

must we bear whatever God will lay upon us ; as he had his consolation, so have we sweet comfort and support too ; as he had his glory, we must carry it so that we may be partakers of eternal glory by Christ, and our sufferings have the same issue.

SERMON VII.

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

PHIL. iii. 11.

THE apostle in the context is reckoning up his gain by Christ. We have insisted on two grand privileges and benefits already—justification and sanctification. This latter consisteth of two parts—conformity to his life and death. The first ennobleth the creature to be admitted unto the life of God ; the other part seemingly depresseth the creature, the fellowship of his sufferings, and conformity to his death ; yet that is an honour too, and so should be valued and reckoned among other privileges ; partly because of its present use, as it helpeth to mortify sin, and deaden our affections to the world ; and partly because it is the way and means to our future advancement, and its respect to the third benefit, which is glorification. Our gain by Christ reacheth further than to anything within time. It accompanieth a man, and preserveth his dust in the grave until the last day, and maketh him a partaker of the glorious resurrection of the just. This last benefit, as the fruit of our closing with Christ, the apostle here representeth, ‘If by any means we may attain to the resurrection of the dead.’

In the words observe—

1. The benefit to be obtained by Christ, ‘The resurrection of the dead.’

2. The submission of a self-denying believer, ‘If by any means I might attain to it.’

1. The benefit. How is this a great privilege, since there is a resurrection of the wicked? Acts xxiv. 15, ‘That there shall be a resurrection, both of the just and unjust.’ But their resurrection shall be to condemnation : John v. 29, ‘But they that have done evil, to the resurrection of damnation ;’ and so a fall rather than a resurrection. Therefore the faithful and the righteous are only called ‘Children of the resurrection ;’ Luke xx. 36, ‘Neither shall they die any more, for they are equal unto the angels, and are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection.’ Not as if the other should not rise, but they shall not rise to glory. And Grotius observeth the word in the text is not *ἀνάστασις*, but *ἐξανάστασις*, to express that full and blessed resurrection which no death, no evil shall ever follow. Therefore by the ‘resurrection of the dead’ he understandeth that eternal life and blessedness which is consequent thereupon : Luke xiv. 14, ‘And thou shalt be blessed, for they cannot recompense thee ; for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just.’

2. The submission of a self-denying believer to use any means to obtain it: 'If by any means I may attain to the resurrection of the dead.' The words seem to express a doubtfulness, but indeed they do not. Paul was not doubtful of his particular interest: 2 Cor. v. 1, 'For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.' Paul could not be doubtful whether by these means he might obtain a blessed resurrection, for there is no uncertainty or fallibility in God's promise; why doth he then thus express himself?

[1.] To intimate the difficulty, thereby to quicken his desire and diligence; as if he had said, I know it is hard to come by this happy estate, but I resolve to pursue it by any means. It is a matter of great difficulty to attain to the glorious resurrection of the just, and have our portion in it; but though it be a difficult thing, yet where the reality is believed, difficulties do but kindle desire and excite our diligence.

[2.] To express the variety of the means, or the way by which God bringeth his people into glory. There is doing good, and suffering evil for his sake. Now whether it be by living to God or suffering for God, Paul submitted to both or either way; and therefore this, 'If by any means,' must be referred to his exercising himself to godliness, implied in that expression, 'Knowing the power of his resurrection; or his patient suffering for Christ, implied in this expression, 'The fellowship of his sufferings, and conformity to his death.' Holiness of life is not the only means, nor are the afflictions of the gospel the only means; sometimes God will use both. Some may get through and escape to heaven without any remarkable afflictions, if they be of eminent holiness; or if they have afflictions, yet they may get to heaven without persecution, as in quiet times when the churches have rest: Luke ii. 29, 'Now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace according to thy word.' Others with persecution, but not to effusion of blood: Heb. xii. 4, 'Ye have not resisted unto blood, striving against sin.' Some only suffer spoiling of goods: Heb. x. 34, 'And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that you have in heaven a better and enduring substance.' And others by plain and direct martyrdom: Rev. xii. 11, 'They loved not their lives unto the death.' Some have store of inward troubles, as Heman; others not, but are exercised with outward crosses.

[3.] To set forth his full submission. We must neither except one means nor another in bringing us to glory. We know not which way he will take, but we must submit to all, even to death itself: 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.'

[4.] His unwearied diligence and earnest endeavour to obtain this happiness whatever it cost him; and therefore he resolveth to be anything and do anything, if he might be happy at length. Though in the meantime we meet with many troubles and crosses, and are put upon duties displeasing to the flesh, yet we must not stick at any means to obtain so excellent an end.

