life? Practise upon that promise: Rom. viii. 13, 'If we live after the flesh, we shall die: but if we through the Spirit mortify the deeds of the body, we shall live.' Now am I willing to undergo the severities and tedious hardships of a christian life? to be much in mortifying and subduing my flesh? Can I yield to this upon these hopes? do I look upon it as better to take pains than suffer pains, to be held with cords of duty than chains of darkness, and run the hazard of being separated for ever from the presence of the Lord? Certainly, when you can neither renounce lusts nor quit interest, nor make any spiritual adventures, you do but look upon the gospel as a fable. What have we ventured upon those bonds God hath given us, and those obligations he hath taken upon himself, that he will bless us if we will yield to these and these conditions? All promises imply some duty; it is improbable we should believe them if we will undergo no hazard for them.

7. You may know whether you have this faith, which evidenceth things to come, and find out the weakness or strength of it by observing the great disproportion that is in your affections to things of sense, and things of faith. It is true, a christian is not all spirit, and therefore sensible things work more with the present state of men than things spiritual. But yet certainly in a child of God, one that believes, that hath the evidence of things not seen, there will be some suitableness. We are diverted from looking after things to come as long as we have carnal comforts to stop the mouth of conscience. But did we soundly believe the truth and worth of the great mysteries of salvation, surely we would learn more to despise temporal things in comparison of eternal. Therefore examine a little the affections and dispositions of your souls as to things present and things to come, temporal things and eternal. Examine a carnal man by his esteem; he is sensible of the sweetness of outward comforts, but hath no taste and savour of things that are to come. The former insinuate themselves into his heart with a great deal of satisfaction; he is moved and affected with them—'Who will show us any good?' Ps. iv. 6. Carnal pleasures tickle him with a great deal of delight, but he hath no taste of communion with

God. Carnal riches, with him they are the only substance, whereas spiritual and heavenly things are but as a notion. Whereas the scripture is quite otherwise; it speaks of outward things as but a fancy: Prov. xxiii. 5, 'Wilt thou set thine eyes upon that which is not?' and of spiritual things, as those which only may be called substance: Prov. viii. 21, 'That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance, and I will fill their treasures.' Now which dost thou esteem, thy treasure and thy substance, the world or heaven? things present, or the great things God hath promised? which are the things most take with thy heart, and draw forth thy esteem? So examine his care and industry. We toil for matters of the world, and are never weary; rise up early, go to bed late, eat the bread of sorrow, and all for a little pelf; we make nothing of the hardest labours to accomplish our worldly delights. But now, to pray, read, meditate, perform acts of worship to God, how difficult are these? and how soon do we cry out, what a weariness is it? A little time spent in duty is with a great deal of murmuring; doth not this bewray too much unbelief? 'So is he that layeth up treasures for himself, and is not rich towards God,' Luke xii. 21; that is, so earnest and diligent to grow great in the world, but cares not to furnish himself with grace. When there is such a disproportion in his care, is he persuaded of these things? There is a wide and sensible difference between things temporal and eternal, so should there be in our pursuit after them. Now when it is not only a nice debate that prevails most with men, but a plain clear case, it shows we are not fully persuaded of them. So examine a man by his hopes, and see whether he hath this evidence of things not seen. Compare your hopes in God's promises with your hopes in a temporal case; it is good to put things in a temporal case and instance: Mal. i. 8, 'Offer it to thy governor, will he accept of it?' If a prince or potentate of the world should make you a promise of a temporal inheritance, or pass over the reversion of an earthly estate for thee and thy heirs, how wouldst thou rest contented, and be satisfied with such a conveyance? so hath God done in the covenant; by a formal compact he hath demised and made over to us the great blessings of the gospel; and yet how little are our hearts satisfied with it, how full of doubts! what unstable thoughts have we about these things! If I had such great promises from an able and faithful man, would I not be more cheerful, and bear up upon these hopes? I have these promises from God, that cannot lie. So examine his fears: when a man threatens a little danger, we are careful to abstain from what may displease him, yet we can swallow lust without remorse. Adultery is punished with death in some countries; but God says: Mat. v. 28, 'That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.' And God threatens again and again, not only with temporal but eternal death, torments that shall be without end and ease; yet these things do not work upon us. God saith, Rom. viii. 13, 'If you live after the flesh, you shall die;' that the delicacies of the fleshly life, if indulged, will be mortal to us. Alas! who fears this death? it is a thing to come and unseen; God doth not presently execute his sentence upon evildoers, therefore we are

not moved with it. It argues either unbelief or very great incogitancy about things of such great concernment.

