

SERMONS UPON 2 THESSALONIANS I. 3.

SERMON I.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.—2 THESS. I. 3.

THE first part of this epistle is gratulatory, for the Thessalonians' perseverance and increase in grace; in which—(1.) The apostle giveth thanks to God; (2.) He telleth of the fame thereof in the churches, ver. 4, that he might the better encourage and exhort them to continue. By both he intimateth his love and spiritual affection to them.

In his thanksgiving to God we may take notice of—

1. The affectionate manner.
2. The matter of this thanksgiving, the increase of their faith and charity.

For the manner, it is done emphatically, 'We are bound to thank God always for you, as it is meet.' There are three emphatical words: 'Always;' this work of God among them was much upon his heart, and still give him new matter of praising God in their behalf. Then there is the obligation from justice and equity, signified in those words, *ὀφείλομεν*, 'We are bound,' and *καθὼς ἄξιον ἐστίν*, 'As it is meet;' there the expression is stronger. He doth not only tell them that he did it, but that he ought to do it, 'We are bound, and it is meet.' The first expression respects the mercy of God, so there was a debt of duty lying upon him; there was justice in the case. The second respects their estate, 'It was meet;' becoming the condition into which grace had brought them, and so there was equity in the case. Some refer this last clause to the performance of the duty, that he gave thanks as was meet; that is, in that manner which so great a benefit deserveth, not slightly and perfunctorily, but with great rejoicing. But rather it refers to the apostle's judgment of their estate: 'As it is meet,' hearing what I do, for me to judge of you; for a parallel expression doth thus explain it, Phil. i. 7, 'Even as it is meet for me to think thus of you all.' He conceived himself bound to judge of them all to be such as had owned the Lord with a sincere faith, and his people with a sincere love, and were likely to continue

therein. Not his affection, but his judgment inclined him to think so; the church of the Thessalonians and every member thereof had given such real and evident signs of the grace of God in them, that he was bound to give God special thanks for this grace. The gospel hath and may be blessed in some places, so far that all the members of particular churches have given positive evidences of true grace in them, and that to the most discerning christians, and those who were best able to judge. It is yet possible, and therefore why should we not endeavour after it? It is meet for me to judge so; I hope you are so; therefore I count myself bound to give thanks to God.

From this preface four points are observable—

1. That it is a debt we owe to God to give thanks for his benefits.
2. That in thanksgiving to God we should specially own his spiritual benefits.
3. That not only the spiritual benefits vouchsafed to ourselves, but to others also, must be acknowledged with thankfulness.
4. That in thanksgiving for spiritual benefits, whether to ourselves or others, the increase of grace must be acknowledged, as well as the beginnings of it.

In the former epistle he gave thanks to God for their faith and love, here for the increase and growth of both, 'Your faith groweth exceedingly, and your love aboundeth.'

Doct. 1. That it is a debt we owe to God to give thanks for his benefits.

Paul saith here not only, 'We do,' but, 'We are bound.'

1. Justice requireth it, for the benefits were given upon this condition, that we should praise God for them: Ps. l. 15, 'Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.' This is God's pact and agreement with us, that we shall have the benefit, and he will have the glory. As the king of Sodom said to Abraham, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself again, Gen. xiv. 21; so in effect God saith to us, You shall have the comfort, but let me have the honour. We ourselves consent to this covenant; we seldom make prayers in our distress but we promise thankfulness: Hosea xiv. 2, 'Take away all iniquity and receive us graciously, so will we render the calves of our lips.' We engage to offer praise when our requests are heard. Now, when God heareth and granteth our requests, there is an obligation upon us to glorify God for the mercies received. But now, though God be sought to in our necessities, there is no more mention of him when our turns are served. We are forward in supplications, but backward in gratulations. All the lepers could beg health, yet 'But one returned to give God the glory,' Luke xvii. 18. Surely we should be as much affected, or rather more, in receiving the mercies than we were in asking them; for before we only knew them by guess and imagination, but then by actual feeling or experience of the comfort of them. But chiefly the argument is, that justice requireth it. It is a kind of theft, and unjust detention of what is another's, if in our necessities we crave help, and afterward there is no more mention of God than as if we had these blessings from ourselves.

2. God by his precept commanding it and we in our distress promising it, he expecteth that there should be thankful returns of the

mercies afforded to us. That is the second argument, God's expectation; which must be interpreted *θεοπρεπῶς*, becoming the excellency of his being. One may be said to expect a thing *de jure*, rightfully, or *de facto*, really and actually. God knoweth that he hath to do with unthankful creatures, and that the stupid world will not take notice of his kindness; therefore *de facto*, actually, he expecteth no more than is given him, having a full and clear prospect of all future events; but *de jure*, of right, he might expect. So these expressions are to be interpreted: Luke xiii. 7, 'These three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none.' So Isa. v. 4, 'When I looked it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes.' So we may fail his expectation, but still to our loss: 2 Chron. xxxii. 25, 'Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done to him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem.' All our receipts call for a return, and a return suitable, which if we perform not, God's wrath is kindled against us, and therefore a good man should make conscience of his returns: Ps. cxvi. 12, 'What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me?'

3. It keepeth up the intercourse between us and God, which would be interrupted and broken off if we should discontinue our addresses to him as soon as we have what we would have, and when our wants are supplied God should hear no more from us. By the laws of Ezekiel's temple, the worshippers were so required to go in at one door and out at another, that none of them might at any time turn their backs upon the mercy-seat, Ezek. xlvi. 9, but which way soever they entered they were to go away right against it. God cannot endure men should turn their backs upon him when their turn is served. Prayer and praise still keep up communion and familiarity with God, that still there may be a commerce between us and him, by asking all things, and taking all things out of his hands. Prayer and praise are our continual work: Heb. xiii. 15, 'By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise continually, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks unto his name.' The supreme benefactor and fountain of all goodness must still be owned; there must be a constant course in it. Some mercies are so general and beneficial that they should be remembered before God every day; and God is still blessing his people, and by new mercies giving new matter of praise and thanksgiving.

4. It continueth a succession of mercies, for the more thankful we are for them the more they are increased upon us, as an husbandman trusts more of his precious seed in fruitful soils. The ascent of vapours maketh way for the descent of showers. The sea poureth out of her fulness into the rivers, and they all return again into the sea: Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6, 'Let the people praise thee, O God, let all the people praise thee, then shall the earth yield her increase, and God, even our God, shall bless us.' Or when the springs lie low, we pour in a little water into the pump, not to enrich the fountain, but to bring up more for ourselves. I do the rather observe it, because it is not only true of outward increase, but spiritual also: Col. ii. 7, 'Rooted and built up in him, and established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' If we give thanks for so much grace as we have already received, it is the way to increase our store. The

reason why we do no more thrive in grace or advance in the spiritual life is because we do no more give thanks.

5. In thanksgiving all spiritual graces are acted and promoted. (1.) Faith is acted in thanksgiving when we see and own the invisible hand that reacheth out our supplies to us: 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee,' 1 Chron. xxix. 14. Stupid and carnal creatures look to the next hand, as if he that bringeth the present were more to be thanked than he that sendeth it: Hosea ii. 8, 'She did not know that I gave her corn, and wine, and oil.' We are unthankful to God and man, but more to God, because blessings that come from an invisible hand we look upon as things of course, and do not praise the giver. Beasts own the next hand: Isa. i. 3, 'The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider.' (2.) Love: It is love that doth open our mouths, that we may praise God with joyful lips: Ps. cxvi. 1, 'I will love the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications;' and then, ver. 2, 'I will praise him as long as I live.' The proper intent of mercies is to draw us to God. When the heart is full of the sense of the goodness of the Lord, the tongue cannot hold its peace. Self-love doth more put us on prayers, but the love of God on praises, therefore to seek and not to praise, it is to be lovers of ourselves rather than of God. (3.) Hope is acted. While we give thanks for the very grant, for the promise, for the preparations, with greater assurance we expect what is behind; as Abraham built an altar in the land of Canaan, and offered thanksgivings to God, when he had not a foot in the country, Gen. xiii. 18. (4.) Our humility: The humble soul is most delighted in the praise of God, but the proud soul in its own praises: 'They sacrifice to their net, and burn incense to their drag,' Hab. i. 16. Whilst others sacrifice to God, they deprive God of his honour, and exalt anything rather than the author of felicity; they ascribe all to themselves, whilst the others profess their unworthiness of the least mercies from God: Gen. xxxii. 10, 'I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies, and of all the truth which thou hast showed unto thy servant;' and 2 Sam. vii. 18, 'Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that thou hast brought me hitherto?' God is never exalted till the creature be abased.

6. It preventeth many sins; as—(1.) Hardness of heart, and security in enjoying the blessings of God's common providence. These common mercies point to the author, and discover their end to the thankful soul, but to the unthankful they prove occasions to the flesh; so 'their table is made a snare to them, and their welfare a trap,' Ps. lxxix. 22. But when we sip and look upward, and acknowledge God on all occasions, the creature is sanctified to us: 1 Tim. iv. 4, 'Every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.' Where there is a due acknowledgment of the donor, we have it with a blessing. So (2.) It suppresseth murmuring, or that quarrelling, fretting, impatient humour which venteth itself against God, even in our prayers and complaints, and soureth all our comforts. Murmuring is an anti-providence, the scum of discontent, by which we entertain crosses with anger, and blessings with disdain. Man is a touchy creature, always querulous, especially when God

retrencheth him in some worldly conveniences which he fancieth. Now a thankful spirit counterbalanceth crosses with comforts: Job ii. 10, 'What! shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?' It taketh notice how gracious God hath been notwithstanding his seeming severity, therefore it can bless God in every condition: Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord.' This fretting humour is cured; as long as we see occasion of giving thanks, it causeth us to submit to his disposing will. (3.) It prevents distrust and carking cares. This remedy is prescribed by the apostle: Phil. iv. 6, 'Be careful for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God.' When we acknowledge what God hath done for us, it prevents distrust: Ps. lxxvii. 10, 11, 'I said, This is my infirmity, but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High: I will remember the works of the Lord; surely I will remember thy wonders of old.' There are great convulsions in an earthquake, but when it findeth a vent all is quiet. When we can bless God for favours already received, we will not doubt of his goodness for the future, but quietly compose ourselves to wait for the good end of the Lord. (4.) It cureth spiritual pride to consider who must be praised and owned for all the good which is in us: 1 Cor. iv. 7, 'Who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? Now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?' The more we have, we are more indebted to grace. We have all from God and for God, not for ourselves, our own glory and ostentation. God will be angry if we rob him of it, as Herod was smitten 'because he gave not God the glory,' Acts xii. 23. The receiver is as bad as the stealer; we consent to this robbery and usurpation.

Use. Oh! then, let us be more abundant in thanksgiving and praise. It is God's will concerning us in Christ: 1 Thes. v. 18, 'In everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.' But there are other reasons to persuade us; as—(1.) Our profit both spiritual and temporal. It argueth a good spirit, great faith and love, when we look to God in everything, and a submissive spirit when we take anything kindly at his hands, the nations had never fallen to idolatry if they had kept up thankfulness, and considered God in all their mercies: Acts xiv. 16, 17, 'Who in times past suffered all nations to walk in their own ways; nevertheless he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness.' Setting up the idol chance was the great cause of perverting mankind. Besides, this is noble and delightful work, the work of angels, our work in heaven. Well, then, observe what matter of praise God vouchsafeth to you continually. If you did want many of the comforts you now enjoy, how miserable would your lives be! A thing too near the ball of the eye is not seen well; our comforts must be set at a distance to make us value them. (2.) Our continual dependence. It is with us as it was with the raven and the dove which Noah sent forth out of the ark, Gen. viii. 7, 8: the raven, feeding on the floating carrion, returned no more; but the dove, finding not whereon to rest the sole

of her foot, returned with an olive branch. Carnal men, if they can get anything from God to support them, and they have their stock in their own hands, they care no more for him, but live apart from God: Jer. ii. 31, 'Wherefore say my people, We are lords, we will come no more unto thee?' (3.) Consider how thankful others are for less than what we enjoy. There are many that would be glad of our leavings, but usually those that enjoy the greatest possessions pay the least rent, and God receiveth more praise from a poor cottage than from a rich palace. But I proceed to the second point.

Doct. 2. That in thanksgiving to God we should especially own his spiritual benefits.

These are usually overlooked, but yet these deserve the chiefest acknowledgments.

1. Because these are discriminating, and come from God's special love, which floweth forth to his own people. Corn, and wine, and oil are bestowed upon the world, but faith and love upon his saints. David prayeth, Ps. cvi. 4, 'Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people.' To have the favourite's mercy is more than to have a common mercy. Protection is the benefit of every common subject, but intimate love and near admission are the privileges of special favourites. Now by the common effects of his providence, love or hatred cannot be known: Eccles. ix. 1, 2, 'No man knoweth either love or hatred by all that is before them; all things come alike to all,' &c. The things without us, and the things before us, and the things promiscuously dispersed, will not discover his special love to us. Christ gave his purse to Judas, the worst of the disciples, but his Spirit to the rest as the choicest gift.

2. Because these concern the better part, the inward man: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For which cause we faint not, but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' He doth us more favour that healeth a wound in the body than he that seweth up a rent in the garment. Is not the body more than raiment? So is not the soul more than the body? Yea, further, and the soul furnished with grace, than the soul furnished only with natural gifts and endowments? 1 Cor. xiii. 1-3, 'Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal: and though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have no charity, I am nothing: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing.' I am nothing without saving grace; therefore these are the mercies for which God will be praised.

3. These are brought about with more ado than temporal favours. God as a creator and upholder of all his creatures doth bestow temporal blessings upon the ungodly world, even upon the heathens that know him not, that never heard of Christ; yet saving grace he bestoweth only as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was to purchase these blessings by his death and bloody sufferings before we could obtain them: Eph. i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual

blessings in heavenly places in Christ.' Other blessings run in the channel of common providence, these in the channel of Christ's mediation.

4. Because these are pledges of eternal blessings, and the beginnings of our eternal well-being. The life that is begun in us by the Spirit is perfected in heaven: John v. 24, 'He that heareth my words, and believeth on him that hath sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death to life.' It is a spark that shall not be quenched, and the food that feedeth it is the meat that 'perisheth not, but endureth to everlasting life,' John vi. 27. Those graces and eternal blessedness are to be linked together, that they cannot be separated: Rom. viii. 30, 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called, and whom he called, them he also justified, and whom he justified, them he also glorified.' Sanctification is included in the last word; here in the beginnings by sanctification, and hereafter in the full possession of eternal glory. So 2 Cor. iii. 18, 'We all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' It loseth itself in the ocean of eternal glory and happiness.

5. These incline and fit the heart for praise and thankfulness to God. There is an occasion to praise God, and a disposition and a heart to praise God. Outward benefits give us the occasion to praise God, but these not only the occasion, but the disposition; other benefits are the motives, but these the preparations, as they do fit and incline the heart. The work of faith and love do set the lips wide open to magnify and praise the Lord. Grace is the matter of God's praises, and gives also a ready will to praise him, yea, the very deed of praising him: Ps. lxxiii. 5, 'My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness, and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' When they feel the love of God shed abroad in their hearts, they are inclined to praise God.