[5.] The value of this benefit, and his ardent and vehement desire to attain it. Paul did all things for the resurrection's sake, or that

happiness to which the resurrection of the body is an introduction. He did rest satisfied with the hopes of eternal life, and that perfect holiness and felicity he should then enjoy, as a sufficient recompense for all his losses and labours, disgraces and troubles. The word is emphatical, *εἰ πως καταστήσω*. The word *ἀπᾶν*, which we translate 'attain,' signifieth to come to the place which is directly opposite to that we are now in. So is the state of glory to the present life; here is misery, there is happiness; here is sin, there is holiness; here shame, there glory; here labour, there rest; here the cross, there the crown; here the conflict, there the full and absolute conquest; here the work, there the reward; here absence from God, there for ever present with him; here weakness, there perfection; then all good is perfected, and all evil shall cease; here we are capable of a dissolution, the body and soul may be severed, but there eternally united never to part more; here God's children are scattered up and down, living in several places and ages of the world, there all God's family shall meet together in one great congregation. So that the resurrection of the dead is the mark we should aim at in the whole course of our lives, and we should say, 'If by any means;' as if he should say, I shall account it well with me, and that I am recompensed enough, if at length I shall attain the perfection and happiness of that blessed estate.

Doct. That the blessedness of the saints at the general resurrection is so great, that we should be content to use any means, to run any hazards, so we might attain it. I shall show you—

1. What is the happiness of the saints in that day.

2. Give you a short account of the means by which God bringeth us thither.

3. Why we must submit to be guided by him in his own way to this glorious and blessed estate, or use any means that we may attain the resurrection of the dead.

I. What is the happiness of the saints in that day. The blessedness is either subjective and inherent, or relative and adherent.

1. Our personal inherent blessedness is glory revealed in us, Rom. viii. 18. Now this glory in us is a complete felicity in body and soul.

[1.] The body hath its felicity, for several reasons; partly—

(1.) Because the man cannot be happy till the body be raised again. The soul alone doth not constitute human nature, or that kind of creature which we call man; the body is one essential part, which doth concur to the constitution of man, as well as the soul; therefore the soul, though it be a spirit, and can live apart from the body, yet it was not to live apart for ever, but to live in the body; and so remaineth a widow as it were, till the body be raised up and united to it; for without its mate and companion, it remaineth destitute of half itself, which though it may be born for a while, yet not for ever. The soul is waiting to be sent again into the body; and when the hour is come, what shall hinder? There is a relative union, and a deep rooted love and inclination of the soul to its body; so that it is mindful of it, and waiteth with longing when the command of God shall send it to receive the body.

(2.) It is agreeable to the wisdom, justice, and goodness of God, that the body, which had its share in the work, should have its share in the

reward. It is the body which is most gratified by sin, and the body which is most pained in obedience. What was it which was wearied and tired, and endured all the labours and troubles of christianity, but the body? Therefore the body, which is the soul's sister and coheir, is to share with it in its eternal estate, whatever it be. Before the general resurrection, the wicked are but in part punished, and the godly in part rewarded: there is a time when God will deal with the whole man.

(3.) The estate of those that die will not be worse than the state of those that are only changed at Christ's coming. Now their bodies are not destroyed, but perfected; the substance is preserved, only it is renewed with new qualities. Now there would be a disparity among the glorified if some should have their bodies, others not.

(4.) In the heavenly estate there are many objects which can only be discerned by our bodily senses; as the human nature of Christ, the beams of the heavenly mansion wherein the blessed have their residence, with other the works of God, which certainly are offered to our contemplation. Now if God find objects, he will find faculties. How shall we see else those things which are to be seen, or hear those things which are to be heard, unless we have bodies and bodily senses?

(5.) As Christ was taken into heaven, so shall we; for we shall bear the image of the heavenly one. He carried no other flesh into heaven but what he assumed from the virgin. The very body which was carried in her womb, offered up as a sacrifice for sin, that very body was carried into heaven. Now this *σῶμα τῆς ταπεινώσεως*, 'this vile body,' shall be likened unto Christ's glorious body, Phil. iii. 21. That body that is now subject to so many infirmities, which is harassed and worn out with labours, obnoxious to such pains and sufferings, even this body shall be likened unto his glorious body. This body shall be then immortal, free from all diseases, imperfections, and defects. It shall not be decayed with age, nor wasted with sickness, nor need the supplies of meat and drink to repair it, nor be subject to pains and aches, but remain for ever in an eternal spring of youth. And for clarity and brightness, it shall shine as the sun: 1 Cor. xv. 42-44, 'So also is the resurrection of the dead; it is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption: it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power: it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.' In short, it is endowed with all the perfections a body is capable of; but the greatest perfection is this, that it shall be united to a soul fully sanctified, that shall never use it as an instrument of sin more.

