

SERMONS UPON 1 CORINTHIANS XV. 19.

SERMON I.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.—1 COR. XV. 19.

IN the context the apostle is disputing for the truth of the resurrection. This way of reasoning is *deducendo ad absurdum*, by showing the absurdities that would follow upon the denial of it.

The first absurdity is mentioned, ver. 13, 'If there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.' In all things he is a pattern to his people; if the head be risen, so shall the members also.

The second absurdity consequent upon that is mentioned, ver. 14-16, 'And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain: yea, and we are found false witnesses of God; because we have testified of God that he raised up Christ; whom he raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not: for if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised.' Whole christianity would be a forgery, and whatever was preached by the apostles, and believed by them, vain and frivolous, if Christ be not risen.

The third absurdity, ver. 17, 'And if Christ be not risen, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins.' That the new covenant, and all their confidence about remission of sins upon repentance, would come to nothing.

The fourth absurdity, that those that had lost their lives for Christ would perish eternally, and would have nothing to recompense this loss: ver. 18, 'Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.'

The fifth absurdity is in the text; if all our hopes in Christ were terminated with this life, christians were the most wretched sort of men in this world: 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.' But these are such absurd thoughts, that every christian should abhor them with indignation.

In the words we have—

1. A supposition, 'If in this life only we have hope in Christ.'

2. An absurdity thence inferred, 'We are of all men most miserable.'

Doct. That the calamities of the godly in this life show that we have much more to hope for from Christ in the life to come.

1. I shall state the point, in what sense it is said that christians are of all men most miserable if there be no life to come.

2. Confirm and prove it, by showing the validity of the apostle's reasoning.

I. For the supposition.

1. This is supposed, that affliction and misery is the common burden of the sons of Adam. In the present life all are liable to misery, some more, some less. We walk through a valley of tears, live in a groaning world; none have such an uninterrupted current and stream of worldly felicity but that they have their crosses and afflictions. These things are common to man. We are told in the book of Job, chap. v. 7, 'Man is born to trouble as the sparks fly upward;' and chap. xiv. 1, 'Man, that is born of a woman, is of few days, and full of trouble.' None can reasonably expect to be absolutely exempted from the common lot of human lapsed nature. Though life be short, yet it is long enough to be vexed with many sorrows. 'Few and evil have the days of the years of my life been,' saith old Jacob, Gen. xlvii. 9. Since they are evil, it is well they are but few. Most men little consider of this, that they come into the world to bear crosses, but rather imagine they come hither to spend their days in pleasure; at least, they do not mind the true cause of their troubles, nor the proper remedy. The true cause is sin; man's transgressions are the door by which it entered; and the proper remedy is the grace of God in Jesus Christ. Well, then, whatever may be the particular and various dispensations of God towards men, yet to be miserable in some sort and degree is common to all Adam's posterity, which should make us to look higher than the present life.

2. Of all men, virtuous good men are more miserable than others, if you consider their temper and the state of the world. Their temper; they deny themselves the pleasures of the flesh, and the world too often depriveth them of the ordinary comforts of life. They deny themselves the irregular pleasures of the flesh, as being an impediment to goodness, and that sense and appetite may not carry them against the dictates of reason, and so, instead of being led by conscience, as they ought, they serve their brutish passions and inclinations, as others do. This is the difference between them and others: 'They do not run with them into the same excess of riot,' 1 Peter iv. 4. But besides this, they are subject to many tribulations and persecutions. We often see that instruments of public good are made sacrifices of public hatred. The bad will hate the good, as differing from them, and disgracing that kind of life which they affect: Prov. xxix. 27, 'He that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked.' They have a malignity and enmity to that goodness which they want themselves, and therefore deal worst with those that deserve best at their hands, because they cannot so quietly take satisfaction in their lusts, whilst others about them excel in virtue and holiness.

3. Of all good men, the profane carnal world is more enraged against christians than others. Probity and honesty in the heathens hath met with opposition in the world; and some among them, that would reform a depraved and disordered age, have met with sore troubles, and been hurried even unto death for seeking to stop the inundation of public vices. But especially hath this been the portion of christians: 2 Tim. iii. 12, 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' Christianity is the more violently opposed because it

carrieth us to an higher pitch of purity and holiness than bare morality doth; for therein men are more devoted to God, and do most resemble him, as they are made partakers of the divine nature. Therefore a true, constant, christian course doth more enrage the world. Besides, it is most contrary to those diabolical impostures which have prevailed over the nations, and are entertained by them with much veneration, as being received by a long tradition from ancestors. Therefore the devil ever had a greater rage against this way; and many of the truths of it are not only mysteries, and therefore contradicted, but mysteries of godliness, tending to imbue men with right thoughts of God, and do more shake the interests of the devil's kingdom. Thence hath it been that christians have been worse used than other good men; and so, considered as to their outward estate, are of all men most miserable.

4. To induce men to lead such an holy godly life, which exposeth them to so many miseries, such motives are necessary as are greater than the temptations of the world; partly with respect to Christ, for Christ is so good that he would not impose this duty upon us without a sufficient recompense for our losses and troubles; for he came not to make us miserable, but happy, to save, not to destroy, that the world might have benefit by him, and not loss and trouble. We have a two-fold apprehension of God, as an holy and happy being. There is in his nature, *τὸ ἀγαθόν*, goodness, and *τὸ μακάριον*, blessedness; accordingly Christ hath made a discovery of him to us when he came to plant godliness and holiness in the world. He hath revealed him as a God of infinite purity and blessedness, that, by imitating him in purity, we might be made partakers of his blessedness; or that, self-denyingly carrying on a life of holiness here, we might have our blessedness in a better life hereafter: his calling is an high and holy calling. And partly with respect to us: In this state of frailty, this living godly in Christ Jesus cannot be carried on unless our natural and sensual inclination be overruled by the bias of a stronger affection. The flesh in us is importunate to be pleased; and therefore when our troubles and trials are sore and manifold, what shall we do if we have not such higher motives as may rationally prevail with us? The voice of nature is, Spare the flesh; but the voice of faith is, Save the soul. Now if this salvation be not greater than the temptations of the present life, how shall we row against the stream of flesh and blood, and run all hazards with Christ?