6. Temporal favours may be given in anger, but the graces of the Spirit are never given in anger. God may give us worldly honour and riches in judgment, and indulge large pastures to beasts fatted for destruction; but he giveth not faith and love in anger, or a renewed heart in anger, but as a token of his special love: 'To you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven,' Mat. xiii. 11; 'To you it is given to believe,' Phil. i. 19. So that for these principally we should praise the Lord. We have a quick sense in bodily mercies, but in soul concerns we are not alike affected. We think God dealeth well with them to whom he giveth greatness and honour; but doth he not deal well with you to whom he hath given his Spirit?

7. These render us acceptable unto God. A man is not accepted with God for his worldly blessings; he is indeed the more accountable unto God, but not of greater account with him: Luke xii. 48, 'For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall the more be required.' The more helps and the more encouragements, the more work and service God expecteth, but they are not more precious in his sight for temporal things' sake. Under the law the rich and poor paid the same ransom; the rich is not accepted for his riches, nor the poor man despised for his poverty; but now the saving graces of his Spirit are acceptable with God. It is said, 1 Peter iii. 4, 'A meek and quiet

spirit is in the sight of God of great price.' God esteemeth this more, and therefore it should heighten the esteem of grace in our hearts, and quicken us more to get and increase it.

8. These benefits should be acknowledged, that God may have the sole glory of them, for he is 'the Father of lights, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift,' James i. 17. It was the opinion of the stoics, *Quod vivamus deorum munus est, quod bene vivamus nostrum*—Our natural being we ascribe to God, but our moral perfections we are apt to usurp the glory of them to ourselves. *Judicium hoc est omnium mortalium*, saith Tully. All men think that prosperity and success is to be asked of the gods, but prudence and good management belongeth to us. But these opinions are sacrilegious, and rob God of his chiefest honour; therefore, to prevent spiritual pride, we must be sure to bless God for spiritual blessings; our crowns must be 'cast at the feet of the Lamb,' Rev. iv. 10, 11, for he only is worthy to receive honour, and blessing, and glory, and power. Whatever we do, it is from him who worketh all our works in us: Isa. xxvi. 12, 'Thou wilt ordain peace for us, for thou also hast wrought all our works in us;' and 1 Chron. xxix. 14, 'All things come of thee, and of thy own have we given thee.' By his grace we are what we are: 1 Cor. xv. 10, 'By the grace of God I am what I am;' and Luke xix. 16, 'Thy pound hath gained ten pounds.'

Use. Is to exhort us to two things—(1.) To be in a capacity to bless God for spiritual blessings; (2.) To be most affected with these mercies.

1. See that you be in a capacity to bless God for spiritual blessings. First see that you have these mercies, and then bless God for them. It would trouble a man even to trembling to hear slight and vain persons take up a form of thanksgiving which no way is proper to them, as to bless God for their election before time, their sanctification in time, and their hopes of glory after all time. As if a leper should give thanks for perfect health, or a madman that he is made wiser than his neighbours, or a man that is ready to die to thank God that he is pretty well and recovering, so they give thanks for grace which they never knew nor felt. This is to mock God while we pretend to adore him. It is true there are spiritual mercies for which all are bound to give thanks, such as the mystery of redemption, the new covenant, the offers and invitations of grace, means, and time to repent; these you should value more, and bless God for them. But for men that know not their own great necessities and benefits, but slight their chiefest mercies, and account them burdens, they can more feelingly thank God for a gluttonous meal, or unjust gain, or some vain pleasure, but for the means of grace they bless him not. But now, the flower of thanksgiving is when we can bless God for Christ, for his Spirit, for heaven, for faith and love; and therefore we should labour to get these things, and to make our sincerity more unquestionable; for these are the chiefest matters for which God expecteth praise from us. The apostolical forms insist upon these things: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.'

2. To be most affected with these mercies. Other mercies may be

overvalued, especially if we look upon them under the notion of provision for the flesh; so our very thankfulness may be a snare. Lust engrosseth our hearts, but religion tippeth our tongues. Men will thank God for their preferment more than for the offer of Christ, and pardon and life by him. Our esteem is known by this, what it is that moveth us to thankfulness; if it be for the world, as used for the pleasure of the flesh rather than for the service of God, it is but lust disguised in a religious form. Therefore, what are you most affectionately thankful for, worldly or spiritual good things? God is to be thanked for all, for temporal increase, but chiefly for spiritual mercies. Now what endeareth God to your hearts, that he is so good in Christ, or that he blesseth your outward estate? You should not lessen that favour, but look for a better and more distinguishing expression of his love.

Doct. 3. That not only the spiritual blessings vouchsafed to ourselves, but to others also, must be acknowledged with thankfulness.

1. It suiteth with our relation of members in the same mystical body of Christ, and so is a part of the communion of saints: 1 Cor. xii. 26, 'And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.' The members care for one another, and are affected with each other's woe or weal. If the toe be trod upon, the tongue will cry out, You have hurt me; therefore, they that have lost sympathy and feeling seem to have cast themselves out of the body, as if they were no way concerned in their fellow-members in Christ. If we be in the body, we must be affected with others' concernments as with our own: Phil. i. 7, 'I have you in my heart.' Where sincere love is among christians, there will be a communion of prayers and praises, therefore they bless God for others' mercies as their own. See Rom. xii. 15, 'Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' Spiritual love is but acted and personated if we only drop some words of prayer and praise, and do not look upon ourselves as under a debt, and that it is meet so to do, and do it upon inclination, and not merely upon the invitation of others. We should give thanks for all their mercies, especially for such spiritual mercies as constitute the union, such as faith and love. By faith we are united to the head, by love to the fellow-members: Col. i. 3, 4, 'We give thanks to God, and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which you have to all the saints.' These graces qualify for this spiritual communion.

2. The glory of God is concerned in it. Wheresoever his goodness shineth forth, especially with any eminency, it must be acknowledged: Rom. i. 8, 'I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.' When Christ's kingdom doth thrive extensively or intensively, by the addition of more peace or the increase of grace; if we love our Master, we must be glad when he getteth more servants, and our joy must be expressed in praises. When Paul was converted, he saith, Gal. i. 24, the saints 'glorified God in me;' that is, praised God in his behalf, and gave him the honour of that great work, that so useful an instrument was gained to the faith.

3. The spiritual blessings vouchsafed to others conduce to a common good, therefore our profit and interest inviteth us to this duty. The good of some is the gain of the whole; we have benefit by their

example, and are confirmed by having companions in the faith and patience of the gospel, and the common profession groweth by their accession to the faith: 1 Thes. i. 7, 8, 'Ye were examples to all that believe in Macedonia, and Achaia; for from you sounded out the word of the Lord, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad.' Eminent christians promote the interest of the gospel, and their gifts make them serviceable: 1 Cor. i. 4, 5, 'I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace that is given you by Jesus Christ, that in everything ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge;' and Rom. i. 12, 'That I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.' It is a comfort to meet with our Father's children everywhere, and that we have hopes of having more companions in heaven.

4. If we have no profit by them, yet the thing itself is a benefit to us, for if we have anything of the bowels of Christ or love to souls, surely we are gratified when any are converted to God. If the salvation of our brethren be dear to us, whatever is given in order thereto we must reckon among our benefits, and we should rejoice in one another's gifts and graces as our own. True goodness is communicative, and diffusive of itself, as fire turneth all about it into fire. Hypocritical profession is accompanied with an envy; they would shine alone; and mules and creatures of a bastard production do not propagate.

5. We increase their faith and comfort when we give thanks to God for them. To that end doth the apostle mention his thanksgiving, that they might be encouraged to go on: Phil. i. 3-6, 'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.'

Use 1. They are monsters of men that repine at the riches poured down by their own or other men's ministry upon others; yet such a base spirit reigneth in many; they cannot endure any should be godly and serious.

Use 2. Let us bless God for others. The angels rejoice at the conversion of a sinner, Luke xv. 10. Now this should never be omitted—(1.) When there is some eminent work accomplished, either for the multitude of objects or degree of grace. As when Cornelius was gained to the faith as the first-fruits of the Gentiles, Acts xi. 18, 'When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then hath God also unto the Gentiles granted repentance unto life;' and ver. 21, 'The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord;' and ver. 23, 'Barnabas was glad when he had seen the grace of God, and exhorted them all, that, with purpose of heart, they would cleave unto the Lord.' (2.) When there are special circumstances, as if we have been instrumental to do them good, and God hath blessed our word, or converse, or example: 1 Thes. ii. 19, 20, 'For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? for ye are our glory and joy.' Or if we have prayed for anything for others, whatever we have prayed for must be thankfully acknowledged when brought to pass: 2 Cor. i. 11, 'You also helping together by prayer for us, that for the gifts bestowed upon us by the means of

many persons, thanks may be given by many on our behalf;’ and 3 John 4, ‘I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in the truth.’

Doct. 4. That in thanksgiving for spiritual benefits, whether to ourselves or others, the increase of grace must be acknowledged as well as the beginnings of it.

The degree is from God. He that beginneth perfecteth: Phil. i. 6, ‘He that hath begun a good work will perfect it to the day of Christ.’ The whole progress of the work, from the first step to the last, is all from God, not from the power of our own free-will, or the strength of our resolutions, or the stability of our gracious habits. For the first, that it is not from the power of our own free-will, is plain from John vi. 44, ‘No man can come to me except the Father which hath sent me draw him.’ And then for the second, that it is not from the strength of our resolutions: Ps. lxxiii. 2, ‘As for me, my feet were almost gone, my steps had well-nigh slipped.’ And for the third, that it is not from the stability of gracious habits, see Rev. iii. 2, ‘Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, and are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God;’ and 1 Peter v. 10, ‘The God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Jesus Christ, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you.’ He that beginneth the work of grace in us doth still carry it on to perfection; he doth establish what is attained, and increase our spiritual strength for all difficulties and duties; so Luke xvii. 5, ‘The apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith.’

Use. Take notice of God’s favour in the addition of every new degree of grace, because the change is more remarkable. We may ascribe our first conversion to God, but we must also our after-growth. We are still under the love and care of Christ; though we are passed from death to life, yet not from earth to heaven. You are in continual need of Christ for direction, intercession, pardon, further sanctification, support, comfort, and peace; therefore take notice of every degree. If there be greater fervour, if more delightful exercise, if more ability and strength to overcome opposition, let God have the glory of all. He many times chastiseth our pride and unthankfulness with lapses or decays if we do not acknowledge him; as Peter and David, what grievous lapses had they!

SERMON II.

We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth—2 THESS. i. 3.

IN these words we have observed—(1.) An affectionate form of thanksgiving; (2.) The matter of it.

For the first, it is a blessed thing when complaints are turned into thanksgivings, both for ourselves and others. For ourselves we should

not be always craving and always complaining. Gratulation should find a place in our addresses to God, as well as acknowledgments of sin and supplications for grace: Col. iv. 2, 'Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.' So for others, we should rather take notice of their excellences than of their blemishes. We give occasion to others to suspect us to have a rough imperious spirit, to be always finding fault, never acknowledging the grace they have received or the good they have done. This was far from Paul's temper, who was ever ready to acknowledge anything of Christ wherever he found it, especially where grace was discovered with eminency, as in these Thessalonians; therefore he saith, 'We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet;' whence we observed four doctrines.

I am now to speak of the matter of this thanksgiving, 'Because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth;' where observe these six things—

1. That it is a comfort that our inward man is in a good state, however it be with us as to our outward condition before the world. These Thessalonians were poor and afflicted. We read in the first epistle; 'They received the gospel in much affliction,' 1 Thes. i. 6; and in the verse next the text he speaketh of their 'patience and faith in all their persecutions and tribulations;' and the following words tend wholly to comfort them under their sore troubles. Yet their condition before God was thriving and prosperous, and matter of thanksgiving rather than lamentation. So 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'For this cause we faint not,' saith the apostle, 'but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.' We should count this world's goods well exchanged if the want or loss of them be recompensed to us by the increase of spiritual graces, and be glad if it go well with our souls, though our bodily interests be infringed. If God by an aching head will give us a better heart, by a sickly body an healthy soul, as he did to Gaius, 3 John 2, by lessening us in the world, or reducing us to straits, make us 'rich in faith,' James ii. 5; by troubles and oppositions excite us to a more lively exercise of grace. We should not barely submit to such a dispensation, but give thanks. The children of God are always set forth to be of this temper: Ps. cxix. 71, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I might learn thy statutes;' 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10, 'I will rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me; therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecution, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then am I strong; 'if the afflictions and troubles of the world may do us good, and our knowledge and holiness be increased as our estates are diminished. So Heb. xii. 11, 'No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous, nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.' All the honours and riches of the world are not worth the least degree or drachm of grace.

2. Their condition was not only good, but growing better every day. It is not enough barely to be good, but we must grow from good to better, and be best at last. God's children wait on the Lord, and he is not wont to be sparing and straitened to those that attend upon him: Isa. xl. 31, 'They that wait on the Lord shall renew their strength.'

They are planted in his courts, and that is a fertile soil : Ps. xcii. 13, 14, 'Those that are planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God ; they shall still bring forth fruit in old age, they shall be fat and flourishing.' There are ordinances by which they receive a supply of the Spirit ; their hearts are upon the ways that lead home to God : Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 'They shall go on from strength to strength.' When our hearts are set upon a thing, we will neither go off nor go back, but still gain ground. They find new encouragement in God's ways : Prov. x. 29, 'The way of the Lord is strength to the upright ;' the more they walk in it, the more encouragement they find to do so, all which doth condemn our laziness, that we make no more progress. Surely our reward should encourage us : Phil. iii. 14, 'I press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.' In a race where there is so great a prize, we should not stand at a stay, but still be running, and getting nearer the goal ; the way is so pleasant that we have no occasion to tire in it : 2 Peter iii. 18, 'But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.' We have so many benefits by Christ, that surely we are encouraged to seek for more. Besides, consider God's expectation. God expecteth more from some than others, according to their years and standing : Heb. v. 12, 'For when for the time ye ought to be teachers' (having had so much means and advantages), 'ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God.' So Luke xii. 48, 'Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required ; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.' We expect he should come sooner that rideth on horseback than he that goeth afoot. Now, that we may grow, carnal affections must be weakened : John xv. 2, 'Every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit.' This purging is by mortification ; faith, the mother grace, must be increased : Rom. i. 17, 'Therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith ; as it is written, The just shall live by faith.' We must still continue to live by faith. The means of grace must still be attended upon : 1 Peter ii. 2, 'As new-born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby.'

