

he smart for sin? What a wound in the conscience will wilful heinous sins make? Witness David, Ps. xxxii. and li. He gives an account how uneasy his heart did sit within him, he was afraid of God, who before was his joy and delight, and speaks as one ready to be cast out of his presence.

## SERMON VI.

*And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.*—2 THESS. III. 5.

THERE are two things keep religion alive in the soul—a love to God, and a hearty intent upon the coming of Christ. These are the two necessary graces which the apostle prays for in the text. Here is the love of God, that is the first grace, and the earnest or patient waiting for Christ. Love respects God, because he is the chief object of it, *primum amabile*, as being the first and chiefest good; but hope or patient expectation respects Christ, who, at his glorious coming, will give us our full reward. Love is the life and soul of our present duties, and by patient expectation we wait for our future hope. The love of God urgeth us to the duties of religion, and hope strengthens us against temptations, whether they arise from the allurements of sense or the troubles of the world. Love is our breastplate that guards the vitals of Christianity, and hope is our helmet that covers our head, that we may hold up our head in the midst of all the troubles and sorrows of the present life, 1 Thes. v. 8. Both graces are necessary, therefore it will not be unprofitable to insist upon them. I begin now with the former, ‘The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God,’ where note—

1. The grace prayed for: *the love of God*.

2. The efficiency which is necessary to produce it: *the Lord direct your hearts*. The word *direct* notes sometimes conduct and guidance, and sometimes bending or setting straight the thing that is crooked. Conduct and guidance, as we guide men that they may not go wrong; Ps. cxix. 5, ‘Oh, that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes.’ Ships that are best rigged need a pilot, and they that love God most need to have their love ordered and directed to the best advantage of his glory and service. This for the first signification, guidance, and direction. But at other times it signifies the bending, inclining, or making straight what is crooked, and what bends and tends another way; in this sense I take it here. Our hearts are distorted and writhed, and averse from God and all good naturally; yea, and after grace received, are apt to wander, and return to their old bent and bias again; therefore, the apostle prays that God would form and set their hearts straight, that they may be more indeclinably fixed towards God; and this prayer he makes for the Thessalonians, whose ‘work of faith and labour of love and patience of hope’ he had so much commended before, and of whose sincerity he had such great confidence; for

those he prays that their love might be directed, and their hearts more fixedly set towards God. The note then will be plain and easy.

*Doct.* That we cannot have or keep up any true love to God, unless the Lord set our hearts straight, and keep them bent towards himself. I shall inquire here:—

I. What is love to God? Love is the complacency of the soul in what is good. Love to God is the complacency and well-pleasèdness of the soul in God as our all-sufficient portion. To open it to you, I shall describe it:—

I. By its radical and internal acts.

II. By its external effects.

III. A little touch upon the properties of it, and then you will see what the love of God is.

I. The radical and internal acts are two—desire and delight; desire after him and delight in him.

I. Desire after him. Love affects union with the thing beloved; and so love to God implies an earnest seeking after him, in the highest way of enjoyment that we are capable of in this world. This appears partly by the kind of mercies that we affect, and partly by the fervency of our endeavours after him.

[1.] By the kind of mercies that we affect. There are some mercies vouchsafed to the creature that lie nearer to God than others do, and do least detain us from him, as his image and favour, or his renewing and reconciling grace. When we love God, these are sought in the first place, as you shall see how the temper of the saints is described and distinguished from the temper of the brutish multitude: Ps. iv. 6, 7, ‘The many say, Who will show us any good? but, Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us, and this will put gladness into our hearts.’ The many, the brutish multitude, seek an uncertain good, and they seek it from an uncertain author—‘Who will show us?’—they do not acknowledge God in these common mercies; but the children of God must have his favour—‘Lord lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us;’ as the beams of the sun do cheer and refresh the earth, this is that that doth revive their souls. So Mat. v. 6, ‘Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness.’ Well, then, they that desire to be like God in purity and holiness, and to recover his favour lost by sin, do certainly more love him than those that only seek temporal mercies from him. God’s sanctifying Spirit witnessing his love to us is the greatest gift can be bestowed in this life, and will more witness his love than anything else can be given us. This the saints seek after, that they may be like God, that they may be accepted and well pleasing unto God—this is all their ambition: 2 Cor. v. 9, ‘Wherefore we labour that whether present or absent we may be accepted of the Lord.’ Other things may please the flesh, but that is not their design; those things that bring them nearer to God take up their mind and heart. Now as it appears by the mercies we affect, so it appears—

[2.] By the fervency of our endeavours after these things; for if the image of God and favour of God be sought superficially, or as things that we may be well without, and the wealth, honours, and pleasures of the world be most earnestly sought after, surely we do not

love God: Ps. lxxiii. 8, 'My soul followeth hard after thee.' The whole spiritual life is but a pursuit of the soul towards God; and the more constantly and earnestly we seek him, to enjoy more of his saving graces and benefits, the more we have of the love of God in us. Therefore David expresseth this desire, as exceeding all other desires: Ps. xxvii. 4, 'One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after, that I might 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.' He sought not the glory of the kingdom, success in battle, victory over his enemies, in the first place, or not so much as converse with God, and attendance on his worship in the tabernacle; all was nothing to this, that he might have communion with God. Therefore this is the radical act of love—this fervent, burning desire that carries the soul through all duties, ordinances, services; they are still making their way to a nearer access to God, and larger participation of his grace, till they come eternally to enjoy him in glory.

2. There is another internal radical act of love; that is, a delight in him. Our full joy is reserved for the other world, but delighting ourselves in God is a greater duty now; for love being the complacency of the soul in God, as apprehended to be good, or a delightful adhesion to God as our all-sufficient portion and happiness, it cannot be imagined love can be without any delight in God even now. Now in this valley of tears, the hope of enjoying him hereafter is our comfort and solace in the midst of our weaknesses and afflictions, that there is a time coming when we shall more perfectly 'see him as he is,' and 'be like him,' 1 John iii. 2. The apostle tells us, 'We rejoice now in the hope of the glory of God;' that we have this in expectation, that we shall have an estate of complete felicity and excellent holiness; that we shall behold our nature united to the godhead in the glorified redeemer, and our persons admitted into the nearest intuition and fruition of God we are capable of, and live in the exercise of a constant uninterrupted love, and be perfectly capable of receiving his highest benefits. Surely this joy we have in our pilgrimage. But there is not only our hope, but our partial enjoyment of it is matter of happiness to us; his favour is as life, and his frown as death to the soul that loves him. The saints look on God reconciled as the best friend, God displeased as the most dreadful adversary; therefore if they have any taste of his love, their 'souls are filled as with marrow and fatness:' Ps. lxxiii. 3-5, 'Because thy loving-kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. I will bless thee while I live. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips.' But if God hide his face; if God be altogether a stranger, then they are troubled indeed, Ps. xxx. 7. But yet we are not gone to the bottom of the matter of delighting in God. Those whose souls are possessed with the love of God, are so well pleased with him, that everything is sweet to them by the relation it hath to God. It is a delight to them to think of God: Ps. civ. 34, 'I will be glad and rejoice in him; my meditation of him shall be sweet.' It is a delight to them to speak of God: Eph. v. 4, 'Not foolish jesting, but giving of thanks.' The delight of God's children, or that which serves instead of jesting to Christians, is the grateful