5. Christ hath promised an happiness that will countervail all these afflictions. There is a fourfold comparison which believers usually make, or in scripture are taught to make, between this life and the next; as—

[1.] Sometimes they compare temporal good things with eternal good things, or the portion of a carnal man with the happiness of a child of God: Ps. xvii. 14, 15, 'From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. But as for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.' That is, the rich and great men of

the world have all their good things allowed by thee in this life ; here they have all riches, and plenty, and a numerous posterity, wealth sufficient not only to enjoy themselves, but to leave abundantly to their children ; but I count myself abundantly provided for if I may have thy favour with a painful holy life here, and when I awake out of the sleep of death, may so see thee hereafter, as to be like thee ; I am satisfied with the hopes of the vision and fruition of God.

[2.] Sometimes they compare temporal evil things with eternal evil things ; as a prison with hell, or the killing of the body with the casting the body and soul into hell-fire : Luke xii. 4, 5, ‘ Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom you shall fear : Fear him which, after he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell ; yea, I say unto you, Fear him.’ Certainly it is more for our interest to fear displeasing God than displeasing men ; the utmost that men can do is to kill the body, and then their malice is at an end ; but God can cast body and soul into everlasting torments. Every one would submit to a lesser evil to avoid a greater. When you must sin to escape trouble in the world, you run into eternal sufferings to avoid temporal. No wrath like the wrath of God ; no torment like the fire of hell.

[3.] Sometimes they compare temporal good with eternal evil ; as Mat. xvi. 26, ‘ What is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul ?’ The plentiful life of worldlings with the forfeiting of the soul ; the pleasures of sin for a season with the pains of hell.

[4.] The fourth sort of comparison which the scripture directs us unto is temporal bad things with eternal good things ; and that is the case we have now in hand. Thus 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.’ Sufferings for the present may be very great, but the glory that is revealed to us, and shall one day be revealed in us, is much greater ; as there is no comparison between a little flea-biting, or the prick of a pin, with eternal ease and rest, or the trouble of entering by a strait gate or entry into a glorious palace : 2 Cor. iv. 17, ‘ For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ The sufferings of the present world are *leves et breves*, light and short ; not in themselves, but in comparison with eternal life. In themselves they may be some of them very sharp and grievous, and some also very long and tedious ; but look, what a point is to the circumference, that is time to eternity, and what a feather is to a talent of lead, that are present evils to future glory and blessedness. All this is spoken to show that it is better to be miserable with the people of God than happy with his enemies, and that we should not be drawn away from Christ neither by the comfortable nor troublesome things we meet with in the world.

6. This happiness which Christ hath proposed is at the general resurrection, or Christ’s coming to judgment ; for that is the point which the apostle is now discoursing of. There is a distinction between the good and the bad at death, when ‘ the spirits of just men are made perfect,’ Heb. xii. 23, and the spirits of the wicked are sent to prison,

1 Peter iii. 19. The soul dieth not with the body, but some go one way, some another; the souls of just men to God's palace of glory, where they are with Christ, and the souls of the wicked to the prison of hell. But this retribution is not sufficient, for two reasons—because it is private, and doth not openly vindicate the justice and holiness of God; and it is but on a part, the soul, and not the body.

[1.] Because it is private, and dispensed apart to every single person, man by man as they die. Certainly it is more for the honour of God to bring his judgment to light, as the prophet speaketh, Zeph. iii. 5, 'Every morning doth he bring his judgment to light.' Here the love of God towards the good, and the justice of God towards the wicked, is not brought into the clear light, nor at death; neither the mouth of the pit is visibly opened, nor the glory of heaven exposed to view. But then this different respect is more conspicuous when the justice of God hath a public and solemn triumph, and his enemies are branded with shame and ignominy, and the faith of his elect found to praise and honour, and the one are publicly condemned, and the other justified by the judge sitting upon the throne: Acts iii. 19, 'That your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.'

[2.] As it is upon a part, the soul only. The bodies of the holy and the wicked are both now senseless, and moulder into dust in the grave; and till they be raised up, and joined to their souls, can neither partake of woe or weal, pleasure or pain. The soul, though it be a principal part, is but a part. The body essentially concurrerth to the constitution of the man; and it is the body that is most gratified by sin, and the body that is most pained by obedience; and therefore the body, which is the soul's sister and coheir, is to share with it in its eternal estate, whatever it be. Therefore, that we may not be in part punished, nor in part rewarded, there is a time coming when God will deal with the whole man, and that is in the day of Christ's solemn court and audience, when all the world shall be summoned before his tribunal.

7. The apostle proveth this, because the righteousness of God's government will not permit that his people should be accounted of all men most miserable.

To clear this I shall show—

First, In what sense the apostle saith, If there were no life to come, christians were of all men most miserable.

Secondly, How this will not consist with the righteousness of God's government.

First, In what sense the apostle saith, If there were no life to come, christians were of all men most miserable. I put this first question, that we may not mistake the apostle's meaning, when he pronounceth christians to be of all men most miserable if our hopes in Christ were terminated with this life. Take him right; and therefore,—

1. Negatively.

[1.] It is not to deny all present providence or watchful care over his oppressed people. No; Eccles. iii. 16, 17, 'And moreover, I saw under the sun the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there.' He meaneth not in the mountains of prey only, but in the tribunals of justice; there was

iniquity and wickedness: 'I said in my heart, God shall judge the righteous and the wicked; for there is a time there for every purpose, and for every work.' So again, Eccles. v. 8, 'If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and the violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter; for he that is higher than the highest regardeth, and there be higher than they.' Both these places show that there is a providence; though God for a while permit his meek and obedient servants to be oppressed, and in the eye of the world they seem to be forgotten and forsaken and utterly left to perish, yet in due time God will exercise a righteous judgment on them and their enemies. The like you have, Ps. lviii. 11, 'So that a man shall say, Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily he is a God that judgeth in the earth.' It is not meant of hereafter, but now. It is many times found that godliness and holiness are matters of benefit and advantage in this world, abstracted from all reward in another life. The world is not governed by chance, but by a wise and most just providence. It may be God doth not relieve the oppressed so soon as men would, yet in due time he will not fail to show himself the ruler of the affairs of mankind; so that this is not his meaning, to exclude all present providence.