3. Their growth was considerable ; they arrived to a great degree of eminency, *ὑπεραυξάνει ἡ πίστις ὑμῶν, καὶ πλεονάζει ἡ ἀγάπη*. Here is high faith and great love. Certainly they did not overgrow their duty, but it was a wonderful growth, considering the difference between them and themselves, what they were before the gospel came to them, and what now ; considering also the difference between them and others, how they had outgrown their equals, yea, those who had received the gospel before them. Surely we should not only grow in grace, but seek to excel in grace ; God will have more glory, and we more comfort. Now those that would excel—(1.) Should be more humble ; for, James iv. 6, 'God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace to the humble.' The Lord increaseth his grace where all is ascribed to God and nothing to ourselves, but he is an enemy to those that lift up themselves, and puff up themselves and set the crown upon their own heads. (2.) They should be diligent in the use of their gifts, for 'to him that hath shall be given,' Luke viii. 18 ; that is, that useth what he hath, that carrieth himself

according to the helps vouchsafed, and employeth and improveth what he hath, he shall have more. They shall have more faith, more love from the same Spirit who gave them the first grace. If in the effect you show what you have, and declare what you have, you shall have more; the original stock shall be increased. (3.) There should be thankfulness. They own God in all: Col. ii. 7, 'Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.' The creature then robbeth not God of the glory of his gifts, and therefore shall have more. (4.) There must be obedience to the word of God as our rule, the sanctifying motions of the Spirit as our principle, and the author of that grace which we have. Now the more ready we show ourselves to comply with the directions of his word and the motions of his Spirit, the more is grace strengthened in us; for disobedience to the word is a provocation to God, which hindereth the due impression of it on our souls: Jer. viii. 9, 'They have rejected the word of the Lord, and what wisdom is in them?' And disobedience to the Spirit is a grief to him: Eph. iv. 30, 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.' So that sin hindereth our growth, and letteth out our strength. But what shall we say of them that beat down the price of christianity as low as they can, and content themselves with what is barely necessary to salvation, as if the safest way were to go as near the brink of destruction as possible? These men care not though they dishonour God, so they may be saved, but they will in time see that the greatest grace is no more than needeth.

4. They grow in both graces, both in faith and love. These two graces are inseparable companions: Col. i. 4, 'Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, and of the love which ye have to all the saints.' So 1 Tim. i. 13, 'Hold fast the firm of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Jesus Christ.' The one concerneth our personal benefit and safety, the other the good of the body, that we may have a tender care of the unity, honour, and prosperity of Christ's church. We are to build up ourselves in our most holy faith, and we are also to edify others, which is done by love principally. Besides, this connection is necessary, because all religion is exercised by these two graces. The mysteries of religion are received and improved by faith, and the precepts and duties of it are acted by love: 1 Cor. xvi. 13, 14, 'Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit yourselves like men, be strong; let all things be done with charity.' And therefore that qualification which entitleth us to the privileges of the new covenant is made to be 'faith working by love,' Gal. v. 6. The one grace without the other is not saving and sincere. Faith without love is dead, James ii. 17, and love without faith is but a little good-nature, or facile inclination to others, not derived from the Spirit of God, nor built on our belief of his grace in Christ; they depend upon one another, as the effect upon the cause. Faith produceth love, as it showeth the true grounds of union, and from a sense and apprehension of God's love to us causeth us to love others. In short, both graces are recommended by the same authority: 1 John iii. 23, 'And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment.' He that

maketh conscience of the one will make conscience of the other also. Again, the one referreth to God, the other to men; faith for God, charity for our brethren. The one keepeth us from defection from God, the other preventeth a schism and a breach with our fellow christians. Well, then, here was the commendation of those Thessalonians, their adherence to the faith was very constant, and they lived in unity and amity with one another. There is no surer argument of sincerity and proficiency in christianity than this growth of faith and love. They are the fountain of all other duties; and if you would be accounted thorough and growing christians, you must excel in both these graces, for true solid godliness is rooted in faith, and acted by love towards God and men, which is the all of christianity.

5. This growth and proficiency was found in all; not only some among them were eminent for faith and love, but all. If the apostle had only said, The charity of you all aboundeth, it might seem to refer to the church, that there was no schism there; but he saith, 'Of every one of you all towards each other.' In other epistles, the believers, to whom the apostle wrote, have all the style of 'churches,' or 'men sanctified,' &c.; but afterwards notorious and particular miscarriages are reprov'd, which showeth that the denomination was a *potiori parte*, from the better part; but here he mentions all and every one; they were a choice sort of christians. Where shall we find their fellows? It is our duty to be such, and it should be our care; for here we see what the grace of God can do if we be serious, and what an advantage it is to be in good company, and to have good examples about us, and how much living coals do enkindle one another when they lie together.

6. He saith, faith groweth, but love aboundeth. Love must not only increase, but abound to each other. A thing may be increased *intensive* or *extensive*; intensively, when it is more rooted, when there is a greater fervour and vigour of faith and love; extensively, either as to effects or objects; as to effects, in doing more good, as when we abound in works of mercy; or as to objects, by doing good to more persons, not confining our love to one only, or a few, but extending it to all. This was the case of those Thessalonians; their love was not a lank or lean love, but an abounding love, full of all good fruits; and this not to some, but to all, even the meanest christians among them. If we would give others occasion to bless God for us, let us imitate their example. Occasions are many, objects are many, to whom we may be beneficial, therefore our charity must not be straitened, but abounding.

[1.] The internal affection must increase: Phil. i. 9, 'This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more;' that is, both their love to God and their neighbours, especially to those who are God's. There are so many things to extinguish it, or make it grow cold, that we should always seek to increase this grace, that it may be more fervent and strong, and not grow cold and dead.

[2.] The external expressions should abound both as to acts and objects.

(1.) As to acts. In duties of charity we should not be weary. Now we may be weary upon a double occasion, either because we meet not presently with our reward; to that the apostle speaketh, Gal. vi. 9, 'Be not weary of well-doing, for in due time we shall reap, if we faint

not;’ duties of charity have their promises annexed, which are not presently accomplished, but in their season; they will be either in this life, or in the next; or because of continual occasions, when there is no end: Heb. vi. 10, 11, ‘For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which you have showed towards his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister; and we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.’ Meaning that formerly they had a courage to own Christ and his despised ways, and to be charitable to poor christians; now he desireth them to be so still; as long as the occasion continueth, so long should the charity continue, that at length they might reap the reward, ‘Ye have ministered, and do minister.’ This is tedious to nature and to a niggardly and base heart, but love will be working and labouring still, and ever bringing forth more fruit. Where this heavenly fire is kindled in the soul, it will warm all those that are about them. But love is cold in most; it will neither take pains, nor be at charge to do anything for the brethren; but christian love is an immortal fire, it will still burn and never die; therefore we should continue the same diligence, zeal, and affection that formerly we had.

(2.) As to objects. Christ telleth us, ‘The poor ye have always with you,’ Mat. xxvi. 11. As long as God findeth objects, we should find charity; and the apostle saith, Gal. vi. 10, ‘As we have opportunity, let us do good to all men.’ Expensive duties are distasteful to a carnal heart. It may be they would part with something which the flesh can spare, and will snatch at anything to excuse their neglect; they have done it to these and these; but as long as God bringeth objects to our view and notice, and our ability and affection doth continue, we must give still. If our ability continueth not, providence puts a bar, and excuseth; but if our affection doth not continue, the fault is our own.

Now I come more particularly to speak of the growth of faith, ‘Your faith groweth exceedingly.’

Doct. That it is well with christians when their faith groweth and doth considerably increase.

The scripture speaketh of a weak faith and a strong faith, therefore it concerneth us to consider whether our faith be weak or strong, in the wane or in the increase. Now we shall best judge of the growth of faith—(1.) By the nature of it; (2.) The properties of it; (3.) The examples of scripture.

First. Let us see the nature of it, and thereby we shall best judge of the growth of it. Faith is a grace whereby we believe God’s word in general, and especially the doctrine of salvation by Christ, and do receive him and rest upon him for grace here and glory hereafter.

First. The general object of faith is the whole word of God: Acts xxiv. 14, ‘Believing all things which are written in the law and the prophets.’ Certainly the general faith goeth before the particular, for there is no building without a foundation; so that the general faith is a firm and hearty assent to such things as are revealed by God, because revealed by him. In which description we may consider—(1.) The object of this grace, things revealed by God, as revealed by him; (2.) The act, it is an assent; (3.) The adjuncts or qualifications of this act, it is a firm, cordial, or hearty assent.

1. The objects of faith, considered materially, are such things as are contained in the divine revelation. Formally these things by faith are apprehended under that consideration as revealed by God, by virtue of the truth and authority of his testimony. The objects of faith materially considered are all such things as are contained in the word of God or revealed by him, which are of a different nature, precepts, promises, threatenings, histories of facts done, mysteries of godliness; all these are apprehended, and improved by faith, to the use of holy living or entertaining communion with God through Christ; only among these objects some are more noble and excellent, others of lesser weight and moment. The chief objects of faith are those things which are absolutely necessary to salvation, and without which we can neither be holy here nor happy hereafter. Such are those things which we specially call articles of faith, as briefly comprehending all the mysteries of salvation, the decalogue, &c. But many other things are contained in the word of God, and conduce to the confirmation and fuller understanding of these things, though not of like weight and importance with them; as, for instance, divers histories and miracles which are spoken of in scripture, as also some lesser doctrines, which only belong to the greater fulness and perfection of knowledge. The first sort of things must be explicitly and distinctly known and believed; an implicit faith may suffice for the rest. Now an implicit faith we call that faith by which we believe things not distinctly and apart, but as they are contained in their common principle; as, for instance, he that believeth the book of Judges to be a book divinely inspired, and yet hath never read it or heard it read by others, he doth indeed believe the histories contained therein to be true, but not by an explicit faith, for he knoweth them not but by an implicit and general faith, as he is persuaded the book was indited by the Spirit of God; but he who hath read the book, and knoweth particularly what is said of Sampson, Gideon, Barak, and others of the Lord's worthies, and believeth it, he hath a distinct and explicit faith of these things. The believers of the Old Testament knew the Messiah and Redeemer of the world implicitly, and not with that particularity which is required of believers in the New. And so do many weak christians assent to all things contained in the word of God by an implicit faith, though they do only expressly and explicitly believe things necessary to salvation; which is not said to justify laziness in any, or an overly carelessness in any matters of religion, as if we should acquiesce in the knowledge of a few necessary things, and seek no further. No; 'The word of God must dwell in us richly, in all wisdom,' Col. iii. 16; for though things absolutely necessary are but few, yet other points have their use, and conduce both to the confirmation and improvement of the rest. But hitherto we have only spoken of the object of faith materially considered; we must speak also of the formal consideration. Things revealed by God, as revealed by him; for every assent, even that which is given to things contained in the word of God, cannot be called faith. For instance, if a man should certainly hold and maintain any point of religion, as the creation of the world out of nothing, but not upon the account of God's revealing any such truth, but for some other reason which seemeth necessary and cogent to him, he cannot be said to believe this article, or to understand it by faith; as it is said, Heb. xi. 3, 'Through faith we understand

that the worlds were framed by the word of God;’ for faith is an assent to a divine testimony; but when we know things by other ways and means of assurance, it is not faith, whatever it be. So if a man should believe the passages of God’s providence towards the Israelites, upon the relation of Josephus the historian, and not upon the authority of the sacred writers who have delivered it to us, he cannot be said to have faith; which also may be said of them who adhere to the true religion only out of custom, and the happy chance of their birth and education, or because they received it by tradition from their ancestors, or the bare warrant of their present teachers, or evidence of reason.

2. The next thing which the description offereth to us is the act of faith about this object, which is an assent. The formal object of faith is some divine truth, as we have seen. Now the understanding hath a double act about truth—apprehension and dijudication, or exercising a judgment about it. So in these divine truths first we apprehend the nature or tenor of them, or consider what is propounded to us in the word of God, which is knowledge or apprehension; but then secondly we judge or determine concerning the truth of these things, which is acknowledgment or assent, and this is the act proper to faith.

3. The adjuncts or qualifications of this assent come now to be considered. They are two—(1.) It is a firm assent; (2.) It is a cordial and hearty assent

[1.] As it is a firm assent, so faith is distinguished from many things that look like it, or pass for it in the world; as (1.) Non-contradiction, or not questioning the truths of religion, which is all the faith that most have, and cometh from their inadvertency and carelessness about divine matters. They do not object against the truth of what the gospel propoundeth, because they do not regard it and weigh it in their serious thoughts. This differeth little from children’s learning questions of catechism, or saying things by rote; they can say over the articles of their belief, and never doubted of them; you may teach them to think and say anything, what you please, for they say it, and never consider of it. So most men in the christian world talk at the same rate that others do, but consider not what they say, nor whereof they affirm, only ignorantly and inconsiderately swallow down the current opinions, without ‘knowing the certainty of those things wherein they have been instructed,’ Luke i. 4. And so though they never doubted of the truth of their religion, it is because they were never assaulted with temptations to the contrary, and all the strength of their faith lieth in their inconsideration or non-attention. If they have any ground and bottom, it is only men’s saying so, and therefore their belief (if they have any) should rather be called human credulity than christian faith. In short, they that believe everything believe nothing, which soon appeareth when a temptation cometh. (2.) It distinguisheth it from conjecture, which is a lighter inclination of mind to a thing, as possibly or probably true, whereby men get no higher than, It may be so, and yet there are shrewd suspicions to the contrary. A guess is not an assent, much less a firm and strong assent, as faith is. (3.) It distinguisheth it from opinion, which is a trembling, fearful, uncertain assent. Opinion is beyond conjecture, but short of faith. Conjecture only supposes it may be so, but opinion asserts that it is so,

though not without some fear of the contrary; but above all, this faith is an undoubted persuasion of the truth of things revealed by God. By opinion one may be so convinced of the truth of divine things as not to be able reasonably to contradict them; but by faith a man is so convinced of the truth of the gospel that he seeth all the reason in the world to embrace and follow it: Col. ii. 2, 'That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ:' and 1 Thes. i. 5, 'For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance, as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake;' and Heb. x. 22, 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.'

[2.] The next qualification of this assent is that it is a cordial or hearty assent: I mean, such as doth engage the will and affections to pursue the happiness which God hath revealed, in the way and by the means which God hath prescribed. We read in scripture of 'believing with the heart,' Rom. x. 9, 10, 'and with all the heart,' Acts viii. 37. The object of faith is not only true, but good, and therefore produceth a cordial adherence to the truths of which it is persuaded. There is not only a conviction of the mind, but a bent and inclination of the will, which followeth the persuasion of faith if it be firm and strong; for it considereth not only the evidence of the things propounded, but the worth, weight, and greatness of them: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation;' otherwise it will not serve the end and purpose of the gospel, which requireth us to crucify our lusts, and sacrifice our interests, and perform duties displeasing to corrupt nature, and all this upon the hopes only which it offereth to us, and to wait upon God for his salvation in the midst of all pressures and afflictions. Therefore certainly believing is an heart-business, not a simple, naked, and speculative assent. This latter qualification doth exclude two things from true, lively, and saving faith—(1.) That which divines call historical; (2.) That which they call temporary faith.