remembrance of the Lord's mercies, especially of our redemption by Christ. To draw nigh to him in ordinances, there this delight is exercised again. There is prayer. A gracious soul cannot be a stranger to it, because it cannot have a greater refreshing than to be alone with God, and unbosom himself with God. The hypocrite is rejected from being capable of this character: Job xxvii. 10, 'Will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?' Sometimes he will call upon God, he is frightened into a little religiousness, it may be, when death is at his back, in great afflictions, or time of great judgments; but he hath no constant delight in God. The constant delight in God is that that brings the saints into his presence. So for all other Christian duties: Ps. cxxii. 1, 'I was glad when they said unto me, Come, let us go into the house of the Lord.' There they entertained traffic and commerce with God about matters of the highest concernment to their precious and immortal souls. Nay, all their work, the whole course of their obedience, is sweetened to them, because it is commanded by God, and tends to the enjoyment of God: as Ps. cxii. 1, 'Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord, that delighteth greatly in his commandments;' they not only keep the commandments, but delight (and that greatly) to keep the commandments. And Ps. cxix. 14, 'I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.' Delight in God is a great act of love, to which we should not be strangers, even in the house of our pilgrimage, though we have no assurance or sensible enjoyment of his favour; for it is a duty of the first commandment, that results from the owning of God as our God.

II. For the external effects of love, they are doing and suffering his will, when we are contented to do what God will have us do, and be what God will have us be.

1. For doing. If we love God, we shall be loth to offend him, we shall be desirous to please him. Faith, I do confess, is a marvellous grace, it can apprehend things strange to nature, but it can do no worthy thing for God, till it be accompanied with love, Gal. v. 6. When the apostle tells us of that faith, that carries away the prize of justification, he describes it to be a 'faith working by love.' Faith itself serves as the bellows to blow up this flame in our hearts, as the next and immediate principle of action. In short, love is the overruling bent of our souls, the weight and poize upon us that inclines us to God. And look, as all noble qualities, when restrained, cannot produce their consummate act, so love suffers a kind of imperfection, till it can thus break forth into some act of thankfulness to God; but then it is perfected: 1 John ii. 5, 'Whoso keepeth his word, in him the love of God is perfect,' that is, hath attained its consummate act, that which it aims at. No man certainly can be owned as a perfect, sincere lover of God, but he that makes conscience of doing what he commands; none but they have a deep sense of his majesty; none but they have an esteem of his favour; therefore they dare not hazard it by a breach or neglect of their duty.

2. For suffering his will. For when the apostle prays here God would direct their hearts to love him, he means that they should endure anything rather than deny the faith, and confess Christ whatever

it cost them. As obedience is virtually contained in love, so also courage and resolution. Solomon represents love as a powerful thing, as an affection that will not be bribed nor quenched: Cant. viii. 7, 'Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it: if a man would give the whole substance of his house for it, it would be utterly condemned.' It is true of love in general, much more of love to God. In carnal matters, love is a venomous poison; when it hath invaded the heart, nothing will reclaim us: but in divine matters, it is a sovereign antidote against temptations, both on the right hand and on the left. For right-hand temptations, all the riches, pleasures, honours, are contemned, they cannot bribe them over from Christ that really love him. All the floods of persecution cannot quench this holy desire. This is the genius and disposition of love, when once the bent of the heart is set towards God and heaven, they are vehemently set against anything that would turn them out of the way, and divert them from their purpose.

III. To speak of the properties; if it be sincere:—

1. It is not a speculative but practical love, not consisting in lofty airy strains of devotion too high for the common rate of us poor mortals. No; it is put upon a surer and infallible test—our obedience to God. Again, it consists not in a bold familiarity, but in a humble subjection and compliance with his will. 'He that hath my commandments and keeps them, he it is that loves me.' God's love is a love of bounty, but ours a love of duty; therefore we are properly said to love God when we are careful to please him, and fearful to offend him. The scripture declares both: the first, 'This is love, to keep his commandments, and his commandments are not grievous;' the second, Ps. xcvi. 10, 'Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.' When we are fearful of committing or omitting anything may be a violation of his law, a grief to his Spirit, or a dishonour to his name, then we are said to love God. Whatever lofty and luscious strains of devotion we may otherwise please ourselves with, here will our trial rest. He doth not love God that can most accurately discourse of his attributes, or soar aloft in the nice speculations of contemplative divinity, or pretences of secrecy with God, but he that is most awful, serious and conscientious in his duty.

2. It is a transcendental love we owe to God; we must love him above all other things. For he must be loved as our felicity and end. He must have the chiefest place in our hearts, and our principal design must be to please, serve, and glorify him. If we seek God in order to other things, we do not love him, but our own lusts; nay, if all other things be not sought after in order to God, we do not set him up as our chief good or last end. 'He that loves father and mother more than me, is not worthy of me,' 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.' Many have a partial, half love to God, but a greater love to other things; then God's interest will be least minded, for there is something nearer and dearer to us than God, which will be soon preferred before the conscience of our duty to him. No; all must be subordinated to our supreme happiness and last end, or else God is not loved as God.

But now the second thing propounded is the nature of that influence upon love, which is expressed here by the apostle in the word *direct.* 'The Lord direct your hearts in the love of God.' What doth this imply?

[1.] It implies that God works upon us as rational creatures; he changeth the heart indeed, but he doth it by direction: he 'draws' us to himself, but it is 'with the cords of a man;' he teacheth while he draws: John vi. 44, 45, 'None can come unto me but those whom the Father draws;' and he proves it by this, because 'they shall be all taught of God.' God's drawing is teaching, it is both by the attractive force of the object, and the internal efficacy of his grace; the Spirit's conduct is sweet, yet powerful, accomplisheth the effect, but without offering violence to the liberty of man. We are not forced, but directed. There is not a violent compulsion, but an inclination sweetly raised in us by victorious grace, or the overpowering sweetness of his love. For 'we love him, because he loved us first,' 1 John iv. 19. And this love is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who by giving us an esteem and serious remembrance of his benefits, blows up this holy flame in our hearts. We do not love God we know not why or wherefore; an account can be given of all the Spirit's operations. Look, as in an impression there must be a seal, and wax to the seal, and the hand that stamps it; so all concur here. The word doth its part, that is the seal, and the heart of man receives the impression; but to make it effectual and durable, the hand of God concurs, or the power of his Spirit. The object is the gospel, wherein God commends his love to us by the incarnation, death, and intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; as also by the new covenant, because he will work upon man after the nature of man; by love he will work upon love. Beside all this, there is an internal powerful agent, the Holy Spirit. The external objective means cannot do it without the inward cause. Though God's love doth so gloriously and resplendently shine forth in the gospel, yet the heart of man is not affected with it till it be shed abroad by the illuminating sanctifying Spirit. The heart of man is dark and dead to these things till changed by grace, and when that is once done, that impression is according to the stamp.

