

of way and course. I say, when by his powerful grace we are thus brought back from our sinful way and course, and made to follow him as our Lord, we are his flock, and he will mind us. Time was when you did run wild, according to your former fancies and the bent of your unruly hearts, and were wholly strangers to God, and could spend days, nights, and weeks, and months, and yet never mind communion with him; but now the business of your souls is to give up yourselves to him, or take the way which he hath prescribed to everlasting glory. Resolve no longer to live to yourselves, but to be under his discipline.

*Secondly*, As to place, 'He shall set the sheep upon the right hand, and the goats upon the left.'

In the right hand there is greater strength and ability, and fitness for all kind of operations; therefore that place is counted more honourable. So Christ himself is said to 'sit down at the right hand of God the Father;' that is to say, hath obtained the highest place of dignity and power, above all angels and men, in bliss, honour, and dominion.

*Doct.* The godly shall be placed honourably at the day of judgment, when the wicked shall have the place of least respect.

A type and figure of this we have in Moses his division of the tribes. Some were to stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people, some on Mount Ebal to curse; those born of Jacob's wives put upon Mount Gerizim, those of his servants on Mount Ebal, Reuben excepted, who went into his father's bed. The saints, in their measure, enjoy all the privileges that Christ doth. Now the Father saith to the Son, Ps. cx. 1, 'Sit thou at my right hand.' So they have chosen the best blessings. It is said, Ps. xvi. 11, 'At thy right hand are pleasures for evermore;' and Prov. iii. 16, 'Length of days is in her right hand.' They love God, and are beloved of him; they honour God in the world: 1 Sam. ii. 30, 'They that honour me I will honour.'

*Use.* Let us then encourage ourselves when we are counted the scurf and offscouring of all things. We shall not always be in this condition, but Christ will put honour upon us in sight of all the world.

## SERMON XXI.

*Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.—MAT. XXV. 34.*

WE have considered in the former verses—(1.) The sitting down of the judge; (2.) The presenting the parties to be judged. Now (3.) The sentence.

First, Of absolution, in these blessed words which I have now read to you. Observe in them—(1.) The preface; (2.) The sentence itself.

1. The preface showeth the person by whom the sentence is pronounced, *then shall the King say.*

2. The parties whom it concerneth, *to them on the right hand.*

Secondly, The form and tenor of the sentence itself; it is very comfortable and ravishing. Take notice—

1. Of a compellation used, *ye blessed of my Father.*

2. An invitation, expressed in two words, *δεϋτε, κληρονομήσατε, come and inherit.*

The first giveth warning for entering; the second, for possessing of this blessed estate, and that by a sure tenure.

3. The happiness unto which we are invited; and there the notion by which it is expressed, *the kingdom.* The adjunct, *a kingdom prepared.* The application of it to the parties concerned, *for you.* The ancientness of it, *from the foundation of the world.* An estate excellent in itself, and made sure for us.

*Doct.* That Jesus Christ, at his coming, will adjudge his people unto a state of everlasting happiness, by a favourable and comfortable sentence passed in their behalf.

First, Observe the order, *then.* The godly are first absolved, before the wicked are condemned. Why? Because—

1. It is more natural to God to reward than to punish, to save than to condemn. The one is called *alienum opus,* 'his strange work,' Isa. xxviii. 21. His self-inclination bendeth him to the one more than to the other. The absolution of the good maketh for the manifestation of his mercy, the attribute wherein God delighteth, Micah vii. 18. But his justice, as to the punitive part of it, it is last. God doth good of his own accord, but punishment is extorted and forced from him.

2. It is suitable to Christ's love to begin with the saints. He is so prone to them, that he taketh their cause first in hand. He parted from them with thoughts of returning to them again.

3. For the godly's sake, that they be not for any while terrified with that dreadful doom which shall pass on the reprobate; and that afterwards become judges of the wicked, by their vote and suffrage, when absolved themselves, 1 Cor. vi. 3.

4. For the wicked, that they may understand and be affected with their loss, and so be made more sensible of their own folly. Christ will, in their sight, put glory and honour upon his good servants, that they may have a stinging and vexatious sense of that happiness which they have forsaken. Whether it be for this or that reason, let us the better bear it here. When judgment beginneth at the house of God, as it often doth, 1 Peter iv. 17, there absolution beginneth at the house of God; and if upon us God first show his displeasure against sin, it is for the bettering of the saints, and reforming the world. First Christ will take in hand our absolution and coronation before he passeth sentence against the wicked.