(1.) Historical faith, which is a simple and naked assent to such things as are propounded in the word of God, and maketh men more knowing but not better, not more holy and heavenly; they are not excited thereby to pursue that happiness which the gospel offereth in the way of holy living or patient continuance in well-doing. So Simon Magus believed the preaching of Philip, Acts viii. 13, yet his heart was not right with God, but he still remained in the gall of bitterness and bond of iniquity. And so many believed in the name of Christ, to whom Christ 'committed not himself, because he knew all men,' John ii. 23, 24; and this faith even the devils may have: James ii. 19, 'Thou believest that there is a God, thou doest well; the devils also believe, and tremble;' and that not only in truths evident by natural light, such as that is there mentioned, that there is a God, but in gospel truths, as that Jesus is the Son of God: Mark i. 24, 'The devil cried out, saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou

Jesus of Nazareth? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.' Now this kind of faith is called historical faith, not from the object of it, as if it did only believe the histories of scripture. No; they that have it may believe the promises, the doctrines, the precepts as well as the histories; but from the manner in which it is conversant about its object, namely, thus: as we read histories in which we are no way concerned; we nakedly read them for knowledge' sake, not to make a party in their broils and interests, but only to know what was done; so they that have only this kind of faith, read the scriptures as persons unconcerned, and rest in idle speculation, without referring those notable truths to choice and practice. I cannot say that this cannot be called faith, because they that have it do believe those things which are true, and do truly believe them; but yet lively saving faith it is not, for he who hath that, findeth his heart engaged to Christ, and doth so believe the promises of the gospel concerning pardon of sins and life eternal that he seeketh after them as his happiness, and doth so believe the mysteries of our redemption by Christ as that all his hope and peace and confidence is drawn from thence, and doth so believe the commandments of God and Christ as that he determineth to frame his heart and life to the observance of them, and doth so believe the threatenings, whether of temporal plagues or eternal damnation, as that, in comparison of them, all the frightful things of the world are as nothing: Luke xii. 24, 'Be not afraid of them that can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do.' Destruction from God is a terror to them, beyond all the evil that man can threaten; as he said to the emperor, Thou threatenest a prison, but Christ threateneth hell.

(2.) It is distinguished from temporary faith, which is an assent to scriptural or gospel truth, accompanied with a slight and insufficient touch upon the heart, called 'a taste of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,' Heb. vi. 4-6. By this kind of faith, the mind is not only enlightened, but the heart affected with some joy, and the life in some measure reformed, at least from grosser sins, called, 'escaping the pollutions of the world,' 2 Peter ii. 20; but the impression is not deep enough, nor is the joy and delight rooted enough to encounter all temptations to the contrary. Therefore this sense of religion may be choked, or worn off, either by the cares of this world, or voluptuous living, or great and bitter persecutions and troubles for righteousness' sake. It is a common deceit; many are persuaded that Jesus is the Christ, the only Son of God, and so are moved to embrace his person, and in some measure to obey his precepts, and to depend upon his promises, and fear his threatenings, and so by consequence have their hearts loosened from the world in part, and seem to prefer Christ and their duty to him above worldly things, as long as no temptations do assault their resolutions, or sensual objects stand not up in any considerable strength to entice them; but at length, when they find his laws so strict and spiritual, and contrary either to the bent of their affections or worldly interests, they fall off, and lose all their taste and relish of the hopes of the gospel, and so declare plainly that they were not rooted and grounded in the faith and hope thereof. This is true faith generally considered, which

foundation being laid, it will be easy to show the nature of special faith, which now followeth to be discussed.

Secondly, The special objects of faith are God's transactions about man's salvation by Christ; therefore, besides the general faith, there is a special faith, whereby we receive Christ, and rest upon him. Saving faith is called a receiving of Christ: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe in his name;' and Col. ii. 6, 'As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.' We take him as God offereth him, and to the ends for which God offereth him; to do that for us and to be that to us which God hath appointed him to do for and to be unto poor sinners. The general work of Christ as mediator is to bring us to God: 1 Peter iii. 18, 'For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God.' And the great use that we make of him, is to come to God by him. There is implied in faith an intention of God as our chiefest good, for otherwise Christ is of no use to us; and a consent to Christ's undertaking, that he may bring us to God, or a thankful acceptance of him for those ends. All they are rejected that will have none of him: Ps. lxxxii. 11, 12, 'But my people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me; so I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust, and they walked in their own counsels;' that 'will not come to him that they may have life,' John vi. 40; that 'will not have him to reign over them,' Luke xix. 27. But they who consent to receive him as their lord and saviour are accepted with him; only let us see how this consent is qualified.

1. It is not a rash consent, but such as is deliberate, and serious, and well-advised. When God in the gospel biddeth us to take Christ, men are ready to say, With all their hearts; but they do not consider what it is to receive Christ, and therefore retract their consent as soon as it is made. No; you must sit down and count the charges, Luke xiv. When you have considered his strict laws, and made a full allowance for incident difficulties and temptations, and can resolve, forsaking all others, to cleave to him alone for salvation, it is an advised consent.

2. It must not be a forced and involuntary consent, such as a person maketh when he is frightened into a little righteousness for the present; such as a person would not yield to if he were in a state of liberty. It may be in a distress or pang of conscience; by all means they must have Christ when sick, when afraid to die, when under some great judgment. No; the will must be effectually inclined to him, and to God the Father by him, as our utmost felicity and end. Christ's people are a willing people: Ps. cx. 3, 'Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power.'

3. It must be a resolved consent, a fixed, not an ambulatory will, which we take up for a purpose, or at some certain times, for a solemn duty, or so. No; you must cleave to him: Acts xi. 23, 'He exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord.' You must trample upon everything that will separate you from him: Phil. iii. 8, 9, 'Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that

I may win Christ,' &c. ; and Rom. viii. 38, 39, 'I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.'

4. It must be not a partial consent, but total ; not only to take Christ as offered with his benefits, but a consent of subjection to him as our Lord. We are to take him and his yoke : Mat. xi. 29, 'Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me.' We are to take him, and his cross : Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.' It is accompanied with a resolution to obey his laws and keep his commandments, that we may abide in his love.

Thirdly, Besides this consent, there must be a recumbency, dependence, resting, or a fiduciary reliance upon him for all things we stand in need of from him. Recumbency is a special act of faith : Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.' Now what do we rest upon him for ? For somewhat here and somewhat hereafter—(1.) Here ; for the inward man, for all kind of grace, justification, sanctification, privileges, duties, for the beginning and continuance : Phil. i. 6, 'Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ ;' and Acts v. 31, 'Him hath God exalted to be a prince and a saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.' He is the author and fountain of grace, as well as a Lord and lawgiver, and the ground of our hope and confidence, as giving us that righteousness whereby we may stand before God, and have comfortable access to him. And then for the outward man, God hath not only undertaken to give us heaven and happiness in the next world, but to carry us thither with comfort, supplying us in a way most conducive to his glory and our welfare : Ps. lxxxiv. 11, 'The Lord is a sun and shield ; the Lord will give grace and glory ; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly.' All things are yours, ordinances, providences : 1 Cor. iii. 21, 'For all things are yours, whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come, all are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's.' (2.) Hereafter ; that Christ will give us eternal glory and happiness in the other world : 1 Tim. i. 16, 'For this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe in him to life everlasting ;' and John xx. 31, 'These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing, ye might have life through his name.' This is the main blessing which faith aimeth at : 1 Peter i. 9, 'Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.' By this all temptations of sense are defeated.

Now, if you would know whether your faith groweth or no, you must discover it by the firmness of your assent, or the resolvedness of your consent, or the peace and confidence of your reliance.

1. For assent. If you believe the word of God, especially the gospel part, with an assent so strong that you can resolve to venture your

whole happiness in this bottom, and let go all that you may obtain the hopes which the gospel offereth to you, certainly he hath a strong faith who taketh God's promises for his whole felicity, and God's word for his only security; he needeth no more, nor no better thing, nor surer conveyance to engage him to hazard all that he hath, when the enjoyment of it is inconsistent with his fidelity to Christ.

2. Your consent. A full, entire, hearty consent to resign yourselves to Christ; not a feeble consent, such as is contradicted by every foolish and hurtful lust, but a prevalent consent, such as can maintain itself notwithstanding difficulties, temptations, and oppositions of the flesh, and control all other desires and delights whatsoever.

3. For reliance. When you can trust him for deliverance from the guilt, power, and punishment of sin, and to quicken, strengthen, and preserve grace in you to everlasting life. You trust him in all his offices; as a priest, when you believe his merits and sacrifice, and comfort yourselves with his gracious promises and covenant, and come to God with more boldness and hope of mercy upon the account of his intercession, especially in all extremities and necessities: Heb. iv. 14-16, 'Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession; for we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin: let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.' You trust him as a prophet when you give up yourselves as his disciples to the conduct of his word and Spirit, being persuaded that he will infallibly teach you the way to true happiness: John vi. 68, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life.' You trust him as a king when you become his subjects, and are persuaded that he will govern you in truth and righteousness in order to your salvation, and defend you by his mighty power from all your enemies: 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;' and 2 Tim. iv. 18, 'And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.'

SERMON III.

Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.—2 THESS. i. 3.

THE growth and increase of faith may be judged of—(1.) By the nature of faith; (2.) The properties of it; (3.) The examples and instances of great faith in scripture.

We are now upon the second thing, the properties.

1. A dependence upon God for something that lieth out of sight.

That this is an essential property of faith appeareth by the description of it: Heb. xi. 1, 'The evidence of things not seen;' that is, not seen by sense and reason. Some things are invisible by reason of their nature, as God, for 'no man hath seen God at any time,' John i. 18; and therefore he is called 'the invisible God,' Col. i. 15. And some things by reason of their distance, because they are absent and future, as the glory of the world to come, and therefore it is an object of faith and hope: Rom. viii. 24, 'For hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for it?' Vision and possession exclude hope, and leave no room and place for it. Now without faith a man can have no sight of these things: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' There is a mist upon eternity, and we cannot look beyond the clouds of this lower world unless we have the eagle-eye of faith; but by faith we can see them, so as to frame our lives accordingly: 2 Cor. v. 7, 'For we walk by faith, and not by sight.' By sense we see what is pleasing or displeasing to the flesh, but by faith what conduceth to the saving or losing of the soul. Faith being very much like sight, and serving us for the government of the soul, as sight doth for the body, it may much be explained by it. Now to bodily sight there must be an object, a medium to make the object conspicuous, and a faculty or organ. (1.) The great object of faith is eternal life, as procured by Christ and promised in the gospel. There is no use of sight where nothing is to be seen; therefore the object is set before us in the view of faith, in the promises of the gospel, Heb. vi. 18, and xii. 2. God's truth is as certain as sight itself can be in it; we see all things promised as sure and near. (2.) The medium; as we see colours in the light of the air, so these spiritual and heavenly things in the light of the Spirit: 1 Cor. ii. 11, 12, 'For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given us of God.' (3.) The eye, or visive power. A blind man cannot see at noonday, nor the sharpest sight at midnight. Now this eye is faith, which is the evidence of things not seen; we are as sure of them as if we saw them with our eyes, or as we are of those things which we now see with our eyes.

The sight of faith may be considered either—(1.) As to its certainty and clearness; (2.) As to its power and efficacy.

[1.] As to its certainty and clearness. We do so see God, heaven, Christ, that we are affected in some measure as if we saw them with our bodily eyes. God, whilst we walk before him: Acts ii. 25, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face.' Christ: Gal. iii. 1, 'Before whose eyes Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth, crucified among you.' Christ was set forth before their eyes, as if they had seen him hanging and dying upon the cross. Heaven; they have it in their eye, and are affected in some measure, as if they were in the midst of the glory of the world to come. I say, only in some measure; for compare the light of faith and the light of glory, and there is a difference in the degree. The light of glory nullifieth sin, the light of faith only mortifieth it; but yet really it maketh us do those things which we would

do if we saw the glory of heaven, shun those things which are to be avoided as if we saw the flames of hell. There is a certainty and firm belief which hath a great influence upon us, so compare it with the light of sense. Those things which we are to see and feel move the more passionately, for while the soul dwelleth in flesh, and looketh out by the senses, the objects of sense are more apt to move the passions, but yet faith doth effectually move us, though not so passionately.

[2.] As to efficacy and prevalency, this sight prevails over those things which we see and feel. A christian hath senses as well as others, and knoweth that he dwelleth in a world full of sensible objects, which are pleasing to that flesh which he still carrieth about with him; but God hath opened the eyes of his mind, by which he seeth better and more glorious things, which take up his heart and mind, life and love, care and time, and so is weaned from sense-pleasing vanities, and can deny them, and trample upon them, for the enjoyment of these better things; and neither life, nor anything comfortable to life, is counted so dear as that, for their sake, he should hazard the favour of God, his Redeemer's blessing, and the happiness of the world to come. If sight and sense invite and entice him to sin, and forsake his God and Christ, the objects of faith prevail against the amusements of sense, and sway his choice, and incline his heart, and govern his resolutions in the whole course of his life. He looketh not to things as they seem for the present, or relish to the flesh, or as they appear to short-sighted men who are governed by sense, but as they will appear at last, and will prove to all eternity, and so can leave things which he seeth and feeleth for things which he never saw, but expecteth shortly to enjoy.

Well, then, this is the essential property of faith, to look to things not seen by sense, but revealed by God in his word; and this property showeth itself in all the acts of faith, elicit and imperate. Elicit acts are those which are proper to this grace; imperate are such as belong to other graces, but faith hath an influence upon them by virtue of which they are produced. We may more plainly call them acts and effects.

(1.) As the acts of faith, which are assent, consent, trust, or dependence.

(1st.) For assent to such truths as God hath revealed in his word. When we have sufficient evidence of this revelation, the less sensible helps we need to underprop our assent, the stronger is our faith. Let me instance in the great article of the christian faith, Christ's person and office. I shall produce that place of the apostle, 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 they had never seen Christ in the flesh, and he was now absent from them in regard of his bodily presence, being withdrawn into the heavenly sacrary, yet this did not hinder their faith; they loved him and rejoiced in him as if they had seen him and conversed with him bodily. It was an advantage certainly to have seen Christ in the flesh, and to converse with him personally here upon earth, to see his miracles and hear his gracious words; but faith can embrace him as offered in the promise though it never saw him in the flesh; and the fewer sensible helps faith hath besides the word, it is the more highly esteemed by Jesus

Christ. The same appeareth by Christ's words to Thomas: John xx. 29, 'Thomas, because thou hast seen, thou hast believed; but blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed.' Thomas must have the object of faith under the view of his senses, which argued a great weakness and imbecility: 'Unless I see in his hand the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, I will not believe.' What if Christ would not give him that satisfaction, but other sufficient evidence? This was his infirmity, therefore Christ telleth us they have the stronger and more acceptable faith that do not give laws to heaven, or prescribe to God upon what terms they will believe, but accept of the assurance God offereth, without satisfaction to sense.

(2*l.*) For consent, when we come to enter into covenant with God, God is invisible who maketh the promise, and heaven, which is the great promise that he hath promised us, is future and yet to come, and lieth in another world, and before we get thither we must encounter many difficulties, yea, shoot the gulf of death; but the believer can as really and heartily transact with the great God, and give the hand to the Lord to become his, as he can with a man that is present, and offereth a good bargain upon easy terms and conditions; he hath so firm a belief of the life to come, that he taketh it for his portion and happiness: 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;' he looketh to things unseen, which he taketh for his treasure and happiness, and is resolved to be anything and do anything which God will have him be and do, that he may obtain it.