[2.] Not to deny that we have such benefits by Christ here in this world as not to make our condition more valuable than that of the wicked. We have hopes by Christ of the pardon of sins, and that is a blessedness: Ps. xxxii. 1, 'Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.' Of communion with God: 1 John i. 3, 'And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ.' And that maketh way for a full joy, and countervaileth temporal evils. We have not only an interest in the love of God, but a feeling of it in our souls: Rom. v. 3-5, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope, and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.' All things are sanctified to us as we are sanctified to God: Rom. viii. 28, 'All things shall work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.' But yet this is not all; therefore the apostle saith, 'If in this life only we had hope, we are of all men most miserable.'

[3.] The apostle's drift is not to compare wickedness and godliness, as abstracted from the eternal reward; as if a wicked man were more happy than an afflicted godly man. No; Christ's worst is better than the world's best; godliness and holiness is amiable, or a reward in itself. Better be good though miserable, than bad though prosperous; for holiness and godliness, though abstracted from all reward in another life, is an excellency and perfection of human nature: Ps. xvi. 3, 'But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight;' Prov. xii. 26, 'The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour.' It is an honour put upon human nature to have the image of God impressed upon it. The more good we are, the more orderly we live, and agreeably to reason and those souls with which we are created; and the actions which the law of Christ calleth for at our hands are fittest to be done by us if they were not commanded, nor ever should be rewarded in us.

2. Positively ; and so—

[1.] The apostle speaketh not of their inward enjoyments, but their outward estate, which no ways seems to answer God's covenant love nor governing justice ; for the calamities of the godly raise two doubts— (1.) How this doth stand with the love and goodness of God to his people ? This was the psalmist's temptation : Ps. lxxiii. 1, ' Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.' It is a most certain and a most infallible truth that God is abundantly gracious and kind, and not only faithful and just to all his sincere servants ; but we are under no small temptation to doubt of the truth of this when they are under severe scourges and chastisements, or exercised with continual afflictions, and others live in pomp and luxury, and all manner of secular felicity. (2.) But the other temptation to doubt of God's governing in righteousness was Jeremiah's temptation : Jer. xii. 1, ' Righteous art thou, O Lord ; yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments. Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper ? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously ?' Certain it is that God is righteous ; yet when his people are in a sad condition, and their enemies thrive and prosper by their wicked courses, their minds are troubled ; for to appearance none are in a worse condition than they that love God most, and serve him best, till he be considered not as to his external but eternal estate.

[2.] The apostle's meaning is, that a man cannot rationally be induced to submit to christianity, and, in defiance of all temptations, to lead an holy godly life, without the expectation of the happiness of another world. The temptation lieth in things present, and our strength lieth in a due reflection on things to come. Faith must guide us, that sense may not mislead us ; and so, when the world's best and Christ's worst are brought into competition, the soul is the better enabled to make a right choice : Heb. xi. 26, ' Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt ; for he had respect to the recompense of reward.' It is the hopes which Christ offereth in a better life which strike all temptations dead. Now in case this should not be, the apostle pronounceth christians to be of all men most miserable, upon a fourfold account—

(1.) Because their very present comforts would seem to be but a fantastical impression or a fanatical illusion ; for our whole religion would be a falsehood if the great promise be chimerical, or a mere dream and supposition : 1 John ii. 25, ' This is the promise which he hath promised us, even eternal life.' And so how can we imagine but that all the comfort which we take in the pardon of sins, communion with God, and the sense of his love, are mere conceit and vain imagination ?

(2.) Because their future hopes and trust would be utterly disappointed, and they deluded in their greatest expectations : 1 Tim. iv. 10, ' Therefore we both labour and suffer reproach, because we trust in the living God, who is the saviour of all men, especially of those that believe.' It is our hope in God through Christ, or the assurance of an eternal reward, which is the only ground of our suffering patiently anything that befalleth us. He is the preserver of all mankind, but hath promised eternally to save those that believe and obey him.

Therefore, if there were no world to come, christians would not only be disappointed of their great hope, which is the worst kind of vexation, but draw a suspicion upon all these advantages that we seem to reap by Christ and enjoy here upon earth.

(3.) Their earnest desires would not be fulfilled if there were no blessedness to come. We may prove eternal life by the disposition and instinct of nature towards happiness in general, yea, eternal happiness, which if we should not enjoy, that desire were in vain; but God doth nothing in vain. The apostle intimateth this universal desire in all rational creatures; they all grope and feel about for an eternal and infinite good: Acts xvii. 27, 'That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us.' Other creatures besides man are satisfied with what they have here, but the soul of man is satisfied with nothing but the eternal enjoyment of what is good, an immortal estate, an infinite good; this is the universal inclination of all mankind. Whence cometh that desire to be so universal if there be nothing to satisfy it? Where is this immortality that we seek after? Not in temporal enjoyments, riches, honours, and pleasures; they perish, and we perish. Yea, the lust of these things passeth away in time: 1 John ii. 17, 'The world passeth away, and the lust thereof.' Not in surviving fame; that is a shadow, like the pleasure which those take who want children in playing with little dogs and puppies. It lieth in the eternal enjoyment of God. But we urge not this now; we urge the desires of the renewed and sanctified, which do much more prove it, for these act more regularly, and direct their desires and hopes to a certain scope and end; and these are excited by the Holy Spirit of God, who imprinteth the firm persuasion of this happiness, and inclineth us to it, and stirreth up these groans after it: Rom. viii. 23, 'And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.' The word of God warrants these desires, and the Spirit of God kindleth them in our hearts, and that usually in our gravest and severest moods, when we are solemnly conversing with God in his holy worship; then doth he raise up these affections towards heavenly things, as in the word, prayer, and sacraments; then is this relish left upon our hearts; and the more serious and holy any are, the more do they feel of this. And also in our bitter sufferings for God: Rom. v. 3, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulation also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience;' 1 Peter iv. 13, 14, 'But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil-spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. This is a greater argument than the bare instinct and desire of nature. Certainly if our holiness be our torment, and God beget in us these desires which he never meant to satisfy, then we are of all men most miserable.