[2.] For the happiness of the soul, we shall be satisfied with the vision of God, and transformed into the likeness of God: 1 Cor. xiii. 12, 'For now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know, even as also I am known;' 1 John iii. 2, 'Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it doth not appear what we shall be: but we know, when he shall appear, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' Our souls shall be naturally and graciously perfected both in our faculties and qualities, and so firmly established in a state of holiness as never to sin more, or to be in danger of

sinning again. We shall fully enjoy the vision of God, and by seeing be made like him. If specular vision transformeth us (2 Cor. iii. 18, 'But we all with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord), much more the light of glory. We shall be filled with eternal joy and delight, and securely possess our eternal blessedness. The light of God's eternal favour shall shine upon us in its full strength, without cloud or night.

2. Adherent privileges, justification, adoption, and redemption, they are all perfect.

[1.] Justification. We are justified now as soon as we believe. We have a right by covenant to justification, but the solemn sentence is not passed. Then we have our absolution from our judge's mouth 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;' that is, our full and final justification, when sin shall never rise up in judgment against us any more.

[2.] Adoption. We have a right now: John i. 12, 'To as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God.' But the full fruition is hereafter: 'Now we are the sons of God; but it doth not appear what we shall be;' Rom. viii. 23, 'Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body;' when God shall not only take us into his family, but his presence and palace; not only give us a right, but the possession; not only some remote service and ministration, but everlastingly employed in loving, delighting, and praising God; and the tokens of his fatherly affection to us are not only privately exhibited, but manifested before all the world. Then adoption is adoption indeed.

[3.] Redemption. Therefore that day is called 'the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30, because then we are completely redeemed out of all misery, both of soul and body: Luke xxi. 28, 'Your redemption draweth nigh;' Eph. i. 14, 'Which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession unto the praise of his glory; for then we are completely redeemed from all sin and misery, both in soul and body at once, when all tears shall be wiped from our eyes, sin and sorrow no more. Christ is a saviour now, a redeemer now; he hath saved us, and redeemed us from all evil as to the fulness of his merit; yea, he is a redeemer now, a saviour now, as to partial application, when guilt is pardoned, and the power and reign of sin broken; but at death he is a more perfect saviour and redeemer, when we receive the salvation of our souls. Now the evils introduced by sin yet remain upon the body, but at death the last enemy is destroyed, and the effects of sin cease.

II. The means by which God bringeth us thither. They may be referred to two heads: there is a way of holiness, and patient enduring the cross. In the general, it will cost us something to obtain it, for all excellent things are hard to come by; in particular, that is by self-denial, both in the active and passive part of our obedience. Therefore the apostle, when he showeth what use we should make of the doctrine of the resurrection, he referreth all to these two heads: 1 Cor. xv. 58, 'Wherefore, my beloved, be ye steadfast and unmovable, always

abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know your labour is not in vain in the Lord.' We ought to be steadfast and unshaken in afflictions, and we ought also to abound in the work of the Lord. Of the two, holiness is the most necessary and indispensable. God may bate some men suffering, but he never bated any man holiness; for 'no unclean thing shall enter there,' Rev. xxi. 27; and 'without holiness no man shall see God,' Heb. xii. 14. There must be mortification of sin, and there must be living to God. Besides, sufferings for religion without holiness are but a scabby sacrifice, and swine's blood offered to him, which are an abomination to the Lord.

1. For the way of holiness, and the active part of our obedience, that consists in two things—dying to sin and living to God.

[1.] Dying to sin. Certainly we must die unto sin; we must 'crucify the flesh with the affections and lusts;' for if pride, worldliness, and sensuality live, we die; for every one of these turneth us to another happiness, and we have our heaven elsewhere than in the habitation of the blessed: Luke xvi. 25, 'Son, in thy lifetime thou receivedst thy good things.' The pleasures, honours, and profits of the world, whilst we make these things our felicity and scope, we discharge God from giving us any other reward. The covetous have their portion in this world, and the voluptuous sell their birthright for one morsel of meat, and the ambitious and vainglorious are not contented with the honour which cometh from God only. We shall have pleasures enough, and riches enough, and honours enough, if we can be contented to tarry God's leisure, and will continue with patience in well-doing. But when we will be our own carvers, and set up sense instead of faith, and an imaginary and corrupting felicity instead of the real and sanctifying felicity which is offered to us in the promises of the gospel, we can blame nothing but our perverse choice; and no wonder if God deny to us the happiness we contemn. Flatter not yourselves; there is no leaping from Delilah's lap into Abraham's bosom; no hope to get to heaven at last, when all our care hath been to heap up treasure to ourselves here in the world; no such connection between vainglory and eternal glory, that after we have served the one, we should obtain the other. No; the scripture is peremptory with us: Rom. viii. 13, 'If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die; but if through the Spirit ye mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live;' Gal. vi. 8, 'He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting.' If the world present to the flesh the bait, faith should show it the hook, and set our loss against our gain. God will not give us two heavens, here in our passage, and hereafter at the end of the journey.