(3*l.*) Another elicit act of faith is trust and dependance, which maintaineth us in a course of patient and cheerful obedience to God, though our happiness be yet to come; yea, though for the present we are harassed with great troubles and afflictions, and it may be, see not the signs, *i.e.*, any sensible tokens of God's favour and respect to us, yet the sight of an invisible God, and confidence of a future reward, keepeth up joy in the soul, and no violence of temptation is able to break it, and remove us from the truth: Rom. viii. 24, 25, 'We are saved by hope, but hope that is seen is not hope, for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' They are confident that in God's time they shall have salvation and final deliverance, though it be not to be seen anywhere but in God's promise by Jesus Christ. Well, then, the fewer external comforts we need, the stronger is our faith; the more, the weaker. Weak christians must be carried in arms, dandled on the knees, fed with sensible pledges and ocular demonstrations, or else they are ready to faint.

(2.) The imperate acts or effects of faith, they are produced by virtue of this property, faith's prevailing oversight and sense. I shall name four—

(1*st.*) To promote holiness, and reduce us and reclaim us from the false happiness. Surely none will accomplish the work of faith with power, and so glorify God and Christ in the world, that is, live in all holy conversation and godliness, but those that have that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. Those that live always as in the sight of an invisible God, are the thorough christians. What greater

check can there be to temptations to sin than to live always in the sight of an invisible God? Gen. xxxix. 9: or to temptations to the world, than an invisible glory: or to the troubles and molestations of the world? Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us;' and 2 Cor. iv. 17, 'Our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.' If godliness expose us to difficulties, molestations, and troubles, faith seeth the final rest, glory, and happiness. If we are inclined to the honours and pleasures of the world, faith seeth the most shining glory will soon burn out, and end in a snuff: Ps. cxix. 96, 'I have seen an end of all perfection, but thy commandment is exceeding broad;' and 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doth the will of God abideth for ever.' If sense present the bait of present profit, pleasure, or honour, faith seeth the final shame, ignominy, and loss; and so we are guarded on all sides against right-hand and left-hand temptations. This is a general; I shall speak of more particular effects.

(2*d.*) To keep the heart tender and in awe of God's word. Surely it is a blessed frame of spirit, and very useful to us, to tremble at the word of God: Isa. lxvi. 2, 'To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word;' and to stand in awe of his word: Ps. cxix. 161, 'My heart standeth in awe of thy word.' Now this can never be unless we have that faith which is the evidence of things not seen; for many times the word threateneth evils which are not likely to come to pass, if we look to the visible face of things, and all that part of God's discipline is lost unless we can believe unseen things. See Heb. xi. 7, 'By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house, by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.' The world was then in a jolly condition, and little dreamt of a flood. The earth flourished as much as ever, and there was building, and marrying, and planting; but God had told him of a universal destruction of all things by a deluge, therefore he admonisheth the careless world, and provideth for his own and family's safety. So we read of Josiah, when he heard of the words of the 'book of the law, he rent his clothes,' 2 Kings xxii. 11. We do not read of any actual trouble that was then in the land, or any danger nigh. When an age is very corrupt and ripe for judgment, God giveth warning. But alas! few take it or lay it to heart, for the world is led by sense, and not by faith: they are not affected with things till they feel them. Few can see a storm when the clouds are ingathering, but securely build on the present ease and peace, though God be angry. But in the eye of faith a sinful estate is always dangerous; therefore they fall a praying and humbling themselves, and cry to God mightily, and use all means of safety, while a judgment is but yet in its causes.

(3*d.*) To support us against the greatest dangers and terrors: Heb. xi. 27, 'By faith Moses forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him that is invisible.' To depend upon God's aid and succour in a time of great extremity and danger needeth a strong faith. As to appearance, he was ready to be swallowed up, being

pursued by a wrathful and puissant king ; the sea was before him, the Egyptians behind him, and the craggy and inaccessible mountains on each side ; but the terrors of sense may be easily vanquished by those invisible succours which faith relieth upon ; an invisible God can bear us out against visible dangers.

(4.) To teach us how to carry an equal mind in prosperity and adversity. In prosperity, when we are borne up by the clin, we have but too much confidence, and when we are lessened and cut short in the world, we are full of diffidence and distrustful fears: Ps. xxx. 6, 'In my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.' When a child of God hath gotten a carnal pillow under his head, he lieth down, and sleepeth sweetly, dreaning many a pleasant dream of uninterrupted felicity in the world, but if God taketh away his pillow from under his head, then he is as diffident as formerly confident, then 'God will be favourable no more.' God is the same, his promises the same, the covenant the same, the Mediator the same, but our condition is changed, because we look to things seen, live upon things seen, and still imagine of things according to what we see and feel. So for supplies of maintenance and provision ; if we have them not in view and sight, how little can we depend upon God ! If sense be against the promises, the promises do us but little good. How few can comfort themselves in God when all faileth, Hab. iii. 18, or make his all-sufficiency their storehouse ! Gen. xvii. 1. No ; they must have a full heap in their own keeping. How few can take his promises for their heritage ! Ps. cxix. 11. No ; they must have lands and fixed revenues, or else they know not where to have food and raiment for themselves and children. How few can be contented to trust the purse in God's hands, and be contented to take their daily allowance from him ! which yet is a necessary point of faith, of continual practice. How few can see all things in God when they have nothing in the creature ! 2 Cor. vi. 10. Many talk of living by faith, but it is when they have enough in the world to live upon ; they eat their own bread ; wear their own apparel, only call it by God's name. The life of sense is more evident than the life of faith. Well, now, this being the nature of faith, thereby we may know the measure of it ; for the excellency and degree of every-thing is known by the essential properties.

2. The second property of faith is self-denial, or a venturing of all in Christ's hands, or a foregoing all for Christ. That this is included in the nature of faith, yea, essential to it, I must prove to you—

[1.] By the description of faith in scripture : Heb. x. 39, 'We are not of the number of them that draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul ;' *ἐκ πίστεως εἰς περιποίησιν ψυχῆς*, the purchasing of the soul ; not purchasing in the way of merit, but means. A true and sound faith will cause us to save the soul, though with the loss of other things. The flesh is for sparing or saving the body, but faith is for saving the soul whatever it costs us. The flesh saith, Favour thyself ; faith saith, Hazard all for Christ.

[2.] By reason. I will prove that it not only necessarily results from the nature of faith, but is included in it ; for faith builds upon the promise of salvation by Christ. Now this promise is not only true but good, 1 Tim. i. 1. It is certainly true, and requireth the firmest be-

rief; it is eminently good, and worthy to be regarded above all other things; the happiness is most desirable, and the assurance of enjoying it as strong as can be given us. Now we do not close with this promise rightly unless we assent and embrace, take the thing promised for our whole happiness, and the promise itself for our whole security. The thing promised we do not take for our whole happiness unless we forsake all other hopes and happiness, and can let go all pleasures, profits, worldly reputation, and honour; yea, life itself, when it is inconsistent with our fidelity to Christ, or the way we should take to enjoy the blessedness that he offereth. Not only wilful sin, and all carnal pleasures, but anything, though never so near and dear to us. No; we will not take up with any other portion and felicity for all the temptations in the world. And also there must be a confidence of God's promise in Jesus Christ, that we may venture our all upon this security, and, if God call us to it, actually forsake all; so that without self-denial we can neither trust God nor be true to him.

[3.] This suiteth with the nature of the conditional and baptismal covenant. There is an absolute covenant whereby God promiseth to give faith to the elect, and a conditional covenant sealed in baptism, wherein it is said that 'He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved,' Mark xvi. 16. Now by this covenant none can be believers or disciples of Christ, but those that forsake all for Christ's sake: Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like to a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' Christ knew the nature of faith better than we do. Many cheapen the pearl of price, but do not go through with the bargain, because they do not sell all to purchase it, all that is inconsistent with this choice and trust. So Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come unto me, and hate not father, and mother, and brother, and sister, yea, and his own life, he cannot be my disciple.' Shall we think to go to heaven at a cheaper rate, after such express declarations of the will of Christ? All christians are not called to this, but all must be ready for this: Eph. vi. 15, 'Your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace;' Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus;' 1 Peter iii. 15, 'Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' This every disciple must be, prepared to undergo martyrdom if God calls him to it.

[4.] I prove it by the instances of believers, ordinary and extraordinary. Faith was ever a venturing all and a forsaking all upon God's veracity and truth of his promises.

(1.) Extraordinary. Noah had but God's bare word for the flood, Heb. xi. 7, yet notwithstanding the mocks of the incredulous world, with vast expense and care he prepareth an ark, which was the prescribed means to save himself and household. Abraham leaveth his father's house, though he knew not whither God would call him, Heb. xi. 8. Here was venturing all on God's fidelity; and afterwards we read that he was ready to offer Isaac, leaving the way to God how to fulfil his promises, ver. 17, 18. So the Israelites passing through the Red Sea, ver. 29, there they put their all into God's hands, when upon

his word themselves and little ones and all their substance ventured into the great deep. So Christ's trial of the young man: Mark x. 21, 'Go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,' &c.; but the promise of eternal life and great treasure in heaven could not part the young man and his great estate.

(2.) Ordinary. Moses: Heb. xi. 24-26, 'By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to endure the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward.' So those that the apostle speaketh of, Heb. x. 34, 'Ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' They had such a faith in Christ, that though they had lost their goods, yet because they lost not Christ and the hopes of heaven by him, they thought themselves happy enough. So Paul's quitting all honour and respect with his countrymen: Phil. iii. 8, 'I count all things but dung and dross for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.' It is endless to instance in all, but this is enough to show you that the true believers are still known by their self-denial. But you will say, if this be necessary to the very truth and being of faith (as certainly it is), how shall we know our growth, for we can but forsake all? I answer—By your readiness and willingness to part with all for Christ. The weakest believer can part with no more but all, but the stronger this faith is, he doth it with the more readiness of mind, and with least defaults in his duty and blots in his fidelity to Christ. Would you know then whether your faith be strong or weak? know it by this—The more you can adhere to Christ, whatever temptations you have to the contrary, if you can venture not only some, but all things, upon the account of the promise of eternal life—

(1st.) Deny the sinful pleasures of the flesh; they were never worth the keeping. If I cannot deny a little vain pleasure, what can I deny for Christ? Surely momentary delight is bought too dear if it must be bought with the loss of eternal joys. Esau is represented as a profane person, that sold his birthright for one morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 15. If the vain delights of the world prevail so with men that all the promises of the gospel cannot reclaim them, these comply with the motions of the flesh, which is importunate to be pleased, but have no sense of the offers of Christ, who calleth upon us to save our souls. The true christian is a stranger and pilgrim on the earth, whose mind and heart is set upon better things, which are to come, 1 Peter ii. 11. Upon the security of God's word, he is taking his journey into another world.

(2d.) We must be willing to sacrifice all our interests: Mat. xvi. 24, 'If any man will come after me, and be my disciple, let him deny himself, and take up his cross and follow me.' If God be trusted as our felicity, worldly felicity must be no impediment to our duty; therefore, if we cannot incur blame and shame with men, yea, damage and loss, that we may be faithful with God, our faith is worth nothing.

(3d.) If God call you not to sufferings, yet there are some expense-

ful and self-denying duties which ever are incumbent upon you, Mat. xxv. 35. Visiting the sick, clothing the naked, feeding the hungry : Luke xii. 33, 'Sell that ye have, and give alms; provide yourselves bags which wax not old, a treasure in the heaven that faileth not.' Can you trust Christ upon such promises, and be at some loss for the gospel? for a religion that costs nothing is worth nothing. Most men love a cheap gospel, and the flesh engrosseth all; faith gets little from them to be laid out for God. These men run a fearful hazard of being rejected for ever; they sow to the flesh: Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.'

(4th.) If your faith maketh you to submit to providence. When we first entered into covenant with God, we entirely and absolutely gave up ourselves to God, to be governed by his commanding will, and to be ordered by his disposing will. You cannot shift yourselves out of his hands, but your voluntary submission to anything, if you may have Christ and heaven at last, is the trial of your faith: Job i. 21, 'The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord;' Phil. i. 20, 'So Christ be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or death.' He was come to a point; nothing should be reserved. So Christ may be glorified, and you may have his saving grace, let him give or take; the more willingly you do this, the stronger is your faith. Certainly to deny all is an essential property of faith.

3. The third evidence of a growing faith is when our light is turned into love; for faith is not a bare knowledge, but a sound, a savoury and effective knowledge, a knowing things as we ought to know them 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2. A knowledge with a taste; for such a difference as there is between the sight of meat and the tasting of it, such a difference there is between speculative knowledge and the apprehension of faith, 1 Peter i. 3. You may dispute him out of his belief that seeth, but you can never dispute him out of his belief that tastes, for you cannot make him go against his own sense. The steadfastness of unlearned christians cometh mainly from their taste and love; they adhere more closely to Christ than those that have only a dead opinion, because they received the truth not only in the light but love of it, 2 Thes. ii. 10. Now the more taste we have of the things we know and believe, the stronger is our faith. Now, besides the manner of apprehension, the truths apprehended tend mainly to raise our love to God, that we may love him that loved us first, 1 John iv. 19. We know God that we may love him, and faith is nothing else but a beholding the love of God in the face of Jesus Christ, that our hearts may be warmed, attracted, and drawn to God. Faith is the bellows to enkindle the fire of love in our souls; and therefore faith, the more sound and sincere it is, the more it worketh by love, Gal. v. 6. Faith is required *sub ratione mediæ*; love, *sub ratione finis*. The end of the gospel institution is love, 1 Tim. i. 5. Well, then, when you make it your great business to love God, and count it your great happiness to be beloved by him, then may you best judge of the growth of your faith. The gospel representeth the goodness and amiableness of God, that he may be more lovely to us, and be beloved by us; for this was the end of reconciling and saving man by Christ; his incarnation, life, sufferings,

death, resurrection, ascension, and intercession is all to reveal the love of God in Christ, and to work our hearts to love God again. To this end also tend his merciful covenant and promises, and all the benefits given to the church, all the privileges of the saints, his Spirit, pardon, peace, glory, all these to warm our hearts, and fill them with a sense of the love of God. Now if we slightly reflect upon these things, with cold and narrow thoughts, we have not the true faith, certainly not a grown faith.

SERMON IV.

Your faith groweth exceedingly.—2 THESS. i. 3.

THE fourth essential property of faith is its respect to the word of God. That I may explain this with more full satisfaction, I shall open four things—(1.) The relation of the word to faith; (2.) The acts of faith about the word; (3.) The effects of faith thus exercised; (4.) The notes whereby we may discern a strong or grown faith.

First, The relation of the word to faith.