(4.) There would be no recompense for their greatest losses. Christ requireth us not only to venture, but lose our lives for his sake: Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come to me, and hate not his father and mother,

and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' Now if our hopes in Christ be at an end with this life, what encouragement have we to lose our lives for Christ's sake? Nature will teach us to submit to a lesser evil to obtain a greater good than that evil depriveth us of; but what will teach us to lose the greatest benefit we are possessed of when nothing cometh of it? Grace indeed teacheth us to quit this frail life for the hopes which Christ hath given us of an immortal blessed estate; but if that be not, christians are of all men most miserable, who had better have kept that life which they had till a natural death called them from it, than to have lost it for nothing.

Secondly, Having vindicated the apostle's meaning, I shall prove that it is inconsistent with the righteousness of God's government that his people should be always of all men most miserable. For a time they may be so, but not for ever. Certainly God is righteous; to deny him to be just is to deny him to be God and the governor of the world. The perfection of his nature includeth his justice; so doth also the eminency of his office: 'Is God unrighteous, who taketh vengeance? God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world?' Rom. iii. 5, 6; that is, he were then incapable of governing mankind. But when is this righteousness manifested? Not always in this world, especially to those who perish in their afflictions and persecutions, which they endure for his name's sake. No; 'He hath appointed a day wherein he will judge the world in righteousness,' Acts xvii. 31, and that is at the general resurrection. God now judgeth the world in patience, winketh or conniveth at many faults, endureth the wicked with much long-suffering, but then he will judge the world in righteousness.' None are punished now besides or beyond their deservings; but all are not punished according to their deservings, nor are the wrongs of his people righted, nor their labour of love recompensed. Therefore we must expect another day and time when that shall be done; and that is most fully and universally done in the great and general day of judgment, when the dead shall be raised out of their graves, they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation. And so it serves the apostle's scope to prove a resurrection.

SERMON II.

If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.—1 COR. XV. 19.

II. I MUST show the validity of the apostle's argument, that there must be a life to come, because otherwise christians would be of all men most miserable. The apostle urgeth it here as a strong proof of the resurrection, and elsewhere he urgeth it as a demonstration of the general judgment; as when he, speaking of the persecutions of the righteous,

telleth us, 2 Thes. i. 5, 'Which is a manifest token of the righteous judgment of God,' *ἔνδειγμα*, a plain and certain demonstration. Surely the argument is cogent and conclusive.

But where lieth the force of it ?

1. I shall argue from the nature of God ; and there—

[1.] I shall begin with his wisdom, which doeth things according to number, weight, and measure, and doth rightly dispose things in their proper places. This wisdom of his will not permit the disjunction of these two things so closely united together as sin and punishment, holiness and happiness. This cannot be but there will be an appearance of deformity and irregularity. If there be such a thing as good and evil, *bonum et malum morale*, as reason will tell us there is ; again, if there be such a thing as pleasure and pain, joy and sorrow, or *bonum et malum naturale*, as sense will tell us there is ; then it is very agreeable to the wisdom of God that these things should be rightly placed and sorted. That moral evil, which is sin, should be punished with natural evil, which is pain and misery ; and that moral good, which is holiness, should end in joy and happiness ; these seem to be such natural relatives, that without great incongruity they cannot be parted. It seemeth uncomely and an uncouth thing to us when it is otherwise : Prov. xxvi. 1, 'As snow in summer, and as rain in harvest, so honour is not seemly for a fool ;' that is, as snow and rain in harvest and summer come unseasonable and unwelcome, and breed a kind of displeasure in our minds, so we look upon it as a blemish or an uncouth thing when the wicked are exalted. We have compassion on a miserable man, whom we esteem not deserving his misery, but are moved with indignation against one that is happy and successful, but unworthy the happiness he enjoyeth. This is the general sense of mankind, which is a proof and plain document that we perceive an excellent harmony, and natural order between these two things, sin and misery, holiness and happiness ; and this sentiment is some stricture and shadow of the perfection of God's wisdom ; and therefore, though for a time, while both good and bad are upon their trial, the good are not regarded, nor the bad punished, yet the wisdom of God will not permit it to be always so, that the godly should be in an afflicted and distressed condition, and the wicked prosperous.

[2.] Come we to the holiness of God, which inclineth him to hate evil and love that which is good. Surely God is not indifferent to good and evil, or more partial to the evil than to the good. That were a blasphemy, and such a diminution of God's holiness as should be abhorred by every good christian. No ; 'He hateth all the workers of iniquity,' Ps. v. 5 ; and again, Ps. xi. 7, 'The righteous Lord loveth righteousness ; his countenance doth behold the upright.' Well, then, wherein is this love and hatred demonstrated ? God doth not openly declare it in his present dealings with the rebellious and the righteous, therefore it shall be seen in his final dealing with the wicked oppressors of his people, and those that walk uprightly. Therefore there is a life to come, for in this life this love and hatred is not sufficiently expressed ; not his hatred against the wicked, even in the judgment of them who have no great knowledge of the nature of sin, and the punishment which is competent thereunto ; nor his love to the godly, who are often ex-

posed to bitter sufferings, and seem to be less favoured in the course of his external providence than their enemies. Therefore there is a time to come, when he will show his love to the good in making them everlastingly happy, and his detestation of the wicked in eternal torments.