Secondly, The next thing observable is the title given to Christ, 'Then shall the King say.' Christ first calleth himself the Son of man, ver. 31, because in human nature he administereth this judgment; afterward sets forth himself by the notion of a shepherd, ver. 32, because of his office and charge about the flock, and then to show it in the exact discrimination he shall make between cattle and cattle. But now the notion is varied, 'The King shall say.' Partly because it belongeth to his kingly office to pass sentence, and prefer his faith-

ful subjects to dignity and honour, as also to punish the disobedient. Partly because in that day he shall discover himself in all his royal magnificence, and call the godly to him, and solemnly put them in possession of the promised glory. The King shall crown and absolve us: it shall be a tribunal act; and therefore valid and authentic. When the Redeemer of the world, as King, shall then sit in judgment in all his royalty, he shall then put this honour upon the saints.

Thirdly, The next thing is—

1. The compellation used, ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father.’

[1.] Observe in the general, it is a friendly compellation, used to such as were thought to be in favour with God. Witness Laban’s words to Abraham’s servant; Gen. xxiv. 31, ‘Come in, thou blessed of the Lord;’ and Judges xvii. 2, ‘Blessed be thou of the Lord.’ Those that were counted dear and beloved of the Lord were thus treated and spoken to. And because of the high favour vouchsafed to the Virgin Mary, in being the mother of the Son of God, it is said, ‘All generations shall call thee blessed,’ Luke i. 28, 42, 48. But what an honour is this, when Christ shall pronounce us to be so with his own mouth: ‘Come, ye blessed of my Father.’

[2.] More particularly, two terms must be explained—(1.) ‘Blessed;’ (2.) ‘Of my Father.’

First, ‘Blessed.’ This term is—

(1.) Opposed to the world’s judgment of them. The world despiseth them, and counteth them execrable, vile, and cursed. Therefore it is said, Mat. v. 44, ‘Bless them that curse you;’ and Mat. v. 11, ‘Blessed are ye when men shall say all manner of evil of you for my name’s sake.’ He is blessed whom Christ blesseth. The world rails at us as cursed miscreants, unfit to live in human societies. The world saith, *Abite maledicti*; ‘Away, ye cursed;’ it is not fit for such a one to live. But Christ saith, *Venite benedicti*; ‘Come, ye blessed.’ We should set one against the other. The least thing intended in this compellation is an absolution from the reproaches of the world and their censures, whether rashly vented, or pronounced under a colour of law and church power. They are not so ready to curse and fulminate dreadful censures on the true worshippers of Christ as he is to acquit and absolve them. Their Redeemer in judgment will call them blessed, and publish to the world that all the censures of wicked men were preposterous and perverse.

(2.) The term is opposed to the sentence of the law. The world’s obloquy is the less to be stood upon, as being the product of wrath, bitterness, and hatred. But the law of God, that containeth in it the highest reason in the world, pronounceth them accursed: Gal. iii. 10, ‘Cursed is every one that continueth not in all that is written in the law to do them.’ And to this sentence we were once subject, and were so to look upon ourselves, Eph. ii. 3. Whatever we were in the purpose of God, our duty is to look upon what we are in the sentence of the law of God; and so we were all of us condemned to a curse. And the wicked, that never changed copy and tenure, lie still under that curse; as Christ himself showeth in his sentence on them, ver. 41, ‘Depart, ye cursed.’ The curse of the law taketh them by the throat, and casteth them into eternal torments. The devil would

have that sentence executed upon us now, according to our deserts; but the judge on the throne pronounceth us blessed, as having taken hold of the privilege of the new covenant, and so escaped the curse of the law. In this term our justification is implied, Acts iii. 19, Christ doth in effect say, These my friends and servants deserved in themselves to be accursed and miserable for ever, but I have made satisfaction to God for them, and pronounce them blessed, and free from all sin and misery.