8. You may know whether you have this faith by your thoughts of the ways of God, when they are despised or opposed. Faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, can see a great deal of beauty in a despised way of God, and glory in a crucified Christ; as the good thief upon the cross could see Christ as a king, when he hung dying on the cross in disgrace: Luke xxiii. 42, 'Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom.' Religion is often veiled under obscurity, slightings, disgraces, and contradictions of the world. God trieth us, as it were in a disguise. Now if we can spy out this inward beauty and inward glory in his ways when they are divested of all outward glory, here is an act of faith—'Christ came to his own, and his own received him not.' A carnal heart sees no worth in anything but what is full of pomp and outward splendour, it knows all things after the flesh; but a gracious heart sees a great deal of worth and beauty in the despised ways of Christ. It is said of Moses, that by faith he 'esteemed the reproaches of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt,' Heb. xi. 26; that is, when it was a reproachful thing for him, who was so great and high in favour, to own an afflicted people, who were so burdened as they were in Egypt. Thus you have seen how you may find out whether this faith be wrought in your souls.

Use 4. To press you to get this faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, that you may believe that which God hath revealed in his word, and that solely upon God's authority and the account of his word; to quicken you to get this faith, which is of such great use to you.

1. Consider that all the difficulty in assenting to doctrines of scripture was not only in the first age. You are ready to think this faith was of use when christianity was first set up in the world, and when it was new and despised, and the powers of the world were against it; but now it is owned by all, there is no such difficulty; yes, very much still. I confess, when it was a novel doctrine, hated, oppressed, persecuted, and the generality of its professors were the poor of this world, there were mighty prejudices against the ways of God; but there were then helps; there was the sensible evidence of miracles to confirm this faith, and there was an extraordinary zeal and holiness in those that promoted it, which was a special means to strike a reverence into the consciences of men, which sensible evidence now we have not. Ay, but the articles of religion are still the same, and men are the same, and every age hath its own prejudices; so that it is still hard to believe. (1.) Because the same articles of religion that were propounded to them are propounded to us also. A man that only hearkens to his own reason, it is hard for him to believe that there is one God, and yet three that are God; that by faith a man is united to Christ, yet he on earth, and Christ in heaven; that God requires faith and conviction of all, and binds men to use the means, and yet in his secret good pleasure determines to give it to a few. These things are expressly revealed in the word, which are hard to be understood by carnal reason; and we cannot see how they can be. There are many

doctrines which must not be chewed, but swallowed; *de re constat, quamvis de modo non constat.* (2.) Men are the same that they were before; still natural men favour not the things that are of the Spirit, therefore are not apt to believe them that they are true. Still we are wedded to sense, and therefore not easily persuaded of things to come; still men love not holiness, but walk after their own lusts; therefore they will not believe God is so unmerciful as to damn all those that are not holy, and that none shall be saved but those that are born again, and walk in such a strict way of communion with God, and in the ways of godliness. (3.) Every age hath its own prejudices. Christianity was a novel doctrine. Ay, but then they had miracles; but now there is less holiness, but no miracles; now men are subject to atheism, because of scandals: 2 Peter ii. 2, 'Many shall follow their pernicious ways, by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.' And now there are many divisions, and variety of thoughts and opinions about matters of religion, which makes men suspect all. Therefore Christ prays: John xvii. 21, 'Father, let them be one, as we are one, that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.' So that if it were a difficult thing to believe then, so it is now. Therefore it concerns us to be soundly rooted in this faith.