[3.] Come we now to the justice of God. It is agreeable to the justice of his government that it should be well with them that do well, and ill with them that do evil, and that he should make a difference by rewards and punishments between the disobedient and the righteous. Conscience hath a sense of this, and therefore checketh and cheereth, as we have done good or evil. Heathens had accusing or excusing thoughts, which the apostle urgeth as an evidence to the gentiles of judgment to come: Rom. ii. 15, 16, 'Which show the works of the law written upon their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.' If every man's thoughts do accuse or excuse him respectively according to the nature of his actions, then there is in nature a sense of this different retribution. Notions of good and evil are as naturally implanted in our hearts as notions of truth and falsehood, and a man is as sensible of a difference between comely and base as between the right hand and the left; only the notions of good and evil are sooner corrupted than the notions of truth and falsehood. However, the workings of conscience cannot utterly be choked and deadened in any, though most men seek to stifle it, and the voice of it be oftentimes unheard. The very profane have hidden fears frequently revived in them because of these retributions of God's justice. The apostle telleth us, Rom. i. 32, 'Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death.' They were none of the tenderest men that are here spoken of, but such as were extremely debauched and corrupted, and did delight in the company of those who were as corrupt as themselves. Well, then, conscience is sensible of a reward and punishment, but this is not fully nor universally dispensed in this world; yea, rather the worst are permitted to enjoy most here, when the good are kept in a low and bare condition. And that is not the whole case; the worst do not only differ from the best, but are permitted to triumph over them. Now no righteous governor will suffer his disobedient subjects to persecute those who most carefully obey him, if he hath power to remedy it; and therefore, though he may permit it for a time, yet he will call them to an account, and then amends and satisfaction shall be made to them that have suffered wrongfully. Therefore the wicked are reserved to future punishment, and the godly to future reward.

[4.] Come we now to the goodness of God. The Lord is inclined to do good to his creatures; and if there were no sin to stop the course of his bounty, there would be nothing but happiness in the world; but certainly if any recover out of a state of sin, and are willing to devote themselves to God, and to contemn all their natural interests for his sake, certainly the Lord will be good and kind to them. A certain truth it is that no man serveth God for nought; and it is *ἐν πρώτοις*,

one of the first maxims of religion, that 'God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him,' Heb. xi. 6. Next to his being, we believe his bounty, that God's service, first or last, will turn to a good account. And it is the rather to be believed by us, because carnal and corrupted nature begrudgeth everything, and in the eye of sense all is lost that is laid out upon God. We say with Judas, 'What needeth this waste?' The same opinion that Seneca had of the Jewish sabbath, the same thoughts have carnal men of the service of God. He said the Jews were a foolish people, *quia septimam aetatis partem perdunt vacando*, because a full seventh part of their lives was lost in idleness and rest. While men are under the influence of such thoughts, they will never do anything for God that is great and worthy. And therefore, to confute this false conceit during the time of his patience, the superficial service he getteth from us hath its reward. He giveth many temporal blessings to those that worship him in the slightest fashion; as he suspended his judgments upon Ahab's mock humiliation, 1 Kings xxi. 29; and his present providence plainly declareth that none shall be a loser by God, nor do anything for nought. He pleaded by the prophet against this people for their sorry services and contemptuous usage of him: Mal. i. 10, 'Who is there even among you that would shut the doors for nought? Neither do ye kindle fire on mine altar for nought. I have no pleasure in you, saith the Lord of hosts, neither will I accept an offering at your hand;' that is, the porters of the temple did not open and shut the doors for nought, nor the Levites that kindled the fire, nor the priests attend upon the burnt-offering for nought; they were all well rewarded with tithes, portions, and oblations, and this by the Lord's own appointment and allowance. And again, if anything be done sincerely, though never so mean and inconsiderable, it hath its reward: Mat. x. 42, 'And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, he shall in no wise lose his reward.' The smallness and meanness of the benefit, help, and refreshing, done to any in Christ's name, shall not make it lose its estimation and recompense. This, though hardly credited by the unbelieving world, is very true: 'Verily I say unto you,' and 'he shall in no wise,' &c.; they are emphatical expressions. But now the more eminent services, which are carried on with hazard and difficulty and very considerable self-denial, surely they shall not fail of their recompense. Whatever we lose for Christ, we shall receive again with infinite advantage: Mark x. 29, 30, 'And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, there is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake and the gospel's, but he shall receive an hundred-fold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecution, and in the world to come eternal life.' He shall in this life, in the midst of his persecutions, and the time of his trials and troubles, have an hundred-fold; not in kind, an hundred wives and mothers (as Julian and Nero scoffed at the christians), but in value, in peace of conscience, and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the satisfaction of having discharged his duty. But God will not rest there; in the world to come he shall have eternal life.

Now, then, the argument groweth upon our hands. If self-denying obedience would be not only man's loss but utter ruin, and he be made miserable by his duty without any recompense, God would not only be not the best, but the worst master; and they that suffer the loss of life and all things by the cruelty of their persecutors would be utter losers by their faithfulness and obedience to God, which is contrary to the experience of all mankind, and all that natural light and sense of religion that is in men's hearts. Surely Christ would never proselyte us to a religion that is our undoing, nor shall any of his people be losers by him, or they that venture the most for him be in the worst condition; and therefore there must be another life, wherein he will fulfil the good he hath promised, and execute the evil threatened.

2. From the nature, state, and condition of man.

[1.] He is God's subject; not left at liberty to break or keep God's laws at his own pleasure, which he would seem to be if no harm would come of it, yea, present good and profit; for we see here the wicked live a life of pomp and ease, and often have their will upon the godly, and oppress them at their pleasure; their wickedness is their advantage. Now this is not only a great discouragement to the gracious and heavenly-minded, but would quite destroy all obedience, if there were not assurance of a better estate. Therefore God expresses himself as particularly engaged to punish such as flatter themselves with hopes of impunity, though they go on in their wickedness: Deut. xxix. 19, 20, 'And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst. The Lord will not spare him, but then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven.' They that add the moist to the dry, and the dry to the moist. So Zeph. i. 12, 'And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled upon their lees, that say in their heart, The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil.' And on the other side, he considereth the case of the faithful, that they have an opposite principle against their duty within their hearts, which must be always curbed and suppressed; and they meet with many temptations from the oppositions and reproaches of those that like not that sort of life which they addict and apply themselves unto; and therefore if they have not sufficient motives to keep them in the love of God and obedience to the end, how shall they bear up against all these blasts of persecution, when all the world is against them? They need both their cordials and their solaces from another and better world. Therefore God assureth them that their fidelity and obedience shall not be lost, that they are blessed already, and shall be perfectly blessed hereafter: James i. 12, 'Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him;' 1 Peter iv. 13, 'But rejoice inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings, that when his glory shall be revealed, you may be glad also with exceeding joy;' that is, that these sufferings are sure pledges of the glory that

shall ensue. Their joy is suspended while the glory of Christ is under a veil, but when he is manifested to the world, they shall be manifested to be the children of God. Alas! otherwise what would become of the best servants God hath in the world, when they are hooted at by the clamours of the wicked rabble, and pursued with sharp laws, and exposed to great difficulties and hardships, if they had no life to live but this? The bare sense of our duty would not support us in this state of imperfection if there were not a great recompense of reward set before us; so that the persuasion of another life is necessary to secure our duty.