[2.] The inclination to God as our felicity and end, which is the fruit of this grace, is the inclination of a reasonable creature; so the inclination is necessary, but the acts are voluntary, therefore you must keep them up still. There is an inclination put by God into inanimate things, as in light and airy bodies to move upwards, and in heavy bodies to move downwards; as a stone falls to the earth, but fire and smoke ascend, they cannot do otherwise, because they have no choice. But now in man there is an inclination to God and heaven, which is the fruit of grace. The inclination is necessary. Why?—because all those whom the Spirit sanctifies, he sanctifies them not in vain, he certainly begets this tendency in them towards God: therefore so often they are said in scripture to be converted or turned to God. Their hearts were averse before, but then they tend and bend towards him; but the acts are voluntary. There is a duty lying upon us to 'stir up the gift of grace that is in us;' the word is *ἀναζωοποιεῖν*, 2 Tim. i. 6. When this holy fire is kindled in our bosoms, we must blow it up and

keep it burning. We must not be negligent and secure, for we cannot reasonably imagine the idle and diligent should fare alike, that the Holy Ghost will direct our hearts into the love of God whether we will or not; therefore, not only as we are rational agents, but as we are new creatures, we are obliged to use the means, and then expect his help and blessing. What is a prayer in the text, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, to the patient waiting for Christ,' is an exhortation, Jude 21, 'Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto everlasting life.' There is both again; you must look to your love, that your hearts be kept straight and bent towards God, and not distracted with worldly vanities. The blessing is from God, but you must use the means; this direction is not to encourage slothfulness, but industry. We must charge it upon ourselves, as our main work and duty: the Spirit stirs and quickens, we must rouse up ourselves.

[3.] It implies there are many things would writhe, and crook, and turn our hearts another way—the devil, the world, and the flesh. The devil seeks to draw us off from God, to abate the fervour of our love towards him; therefore we are bidden 'to flee youthful lusts,' 2 Tim. ii. 22, that we may not be taken captive by him at his will and pleasure. Some tamely yield to his temptations, and he doth unto them as he listeth; but there is more tugging and drawing to get a serious Christian into his snare. Therefore, we are bidden to be 'sober and watchful, for your adversary the devil, like a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour.' Sobriety is a sparing use of worldly delights, and vigilance is a serious diligence in the use of all those holy means whereby temptations may be vanquished. And as the devil, so the flesh: James i. 14, 'A man is tempted when he is drawn away by his lusts, being enticed;' that is, by seeking to please his fleshly mind and appetite. And then the world would pervert us, and offers many baits to that end and purpose: 1 John ii. 15, 16, 'Love not the world, nor the things of the world; for if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For whatsoever is in the world, is either the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, or the pride of life;' that is, pleasures, riches, and honours. These seem sweet baits, but there is a dangerous hook in them, and your love to God may soon be lessened. Well, then, this directing is opposed to wavering by reason of any of these temptations on the one or the other side, that the Holiest may keep in us that ardent love of God which of duty we owe to him.

[4.] *Directing* notes the orderliness of the new creature. There is not a more beautiful thing in the world when the motions thereof are directed by the Spirit, for then we are in a due posture both to God, our neighbour, and ourselves. To God, for then the creature is kept in a due subjection to him, and all our motions and actions are subordinated to his glory. When we sin we are in rebellion against God, and set up the creature against him, as if it were more amiable and fitter to content and delight the soul than God, and so disturb the order and harmony of the world, abusing both ourselves and all things within our grasp to a wrong end. Look, as in the motions of a watch, there is such a proportion in every part, that if one wheel be wrong the whole is put out of frame; so the world, that was made for us,

and we for God, is all disordered when we use the world for ourselves and not for God. So as to our neighbour. Self-lovers and self-pleasers will never heartily do good to others. The most sincere commerce in the world is among those that love God. So for ourselves. Till the love of God rule in our hearts all is out of order. Look, as in the body, if the feet were there where the head should be, the disorder and deformity would be great; so it is in the soul, when the beast rides the man, and conscience and reason are made slaves to lust and appetite. But when once a man is gained to love God, everything is in frame again, self-government is restored, due obedience to God is well provided for.

To give you some reasons to show you the necessity of this, both as to persons regenerate and unregenerate.

1. The necessity of God's direction to persons unregenerate. They cannot love God till the Lord direct and set their hearts straight. It is a hard thing to say (but we must not mince the matter), that in the carnal state we were all haters of God, Rom. i. 28. And it were well if this enmity and hatred were thoroughly got out of our hearts. How can this be? Nature tells us that he from whom we have received being, and life, and all things, deserves our love. I answer—Though men may see some reason of love to God as he is our creator and preserver, but as he is a lawgiver and a judge, so we all hate him. Three reasons there are of that natural enmity that is in the hearts of men against God. I would have you consider them seriously, that we may feelingly bewail our own aversion from God.

[1.] Our inclination to carnal things, which prepossesseth our hearts, and then there is no room for any inclination to God. Naturally men are addicted to vain and sensual delights, for 'that which is born of the flesh is flesh,' John iii. 6. Having no principle to incline them to God, they wholly seek to please the flesh. When men once lost original righteousness, they took up with what came next to hand, and so became 'lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God,' 2 Tim. iii. 4. And this inclination we cannot divest ourselves of till it be cured by grace. Therefore the Lord promiseth this cure: Deut. xxx. 6, 'The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.' The heart must be circumcised before it can love God. Till God pare away the foreskin, and till this carnal love be mortified, there is no place for divine love to be raised and quickened in our hearts. We are entangled in the love of worldly things, and shall so remain till God bend the crooked stick the other way, and God set our hearts right to himself.

[2.] The second reason is carnal liberty, and so we hate God as a lawgiver, who would bridle our lusts. There is in the law the precept and the sanction. The precept is to our purpose, the sanction will come to be considered in the next. Because of God's restraint we cannot enjoy our lusts with that freedom and security we desire. His law is in the way, therefore the heart riseth up against God, because he hath made a law to forbid those things that we affect: Rom. viii. 7, 'The natural mind is enmity to God, for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can be;' Col. i. 21, 'Enemies in your mind by evil works.' We love



sin, therefore we hate God, who forbids it, and makes it so penal and damnable to us.

[3.] Slavish fear is the cause of this enmity. This relates to the sanction and penalty of the law. Thus, we hate God, because we fear he will call us to account for our sins, and punish us; for a condemning God, barely apprehended under that notion; can never be loved by a guilty creature. Thus Adam, when he had sinned, ran away from God, and hid himself in the bushes, Gen. iii. 7, 10. Now it is in vain to come and tell them of the goodness of God and his perfections till he change their hearts; as you do in vain induce a guilty prisoner to love his judge, to tell him he is a discreet person, a man of solid judgment, one well skilled and versed in the law—this sticks, he is one that will condemn him. Therefore the gospel, as a means to induce us to love God, sets him forth as a sin-pardoning God: 'There is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.'

2. Come we to the regenerate. The Thessalonians did excel in all graces, and yet the apostle prays that the Lord would 'direct their hearts to the love of God.' Why?