2. Consider the benefit of a sound conviction. A clear evidence of the mysteries of salvation is a great ground of all reformation of life. What is the reason that men are so backward to practise, that they experience so little of what they believe and have received of the christian faith? because the evidence is not clear. I do not say their interest, but the evidence and certain belief of these things. Usually christians think it is their only work to clear up their particular interest; that is a great work—'We must give all diligence to make our calling and election sure,' 2 Peter i. 10. But that is not the only work: there is a former work, which is the foundation of all, and that is, to settle the soul in a sound belief of the things to come, and have the hopes of christianity evidenced to us; if our belief of this were more steady, there would not be such a deformity in our practice. Our affections are glued to earthly things, because we are not persuaded of heavenly things: there is a privy atheism, which, like a worm at the root, eats out the strength and vigour of our graces, and causeth them to languish. When the mind is satisfied, and brought to a full assent, there will be a greater awe upon the practice: Heb. xi. 6, 'He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.' This is the first thing that we should be persuaded of, that certainly there is a God: and this God will be good to all that seek after him in Christ. If we had such a persuasion of this, we could not be so cold and careless in duty, and so bold in sin; but we have a wavering trembling assent, and some imperfect opinions about the things of God, and not a full persuasion: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Therefore be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as you know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' If we did once know and were persuaded of this, if we had an evidence of things to come, and things unseen, we would be more steadfast and unmovable in the work of the Lord. If our expectations were greater, our observation of God would be

greater, the business of eternal life would not be so neglected; conscience would not be so sleepy, nor should we venture upon sin so often as we do; this would put life into every exhortation you hear and read. Alas! we press and exhort day after day; it works not, why? because it is not 'mingled with faith in them that hear it,' Heb. iv. 2. What earnest affections of soul would there be towards God and heavenly things if we did truly believe these things.

3. The more faith depends upon the warrant of God's word, the better; and the fewer sensible helps it hath, the more it is prized; As Christ saith, John xx. 29, 'Blessed are they who have not seen, and yet have believed.' It is the weakness of men, they will not believe unless the object of faith some way or other come under their sense. The word of God is enough.

4. Sensible things will not work, if we do not believe the word; those that think Moses and the prophets are but a cold dispensation in comparison of this, if one should come from the dead, for then they would repent and turn to God, let them read Luke xvi. 29-31. There were miracles heretofore; faith was confirmed to sense; God condescended to the weakness of the first age; but yet it is said of the people of Israel, Ps. lxxviii. 22, 23, 'They believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation: though he had commanded the clouds from above, and opened the door of heaven,' &c. There were ever unbelievers, and carnal wretches, let God use what dispensation he will, and there will be so still. There is more in the harmony and correspondency of scripture to work men to a sense of believing than if one should come from the dead.

5. We have need now to look after this faith, which is the evidence of things not seen, because the great reigning and prevailing sin is infidelity and unbelief; which is seen by our cavilling at every strict truth, by our carelessness in the things of God, by the looseness and profaneness of those that would be accounted christians. Certainly, generally men take the great truths of religion for fabulous delusions, and look upon Christ as an impostor, and the doctrine of the resurrection from the dead, and eternal life, as so many idle dreams; else they could not cavil so at every strict truth and be so careless and profane as they are; for these things are irreconcilable.

6. We ought to look to this faith, because none are so resolved in the great matters of faith but they may be more resolved; no man doth so believe but he may believe more: 1 John v. 13, 'These things have I written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God.' Our assent to divine truth is not a thing that is *in puncto*, that consists in one indivisible point, so as it cannot be more or less; but it is a thing that is ever growing and never so perfect as it should be, till we come to fruition. There is something 'lacking to your faith,' 1 Thes. iii. 10; 'therefore labour after this faith which is the evidence of things not seen.'

Obj. While we establish a faith which is the evidence of things not seen, doth not this make way for every fancy and fond credulity? This was the objection that Celsus brought against Origen, that faith introduced all kind of error into the world, and cast out science. I answer!

Ans. 1. There is a reason why we believe, though we cannot always see a reason of what we do believe. Though there can be no reason given of many things that are to be believed; yet faith sees reason enough why they should be believed, and that is the authority and veracity of God speaking in the scriptures.

2. There is an aptitude or objective evidence in what is revealed in scripture, to beget faith in those that diligently exercise themselves, and had eyes to see it. The main truths which are delivered there are delivered with such reasonableness that they assure us of the rest.