(3.) The term is opposed to their own fears. Not only doth the world condemn us, and Satan urge the curse of the law against us, as having transgressed the bonds and rules of our duty in many cases, but our own trembling hearts are ever and anon casting up many a fearful thought: What shall become of us to all eternity? This fear is so strong, and rooted in the hearts of the godly, that it is a long time ere the promises of the gospel can vanquish and quell it; though the messengers of Christ come and tell them of the tender mercies of God, that there is enough in the merits of Christ, of the privileges and immunities offered by the new covenant, and beseech them that they would not obstinately lift up their fears against the whole design of Christ in the gospel, yet all will not do: if they can get a little peace and rest from accusations of conscience, it is almost all they can attain unto in the world: 'Perfect love casteth out fear,' 1 John iv. 10. But then the supreme judge, before whom all must stand or fall, will assure them with his own mouth that they are blessed; and therefore they shall fully get rid of all disquieting and tormenting fears. He shall say, Tremble no more; 'Come, ye blessed of my Father.'

(4.) It noteth what God hath done for them to bring them to this estate of blessedness: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' He hath loved them, and enriched them with grace, heaped many spiritual favours upon them, which now they are to receive the consummation and accomplishment of. *Dei benedicere est benefacere*—when we bless God, we declare him blessed; when God blesseth us, he maketh us blessed; his saying is doing. Since ye are elected, called, justified, sanctified, at the will of my Father, come and freely possess yourselves of all that you have hoped, longed, and waited for.

Secondly, 'Of my Father.'

(1.) In this expression he pointeth at the fountain cause of all our happiness; the beginning of our salvation was from a higher cause than our own holiness, yea, than Christ's merit, from the favour and blessing of God the Father. He was the principal efficient cause and ultimate end of the work of our redemption and the saints' blessedness. Christ as mediator is but the way to the Father, John xiv. 6. It is the Father appointed Christ, gave him to us, John iii. 16, gave them to Christ, John xvii. 6, and in time brought them to close with his grace, John vi. 44. It is the Father that prepared this kingdom for them before the foundation of the world; they are the Father's chosen ones, those whom the Father loveth.

(2.) This expression shows how the divine persons glorify one

another. As the Spirit glorifieth the Son, John xvi. 14, so here the Son glorifieth the Father, and referreth all to him; he doth not say, My redeemed ones, but 'Ye blessed of my Father,' they are not less beloved and blessed by the Father than by the Son who redeemed them; blessed in the Father's love who elected them, gave them to Christ, sent Christ and accepted his ransom, declared his will in willing their glorification.

2. The invitation, in two words, *δεῦτε, κληρονομήσατε*; both have their emphasis and proper signification: the one signifieth our entrance upon the glorified estate, the other our everlasting possession of it.

[1.] *Δεῦτε*, 'Come.' To the wicked he saith 'Depart,' but to the saints, 'Come.' As the quintessence of all misery lieth in the one, so the consummation of all blessedness in the other. He had said before, Mat. xi. 28, 'Come to me all ye that are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest;' but that was but an acquaintance at a distance, and some remote service we were called unto. But now, Come into my heart, my bosom, my glory. Our nearest communion with Christ is not till we be translated into heaven. Come, draw near to me; be not afraid of my majesty. This was it the saints longed for, and now they enjoy it: 'When shall I come and appear before God?' saith holy David, Ps. xlii. 2. You that had a heart upon my first invitation to come to me, and seek after me in the kingdom of grace, come near to me now in the kingdom of glory. The godly do not so much desire to come near to Christ, as Christ desireth to come near to them. Where have you been all this while? Come, come; I am ready to receive you; you are welcome guests to me: we have been too long asunder. Oh! how ravishing will this be to every gracious heart that loved and longed for this day!

[2.] *Κληρονομήσατε*, 'Inherit.' Our happy and blessed estate we have and hold by inheritance: 1 Peter iii. 9, 'Ye are called to inherit a blessing.' That noteth a tenure free, full, and sure. This heritage—

(1.) Is free. We do not possess it as bondmen or servants only; we do not come to this happiness by our own earning and purchase; but as heirs of Christ. Adam's tenure was that of a servant; the blessings he expected from God were mere wages. We hold promises in another manner. Our title is by adoption, which we have immediately upon closing with Christ, John i. 12, by virtue of our sonship, Rom. viii. 17; not by merit, but free gift, Rom. vi. 23.