[1.] Because there are many defects of love in the best. To give some instances:—

First, Love signifies a strong inclination, or an earnest bent of heart towards God, as our chief good and last end. Well, then, our end is our measure by which we judge of all means, of the aptness and fitness of what is to be avoided and embraced. The seasonableness of all means must be determined by the end, that all means that are inconsistent with and impertinent to our great end may be cut off. Now all sins are inconsistent with making God our great end, and all vain and foolish actions are impertinent thereunto. Judge you by this, if we have such a perfect love to God, if this be love, as questionless it is. But now with how many impertinent and extravagant actions do we fill up our lives? How many purposes, desires, words, and actions have we that have no respect to our great end at all? How much do we live to ourselves, and how little to God? How great a passion have we for earthly things, so that they can occupy and intercept the far greatest part of our lives? And then judge whether we had not need have the bent kept up, and the tendency towards God, as our end and happiness: Ps. lxxxvi. 11, 'Unite my heart to the fear of thy name.' It is the natural disease of man's heart to be loosed from God, and to be distracted in variety of worldly objects, which obtrude themselves upon our senses, offer themselves to us daily; therefore it is not enough for a man once to resign over his heart to God, as we do in conversion, when this love was first wrought in us, but we need often to beg that God would reclaim us from this ranging after carnal vanities, that he would direct and keep us straight and true to our end, that we may love him more, and at a better rate. So, if you consider the nature of love; the thing is obvious and plain, unless the Lord maintain this love in us, and keep it up, what will become of us?

The second evidence is those slavish fears which do oppress us and hinder our delight in God and comfortable communion with him in the means of grace. Certainly the more we are under slavish fear,

the less love we have to God and thankfulness for his grace. The apostle tells you, 1 John iv. 18, 'There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear, because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love.' Surely we should seek after such a spirit of love, that all we do for God may be done with great delight; that we may not serve him by compulsion, but by inclination; not as enjoined only, but as inclined; not as putting a force upon ourselves, but as delighting in our work. And then—

Thirdly, Another instance is our frequent preferring the profits and pleasures of the world before the service of God, and if it doth not go so far as to forfeit our right, yet how often do we expose and put our spiritual comforts to hazard for every trifle? As Esau, that sold his birthright for a morsel of meat, Heb. xii. 15, 16. The best of us show too much lothness to cut off the right hand, and to pluck out the right eye, or to do that which is signified by it. This shows a weakness of love; for where love is strong, there is a thorough inclination to God; we dare love nothing above him, or against him, or without him.

Fourthly, Our backwardness to obedience, and the tediousness we find in it, shows a great imperfection in our love. All goes on easily, sweetly, acceptably, where love is at the bottom. Gen. xxix. 20, Seven years to Jacob seemed as a few days, for the love that he had to Rachel; and so love sweetens our obedience: 'His commandments are not grievous.' But when we are wedded to worldly things, and will not be reclaimed from them, then every heavenly business is an interruption to what we would be at, what we delight in.

Fifthly, The many conflicts we have with carnal self-love, or our own foolish and hurtful lusts, show our love is not perfect; as the weakness of faith is seen and felt by the remainders of unbelief, and our frequent conflicts with doubts and fears: 'Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief,' Mark ix. 24. So the weakness of our love is known by the opposition of carnal and inordinate self-love. The flesh will say sometimes, 'Favour thyself,' or 'What a weariness is it,' Mal. i. 13, and grudge everything that is done for God. It doth excuse us in our stragglings and deviations from our great end, and applaud us in our negligent course of living; as 'the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason,' Prov. xxvi. 16. Nay, sometimes it will urge us to please ourselves to the grief of the Spirit, and to take our fill of carnal delights. All this belongs to the first reason.

[2.] There needs much to be done about our love after it is planted in the soul; we need to get it rooted, to get it increased, to get it continually excited, and kept in act and exercise.

(1.) We need to get it rooted. Our first affection to God and heavenly things may hastily put forth itself, as the early blossoms of the spring do, but they are soon nipt; and those high tides of affections, which we find in our first acquaintance with religion, afterwards sink low enough. Love is more passionately expressed at first, partly by reason of the novelty of the things represented to us, and partly because of our great necessity, as men that are in a violent thirst take large draughts with pleasure; and because our love is not as yet dispersed into the several channels of obedience, but wholly taken up with

admiraions of grace ; but yet this may vanish and decay. Our business is to be 'rooted and grounded in love,' as the apostle saith, Eph. iii. 17, to get a more solid, durable affection to God.

(2.) After it is planted it needs to be more increased : Phil. i. 9, 'I pray God your love may abound yet more and more.' At first love is but weak ; there is fire, but it is not blown up into a flame ; afterwards God gets a greater interest in our hearts, and then the constitutions of our souls become more holy and heavenly. Love being the heart of the new creature, he that hath most love hath most grace, and is the best and strongest Christian.

(3.) After it is planted in the soul it needs to be excited and kept in act and exercise. This is mainly intended here. For—

First, All religion is in effect but love. Faith is a thankful acceptance of Christ, and thankfulness is an expression of love. Repentance is but mourning love ; as she wept much to whom much was forgiven, Luke vii. 47. Diligence in the holy life is but seeking love ; obedience is pleasing love ; self-denial is the mortification of inordinate self-love ; sobriety is a retrenching of our carnal love.

Second, If love be not acted and kept at work, carnal love will prevail. The soul of man cannot lie idle, especially our affections cannot ; either they are carried out to God, or they will leak out to worldly things. When our love ceaseth, yet concupiscence ceaseth not, and the love of the world will soon grow superior in the soul ; for the neglected principle languisheth, while the other principle gets strength, and secures its interest to God. The—

Third is the benefit we have by keeping love in act. This makes us more sincere, and to act purely for God : 2 Cor. v. 14, 'The love of Christ constrains us : for we thus judge, that they that live should no more live to themselves, but to him that died for them, and rose again.' The constraining influence of love is that that keeps us from living to ourselves ; and this makes us more diligent. Labour and love are often coupled in the scripture : 'Knowing your labour of love, the work of faith and patience of hope ;' 'and God is not unrighteous to forget your labour of love ;' the church of Ephesus 'lost her first love,' she 'left her first work,' Rev. ii. 4, 5.

*Use.* Oh, then, let us seek this benefit from God, that our hearts may be directed into his love.

1. The sanctifying Spirit is given us for this end, to stir up love to God : John iv. 14, 'The water I will give him shall be a well of water, always springing up unto eternal life.' It is not in the heart a dead pool, but a living spring. And the same is intimated, John vii. 38, 'He that believes in me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water ; this he spake of the Spirit.'

2. The ordinances were appointed for this end. The word, to represent God amiable to us, both for the goodness in him and the goodness proceeding from him, especially in our redemption by Christ ; and also for those rich preparations of grace he hath made for us in another world to blow up this holy fire ; and this is the end of the sacrament. All the dainties that are set before us in the Lord's Supper do all taste and savour of love. Our meat is seasoned with love, and our drink flows into our cup out of the wine-press of love. Why do we eat

of the crucified body of Christ, but that we may remember Jesus 'who loved us, and gave himself for us?' Gal. ii. 20. And also the drink that is provided for us at this feast is the blood of Christ: Rev. i. 5, 'Who loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood.'