1. It is a means to beget and breed faith: Rom. x. 14, 15, 'How shall they call on him on whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe on him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? and how shall they preach except they be sent?' Every part of the gradation hath its weight. First, what I am bound to adore and invoke; I must believe in him as a divine power. For the second, how shall men believe in Christ as a God unless they have heard of him? Faith is a believing such things as God hath revealed because he hath revealed them; therefore the divine revelation must be conveyed to them by some means or other. The third, there is no hearing without a preacher; some messenger or interpreter that may bring tidings of pardon and life by Christ. Then for the fourth branch, 'How shall they preach except they be sent?' that is, come with authority, evidence, and power, whereby it may be known that he is a messenger authorised and sent by God, that the things propounded may be received as a certain truth of God's own revelation, that we may depend upon the credit of his word, and that with such a lively and effectual belief as may prevail with us to assent unto it, and embrace it notwithstanding all difficulties and objections to the contrary. Now such is the doctrine of salvation by Christ, which inviteth us to call upon his name or name ourselves by the name of Christ, because we may believe in him, and run all hazards for him, 2 Tim. i. 12. Why? Because we have heard of him; the fame of his doctrine, so suitable to the glory of God and the necessities of mankind; and the fame of his miracles, especially his death and resurrection, and that by authentic preachers, or faithful men authorised by God, and sufficiently owned by him, as those that are commissioned to instruct the world, and to teach them the way of salvation; so that the word is the great means to work faith.

2. It is the warrant of faith, which stateth the laws of commerce between us and God, which showeth how far God hath obliged himself, and we may depend upon him, as appeareth by the words of Christ: John xvii. 20, 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also that shall believe in me through their word.' The principal object of faith is Christ; we believe in him; and the warrant of faith is the word, that is, the doctrine which by the apostles is consigned to the use of the church. For these and no other Christ prayeth, and according to this way or law of grace God offereth himself to be reconciled to his creatures. So that here you may hold him to his covenant; the word is gone out of his lips, and without this you make promises to yourselves which God will not stand unto.

3. It is the object of faith, or the thing which we do believe: Acts xxiv. 14, 'I believe all things which are written in the law and the prophets;' and add to that, in the writings of the apostles. To make the object of the christian faith complete, take in also what is written in the apostles, for 'We are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,' Eph. ii. 20; that is, the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ being the chief sum and scope of it, who is to be accepted of as he is revealed and offered in the scriptures of the Old and New Testament, betwixt which there is a sweet harmony and agreement. But because this is too bulky and large for us to manage at one time, let us consider the sum of the scriptures in the method wherein God hath put it, and that is, the covenant of grace ratified by the blood of Christ, which is the most glorious discovery whereby God hath made known himself to his creatures: Ps. cxxxviii. 2, 'I will praise thy name for thy loving-kindness and thy truth, for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.' There we see that God's word is the chiefest discovery that he hath made of himself to the creature, for it is magnified above all his name; that is, it doth set forth God above all that is named, famed, spoken, or believed, or known, or understood of God. And what is the matter of his word? His loving-kindness and his truth; that is, in the word there are contained admirable promises, which God will certainly perform to the utmost importance of them. There we see his mercy and loving-kindness in making such great promises. The promises of the new covenant are beyond all expression great and precious, 2 Peter i. 4; they contain as much as the heart of man can desire, all spiritual and eternal riches, pardon of sin, taking away the stony heart, eternal life; these are offered to men to believe. And then his truth and fidelity in performing these promises most punctually to all those that do believe, and will accept the pardon, grace, and blessedness offered, and behave themselves accordingly. Well, then, God's mercies in Christ to them that repent, believe, and obey God are the matter and object of our faith.

4. The word is the security and strength of our faith—(1.) As it puts God's grace into the way of a promise; (2.) As this promise is the promise of God.

[1.] We have much advantage in believing by the formality of a promise. A promise is more than a purpose, more than a doctrinal declaration, more than a prediction of prophecy.

(1.) More than a purpose. A purpose is only the thought of the heart, a thing secret and hidden, but a promise is open and manifest. A purpose is the intention of a person, a promise is his intention revealed, whereby we have a knowledge of the good intended to us. If God had only purposed to give us eternal life, we might at last have enjoyed it, but we could not have known it beforehand; it would have been as an hidden treasure. Promises are the eruptions and overflows of God's love to us; his heart is so big with kindness and designs of goodness that it cannot stay till the accomplishment of things: Isa. xlii. 9, 'Before they spring forth I tell you of them.' God's purposes are a sealed fountain, but his promises are a fountain broken open, bubbling forth. He might have done us good, and given us no notice, but love concealed would not be so much for our comfort. Besides, they are obligations which God taketh upon himself *promittendo se fecit debitorem*. So far as God hath promised, so far he hath made himself a debtor. God's purposes are unchangeable, but his promises are a security put into our hands, so that we have a greater holdfast upon God now the word is gone out of his lips, Ps. lxxxix. 34. We may put the bond in suit, throw him in his handwriting: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' We have the pawn of the thing promised, which we must hold fast till performance cometh. His truth and holiness lie at stake, and are as it were impawned with the creature.

(2.) It is more than a doctrinal declaration. It is one thing to reveal a thing, another to promise it. A doctrine maketh a thing known, but a promise maketh a thing sure. A doctrine giveth us notice, but a promise giveth us right and interest if we be qualified. Christ hath brought life and immortality to light through the doctrine of the gospel, 2 Tim. i. 10; but he hath not only manifested, but granted, assured it to believers by the promises of the gospel, 1 John ii. 25. It is so conveyed to us as that we may be sure of obtaining it.

(3.) It is more than a prophecy or simple prediction. Scripture prophecies will be fulfilled because of God's veracity, but scripture promises will be fulfilled, not only because of God's veracity, but also because of his fidelity and justice. As by our promise another man cometh to have a right to the thing promised, therefore it is just it should be given unto him, so it is in God; it was his mercy and goodness to make the promise, but his holiness and justice bindeth him to make it good: 1 John i. 9, 'He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins.' And as for pardon, so for life: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the righteous judge shall give me on that day.' It becometh a debt of grace. This may be illustrated by what divines say of an assertory lie and a promissory lie. An assertory lie is when we speak of a thing past or present otherwise than it is, and a promissory lie is when we speak of a thing for the time to come which we never intend to perform; and this is the worst sort of lies, because it doth not only prevent the end of speech, which is truth, but also defeateth another of that right which we seem to give him by our promise in the thing promised, which is a further degree of injustice. Now we should apprehend God to be very far from this: Titus i. 2, 'In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot

lie, promised before the world began;’ and Heb. vi. 18, ‘That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation.’

[2.] It is the promise of God. In every promise, that it be certain and firm, three things are required—(1.) That it be made seriously and heartily, with a purpose to perform it; (2.) That he that promiseth continue in his purpose without change of mind; (3.) That it be in the power of him that promiseth to perform what he hath so promised. Now in the promise of God there can be no doubt of any of these things. Certainly God meaneth as he speaketh, when he promiseth eternal life to the faithful servants and disciples of Jesus Christ; for what need had he to court his creatures into a false and imaginary happiness which he never meant to bestow upon them? to send his Son with a commission from heaven, to assure them of it, who also wrought miracles to confirm the message that he brought from God, died upon this truth, and rose again, and entered into the happiness that he spoke of, to give us assurance, and a visible demonstration of the truth of it? sent abroad his apostles to invite the world to embrace it, his Holy Spirit accompanying them, and sealing their message also with divers signs and wonders? And surely he doth continue in the same mind, for there is no repeal of this law of grace. And he is able to perform it; for what difficulty is there which omnipotency cannot subdue and overcome? Surely what God hath promised he is fully able to perform.

Secondly, The acts of faith about the word.

1. We are to believe and credit it upon solid and sufficient evidence. It is said, Heb. xi. 11, ‘They saw these things afar off, and were persuaded of them;’ and Acts xiii. 48, ‘When the gentiles heard this, they glorified the word of God, and believed;’ that is, blessed God for his glorious mercy revealed in the gospel. The sound belief and firm assent leadeth on other things, for the most powerful truths work not till they are believed: 1 Thes. ii. 13, ‘Ye received the word not as the word of man, but (as it is in truth) the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.’ Here beginneth the efficacy. Now usually we receive the truth at first upon low and insufficient evidence, but afterwards our assent is upon better grounds, and more valid and strong; as the Samaritans: John iv. 42, ‘Now we believe, not because of thy saying, for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.’ Her saying was much, for the woman had testified that she had met with an holy person that had told her of all that ever she did. So Nathaniel was drawn to Christ by Philip’s persuasion, but when he perceived that he knew the heart and secret things, John i. 48, 49, ‘He saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee. Nathaniel answered, and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the son of God, thou art the king of Israel. Christ then promiseth him further assurance and greater evidence, which should beget a more confirmed and strong faith: ver. 50, ‘Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig-tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.’ The church is in possession of a religion which

God hath blessed throughout successions of ages, and we received the doctrine of the gospel and new covenant upon report and hearsay; hereafter we see farther and better grounds, and the scriptures are owned with more certainty of evidence. Well, then, here is the first thing, assent, or a receiving all truths about supernatural things upon the credit of God's word.

2. The work of faith is to apply these things; for the closer such blessed truths are laid to our own souls, the more we feel the virtue of them: Job v. 27, 'Lo, this it is; know thou it for thy good;' Rom. viii. 31, 'What shall we then say to these things?' The promise includeth you as well as others, and promiseth and offereth you pardon and life if you will believe in Christ; therefore the application I press you to is not a claim of privileges (stay a while there), but an exciting yourselves to perform the duties of the gospel, that you may turn away from all other ways of felicity, and choose this alone. Faith must be applicative, and the closer the application the better; but there is a difference between the application which is an excitement of your duty, and that application which is an assurance of your interest: Acts xiii. 20, 'To you is this word of salvation sent.' It is my duty to make general grace particular, but not presently, and at first dash to enter my plea and claim, but to oblige me to take God's way. God calleth upon me to repent and believe in Christ, that I may have pardon and life.

3. We are heartily to consent to this blessed covenant which is contained in the word of God, taking the promises offered for our happiness, resolving upon the duties required as our work: Acts ii. 41, 'They received the word gladly, and were baptized.' There was a precept and a promise, ver. 38; they accepted the counsel, and waited for the promise. Our respect to the word is made up of a mixture of obedience and dependence; there must be a consent to both, and we must resolve for the holy and heavenly life. Faith is an act of the will as well as of the understanding: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Besides being persuaded, there is embracing: 'The promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us,' 2 Cor. i. 20; and they are 'exceeding great and precious promises,' 2 Peter i. 4. In one place you have both: 1 Tim. i. 15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.' Therefore embrace them you must with all your hearts, and submit to this way of covenanting with God.

4. Your judgments must highly esteem these promises, and your hearts find full contentment and satisfaction in them. We read often of receiving the word with joy, and the confidence and rejoicing of hope, Heb. iii. 6. Usually the word of God hath too cold and slight entertainment in our affections, and we do not value those precious promises as we ought to do. They should be dearer to us than our lives, and give us more satisfaction than all the enjoyments of the world: Ps. cxix. 111, 'I have taken thy testimonies as an heritage for ever; they are the rejoicing of my soul.' They do you good to your very heart, and the more you are acquainted with them, the

more you will see the worth of them: Luke vi. 23, 'Rejoice and leap for joy, for great is your reward in heaven.' And of the eunuch, when he had sealed covenant with God, Acts viii. 39, it is said, 'he went his way rejoicing.' Faith cannot do its office, that is, out of an holy gratitude to God, to draw us off from the allurements of sense, and fortify us against adversities and troubles, and engage us to the duties of christianity, which are distrustful to flesh and blood, unless it did fill our hearts with an higher and better joy than the world yieldeth. Surely it is comfortable to be pardoned and reconciled to God, to be in the way, and under the hopes of eternal life.

Thirdly, The effects which these acts produce. These may be stated by the several uses for which the word of God serveth. (1.) It is the seed of a new life; (2.) The constant rule of all our actions; (3.) The sure charter of our hopes; (4.) Our strength and preservation against all temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh; (5.) Our comfort and cordial in all afflictions.

1. It is the seed of a new life: 1 Peter i. 23, 'Being born again, not of corruptible seed. but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever;' and James i. 18, 'Of his own will begat he us, with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of first-fruits of his creatures;' and also, 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these you might be partakers of the divine nature.' When we so believe the pardon, and grace, and blessedness offered, that our hearts are changed into the life and likeness of God; for the truth is not rightly owned and believed till this change be wrought both in heart and life, then we are cast into the mould of this doctrine: Rom. vi. 17, 'Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine that was delivered to you.' Gospel truths serve not for speculation or mere talk and discourse, but for sanctification; and therefore if this seed be sown and engrafted in your hearts, and you begin to live to God an holy and heavenly life, you have the surest evidence of your faith; for causes are made sensible to us by their effects. It is usually brought as a proof of the word, the sanctifying virtue of it; so it is of the sincerity of your faith, for the word profiteth not unless it be mingled with faith; and since both faith and the word concur to this effect, it may be ascribed to either. Surely therefore if we believe the word of God, and value it as we ought, it doth leave the impression of God's image upon us, for it is the fairest draught and representation of God that ever was in the law and life of Christ, 2 Cor. iii. 18. If our souls and lives be a transcript of the word, this image is thence deduced to us by the Spirit, and of necessity it must be so, for Christ's comforting promises of mercy and glory are made to these new creatures who live the holy and heavenly life. They have God's mark and signature upon them, and therefore are said to be 'sealed to the day of redemption,' Eph. ii. 30, and Eph. i. 3. This renovation of the soul is the seal of God, the pledge of his love, and the earnest of the heavenly inheritance.

2. The constant rule of all our actions. There is a fixed determined rule from whence we cannot swerve and vary without sin, and if we would have communion with God here or enjoy him hereafter. We must keep close to this rule: Gal. vi. 16, 'As many as walk according

to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.' This rule, that is the word of God, which directeth us as to our general path and way, and all our steps or particular actions: Ps. cxix. 105, 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my paths.' We must hide the word in our hearts: Ps. cxix. 110, 'Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against thee.' We must consult with it upon all occasions, as willing to understand our duty: Ps. cxix. 24, 'Thy testimonies also are my delight, and my counsellors.' And because we may mistake through error of mind, or be tempted aside through aversion of heart and manifold temptations, therefore we must earnestly beg it of God: Ps. cxix. 133, 'Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.' And we must use all study ourselves, Rom. xii. 2, and constant watchfulness: Eph. v. 15, 'See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise.' Now that which I say is this: When the word ruleth the main course of our lives, and teacheth us how to live in the world, soberly, righteously, and godly, the tenderness of the word, and high respect to it, that we dare not transgress it whatever temptations we have so to do, showeth that faith hath obtained its effect in us; for trembling at the word, fearing of a commandment, and whatever of that kind is spoken of in the scripture, they are all fruits of faith.

3. It is the charter of our hopes: John xx. 31, 'These things are written that ye might have life through his name;' 1 John v. 11, 'This is the record that God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.' Now the work of faith is to 'lay hold upon eternal life,' 1 Tim. vi. 12; that is, seize upon it as ours, as assured to us by the word of God, or to take it as our happiness, and accordingly pursue after it: Eph. i. 13, 'In whom ye trusted after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.' Now, when we choose this felicity for our portion, set our hearts upon it, make it the chief care and business of our lives to seek it, and do all as means thereunto, carry ourselves as strangers and pilgrims in the world, and look for no great matters here, but wholly depend upon God's faithful word for this happiness to come, then is faith wrought in us.