(2.) A full tenure. As children under age differ but little from a servant; but we come then as heirs to our full right. A child, though he be an heir, and owner of all his father's inheritance in hope, yet as long as he is a minor, or under age, he differeth little or nothing from a servant in point of subjection, and as to free government and enjoyment of his rights and goods. But now, to this inheritance we come as meet heirs. They distinguish of *jus hereditarium*, and *jus aptitudinale*—an hereditary right and an aptitudinal right. Now, when we have believed, suffered, and been exercised enough, we shall receive our full inheritance, 'being made meet for it,' Col. i. 12.

(3.) A sure title. It was given us by the Father, and purchased by the Son; and we hold it by this tenure for ever. God the Father gave

it: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's pleasure to give you a kingdom.' And Christ hath purchased it, Heb. ix. 15; it is left us as a legacy by him, John xvii. 24; and he liveth for ever to be the executor of his own testament, Heb. vii. 25; so that now we are past all danger when once admitted into possession.

3. Here is the description of that happy estate we are invited unto. Where observe—

[1.] The notion by which it is expressed; it is 'a kingdom.' What can be thought of more magnificent and glorious than a kingdom? It is called a kingdom—

(1.) Partly with respect to Christ, who is our head and chief; in whose glory we shall all participate and share, in our places and capacities. Jesus Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords, and we shall reign with him as kings; for he hath made us a royal priesthood, 1 Peter ii. 9; and Rev. i. 6, 'He hath washed us in his own blood, and made us kings and priests unto God;' and Rev. v. 10, 'And hath made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign with him.' It is begun on earth spiritually, but it is perfected in heaven gloriously, where the saints shall be as so many crowned kings.

(2.) And partly with respect to the very thing itself. Our blessed estate shall be an estate of the highest dignity and dominion, of the fullest joy and content that heart can wish for. We have no higher notions whereby to express a blessed and happy estate; and therefore our eternal glory, whereof we are partakers, is thus set forth; especially to counterbalance our mean and low estate in the world: James ii. 5, 'God hath chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith, and heirs of a kingdom;' 'The saints shall have dominion in the morning,' Ps. xlix. 14. They shall sit with Christ as kings upon the throne, to execute the judgment written. Oh! how should this warm our hearts with the thoughts of these things!

(3.) Partly with respect to our loss by the fall. In the creation God put man in dominion, but by subjecting ourselves to the creature, who was made to be under our feet, we lost our kingdom, and are become slaves under the power of brutish lusts; and till our blessed estate, we never fully recover it again; but then we are absolutely free, and at liberty to love and serve God.

Well, then, it is no mean thing Christ inviteth us unto, but unto a kingdom, which we shall all jointly and severally possess. There are two quarrellous pronouns, *meum* and *tuum*, mine and thine, which are the occasion of all the strifes in the world. These shall be excluded out of heaven as the common barretors and makebates. There is no envy, no uncharitableness. There one cannot say to another, This part of this glorious kingdom is mine, that is yours; for every heir of this kingdom shall be as much an heir as if he were sole heir. Here we straiten others as much as we are enlarged ourselves; but there each one hath his full proportion in that blessed estate; each hath the whole, and the rest never the less; as the same speech may be heard entirely by me and all, as the light of the sun serveth all the world; another hath not the less, because I enjoy the whole of it.

Secondly, The adjunct of this kingdom is that it was prepared for us. The word signifieth made ready. God made ready this state of

happiness long ere we were ready for the possession of it. Eternal love laid the foundation of it. Merit of infinite value carried on the building, and powerful and effectual grace still pursueth the work in our hearts; for we must be prepared for the kingdom, as well as this kingdom prepared for us. So that, in short, this kingdom was prepared for us—

1. By the Father's love. It was his own love and most free goodness that inwardly moved him to do all this for us: Luke xii. 32, 'It is your Father's good pleasure.'