3. All the providences of God tend to this end, that we may love God; all God's mercies are as new fuel to keep in this fire. 'I will love the Lord, because he has heard the voice of my supplication,' Ps. cxvi. 1; 'And thou shalt love the Lord, who is the strength of thy life, and the length of thy days,' Deut. xxx. 20. All the mercy we have from God is to refresh and revive our love, that it may not languish and die; nay, all the sharp corrections God sends are to recover our love to God: Isa. xxvi. 9, 'My soul hath desired thee in the night,' saith the prophet, 'and early have I sought thee.' And when was that?—'when thy judgments were abroad in the world,' when great and sharp afflictions were upon them.

## SERMON VII.

*And into the patient waiting for Christ.*—2 THESS. III. 5.

THE words are a prayer; and the apostle prays here for those things which are most necessary to Christians—love to God, and patient waiting for Christ.

I come now to handle the second branch.

The point is this:—

*Doct.* That when the heart is bent by love to God, we need also the direction of his grace to keep it intent upon the coming of Christ.

Four things I must speak to:—

I. What this patient waiting for Christ is.

II. The connection between it and the love of God.

III. That it hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, or keeps religion alive in the soul.

IV. The necessity of God's concurrence hereto: 'the Lord direct your hearts into the patient waiting for Christ.'

I. What is this patient waiting for Christ? I answer—It is the grace of hope fortifying our resolutions for God and the world to come, that we may continue in our duty till our work be finished and our warfare ended. The act of hope is three ways expressed:—Sometimes by looking, which notes a certain expectation: Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour.' Sometimes by loving or longing, which notes a desirous and earnest expectation: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Not to me only, but to all that love his appearing.' Sometimes by waiting, which notes a patient expectation, 1 Thes. i. 10. He makes it there the fruit of our conversion: he saith, we are 'turned to God, that we may wait for his Son from heaven.' This last notion is expressly mentioned in the text, the others are implied; as looking, there can be no waiting for that we

do not look for; and longing, for delay is only troublesome to them that earnestly desire his coming, and build their hopes upon it. Faith adds certainty, and love earnestness; and both give strength to patience. Let us open all these things. As—

1. Looking for the coming of Christ: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.' It is not a matter of conjecture, but of faith. Reason saith, He *may* come; but faith saith, He *will* come. Nature will teach us it is very likely, for a guilty conscience fears the judge; and the course of things is so disordered in the world, that there needs a review. But scripture tells us, it is very certain that 'he that shall come, will come, and will not tarry,' Heb. x. 37. Therefore, in the eye of faith it is sure and near. As Rebecca spied Isaac at a distance, so faith looks upon Christ as if he had begun his journey, and were now upon the way, and makes the believer stand ready to meet him and welcome him. Though it come not to pass presently, the thing is promised, and the time certainly determined in God's eternal purpose, which is enough for faith.

2. There is a longing or a desirous expectation: 2 Peter iii. 12, 'Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.' It is good to observe how differently this coming of Christ is entertained in the world; it is questioned by the atheist, it is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent, but it is longingly expected by the godly.

[1.] For the first sort: 2 Peter iii. 3, 4, 'There shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming?' They would eternally enjoy the pleasures of the present world, and therefore labour to dash all thoughts of this great day out of their hearts, and take up all obvious prejudices to smother the belief of it: they would be glad in their hearts to hear such news that Christ would never come. Now, their wishes do easily commence into opinion. Christ's coming is the burden and torment they would willingly get rid of; and men readily believe what they earnestly desire.

[2.] The second sort. It is dreaded by the wicked and impenitent. And therefore hated and abhorred by them. At the mention of it Felix trembled, Acts xxiv. 25. There is reason for it, for Christ comes to them as a terrible judge. In scripture his coming is set forth by light, and sometimes by fire. Light is comfortable, but fire dreadful: 2 Thes. i. 8, 'He shall come in flames of fire to render vengeance to them that obey not the gospel.' But—

[3.] To the godly it is not matter of terror, but delight; not like the handwriting on the wall to Belshazzar, but like comfortable tidings to one that expects news from far; they long for it, and would hasten it if they might have their desire: Cant. viii. 14, 'Make haste, my beloved, and be like a young hart or roe upon the mountains of spices.' Christ is not slack, but the church's affections are strong, therefore she saith, Make haste. So Rev. xxii. 20, Christ saith, 'I come;' and the church, like a quick echo, takes the words out of his mouth, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.' Christ's voice and the church's voice are unisons. You will say this is the desire of the church in general; but doth every particular believer so desire it?

I answer—The part follows the reason of the whole, the same Spirit is in all the faithful; the Spirit in the bride says come; the Holy Ghost in necessary things works uniformly in all the saints, therefore he breeds this desire in them. The meanest, the weakest, even those that tremble at their own unpreparedness, have some inclination that way. There may be a drowsiness and indisposition, but no total extinction of the desire of meeting with Christ.

3. There is waiting; and here it is expressed by its adjunct, 'patient waiting;' for patient waiting is an act of hope, as well as longing expectation: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'Knowing,' saith he, 'your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope.' Faith, or a sound belief of things, will break out into practice; therefore the work of faith, love, will put us upon labour, and hope produces patience. There is a threefold patience spoken of in scripture; all the branches are near kin, for they are all begotten by hope.

[1.] The *bearing patience*; which is a constancy in adversity, or a perseverance in our duty notwithstanding the difficulties and trials that we meet with in our passage to heaven: Heb. vi. 12, 'Be ye followers of them who, through faith and patience, have inherited the promises.' As we cannot inherit the promises without faith, so not without patience; for our obedience and fidelity to Christ requires not only labour and great pains, but courage and constancy to suffer as well as to do: Heb. x. 36, 'Ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God you might inherit the promise.' A child of God cannot be without patience, because he must reckon for troubles and molestations. We have indeed our calms as well as our storms, many intermissions; but at other times God will exercise us, and show us our fidelity is not sufficiently tried in doing good, but before we go to heaven we must sometimes suffer evil. God hath something to do by us, and something to do with us: we must be prepared for both, to endure all things, and readily and willingly suffer the greatest evil, rather than commit the least sin, that so at length we may be accepted in the judgment.

[2.] There is a *waiting patience*, to wait God's leisure. The evil is present, the good is absent; now we long for the good as well as bear the evil: Rom. viii. 25, 'But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' This is the work of patience, to wait; to refer it to the good pleasure of God when our warfare shall be accomplished and our troubles at an end, and our final deliverance come about. The time cannot be long, for what are a few years to eternity? This waiting patience is delivered to us under the similitude of an husbandman, James v. 7, who 'waiteth for the precious fruits of the earth, and hath long patience for it, till he receive the early and the latter rain.' The husbandman, that hath laid out all his substance in seed-corn, cannot hope for a present harvest, or that he should receive the crop as soon as the seed is cast into the ground. No; it must lie a while there, it must endure all weathers before it can spring up in the blade and ear, and ripen, and be fit to be reaped. So though we venture all upon our everlasting hopes, yet we must expect our season, till we see the fruit and recompense of it. This is the waiting patience.