4. It is our strength and preservative against all temptations from the devil, the world, and the flesh. The word of God is the 'sword of the Spirit,' Eph. vi. 17, a weapon of excellent use in the spiritual warfare; and it is said, 1 John ii. 14, 'Ye are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one.' This helpeth us to ward off the blow of any temptation. When the heart is well stocked and furnished with this word of God, you have something to oppose still to darken the splendour of the world, to check the desires of the flesh, and so do the better carry on a continual warfare and watchfulness. And so the fleshly inclination is overruled, and the profits, honours, and pleasures of the world have less force upon us. When the devil showeth the bait, and the flesh is ready to swallow it, faith showeth the hook. A belief of the word of God being of a lively and vigorous nature, produceth noble effects in us. It casteth down all that rebelleth against God, and casteth out all that would be preferred before him: Ps. xxxvii. 31, 'The law of his God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide.' A lively active sense of his duty is kept fresh upon his heart.

5. To be our comfort and cordial in our afflictions: Ps. cxix. 59, 'This is my comfort in my affliction, thy word hath quickened me;' ver. 92, 'Unless thy law had been my delight, I should then have perished in my affliction,' Heb. xii. 5; 'Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.' So Ps. xciv. 19, 'In the multitude of my thoughts within me thy comforts delight my soul.' God's comforts are such as God alloweth, or God worketh. The matter of both is in the scriptures, though the Spirit be the author of them, and the instrument he worketh by is faith. In wants and straits how sweet is it to a believer to consider how amply we are provided for in the covenant. When God's hand is heavy upon us, and providence represents him as an angry judge, yet the covenant represents him as a father. In a time of trial, one promise of God will give you more true comfort and support than all the arguings of men.

Fourthly, The notes whereby we discern a strong and grown faith as to this property of it, its respect to the word.

1. When the consolations laid down in the word of God are more prized than any extraordinary dispensations. Certainly it is a weakness when men undervalue the comforts of the word, as slender, empty, unsatisfactory, and would have the manifestations of God's love exhibited to them in some singular and extraordinary way. Eliphaz chargeth it on Job wrongfully, Job xv. 11, 'Are the consolations of God small with thee? is there any secret thing with thee?' God's ordinary way is the sure way, the other layeth us open to a snare. Surely our consciences are best settled in the ordinary way of God's word, in a way of faith, repentance, and close walking with God; but as Naaman despised the waters of Jordan, so many despise the ordinary comforts, and would have signs and wonders to assure them. These may long sit in darkness, because if God comforts them not in their way, they will not be comforted at all. Now, though God sometimes, in condescension to his people, may grant their desires, as Christ did to Thomas, yet it is with an upbraiding of their weakness and unbelief, John xx. 28. You should acquiesce in the common allowance of God's people, lest you seem to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God, and lay open yourselves to some false consolation and dream of comfort, while we affect new rules without the compass of the word; especially when we find not our expectations there speedily answered, like hasty patients ready to tamper with every medicine they hear of, rather than submit to a regular course of physic. Gregory telleth us of a lady of the emperor's court that never ceased importuning him to seek from God a revelation from heaven that she should be saved. *Rem difficilem petivit et inutilem.* It was a thing difficult, and unprofitable; difficult for him to obtain, and unprofitable for her to ask, having a surer way by the scriptures: 2 Peter i. 19, *βεβαιότερον λόγον*, 'We have a more sure word of prophecy' than oracles. The adhering of the soul to the promises is the unquestionable way to obtain peace. Luther, as he confesseth, was often tempted to ask for signs or some special revelation. He tells also how strongly he withstood these temptations, *Pactum feci cum Domino meo, ne mihi mittat visiones, vel etiam angelos; contentus enim sum hoc dono, quod habeo scripturam sanctam quae abunde*

docet et suppeditat omnia quæ necessaria sunt, tam ad hanc vitam, tam ad futuram—I indented with the Lord my God that he would never send me dreams and visions; I am well contented with the gift of the scriptures.

2. When the word is matter of joy and firm confidence to us before there is any appearance of performance. This in two cases—

[1.] In case of delay, when it is long ere God appeareth, and faith doth not require the existence and pre-essence of the thing believed, only the promise of it. Therefore though the promise be delayed, it eyeth the blessing at a distance: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, were persuaded of them, and embraced them.' Abraham was one of them: John viii. 56, 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day, and he saw it, and was glad.' And we, if we would be strong believers, must do likewise: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.' A christian is not to be valued by his enjoyments, but his hopes; heaven is all performance. Here he dealeth with us by promises, but you will find his payment sure, and that God in effect is better than all his promises; for they cannot signify and convey the full sense of all that God meaneth to bestow. Therefore we must wait, whether the promise be to be fulfilled in this life or the life to come; let us dig the pit, and tarry till God fill it with rain from heaven.

[2.] In case of difficulties, wants, distresses, the naked promise must be ground of hope and comfort to you; though it seem to be contradicted in the course of God's providence, when it is neither performed nor likely to be performed, you are to go by his word whatever his dispensation be: Rom. iv. 18, 'Abraham against hope believed in hope;' and David saith, Ps. lvi. 4, 'In God will I praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what man can do unto me.' So ver. 10, 'In God will I praise his word, in the Lord will I praise his word.' The best holdfast faith can have on God is to take him by his word; though he withholdeth comfort and deliverance from us, yet we may praise him as long as we have his word. His dispensation giveth no satisfaction, yet the soul can find rest and contentment in his word. Well, then, if the word be an impregnable bulwark against all fears and dangers, and comfort against all wants and distresses, your faith is grown; for the more simply our dependence is upon the word of God, without sensible encouragements, the stronger is our faith.

3. When all the trust we have in God concerning the comforts we expect by the way is still referred to the great blessing of eternal life. We are to trust God by the way for our protection and defence, as well as for the reward at the end of the journey; by swimming in the shallow brooks we learn to venture in the great ocean, but still in subordination to the main blessing. This is the great comfort: Luke xii. 32, 'Fear not, little flock; it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.' And our faith in the word tendeth to this: Rom. xv. 4, 'Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' Therefore strength of faith is hereby determined.

4. Because the word is not only our charter, but our rule. The strength of faith is known by this. If we value the word of God as it maketh us wise unto salvation, therefore we delight in the plain word without the ornaments of wit, as painting in glass windows hindereth the light. Everything communicateth to its own nature; heat causeth heat, cold causeth cold. Ministers speak as the oracles of God, and so the people receive.

SERMON V.

Your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all towards each other aboundeth.—2 THESS. i. 3.

WE come to the fifth property of faith, which is an high value and esteem of Jesus Christ. I mention this—

1. Because faith in the new covenant mainly and distinctly respects Christ: Acts xx. 21, 'Testifying both to the Jews, and also to the gentiles, repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ.' Why repentance respects God I showed you lately, because from God we fell, and to God we return. We fell from him as we withdrew our allegiance and sought our happiness elsewhere; we return to him as to our rightful Lord and proper happiness. But faith respects the Mediator, who is the only remedy of our misery, and the means of eternal blessedness. He opened the way to God by his merit and satisfaction, and actually bringeth us into this way by his renewing and reconciling grace, that we may be in a capacity to please and enjoy God, and that is the reason why faith in Christis so much insisted on, as it begets a title to the blessings of the new covenant. It hath a special aptitude and fitness for this work of our recovery from sin to God, partly because a guilty conscience is not easily settled, and brought to look for all kind of happiness from one whom we have so much wronged. Adam, when once a sinner, was shy of God, Gen. iii. 10. Guilt is suspicious, and maketh us hang off from God, Ps. xxxii. 13; and if we have not one to lead us by the hand, and bring us to God, we cannot abide his presence.

2. Partly because the comfort of the promises is so rich and glorious, and the persons upon whom it is bestowed so unworthy, that it cannot easily enter into the heart of a man that God will be so good and gracious to us, unless we have a sound belief of his merit who hath procured these mercies and hopes for us: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 'Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.' Therefore since sense and reason could look for no such thing, a strong faith is necessary.

3. The way God hath taken for our deliverance is so supernatural and strange that nothing but faith can receive it: John iii. 16, 'God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have everlasting life;

and Rom. viii. 32, 'He spared not his own Son, but gave him to die for us.'

[4.] The chief of our blessings lie in another world, and nature cannot see so far off: 2 Peter i. 9, 'He that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off.' Unless we believe Christ, and his message to us, we shall never entertain these things.

[5.] For the present Christ's people are assaulted, and afflicted with so many difficulties, and so seemingly forsaken, and temptations to unbelief in this lower world are so manifold and pressing, that we can take no comfort in the new covenant unless we have faith in Christ, who is able to maintain and defend us till he hath brought us home to God: 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.'

[6.] Faith in Christ is most fitted for the acceptance of his free gift. Faith and grace go always together, and are put as opposites to law and works: Rom. iv. 16, 'Therefore it is of faith, that it might be of grace;' and Eph. ii. 8, 'By grace ye are saved, through faith, and that not of ourselves, it is the gift of God.' Faith establisheth the free grace and favour of God, or his condescension to us in the new covenant, wherein pardon and life are offered to penitent believers. What we receive by the grace of God in Christ cannot be of right, or such as we may challenge by virtue of obedience to the law upon that account. He might condemn us, but he doth accept us upon these new terms which Christ propounded of his mere grace: and therefore faith solveth the interest of grace in our pardon and salvation.

[7.] Because the duties of the new covenant are opposite to the bent of the carnal heart, which is set upon liberty and uncleanness: Rom. viii. 7, 'The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' And nothing will bind us but faith in Christ, to whom we must give an account in the solemn judgment: Acts xvii. 30, 31, 'He commandeth all men everywhere to repent, because he hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.' In which words I observe four things—(1.) That God requireth of all that will submit to the gospel repentance and new obedience; (2.) That the binding consideration is, that the judgment of every man's estate is put into Christ's hands, who in the day appointed will declare and determine every man's right and qualification; (3.) That the efficacy of this consideration dependeth on the strength of our faith or belief in Christ; (4.) That the strength of our faith dependeth on that assurance given, *πίστιν παραχρῶν πάσιν*. Woe be to those that now refuse Christ, or do not believe him so as to obey him: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'In flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.'

[8.] Till we believe in Christ all his offices are useless to us, and therefore without faith he will do us no good. Who would learn of him that doth not believe him to be the great Prophet sent of God to teach the world the way to true happiness? Who would obey him that doth not believe that he is our Lord, that he hath power over all

flesh, at whose judgment we must stand or fall? Who would depend upon the merit of his obedience and sacrifice, and be comforted with his gracious promise and covenant, and come to God with boldness and hope of mercy in his name, and be confident that he will justify and save, who doth not believe that he is a priest who once made an atonement, and doth continually make intercession for us? In the days of his flesh, all that would have benefit by Christ he did put them to this question, whether they did believe he was able to do it? To the father of the possessed child, 'Believest thou that I am able to do this?' Mark ix. 23; to Martha, John xi. 26, 'Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die: believest thou this?' So still it holdeth good: this is the most necessary grace, that maketh way for all other respect to Christ.

That this respect is an high value and esteem of Christ above all other things. That faith implieth an esteem of Christ is plain by that of the apostle, 1 Peter ii. 7, 'Unto you therefore which believe he is precious.' And that it is a transcendental respect and esteem, so as that all other things are lessened in our opinion of them, and estimation of them, and respect unto them in comparison of Christ, appeareth by other scriptures; as Phil. iii. 8, 'I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' He had counted, and did count, as not repenting of his choice; he could deny his own honour, ease, profit, and estate, his own everything but his own God and his own Christ. So Mat. xiii. 45, 46, 'The kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant-man seeking goodly pearls, who when he had found one pearl of great price, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.' The pearl was accounted of great price, if he would sell all things for it. Christ is so dear and precious, that the most excellent things are not dear and precious when they are to be ventured for his sake: Acts xx. 24, 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' No faith but this will allure and draw our hearts to Christ, and no faith but this will keep our hearts to him, there being so many other things either to keep us, or to draw us off from him. Nothing but this transcendental respect begets the close adherence to Christ.

Now I will show three things—(1.) That Christ hath deserved this esteem; (2.) That faith only will give it him; (3.) The notes, or how this esteem of Christ will show itself.

1. That he deserveth it; and that—

[1.] By what he is in himself, the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. This is the chief ground of our respect to the mediator: Acts viii. 37, 38, 'If thou believest with all thy heart, thou mayest; and he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.' So Martha maketh her confession of faith: John xi. 27, 'Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God that should come into the world.' So Peter in his own name and the name of his fellow-disciples: John vi. 69, 'We believe and are sure that thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the ground of adherence to

him and dependence upon him, that he whom the christian world hath hitherto called their Saviour is the very Son of God, appointed by God to execute the office of king, priest, and prophet to the church. This giveth us ground to adhere to him, and vanquish all temptations: 1 John v. 5, 'Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God.' The most part of the christian world leap into this opinion, and the name of Christ is prized, but his office is neglected; there is a fond esteem of his memory, but no real improvement of his grace. *Quandoquidem panis Christi jam pinguis factus est, tractatur in conciliis, disceptatur in judiciis, disputatur in scholis, laudatur in eclisiis, questiosa res est nomen Christi.* But this is the true ground of a christian's esteem, when soundly persuaded that he is the Christ.

[2.] What he hath done for us. Christ requireth not so much at our hands as he himself hath voluntarily performed for our sakes. He 'pleased not himself,' that he might promote the glory of God and our salvation, Rom. xv. 3; 'He became poor that we might be rich,' 2 Cor. viii. 9; He 'was obedient to the death, even the death of the cross,' that we might have life, Phil. ii. 7; 'He was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him,' 2 Cor. v. 21; 'He was made a curse for us,' that we might have the blessing; Gal. iii. 13. Doth he require so much of us? It is grievous to the flesh to be crossed, but he hath suffered greater sorrows and agonies, that we might have eternal life.

[3.] What he still doth for us. He is 'our life,' Gal. ii. 20. You live upon and by his life: John xiv. 19, 'Because I live, ye shall live also.' We use him not as an instrument which is laid by when our turn is served, but as an head and root. He is your righteousness, 1 Cor. i. 30, and 2 Cor. v. 21, 'He hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.' You have the effect of his merit and obedience to plead to God; he is your blessedness for the present: Col. i. 27, 'Christ in you the hope of glory.' All the fatherly goodness of God cometh to you by him; all your helps, mercies, and hopes are founded in him alone. It is he presents your requests to God, and you take all your mercies out of his hands: 1 Cor. viii. 6, 'To us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him.' Your petitions are presented by the hands of him who is the beloved of God.