[2.] Man is bound to be upright and sincere in God's service, or to get such a constitution of soul as to resolve to adhere to God, whatever temptations he hath to the contrary. Our Lord describeth the good ground to be 'that good and honest heart which, having received the word, keeps it, and brings forth fruit with patience,' Luke viii. 15. This was a principle not denied by many heathens, who esteemed the love of honesty and goodness better than this mortal life with all its appurtenances, and thought that a man was never sincere nor thoroughly honest till he did abhor the practice of any villany and impiety more than death, and those things which were *τὰ ἀπλῶς ἀγαθὰ*, absolutely good, a man ought to love them more than life, and lose life rather than omit their practice. Now such principles, whether they saw it, yea or no, do necessarily conclude and infer a life after this much better than this is, and an estate of torment much worse than death to those that have lived and died dishonestly; for everything that hath a being doth by an indispensable law of nature desire the continuance of its being, but most of all its well-being, or the bettering of its present estate. Therefore every man (if there be not a life after death) is bound to seek the preservation and continuance of this life above all things in the world besides; and to do that, no device would be dishonest or practice amiss. But all they that have ever heard of the name of virtue abhor this principle as base and odious, that a man should make what shift he can, though never so base and wicked, to maintain and save his life. No means used to this end are to be accounted foul, for nothing is so ill as death, nothing so good as life. But if this would destroy all honesty and virtue, then certainly we have hopes and fears of another life. If you will say, No; virtue is a sufficient recompense to itself, at what rate soever it be purchased and maintained; yet what is there to countervail all the losses and grievances it exposeth us unto, such as the loss of life and limbs? Virtue is a sufficient reward to itself, *spe, non re*, in hope, not in the thing itself, but so far as it is the only way to everlasting communion with God, who is our exceeding great reward, or so far as the assured hope of a better life after death is inseparably connexed to the constant practice of godliness in this life. And to do good merely for goodness' sake, without any eye or respect to the reward, is a strain of devotion contrary to that doctrine which is taught us by Christ and his apostles.

[3.] With respect to man's comfort and solace in his troubles, which ariseth from reflecting on our future reward when all things go cross to us here: 'Comfort one another with these words,' saith the apostle, 1 Thes. iv. 18. Now what words were those? The belief of a blessed

resurrection of those that died in or for the Lord ; that is, by occasion of the faith of Christ. He thought that consideration sufficient to yield matter of comfort or support to them. These are consolations proper to christians, because they are sure, as depending upon Christ's word ; and they are congruous and suitable, because their hearts are set upon these things ; not upon a vain world, but a blessed and glorious estate that Christ hath offered, and himself is entered into ; and when we get thither, our affections will be satisfied, desires granted, and hopes fulfilled. So that still the apostle's reasoning is strong : ' If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable ;' for our consolations, which are fetched from the other world, are our proper consolations.

[4.] With respect to the credit and esteem of God's servants in the world. It is neither for the glory of God nor the safety of his people that the most eminent virtue and goodness should lie under perpetual infamy. God's servants do not only suffer hard things, but their names are cast forth as evil. Now this is not for the honour of God, because it reflects upon him when the children of wisdom are represented as sons of folly, in checking their lusts, venturing their interests, and renouncing their all for their fidelity to Christ, as if they did foolishly in running into such inconveniences, when they might spare themselves, and sleep in a whole skin. Now it is a great dishonour to God that his wisest and most faithful servants should be accounted fools, and an humorous odd sort of men, that needlessly trouble themselves and others. This hardeneth the world in sin, and would quench and destroy all zeal for God, if there were not a time coming when the wisdom of the world shall be seen to be the greatest folly, and that there are no such fools as those that employ their greatest abilities in attaining present pleasure, profit, and preferment ; but those are the wisest adventurers who have sold all to promote the glory of God and gain Christ, who look not upon things as they appear now to the sensual and deluded world, but as they will be found at the last day, when all things shall be seen in their own proper colours. Neither is it for the safety of the saints, who, though they seek nothing but the public good, are traduced as the troublers of Israel, and their way condemned as factious singularity. Therefore it is a great satisfaction that we have hopes that things shall be reviewed, and that which is good be restored to its public honour, and the godly, who prize a good name above all earthly interests, shall have their faith found to praise and honour and glory : 1 Peter i. 7, ' That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

Use 1. It showeth us how much it concerneth us to be assured of the future estate. It is the life of our religion ; it bindeth our duty upon us by the strictest tie, and doth also establish our true and proper comfort. If we may have hope of better things from Christ in another world, not only in our calamities, but by our calamities, we should not have such dark and doubtful thoughts about eternal blessedness, but live more in the clear foresight of it by faith, and the foretaste of it by hope. Especially should this support us in two cases—in sharp afflictions, and in death.