[3.] There is the *working patience*; which is a going on with our self-denying obedience, how tedious soever it be to the flesh. Thus we are told, the good ground bringeth forth fruit 'with patience.' They were hasty to have present satisfaction, or else grew weary of religion, and turned aside to worldly things. So the heirs of the promises are described, Rom. ii. 7, to be those that 'continued with patience in well-doing.' And to the church of Ephesus God saith, Rev. ii. 2, 'I know thy works, thy labour, and thy patience.' Religion is not an idle and sluggish profession, the work of it is carried on by diligence and faithfulness. Lusts are not easily mortified; neither do graces produce their perfect work with a little perfunctory care. Much labour and serious diligence is required of us, we have many things to conflict withal, there is the burden of a wearisome body, the seducing flesh, unruly passions, disordered thoughts, a dark mind, dead affections, and sometimes the misery of a troubled conscience that we conflict withal: and therefore we need much patience, that we may not faint, but be accepted of the Lord at his coming. Well, then, to live in this constant and patient expectation of Christ is the perpetual necessary duty of all those that love him.

II. The connection and affinity between it and the love of God; for if a man love God, he will wait for the coming of Christ. The one is inferred out of the other, 'The Lord direct your hearts to the love of God, *and* the patient waiting for Christ.'

1. They that love God level all their thoughts and desires to this, that God may be enjoyed, that God may be glorified.

[1.] That he may be enjoyed in the fullest manner and measure they are capable of. Now this full enjoyment is the fruit of Christ's coming; 'then we shall be ever with the Lord,' 1 Thes. iv. 17; 'When Christ shall appear, we shall see him as he is, and be like him;' that is, like him in holiness, and like him in happiness. Our vision will make a transformation. The desire of union, which is so intrinsic to love, is never satisfied till then. Here we have a little of God in the midst of sin and misery. Sin straitens our capacity from receiving more; and God sees fit to exercise us with misery, only affording us an intermixture of heavenly comfort. But our full joy is reserved to the day of Christ's appearing.

[2.] They that love God desire also that God may be glorified, that his truth may be vindicated, his love and justice demonstrated. His truth is vindicated because his threatenings and promises are all accomplished: sin will no more be had in honour, nor pride and sensuality bear sway. Love to the saints will be seen in their full reward, and his justice demonstrated on the wicked in their full punishment. All matters of faith shall then become matters of sense; and what is now propounded to be believed shall be felt, and God shall be glorified in all.

2. The saints love Christ as Mediator; we love him now though we see him not: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Whom having not seen, we love; and believing in him, rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.' But desire to see him, as our surest and best friend. We have heard much of him, felt much of him, and tasted much of him, but we desire to see him, especially when he shall appear in all his glory:

Mat. xxv. 31, 'The Son of man shall come in his glory, and all his angels with him.' All clouds about his person shall vanish, he shall appear to be what he is, the Saviour and judge of the world.

3. They have a love for the church; for the church in general shall at that day be adorned as a bride for her husband, and fully freed from all sin and trouble. It is no more eclipsed by its lamentable imperfections, corruption of worship, division of sects, or the persecutions of the world, nor polluted by the distempers of its diseased members: all is then holy and glorious. Christ will present it as a glorious church without spot or wrinkle, Eph. v. 27.

4. They love themselves in God; and their own happiness is then fully to be perfected. All the desires and hopes of believers are then satisfied. They that are now scorned and persecuted shall have the reward of their love to God, be perfectly loved by him. A gladsome day it will be with God's people. 2 Thes. i. 10, it is said, 'Christ shall be admired in the saints, and glorified in all them that believe.' Glorified, not actively, but objectively. Poor creatures, that are newly crept out of the dust and rottenness, shall have so much glory put upon them, that the angels themselves shall stand wondering what Christ means to do for them. And then for all their labour they shall have rest, they shall rest from their labours; that is, all their troublesome work shall be over, for their pain and sorrow they shall have delight, 1 Peter iv. 12. For their shame they shall have glory put upon them both in body and soul. Our Lord Christ despised the shame for the glory set before him, Heb. xii. 2.

III. It hath a great influence upon the spiritual life, and keeps religion alive in our souls. That will appear if you take either word in the text, *waiting* or *patience*.

1. If you take the first notion, waiting or looking, as it draws off the mind from things present to things to come.

[1.] Looking to the end of things giveth wisdom: Deut. xxxii. 29, 'Oh, that they were wise, that they would consider their latter end.' It is not so much to be stood upon who is happy now, but who shall be happy at last. If men would frequently consider this, it would much rectify all the mistakes in the world. If we would inure our minds not to look to things as they seem at present, or relish to the flesh, or appear now to such short-sighted creatures as we are, but as they will be judged of at the last day, at Christ's appearing: how soon would this vain show be over, and the face of things changed, and what is rich, and pleasant, and honourable now, appear base and contemptible at the latter end! Then shall we see that there is an excellency in oppressed godliness, that exalted wickedness and folly is but shame and ruin. Do but translate the scene from the world's judgment to Christ's tribunal, and you will soon alter your opinions concerning wisdom and folly, misery and happiness, liberty and bondage, shame and glory; the mistaking of which notions pervert all mankind, and there is no rectifying the mistake but by carrying of our mind seriously to the last review of all things: for then we shall judge things not by what they seem now, but by what they will be hereafter. Solomon tells us, Prov. xix. 20, 'Hear counsel, and receive instruction, that thou mayest be wise in thy latter end.' That is true wisdom, to



be found wise at last. Time will come when we shall wish and say in vain, Oh, that we had laid up treasure in heaven, that we had laboured for the meat that perisheth not, that we had esteemed despised holiness, that we had set less by all the vanities of the world, that we had imitated the strictest and most mortified believer, for those are only esteemed and have honour in that day. More particularly—

(1.) It would much quicken us to repentance: Acts iii. 19, 'Repent and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the day of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.' All things shall be reviewed at Christ's coming, and some men's sins remain, and others are blotted out. None but those that are converted and turned to God can expect that benefit. Unless we be recovered from the devil, the world, and the flesh, and brought back again in heart and life to God, there will be no escape. Now those that wait for this day should prepare for it, that they may stand in the judgment with comfort. The wicked shall have judgment without mercy, but the believer shall be accepted upon terms of grace. Days of torment shall come to the one from the presence of the Lord, and days of refreshing shall come to the other. The state in the world of believing penitents is a time of conflict, labour, and sorrow, but this trouble and toil is then over, and they shall enjoy their rest. Consider these things, Where would you have your refreshment, and in what? Many seek their refreshing now either in brutish pleasures, and sit down under the shadow of some earthly gourd, which soon withers; but those that seek their refreshment in the enjoyment of God shall then be satisfied. Nothing certainly makes us so solicitous about a serious reconciliation with God as the consideration of this day.