2. That faith doth give him this esteem, as it is an assent, consent, and affiance.

[1.] As an assent, we believing what he is, hath done, and doth still do for us, therefore we prize him. Faith knoweth him partly by what the word revealeth: John iv. 10, 'If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him, and he would have given thee living water;' and John vi. 40, 'This is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son and believeth on him may have everlasting life.' They see such an excellency, fulness, and all-sufficiency in him as draweth off their hearts from all other things, and they cleave to him alone. Partly by experimental feeling, that he is such an one to us. As they see him to

be such, they find him to be such : 1 Peter iii. 3, ' If so be that ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious.' The word revealeth, and experience findeth him to be so.

[2.] As it is a consent. We see Christ is so necessary for us, so beneficial to us, that we accept him for our Lord and Saviour, and count all the choicest concernments in the world but base things in comparison of his grace ; therefore, forsaking all others, we devote ourselves to him, and are married to the Lord, that we may bring forth fruit to God, Rom. vii. 4. Nothing is allowed to rival Christ in the soul, or to be a competitor with him : Hosea iii. 3, this is the form of the conjugal covenant, ' Thou shalt not be for another, but thou shalt be for me.'

[3.] As it is a trust and affiance in him, that we may be reconciled to God, and saved by him from sin and punishment, and so be brought safe into a state of perfect happiness. Every one of these benefits doth endear him to the soul. Surely dependence will beget observance, and we will love him and please him in whose hands we venture our all, even our eternal interests and concernments.

3. The notes, or how this esteem will show itself.

[1.] In labouring to get Christ above all. This is the prime care, and must be carried on, whatever is left undone : Mat. xvi. 33, ' Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you ;' Ps. xxvii. 4, ' One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after ; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in his temple ;' Prov. iv. 7, ' Wisdom is the principle thing, therefore get wisdom, and with all thy getting get understanding.' The accessory things must give way to the principal, the arbitrary things to the necessary. Food and raiment is not so necessary as Christ ; temporal want is not so great an evil as eternal misery. Well then, communion with God in Christ must be minded, whatever is neglected. Most men's time and labour is laid out upon unsatisfying vanities ; their life, and love, and time, and strength, and care is spent on worldly things, and they have seldom and cold thoughts of salvation by Christ, cannot deny themselves a little worldly pleasure or carnal ease, that they may attend upon this work, to get an interest in Christ's renewing and reconciling grace. Of those that were invited to the marriage-feast it is said, Mat. xxii. 5, ' They made light of it.'

[2.] A care in keeping Christ above all. Nothing should be so near and dear to you as Christ ; he is your life and your strength. Your great care is, that he may lie as a bundle of myrrh in your bosoms : Cant. i. 13, ' A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me ; he shall lie all night betwixt my breasts ;' or ' dwell in your hearts by faith,' Eph. iii. 17. Christ is all in all to you. You are loath to put the comforts of his presence to hazard for a little carnal satisfaction, are chary and tender of your respects to your Redeemer, that he be not displeased or provoked to withdraw by any unkind dealing of yours. Whatever temptations would withdraw you from your duty you reject with loathing and indignation. Christ hath pitched upon this as the true and proper evidence of our love to him and esteem of him : John xiv. 21, ' He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth

me ; and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him and will manifest myself to him.' We are apt to flatter ourselves with an airy religion, that we value Christ and prize Christ ; if so, we will be careful he be not offended and displeased.

[3.] By a willingness to lose all rather than lose Christ : Luke xiv. 33, ' Whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.' Counting the most dishonourable things in the world as honourable for his sake : Heb. xi. 26, ' Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt, for he had respect unto the recompense of reward ;' Acts v. 41, ' And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.' They see a beauty in his despised ways. You can worship Christ as the wise men did, though in a stable, and are contented to be made vile for his sake : 2 Sam. vi. 22, ' I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in my own sight.' And we read of Marsacus, when he was led forth to suffer, and because of his quality they bound him not as they did others, he cried out, *Cur non et me quoque torque donas, &c.*—Why do you not give me also my chain, and make me a knight of this noble order ? Some will pretend to prize Christ, but can hardly suffer a disgraceful word for him, or endure to be browbeaten with a frown.

[4.] By delighting in him and the testimonies of his love above all things else. Faith must breed such a confidence in Christ as keepeth up our delight in him, and such a delight and well-pleasèdness of mind as we find not elsewhere : Ps. iv. 7, ' Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased ;' and Cant. i. 4, ' We will be glad and rejoice in thee ; we will remember thy loves more than wine.' The choicest contentments of the flesh are nothing so satisfying as the joy of his salvation. This joy is called ' unspeakable and glorious,' as being better felt than uttered, 1 Peter i. 8. The strength of it is seen when other comforts fail : ' How precious are thy thoughts unto me, O God ! how great is the sum of them !' Ps. cxxxix. 17.

Sixthly, The sixth property of faith is victory over the world : 1 John. v. 4, 5, ' For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world, and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith : who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God ?' I shall despatch this briefly, and shall show you—

1. What is the world that is to be overcome ? All worldly things whatsoever, so far as they lessen our esteem of Christ and heavenly things, or as they hinder us in our duty to God. In short, the delights and terrors of this world ; for we must be armed on both sides with the armour of righteousness, both on the right hand and the left, 2 Cor. vi. 7. The fears of this world are apt to stagger us, so do snares prevent and inveigle us. Moses had temptations of all kinds, right-hand temptations from riches, honours, pleasures : Heb. xi. 24–26 ; ' By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the Son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season, esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt ;' left-hand temptations : ver. 27, ' By faith he forsook Egypt, not fear-

ing the wrath of the king, for he endured as seeing him who is invisible.' The armour of the right hand is called temperance; of the left hand, patience: 2 Peter i. 6, 'To knowledge temperance, and to temperance patience.' In the parable of the sower sowing his seed we read that which fell on the stony ground withered in persecution: Luke viii. 13, 'They on the rock are they which, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. That which was sown in the thorny ground was choked with the cares, riches, and pleasures of the world: ver. 14, 'And they which fell among thorns are they which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.' If the terrors of sense assault our constancy, we must set loss against loss, pain against pain, fear against fear: Mat. x. 28, 'Fear not him that can kill the body, and do no more, but fear him that can cast both body and soul into hell.' If they threaten a prison, remember God threatens hell; if they threaten fire, God threatens everlasting fire: if they threaten loss of estate, loss of heaven is much worse. If the delights of sense are likely to corrupt us, to pervert or divert our minds from better things, we must look to it, and remember what better things are reserved for us. Persecution is opposite to profession without, but this obstructs the very vigour, life, and power of godliness within: 1 John ii. 15, 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.' And then for pleasures: 2 Tim. iii. 4, 'Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;' Heb. xii. 16, 'Or profane person as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.' Honours are baneful to our faith: John v. 44, 'How can ye believe which receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?' They eat out the heart of it. These are our daily temptations.

2. The necessity of overcoming the world.

[1.] It is by the world that our spiritual enemies have advantage against us. The devil seeketh to tempt or fright the fleshly nature in us either by the terrors or allurements of sense. Therefore conquer the world, and the tempter is disarmed; he blindeth us as the god of this world: 2 Cor. iv. 4, '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.' He vexeth as the prince of this world, and having a strong party in the world, he findeth it no great matter to entice a sensual worldly mind to almost anything that is evil. The baits and provisions of the flesh are in the world: 1 John ii. 16, 'For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.' The world fits us with a bait agreeable to every appetite, or a diet that suiteth with every distemper of our souls. A proud mind must be honoured and humoured, and will go nothing lower than high place and pomp of living. A sensual mind must have its pleasures, and the covetous the increase of wealth, and religion is either cast off or neglected and made an underling.

[2.] The world is the great let and impediment to our obedience.

In the first epistle of John, chap. v., in the context to the words that I am now explaining, ver. 2, 3, it is said, 'By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments; for this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous.' Then it followeth, ver. 4, 'For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world,' &c. So Titus ii. 11, 12, 'For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us, that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world.' The one must be done that the other may be done. We shall soon be tempted to make a breach upon righteousness, sobriety, or godliness if we do not labour to overcome the world. So Ps. cxix. 36, 'Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.'

[3.] This victory over the world distinguisheth the spiritual from the animal life. The world of mankind is distinguished into two sorts—some that live the animal life, and some that live the spiritual life. They that live the animal life are such as only behave themselves merely as living creatures, or as a wiser sort of beasts, and the comfort of their life is only kept up by the good things of this world, land, heritages, honours, pleasures, riches; and so reason is subjected to sense, all their contrivance is for the flesh. But the spiritual and divine life is supported by the comforts of the Spirit and the foresight of eternal joys in the world to come, and so reason is raised and sublimated by faith. These two lives are distinguished: John iii. 6, 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is Spirit;' 1 Cor. ii. 14, 15, 'But 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: but he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man;' and Jude 19, 'These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit.' Now the more we live this spiritual life, the more thorough christians we are. Another kind of spirit cometh upon a man, he liveth as a man of another world; he can bear up when the outward and animal life is exposed to the greatest difficulties, 2 Cor. iv. 16; he fetcheth his solace and comfort from those great and glorious things which are kept for him in heaven. It is a mighty thing to have this spirit of faith.

[4.] We cannot hold out with Christ whilst any temporal and sensitive thing lieth too near the heart: 1 Tim. vi. 10, 'For the love of money is the root of all evil, which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows,' and 2 Tim. iv. 10, 'Demas hath forsaken us, having loved this present world.' The devil hath them in a string, and we are easily taken again, though we seem to make some escape from him.

3. Faith is the grace that is employed in overcoming the world. It is not only said to be a means of overcoming, but the victory itself; for it is the nature of faith. There are terms in it as in other graces; it is a recess from the world, and an access to God, a drawing off the heart from things visible and temporal to those which are invisible and eternal. How doth faith overcome the world?

[1.] As it is an assent to God's word, and chiefly to the promises of

the gospel. Now this strong and firm assent doth prepossess the mind with the glory of the world to come: Heb. xi. 26, 'Moses had an eye to the recompense of reward;' and 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'We look not to the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen;' and Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' By this sight and view of heavenly things our esteem of the world is abated, so by consequence the force of the temptation. Alas! whatever this world offereth must be left on this side the world, pleasure, estate: 1 Tim. vi. 7, 'For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.' Here we lust for greatness, but death soon endeth the quarrel. In the grave no difference is to be discerned between rich and poor, both are alike obnoxious to rottenness and corruption; but faith persuadeth us of better things: Heb. xi. 13, 'These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.'

[2.] As it is a consent. It causeth us to surrender ourselves to Christ's discipline, or that religion which wholly draweth us off from this world to the world to come. Its purpose and drift is that we may deny ourselves, bear the cross, and follow him. This we promise in baptism: 1 Peter iii. 21, 'Baptism saveth us (not the putting away the filthiness of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience towards God), by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.' The spirit of our religion is not the spirit of the world: 1 Cor. ii. 12, 'Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God.'

[3.] As it is a dependence and trust in Christ's power and sufficiency to maintain you, and defend you safe, till you are brought home to God. He died for this end: Gal. i. 4, 'Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father.' He intercedeth for us to the Father for this end: John xvii. 15, 'I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil.' He overcame the world in his own person for this end, not only to encourage us, but to enable us by his example: John xvi. 33, 'These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace; in the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.' He sendeth his Spirit into our hearts to preserve us against the assaults of the devil, the world, and the flesh: 1 John iv. 4, 'Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is he that is in you than he that is in the world.' And because every state of life is thick-set with temptations, he reneweth his influence upon us: Phil. iv. 13, 'I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.' He had before spoken of carrying an equal mind in all conditions; Christ enabled him as well as taught him this contentment.

Well, then, reckon the growth of your faith by the exercise of your mortification and weanedness from the world, rather than by strong confidence of your good estate or highflown joys and comforts. The comforts of the Spirit will not be tasted by an unmortified worldly heart. Most men's confidence cometh from their security and mind-

lessness of these things. The comforts are more suspicious when the mortification is a sure note.

Seventhly, The seventh property of faith is quieting the heart against fears and doubts, and waiting on God. I join these two things together because the scripture doth : Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good that a man should both hope, and quietly wait for the salvation of God.' But we must handle them asunder.

1. *Waiting*. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith can tarry God's leisure till these good things which we do expect do come in hand : Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believeth shall not make haste.' Men that cannot tarry for relief will yield up a town upon the basest terms. The children of God were always forced to eat their words when they spoke in haste : Ps. xxxi. 22, 'For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes ; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication when I cried unto thee ;' and Ps. cxvi. 11, 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.' But where faith and hope is there is patience : Rom. viii. 25, 'If we hope for what we see not, then do we with patience wait for it ;' James v. 7, 8, 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient ; stablish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' Unbelief leapeth overboard on the first danger. Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief. What moved the Israelites to make the golden calf, but impatience in not waiting for Moses till he came down from the Mount, where he was with God ? What made Saul to offer sacrifice, but want of patience till Samuel came ? 1 Sam. xiii. 8-10, 'He tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed. But Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him. And Saul said, Bring hither a burnt-offering to me, and peace-offerings ; and he offered the burnt-offering, and it came to pass that as soon as he had made an end of offering the burnt-offering, behold Samuel came,' &c. What made the bad servant to smite his fellow-servant, and to eat and drink with the drunken, Mat. xxiv. 40, but this, 'My Lord delayeth his coming ?' Hasty men are loath to be kept long in doubtful suspense. The voluptuous cannot wait their time, when they shall have pleasures at God's right hand for evermore, therefore take up with present delights, like those that cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, but eat them sour and green. Solid everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for, therefore choose the pleasures of sin that are for a season. A covetous man will wax rich in a day, cannot tarry the leisure of God's providence : Prov. xx. 21, 'An inheritance may be gotten hastily at the beginning, but the end thereof shall not be blessed.' The ambitious man will not stay till God gives crowns and honours in his kingdom. All revolts and apostacies from God proceed hence ; they cannot wait for God's help, and tarry the fulfilling of his promises, but finding themselves pressed and destitute, the flesh, which is tender and delicate, groweth impatient. It is tedious to suffer for a while, but they do not consider it is more tedious to suffer for evermore. Thence come murmurings and unlawful attempts, stepping out of God's way. An impetuous river is always troubled and thick, so is a precipitated impatient spirit, out of order, and ready for a snare.

2. Quieting the heart against doubts, fears, and cares. By a grown faith thoughts are established: Prov. xvi. 3, 'Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established.' Fire well kindled casteth the least smoke. We have firm ground to stand upon, therefore we must not reel to and fro in a doubtful agitation of mind: James i. 6-8, 'Let him ask in faith, nothing wavering; for he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea, driven with the wind and tossed; for let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.' Faith fixeth the heart against fears: Ps. cxii. 7, 'He shall not be afraid of evil tidings; his heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord;' Isa. xxvi. 3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee;' Rom. v. 1, 'Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ;' Phil. iv. 7, 'And the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus;' Rom. iv. 20, 'Abraham staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God;' and Mat. vi. 30, 'Wherefore if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith!' so Mat. viii. 26, 'He saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith!' The weak are mated with every difficulty: Mat. xiv. 31, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' Ps. xlii. 5, 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God, for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.' Well, then, here is a sure note of a grown faith, the more we can quiet ourselves in the promises of God, and wait his leisure for their accomplishment.