1. In sharp afflictions. We are apt to take scandal and offence at

the sufferings that befall us for righteousness' sake ; but consider not only the promises of Christ, but that our very persecution is an argument of our final deliverance. The opposition of ungodly and unrighteous adversaries is 'to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God,' Phil. i. 28. That they are wretched and obdurate people, and run on to their own destruction ; but that you are sincere and penitent believers, who are not drawn away from your fidelity to Christ by any terrors whatsoever. It is not *ἐνδειξις*, not only an argument to confirm the hopes of the gospel, but a mark and token of your sincerity ; it confirmeth your right. Well, then, though our afflictions be smart and grievous, let us comfort ourselves with these hopes. You are not to look to present things, but future ; not to what is applauded in the world, but what opinion Christ will have of them at the last ; not to what you feel now, but what you shall enjoy hereafter. Though all things appear with pomp and glory on the world's side, and terror to the saints, yet this scene is soon withdrawn, and present time is quickly past, like a dream or piece of fantasy ; and then there is an utter inversion of things ; shame is on the wicked's side, and honour put upon the saints ; and the shame and glory are both eternal ; and when they enter into everlasting torments, we enter into our master's joy ; and the children of God, that are derided and vilified in the world, are then approved and justified by Christ ; and it shall be plainly seen that they have chosen the better part that have chosen the faith, and patience, and holiness of the saints.

2. In death. This is a comfort suited to that time. When you die, you may commend your souls to Christ ; as Stephen : Acts vii. 59, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.' God trusted Christ with souls from all eternity ; they were given him by way of charge and reward ; and you may trust him, for he is able to make good his trust : 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.' If they are consecrated, they may be committed. And you may dismiss your bodies to the grave, there to rest in hope : Acts ii. 26, 'Moreover also my flesh shall rest in hope ;' Acts xxiv. 15, 'And have hope towards God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust.' So Acts xxvi. 6-8, 'And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers : unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come : for which hope's sake, King Agrippa, I am accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead ?' Death seemeth to make void all the promises at once, but there is an estate after death. The dead shall rise ; and to men bred up in the church this should not seem incredible. It is not incredible in itself, considering the justice and power of God ; and this should not seem incredible to us, since all religion tendeth to it ; but rather you should entertain it as a matter of undoubted certainty. All true believers do look and long for and prepare for this blessedness ; otherwise why should they trouble themselves about religion, which abridgeth them of present delights, and often exposeth them to great difficulties and sufferings ? But there is another life, which is happy and joyful ; and therefore we serve God instantly day and night.

Use 2. That it concerneth us to see this blessed estate, not only by the light of faith, but reason. Though the light of scripture be more sure and clear, yet the light of nature hath its use. Nature saith, It may be; faith saith, It shall be; yet the light of nature must not be rejected.

1. Because things seen in a double light work the more strongly upon us; as our affections are stirred more by a double consideration than a single. As Paul said of Onesimus to Philemon, that he was dear to him, but much more dear to him 'both in the flesh and in the Lord,' ver. 16, as being one of his faith, and one of his family; so this worketh upon our faith, when even nature teacheth us that it is reasonable to expect such a retribution; then all vain cavils are refuted. All have not received the light of scripture, at least with such veneration and reverence as they ought to do: to such the light of nature is a preparative inducement either to believe, or to believe it more firmly. Nay, the children of God have not such a steady belief of the life to come as they ought to have, especially in time of temptation, as the time of grievous and bitter persecution is. Surely we need all the succour and relief which the nature of the thing will afford. Evil is present and pressing, and our great hopes are to come; surely then, besides the grounds of faith, we must study the helps of faith. The grounds of faith are the promises of the gospel; the helps of faith are such demonstrations and evidences as the light of nature will afford in the case. Therefore reason must be allowed to be an handmaid to faith.

2. Because by this means a temptation is turned into an argument. Men doubt of the being of God, of providence, and the future estate, because of the afflictions of the good; and this is one means to settle you in the belief of these things. It is good to observe how differently men will reason from the same principles; for the wicked draw another conclusion hence, either that there is no God, or he hath no respect to human affairs, or that all things are governed by chance, or the like. So elsewhere you may see what contrary and different conclusions the carnal and the spiritual draw from the same premises; as David infers the immutable certainty of God's promises: Ps. cxix. 89-91, 'For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven; thy faithfulness is unto all generations. Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth: they continue this day according to thine ordinance.' But the scoffers said, 'Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation,' 2 Peter iii. 4. Because the frame of nature had kept one constant tenor and course, they plead for the eternity of the world, and the falsehood of the promises; but David was hereby confirmed in the belief of God's constancy and fidelity. So from the brevity of life; see the different conclusions drawn from hence: 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 'The time is short: it remaineth that both they that have wives be as if they had none, and they that weep as though they wept not, and they that rejoice as though they rejoiced not, and they that buy as though they possessed not, and they that use the world as not abusing it.' On the contrary: 1 Cor. xv. 32, 'Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we shall die.' So from the grace of God: Jude 4, 'Turning the grace of God into lasciviousness;' compared with Rom. vi. 1, 'Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?' So also, 2 Sam. vii. 2, 'I dwell in an house of cedar

but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains.' Observe the workings of David's heart: 'The Lord hath built me a stately house, but what have I done for God? But those wretches, Hag. i. 2, 'This people say, The time is not come, the time that the Lord's house should be built.' So 1 Sam. iii. 18, 'It is the Lord; let him do what seemeth him good;' compared with 2 Kings vi. 33, 'Behold, this evil is of the Lord; why should I wait for the Lord any longer?' See Prov. xxvi. 9, 'As a thorn goeth up into the hand of a drunkard, so is a parable in the mouth of fools.' All is as the heart is.

3. Because if the perverse carriage of things now be not a confirmation to your faith, it will at least be an help to your meditation. Improve the argument as it was set forth before, by your most serious thoughts; thus: Surely there is a God; he is wise, holy, just, and good, and would not impose duty upon a man, but he hath encouragements and rewards to quicken him to the performance of it. Few christians are so firm and strong in believing but they may find it a prop to their faith. Certainly all are so barren of thoughts that they will find it an help to their meditation. Would God make laws with a sanction of penalty and reward, and never look after them more? Doth he delight in the prosperity of his servants or their afflictions? Would he raise hopes and desires which he never meant to satisfy? give the wicked power to afflict and vex his people, and never call them to an account? bid us venture our all for him, and give us no recompense? If such thoughts were more frequent with us, God would bless them to the increase of faith, love, and hope.