(2.) It engageth us to holiness, and puts life into our obedience. We that look for such things, 'what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?' 2 Peter iii. 11. Men are secure and careless, either because they do not believe this day, or do not seriously think of it. Could we bring ourselves to this, to think and speak and do as having judgment and eternity in our eye, we would be other manner of persons than ever we have been. What! believe this day, and be so careless! It cannot be. We would not beat down the price of religion to so low a rate, nor serve God so loosely, if we did wait for the coming of Christ, who will bring everything into the judgment, whether it be good or evil. We could not then satisfy ourselves in such a negligent profession and practice of godliness.

(3.) It would produce a more heavenly temper and conversation. That is evident from the apostle's words: Phil. iii. 20, 'Our conversation is in heaven, from whence we look for a Saviour.' Looking for this salvation and this Saviour, it breeds in us the heavenly mind. He comes from heaven to bring us thither; for he comes to receive us to himself, John xiv. 3. Therefore if we be not heavenly, our practice will be a contradiction to our faith. You believe that there is a God and a Christ and a life to come; that this Christ came from God to bring us to God, that we may enjoy him in the life to come; and thereupon you renounce the devil, the world, and the flesh, and give up yourselves to God, believing that this Christ will come again

to lead all his sincere disciples and penitent believers into the glory and happiness of the heavenly state. If you believe this, what follows? That your conversation must be heavenly, either you must live for heaven, as seeking it with all diligence, that you may at length certainly obtain it, and not be excluded with the wicked, or live upon heaven, solacing yourselves in the foresight and hopes of it. Otherwise, to profess this faith, and yet to live as though your happiness were altogether in this world, were to go about to reconcile contradictions; to pretend you place your blessedness in heaven, and yet fly from it as a misery. You profess to look and long for that you have no mind to. The second notion is patience.

2. Patience, that also hath a great influence upon religion; for that which destroyeth all religion and godliness is making haste. Therefore it is said, Isa. xxviii. 16, 'He that believes, shall not make haste.' God's promises are not presently effected; and if we cannot tarry, but run to our own shifts, because they are next at hand, presently you run into a snare. On the other side it is said, Lam. iii. 26, 'It is good to hope and quietly to wait for the salvation of God.' When we can hope and wait, it mightily secures our obedience. Sense is all for present satisfaction, but faith and hope can tarry God's leisure, till those better things which he hath promised do come in hand. Whatever our condition be, afflicted or prosperous, we are in the place and station where God hath set us, and there we must abide till he bring us to his kingdom. Impatience and precipitation is the cause of all mischief. What moved the Israelites to make a golden calf, but impatience, not waiting for Moses, who, according to their mind and fancy, remained too long with God in the mount? What made Saul force himself to offer sacrifice, but because he could not tarry an hour longer for Samuel, and so lost the kingdom? 1 Sam. xiii. 12-14. What made the bad servant, or church officer, to smite his fellow-servant, and eat and drink with the drunken, that is, to abuse church censures, countenance the profane, and smite and curb the godly, but only this? Mat. xxiv. 48, 'My Lord delays his coming.' He sees the strictest are hated in the world, and the others befriended; and honour and interest runs that way, and Christ comes not to rectify these disorders. 'My Lord delays his coming.' Hasty men are loth to be kept in suspense and long expectation, and so miscarry. Look to all sorts of sinners. The carnal and sensual, they cannot wait for the time when they shall have pleasures for evermore at God's right hand, therefore take up with present delights. Like those who cannot tarry till the grapes be ripe, therefore eat them sour and green. Solid and everlasting pleasures they cannot wait for, therefore choose the pleasures of sin, that are but for a season. A covetous man will wax rich in a day, and cannot tarry the fair leisure of providence; therefore we are told, 'He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent,' Prov. xxviii. 20. An ambitious man will not stay till God gives true crowns and honours in his kingdom, and therefore he must have honour and greatness here, though his climbing and affecting to be built one storey higher in the world cost him the ruin and loss of his soul. All revolt and apostasy from God proceeds from hence, because they cannot wait for God's help, and tarry his

fulfilling the promise; but finding themselves pressed and destitute, the flesh, that is tender and delicate, grows impatient. It is tedious to suffer for a while, but they do not consider it is more tedious to suffer for evermore. Thence comes also our murmuring and distrustful repining: Ps. xxxi. 22, 'I said in my haste, I am cut off; nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplication.' Just at that time when God was about to hear him. So, 'I said in my haste, All men are liars.' And thence also our unlawful attempts, and stepping out of God's way. Men fly to unwarrantable means, because they cannot depend upon God, and wait with patience. Look, as an impetuous river is always troubled and thick, so is a precipitate, impatient spirit out of order, full of distemper, a ready prey to Satan.

IV. The necessity of divine concurrence. The apostle prays here, 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and the patient waiting for Christ.' It concerns this clause as well as the former.

1. As to the carnal and unregenerate. Till their hearts be changed, they can never attain to this patient waiting for Christ, for two reasons:—

[1.] In the wicked there is no sound belief of these things, for they live by sense and not by faith. The apostle tells us, 'He that lacketh grace is blind, and cannot see afar off,' 2 Peter i. 9. Things of another world are too uncertain, and too far off for them to apprehend, so as to be much moved by them. They hear of the coming of Christ, and speak by rote of it after others, but they do not believe it; therefore, till God enlighten them, how shall they be affected with this matter?

[2.] There is an utter unsuitableness of heart to them. Things present, that suit their fancies and please their senses, carry away their hearts. Ps. xlix. 18, 'Whilst he lived he blessed his soul; and men will praise thee when thou doest well to thyself.' Men bless themselves, and the carnal world applauds them in a sensual course and way of living. They measure all happiness by their outward condition in the world, and please themselves with golden dreams of contentment; and this being seconded with the flattery and applauses of the deceived world, they are fast asleep in the midst of the greatest soul-dangers, and so go down into hell before they think of it.

2. Come we now to the regenerate. Such the apostle looks upon the Thessalonians to be. They need to have their hearts directed to the patient waiting for Christ, for these reasons:—

[1.] Because we have too dim and doubtful a foresight of these things. How dark a prospect have even the best of God's children of the world to come! We may speak of others as unbelievers, but God knows how doubtful our own thoughts are about eternity and Christ's coming; how little we can shut the eye of sense, and open that of faith, and say truly with the apostle, 2 Cor. iv. 18, 'We look not at the things that are seen, that are temporal; but to the things unseen, that are eternal.' Alas! we have no through sight into another world. The best Christians have need to have their eyes anointed with spiritual eye-salve, that their sight may be more sharp and piercing; to beg 'the spirit of wisdom and revelation, to open the eyes of their mind, that they may see what is the hope of Christ's calling,' Eph. i. 17, 18. There are too many intervening clouds between us and eternity, that darken our sight and obscure our faith.