2. By the Son's merit and mediation, who 'died that we should live together with him,' 1 Thes. v. 10.

3. By the sanctification of the Spirit, by which we are fitted for this estate, 2 Cor. v. 5.

1. The Father's love. The preparation is ascribed unto God: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'The things which God hath prepared for them that love him;' and Heb. xi. 16, 'For God hath prepared for them a city.' Particularly by God the Father. So Mat. xx. 23, 'It is not mine to give, but to them for whom it was prepared of my Father.' The Father's act may be thus conceived: God loved us so much, as he decreed to give Christ for us, that by his precious blood he might purchase and acquire for us a blessedness in heaven; and in the fulness of time accordingly sent him into the world for that end, and bound himself by eternal paction and covenant that all that believe in his name should have this kingdom. This was the preparation of his decree.

2. Jesus Christ, by way of execution of this decree, maketh a further preparation, when by his death he purchased it, and by his ascension went to seize upon it in our name: John xiv. 2, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' As Christ by his death did purchase a right and title to heaven, so by his ascension he prosecuteth and applieth that right. He is gone, as our harbinger, to take up rooms for us. As the high priest entered into the most holy place with the names of the children of Israel upon his breast and shoulders, and with the blood of the sacrifices, so he hath entered heaven with our names, to present the merit of his blood continually, and to pour out the Spirit to fit us for glory: this is his errand and business in heaven, and he is not unmindful of it.

3. The Spirit prepareth us, without which all the rest would come to no effect; for it is the wisdom of God to dispose all things into their apt and proper places. Therefore the persons are prepared, as well as the place: Rom. ix. 23, 'Vessels of mercy, which he hath aforehand prepared unto glory.' He worketh faith in their hearts, giveth them a title, and by sanctifying prepareth them for the possession and enjoyment of it: 'He that worketh us for this self-same thing is God,' 2 Cor. v. 5.

Thirdly, The application or appropriation of this preparation to the persons that shall now enjoy it, 'For you;' which respects not only the qualification, but the persons.

1. Not only for such as you, but for you particularly. In the general, heaven was prepared for believers. God never intended unbelievers should have such a glorious estate; such as love the world do not prize nor long for this happiness, and therefore it is fit they should never enjoy it; for though the preparation be a work of abundant mercy,

yet that mercy is so tempered and limited by his wisdom and justice, that it will not permit him to give such holy things to dogs, or cast pearls before swine. No; it was prepared to be enjoyed only by believers and holy ones.

2. For you personally and determinatively. This is most agreeable to Christ's scope and sense, for all the conditions were also prepared for them. God did elect us to faith and holiness, as well as to eternal life. Faith is the fruit of election, not a cause; he did not choose us because we were holy, or because he did foresee that we would be holy, but that we might be holy, Eph. i. 4; that, being sanctified and renewed by the Spirit, we might be placed in the new Jerusalem. For you in person, that is Christ's meaning.

Fourthly, The antiquity or ancientness of this preparation, 'From the foundation of the world;' that is, from all eternity; for the scripture goeth to the highest point of time unto which we can ascend in our thoughts. So that *ἀπὸ καταβολῆς* signifieth as much as *πρὸ καταβολῆς*; as it is expressly said, Eph. i. 4, 'Before the foundation of the world.' The phrase is ordinary in scripture, and is as much as to say, from all eternity, or before any time was; for God's purposes are as he is, eternal and without beginning; therefore, if we speak of God's intention and purpose, it was before all worlds. Those that understand this, 'For you,' that is, for persons so qualified, will deny the meaning of the phrase to be that the dignities of the kingdom of heaven were designed to be the reward of all the faithful servants of Jesus Christ before all worlds; and they that know the scriptures cannot but conclude that from all eternity he made choice of us to be justified, sanctified, and glorified. The elective love of God is of an ancient standing, even from all eternity, and therefore most free, there being nothing in the elect before they had a being to move his love towards them; and this will be the glory of his grace at that day, that we are invited into that estate that was prepared for us long before: and who are we, that the thoughts of God should be taken up about us so long since? Titus iii. 2, 'Which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began;' so 2 Tim. i. 9, 'Who saved us, and called us with a holy calling, according to his purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the world began.' He indented then with Christ to bring us to what we shall at last enjoy. But if any morosely insist upon the phrase, because it doth not necessarily signify eternity, we must then understand that though the purpose of God were from everlasting, yet the things designed and acted by him, they take their beginning in time, or with time; and so the words must be understood—(1.) Of preparing the place which shall be the state of the blessed. The third heaven is the dwelling-place of the saints, which was framed about the beginning of the creation. So good and gracious was our God, that he did not make man or angel till he prepared a place convenient for them. Or (2.) To the promise presently made upon Adam's fall; but the former exposition is more simple.