Use 3. Is to persuade us to live in the constant hopes of this blessed estate in the life to come. Hope is a certain and earnest expectation of the promised blessedness. Let me show you—(1.) The necessity of this hope; (2.) The encouragements of it.

1. The necessity that the hope of eternal glory should always be cherished in us.

[1.] Because it is a special act of the new nature: 1 Peter i. 3, 'Who hath begotten us to a lively hope.' As soon as we are children, we look for a child's portion. The new nature presently discovereth itself by its tendency to its end and rest, which is the fruition of God in heaven. Indeed, the scriptures speak of a twofold hope—one that is the immediate effect of regeneration, and flows from our acceptance of the new covenant, and dependeth upon the conditional offer of eternal life; we take it for our happiness, resolving to seek it in God's way; without this we are not new creatures. There is another hope, which is the fruit of experience, and belongeth to the seasoned and tried christian, who hath approved his own fidelity to God, and hath had much trial of God's fidelity to him. This is spoken of, Rom. v. 4, 'Patience worketh experience, and experience hope.' This produceth not a conditional certainty, but an actual confidence of our own salvation. The former is more necessary, for we live by it, but this is very comfortable.

[2.] Because it is the great end why the scriptures were written, to beget and raise this hope in us: Rom. xv. 4, 'For whatsoever things were written aforetime, were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.' It is the business and design of these holy books.

[3.] Because the keeping up of this hope with zeal and industry is

the distinguishing character between the temporary and the sincere convert. The one loseth his taste and comfort, and so casteth off the profession of godliness, or neglecteth the powerful practice of it; the other is diligent, serious, patient, mortified, heavenly, and holy, because 'he holdeth fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,' Heb. iii. 6. And his end sweetens his work, for this grace doth quicken the whole spiritual life: Titus ii. 12, 13, 'Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.'

[4.] Because we have nothing else to support us and fortify us against the difficulties that fall out between our first right to eternal life and our full possession of it. In our journey to heaven there are many sufferings and trials which must be undergone, and hope is our strength and support. He that sets his face heavenward will find difficulties that attend his service, temptations that assault his constancy, and troubles and calamities to which his religion exposeth him. Now it is hope carrieth us through, and therefore it is compared to an anchor: Heb. vi. 19, 'Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;' and to an helmet: Eph. vi. 17, 'And take the helmet of salvation,' compared with 1 Thes. v. 8, 'And for an helmet the hope of salvation.' As we would not go to sea without an anchor, and to war without an helmet, so we must not think of carrying on the spiritual life without hope; nothing else will compose the mind, and keep it stable in the floods of temptation, or cause us to hold up our heads in our daily conflicts and encounters. Without this anchor our souls are in danger of spiritual shipwreck; without this helmet our heads are exposed to deadly blows from sin, Satan, and worldly discouragements.

[5.] We shall need it not only while we live, but we shall have most need of it when we come to die. They that are destitute of the hope of glory then are in a dangerous, woful, and most lamentable case: Job xxvii. 8, 'For what is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?' They may be full of presumption and blind confidence while they live, but what hope have they when they come to die? All their worldly advantages will afford them no solid comfort. They live in a presumptuous dream that all shall be well; but then they die stupid and senseless, or else despairing, and their hopes fail them when they have most need of them.

2. The encouragements of it.

[1.] God's gracious covenant and promises. God would not invite and raise an hope to disappoint it, for surely God will not disappoint the creature that dependeth upon his word; and therefore we are allowed to challenge God upon his word: Ps. cxix. 49, 'Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.' It contains a double argument; the promise was of God's making, and the hope of his operation; the grant of the new covenant, and his influence by the Spirit. We have a strong tie upon God; as he giveth us the promise, which is a ground of hope, we may humbly put the bond in suit; and when his Spirit hath caused the hope, it is not with a purpose to defeat it.

[2.] Consider what a foundation God hath laid for his promises: 2 Tim. ii. 19, 'The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his;' 2 Cor. i. 20, 'For all the promises of God in him are Yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us.'

[3.] Observe what God hath given you by way of earnest. Hope is not built upon promises alone, but also upon assurances and earnest; the promises are contained in the word of God, but the earnest is given into our hearts: 2 Cor. i. 22, 'Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of his Spirit in our hearts;' 2 Cor. v. 5, 'Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given unto us the earnest of the Spirit;' Eph. i. 13, 14, 'In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' Though God be truth itself, and promiseth nothing but what he meaneth to perform, yet he will give earnest of his promises, and a pledge of his affection to us. An earnest is a part of the sum which is promised, so is the earnest of the Spirit a part of the promised felicity. God would not altogether weary us, and burden us with expectation, but giveth us somewhat in hand. Surely he that giveth us earnest will give us the whole sum. The earnest of the Spirit consisteth in light, life, grace, joy; one draehm of these is more precious than all the world, and yet these are but an earnest. Now, having such a confirmation in the midst of our doubts and fears, let us with more confidence look to receive the whole in due season.

[4.] Some already have got home to God upon the same terms, and in the same way in which you expect to get home to him. Think often of the happiness of the blessed, who are now enjoying what we expect, and are in possession of that supreme good which we hope for. They are entered into the joy of our Lord, and have neither miseries to fear nor blessings to desire beyond what they enjoy; they possess all that they love. And though the time of our advancement to these privileges be not yet come, yet we should look and long for it. We are all of the same family: Eph. iii. 15, 'Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.' It is but one household; some live in the upper room, some in the lower, some in heaven, some on earth; but we are all of the same society and community: Heb. xii. 23, 'To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven.' We are said to be already come into this fellowship, only they have gotten the start of us, and are made perfect before us, that we should follow after. We are reconciled to the same God by the same Christ: Col. i. 20, 'By him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.' And we expect our portion from the bounty of the same Father. If he hath been so good to that part of the family which is now in heaven, will he not be as good to the other part also? Therefore they that are working out their salvation with fear and trembling may encourage themselves, and look upon this felicity as prepared for them, though not enjoyed by them. It will one day be their portion, as well as those others who have passed the pikes, and are now triumphing with God.