[2.] Our thoughts of these things are strange and dull, and too rare and unfrequent. How seldom have we any serious thoughts of his coming, and how unwelcome are they to our hearts! It was a complaint against Israel, that they did put far away the evil day; but the complaint against us may be taken up thus, that we put far away the good day, when all our desires and hopes shall be accomplished and satisfied. The atheistical world deny it, and we forget it. Solomon saith to the sensual young man, 'Remember, that for all these things God shall bring thee to judgment.' Young men forget or put off these thoughts, lest, like cold water cast into a boiling pot, they should check the fervour of their lusts. But, alas! grave men, good men, forget these things. When Christ had spoken of his coming to judgment, he saith, Mark xiii. 37, 'What I say unto you, I say unto all, Watch.' Watching is keeping up this attentiveness to his second coming with all Christian vigilance and endeavour. But few regard the charge: therefore 'the Lord direct your hearts,' &c.

[3.] Because our affections are so cold, and we are no more affected with it, but as if we were senseless of the weight of these things. Some dead and drowsy desires we have, but not that lively motion which will become hope and love. If nature say, 'Come not to torment us before the time,' grace should say, 'Come, Lord Jesus, oh, come quickly.' We are not only to look for his appearing, but to love his appearing. Where are these desires, that Christ would either come down to us, or take us up to himself, that we may live with him for ever?

[4.] This prayer need to be made for the renewed too, because Christians think of it with too much perplexity and fear. Is the sight of a Saviour unwelcome to you? or should the drawing nigh of your redemption be a comfort or a terror? Why do you then believe in Christ, and choose his favour for your happiness? We thought that this had been all your hope, and your desire, and your great comfort; and shall your hope be your torment, and beget horror rather than joy? Oh, beg the Lord to direct your hearts, that you may 'hope to the end for the grace that shall be brought unto you at the revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13. We do not only wait for glory, but for grace; and shall not this be a comfort to you?

[5.] We need to pray this prayer, because our preparations are too slender for so great a day. Serious preparation is necessary. It is described 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent, that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless;' that is, in a state of reconciliation with God. But we live too securely and quietly, in an unprepared state. If we have the habitual preparation, we do not keep up the actual preparation by clarifying and refining our souls from the dregs of sense, by honouring God in the world with greater earnestness, that when our Lord comes, he may find us so doing. We do not stand 'with our loins girt, and our lamps burning,' that when the Lord knocks we may open to him immediately. We do not keep up the heavenly desire, the actual readiness. The return of a husband after long absence is more welcome to the wife than to a harlot; but she would have all things ready for his reception and entertainment.

[6.] Because our motions are too inconstant. We interrupt the course of our obedience frequently, faint in our afflictions, do not keep up the fervour of our affections, and follow after salvation with that industrious diligence. We need often the Christian watchword, 'The Lord is at hand.' We lose much of our first love, intermit of our first works. Therefore, 'The Lord direct your hearts to the patient waiting for Christ.'

The exhortation is to quicken you to take care of this grace, that you may be constantly exercised in it. While we are upon earth, we should continually be expecting Christ's coming from heaven. The motives may be these :—

1. Before Christ's coming in the flesh, the saints waited for him. 'I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord,' saith Jacob, Gen. xlix. 18. And Simeon for Christ, the Saviour of the world; for so it is explained, 'Mine eyes have seen thy salvation.' And our Lord tells us, 'Abraham rejoiced to see my day,' John viii. 56; and it is said of Anna and others, that they 'waited for the consolation of Israel,' Luke ii. 25, 38. And after Christ was come, the disciples were commanded to 'wait for the promise of the Spirit,' Acts i. 4. So, by parity of reason, we must wait for the coming of Christ; for that is the next great promise to be accomplished, and the great thing to put life into our religion.

2. The people of God are described by this, 1 Thes. i. 10, 'Who wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come.' A man would have thought, in those early days, they should have been described by their respect to what was past rather than to what was to come, which was at so great a distance: they should have been described by believing Christ was already come in the flesh, rather than waiting for his coming in glory. No; this is proposed as an evidence of their sincerity and Christianity, 'Waiting for the coming of Christ.' And so it is said, Heb. ix. 28, 'That Christ would appear unto the salvation of them that look for him.' That is the property of true believers. But they that look not for his coming, love not, and long not for his coming, cannot expect his salvation. It is an allusion to the people, who, upon the day of expiation, when the high priest went into the holiest before the mercy-seat, were waiting for his coming out, that he might solemnly bless them. So must we look for Christ's return, now he is gone within the veil of the heavenly sanctuary, that he may come out and bless us with everlasting blessings.

3. This should move us to it, the benefits that will come to us hereby; for this waiting for Christ breeds in us contempt of the world, mortification of the flesh, tolerance and enduring of the cross.

[1.] It breeds in us contempt of the world; because we look for higher and better things to be dispensed to us when Christ comes. 'Set not your affections on things on earth, but on things in heaven.' Why? 'For your life is hid with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall you also appear with him in glory,' Col. iii. 2-4. The more the heart is given to one, the other gets the less. Earthly things be little regarded in comparison of that

glorious state, both of soul and body, which we shall have at Christ's appearance.

[2.] This conduceth to the mortification of the flesh ; therefore we deny ourselves present satisfactions, that we may not be castaways, disallowed in the judgment. 'Be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought to you at the coming of Christ,' 1 Peter i. 13.

[3.] The tolerance and enduring of the cross. This gives a quiet temper in all troubles. We may suffer now, 'but when Christ shall appear, we shall rejoice with exceeding joy,' 1 Peter iv. 13. And then our reward will very much exceed the proportion of our sufferings ; they are no more to be set against them than a feather against a talent of lead. 'I reckon they are not worthy to be compared,' saith the apostle, Rom. viii. 18. It would be a disgrace to a man's reason that these things should bear any competition with our great hopes : 'these light afflictions, that are but for a moment,' with 'that exceeding weight of glory,' Christ shall bestow upon us.

For means, all I shall say is this : if you wait for Christ's coming, look upon it as sure and as near : Rev. xxii. 12, 'Behold, I come quickly, and bring my reward with me.' We have the promise of the eternal God for it, so attested, and made out to us with such evidence, that we have no reason to doubt of the recompenses of religion. But things at a distance, though never so great, will not leave a due impression upon us : therefore we must look upon this promise with a certainty of persuasion that it will not be long before its accomplishment. Thus faith lessens the distance between hope and enjoyment, and enables us comfortably to wait.

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## SERMON VIII.

*Wherein he hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence.*

—EPI. I. 8.

In the context the apostle speaks of the spiritual blessings we have by Christ : he considers them under a threefold reference :—(1.) As they were appointed and prepared for believers in God's decree of election. There was the first stone laid towards this building. (2.) As they were purchased by Christ in the great and wonderful work of redemption. (3.) As conveyed and applied to us in effectual calling, and so brought home to our souls. In all these God gave evident proofs of the riches of his free grace. For (1st,) If he 'chose us to be holy before the foundations of the world,' nothing anteceded his love ; not in us—for there was nothing in being then ; we were not, and so could do nothing to deserve it—nor in that prospect and foresight which God had of things ; for he could foresee nothing but what was the effect of his free grace : not because holy, but 'that we *might* be holy and without blame before him in love.' (2dly,) Consider his