Well, then, you have heard what entertainment the faithful shall have from Christ at his coming, so far as our dull minds can conceive of it, and with weak and imperfect words can express it to you. Now let us see what use we may make of all this.



*Use 1.* Let us be convinced that there is such an estate, and will be such a time, and that there is no true blessedness but this enjoyment of God in the kingdom of heaven, that we shall then have. The world hath been much puzzled about disputes of happiness, and the way to it. The philosophers, some placed it in knowledge, some in that virtue which they knew, some in pleasure; some in this, some in that. Austin out of Varro reckoneth up two hundred and eighty-six opinions about the chief good. They erred thus because they sought it in so many things, whereas it consists in one—the enjoyment of God; and because they sought it in this world, where all things are mortal and frail, and we can find not one thing that can make us completely happy. This discovery was left for the scriptures, which teach us that our happiness lieth in God alone, and that our perfect enjoyment of him, in body and soul, is reserved for Christ's coming, when there is a perfect conformity to God and communion with him: 1 John iii. 2, 'Beloved, we are now the children of God; but it doth not appear what we shall be, but we know when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' The Lord revealeth his truth to us in the word, but before we can be convinced of it we must be enlightened by the Spirit; for spiritual things can only be spiritually discerned, 1 Cor. ii. 14. We may talk of these things by rote one to another, and have an assent to them, which is called a non-contradiction, though not a positive understanding and conviction of the truth of them: 'Believest thou this?' John xi. 26.

2. When we believe it, let us look for it and long for it, and live in the hopeful expectation of this blessed time, when all these things shall be accomplished. Therefore, if we believe such a thing, we must long for it, and live in the hope of it: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope.' Hope showeth itself—

(1.) Partly by frequent and serious thoughts and delightful meditations of the thing hoped for. Thoughts are the spies and messengers of hope; it sendeth them into the land of promise, to bring the soul tidings thence. It is impossible a man can hope for anything but he will be thinking of it, for it is the nature of this affection to set the mind a-work, and to preoccupy and forestall the contentments we expect before they come by serious contemplations, and feast the soul with images and suppositions of things to come, as if they were already present. So should we demean ourselves as if the judgment were set, and the judge upon his white throne, and we heard him blessing and cursing, absolving and condemning. The heart will be where the treasure is, Mat. vi. 18. As if we saw Christ with his faithful ones about him. If a beggar were adopted to the succession of a crown, he would please himself in thinking of the happiness, honour, and pleasure of the kingly estate. If you did hope to be coheirs with Christ, or to inherit the kingdom prepared for you, you would think of it more than you do. Our musings discover the temper of our hearts. A carnal heart is always thinking of building barns, advancing the family higher, our worldly increase: Luke xii. 18, 'I will pull down my barns, and build bigger, and bestow my fruits.' And those in James iv. 13, 'To-morrow we will go to such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain.' It is usual with men to

feed themselves with the pleasure of their hopes; as young heirs spend upon their estate before they possess it.

(2.) By hearty groans, sighs, and longings: Rom. viii. 23, 'We groan in ourselves.' They have had a taste of the clusters of Canaan in private justification; they can never be soon enough with Christ: when shall it once be? They are still looking out, and the nearer to enjoyment the more impatient of the want: 'The earnest expectation of the creature,' Rom. viii. 19. Stretching out the head to see if they can spy a thing a great way off; as Judges v., 'She looked through the lattice: why is his chariot so long a-coming?' They would have a fuller draught of consolation, more access to him, and communion with him.

(3.) By lively tastes and feelings. It is called a lively hope, 1 Peter i. 3; not a living hope only, but lively; because it quickens the heart, and filleth it with a solid joy, Rom. v. 2; 1 Peter i. 8. Where we have such a fruition, the very looking and longing giveth us a taste.