Use 5. Direction to get and increase this faith.

1. Beg the illumination of the Spirit of God to show you the truth of the word, and the good things offered therein. This evidence is from the Spirit; therefore Paul prays for the Ephesians: chap. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understandings being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' You may have literal knowledge from men, but that is weak and washy, like a golden dream of rubies; saving knowledge is only from the Spirit. They differ as strong water and running water, which have the same colour, but they differ in their taste and virtues.

2. Employ your reason, serious consideration, and discourse. The devil throws the golden ball in our way, of honour, pleasure, and profit, to divert us from heavenly things; and the intention of the mind being diverted, the impressions of religion are weak and faint; as when the bird often leaves her nest the eggs are chilled. Inconstancy is as great an enemy to faith as ignorance. The scattering and vanity of the thoughts make our assent but weak and trembling: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end.' not only to know, but to consider it. Men have not such a deep apprehension of the beauty of holiness, and the excellency of Christ, because they do not exercise their thoughts more upon these things. By consideration truths are kept near the heart, and in the view of the understanding.

3. Labour to get a heart purged from carnal affections. Where there is more purity there will be more clearness: Mat. v. 8, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.' Sin doth weaken our faith. We shall always stagger and waver in an uncertain doubtfulness concerning supernatural verities while we indulge our lusts. Sin blinds our eyes: 2 Cor. iv. 3, 4, 'If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: in whom the God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.' We had need keep that eye clear that shall discern things unseen, and the comforts and blessedness of another world. By sin you grieve the Spirit, which should help you in believing: Eph. iv. 30, 'And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed unto the day of redemption.' And hereby you provoke God to give you up to natural prejudices: 2 Thes. ii. 11, 'For this cause God shall send them strong delusions that they shall believe a lie.' Men sin away their faith, wound their

consciences, put out that light that should guide them. And therefore get your hearts purged from sin; for as faith makes way for holiness, so doth holiness again for faith.

SERMON VI.

For by it the elders obtained a good report.—HEB. xi. 2.

THE whole chapter is mainly spent in the praise of sanctifying faith—a necessary grace, and of a universal influence into all the parts of the spiritual life.

Divers things are attributed to faith, and that several ways: either as acts or as effects, or as fruits and consequences of faith.

1. As acts, which decipher the essence and formal nature of it, ver. 1. These are the *elicite*, or formal acts of faith, which substantiates things hoped for, and convinceth of things that are not seen.

2. Then there are the effects of faith, or, as the schoolmen call them, *imperate* acts, which flow from the primary acts, as hope, valour, patience, christian self-denial; all which are the progeny of faith, as in opening the following verse will appear.

3. Then there are the fruits and consequences of faith, which follow faith though they do not flow from it; as the recompenses and rewards of religion, temporal or eternal, which a believer receives not from the power and worth of his faith, but from the free grace of God. Faith is a condition by the ordination and appointment of God, but not a cause: that distinction is necessary for the clearing many parts of the chapter. Such a fruit of faith you have in the text, the approbation or testimony which the ancient fathers received from God in the word, 'For by it the elders received a good report.'

To commend that faith which he had before described, the apostle brings the experience of the elders, or of the Old Testament saints. Here you have—(1.) The persons—*The elders*: (2.) The means—*By it*: (3.) The blessing—*They obtained a good report*. Or else—(1.) The condition—Faith; (2.) 'The consequent—*ἐμαρτυρήθησαν*, they were witnessed to or spoken of with respect in the world; and (3.) The subject in which both these do meet and concur.

'The elders;' by faith 'the elders obtained a good report.'

'The elders,' *πρεσβύτεροι*, the patriarchs, fathers; the word is rather proper to the life of man than to the age of the world. The ancients are called *οἱ παλαιοί*, *homines prisci sæculi*, but the words are confounded. And they might well be called elders, not only for their antiquity, and living in the first ages of the world, but because most of them were *μακρόβιοι*, of wonderful long life.

'By it,' *ἐν ταύτῃ*. It is not *for* faith, but *by* faith, for faith is as improper as for works; but having faith, not by the worth and influence of it as a cause, but through faith as a condition appointed and ordained by God.