3. This hope should put us upon serious diligence and earnest pursuit after this blessedness, 1 Peter i. 13. Partly as it purgeth the heart from lusts: 1 John iii. 3, 'He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' These are the months of our purification, wherein we are made meet to be partakers of the saints in light; we are a-preparing for heaven, as that is prepared for us, and it is a lively expectation which produceth this. That puts us upon mortification and diligence in cleansing the soul, that we may be counted worthy to stand before the Son of God. Partly as it withdraweth our hearts from present things, and minding earthly things: 'But our conversation is in heaven,' Phil. iii. 18-21. A man that is always looking and longing for the world to come, the present world is nullified to him, and he hath a mean esteem of all secular interests and contentments in comparison of those other which his soul looketh after; as a man looking upon the sun cannot see an object less glorious. On the contrary, our overprizing secular contentments necessarily breedeth an undervaluing of matters heavenly; and those that have so great a relish for the world and the delights of the flesh, they know not what eternal life meaneth. The Israelites longed for the flesh-pots of Egypt before they tasted the clusters of Canaan; by faith Moses refused the honours and pleasures of Pharaoh's court. We cannot value real happiness till we are brought to contemn earthly happiness. Partly as it urgeth to care and diligence, and constancy in obedience. This is the spring that sets all the wheels a-going: Phil. iii. 13, 'I press towards the mark, because of the high prize of our calling.' What is the reason christians are so earnest and serious? There is an excellent glory set before them; the race is not for trifles. We want vigour, and find such a tediousness in the Lord's work, because we do not think of the kingdom of heaven prepared for us, 2 Cor. viii. 8, 9; 1 Cor. xv. 53, 'We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord: wherefore we labour, that whether we are present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' If it be tedious to us to be at work for God, this tediousness will not consist with the cheerful remembrance of that great blessedness which

he hath prepared for us. How eminent should we be in the labours of holiness, to whom this estate was so peculiarly designed! Partly in self-denial; men venture all in this vessel of hope. Self-denial is seen in refusing and resisting temptations of honour and profit. Sin maketh many promises, and so prevaileth by a carnal hope. Balaam was enticed by proffers of riches to curse God's people; Babylon's fornications are presented in a golden cup. Now faith and hope sets promise against promise, heaven against earth, the pleasures at God's right hand against carnal delights; as the kingdoms of the world are nothing to this glorious kingdom. Partly in charity; laying up treasure in heaven: Luke xii. 33, 'Being rich in good works,' 1 Tim. vi. 18. I call this self-denial, because it is a loss for the present, Eccles. ii. So in hazarding interests: christians' blessings are future, their crosses are present, Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 12.

Thus you see there are some who are carried on by the hopes of heaven to make serious preparation; others are wholly wedded and addicted to present things. The world, morally and spiritually considered, is divided into two ranks; the one of the devil, the other of God. Some seek their rest and happiness on earth, others eternal felicity in heaven. By nature all are of this earthly society, in the kingdom of darkness, and strangers to the commonwealth and city of God; but when grace hath wrought in them the belief of this coming of Christ, and the hope of this blessed estate is rooted in us, we are always purging out of fleshly lusts, and weaning our hearts from the world, exercising ourselves to godliness, and denying our worldly interests.

4. This hope must moderate our fears, sorrows, and cares, so as no temporal thing should unreasonably affect us: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock.' The fear is allayed; the world cannot take away anything from us so good as Christ will give unto us. If our earthly estate be sequestered, or anyway taken from us, we have a better estate in heaven, Heb. x. 34. If we be reproached and disgraced in this world, yet we shall be kings and priests, and for ever be honoured in heaven. If banished and driven from place to place, so that we can find no rest nor safety, but are wearied out with our removals, let us consider we have a place of eternal abode in heaven, a kingdom that cannot be shaken, of which none can dispossess us. Our sufferings may be many, long, and grievous, but then all will be at an end when Christ shall place us at his right hand: Heb. vi. 19, 'Which hope have we as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.' We have a sure anchor in the stormy gusts of temptations: 1 Thes. v. 8, 'Let us put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for an helmet the hope of salvation;' and Eph. vi. 17, 'And take the helmet of salvation.' Hope is our helmet in the dreadful day of battle. As long as we can lift up our heads and look to heaven, we should patiently bear all calamities. We shall at last hear this blessed voice, 'Come, ye blessed of my Father; inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.'