[2.] Living to God. None shall live with God but those that first live to God in a state of holy communion with him, and glorify him upon earth. The spiritual life is heaven begun: if it be begun, it will be perfected; if not, we eternally miss of it. If we look for the resurrection of the dead, we must prepare for it by giving all diligence 'to be found of him in peace,' 2 Peter iii. 14, by watching and praying, that we may be 'counted worthy to stand before the Son of man,' Luke xxi. 36, that we may meet him with cheerfulness and confidence, not fear any evil from him: Acts xxiv. 15, 16, 'And have hope towards

God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. And herein do I exercise myself, to keep always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men.' Surely it is no easy thing to attain to this blessedness, and therefore we must set ourselves if by any means to seek after it.

2. As to passive obedience, this must be minded too, that so dying with him, and after his example, we may consequently obtain to rise with him to everlasting life. So great a good as eternal blessedness is to be sought, though with the communion of the sufferings of Christ.

Now here I shall observe two things.

[1.] That no suffering must be excepted out of our resignation. Though all that shall be happy do not suffer death for Christ (for all are not called to so great an honour), yet all must be ready to die for Christ; for he is a christian, and none but he, that can deny life itself for Christ's sake. I prove it, because when Christ would teach his disciples self-denial, he doth instance in this point, to put our self-denial to the trial: Mat. xvi. 25, 'He that saveth his life, shall lose it; and he that loseth his life, shall save it.' Whether you love an immortal holy life with God, or else your fleshly and earthly life better. This is the great question to be resolved, whether you are heirs of heaven or hell? The unsanctified may have some love to God, but not a love to him above their lives. But if you can, for the love of God, and the hopes of glory, submit even to death itself, this is the proof of your sincerity. Again, Luke xiv. 26, 'If any man come unto me, and hate not father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple.' You will think it is a note of excellency, and a commendable qualification of some few extraordinary saints. No; it is that measure of saving grace which constituteth sincerity. Some may more willingly and readily lay down their life for Christ, but all must be contented to do so. If you think this is a hard saying, and who can bear it? I answer—

(1.) There is no room for objections against so plain a word of Christ. It is the wisdom of God, and not our reason, which disposeth the crown of life, and which way we shall obtain it; and when Christ hath stated his terms, it is too late for the vote of man to think to bring down christianity to a lower rate.

(2.) This self-denial must be acted. When there is no way to escape such sufferings but by sinning, you must cheerfully lay down, not only all your interests, but your lives for Christ's sake. As those martyrs, Heb. xi. 35, 'They were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection.' When they might have been upon certain conditions freed from these cruel pains, they chose rather to suffer and die than accept of these conditions, being contrary to the laws of God. Why? Because they looked for a resurrection to eternal life, that God would give them a glorious, immortal, blessed life, for a little miserable, short, and mortal breath, and would recompense their cruel pains with eternal pleasures. This will explain the apostle's expression, 'If by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead.'

III. The reasons why, rather than fail and miss of eternal life, we must submit to any means which God hath appointed in this

world, or for our trial doth put us upon in the course of his providence.

1. From the absolute dominion and prerogative of God, both to make laws and to put us upon what trials he pleaseth to appoint. He is our lord and sovereign, and therefore it is his wisdom, and not our reason, must determine by what we shall attain to that blessedness for which we were created. In his word he hath prescribed the duties, and hath reserved to himself a liberty in his providence to appoint our trials. To repine against his laws is to question his sovereignty: Ps. xii. 4, 'Who have said, With our tongue we will prevail, our lips are our own; who is lord over us?' If we think to speak and do what we please, and as our affections and interests shall move us, we go about to disannul his authority, and question his right to govern. So also to murmur against his providence. He may do with his own as he listeth, Mat. xx. 15. Therefore we must submit to his sharpest dispensations, and be in perfect subjection to the Father of spirits, Heb. xii. 9. Our comforts, our lives, are not our own; God, that doth require them, is absolute lord of them. If he cannot dispose of us and our comforts at his own pleasure, he is not, at least he is not owned as our lord and governor.

2. From the temper of his government, or the mitigation of his sovereignty, which he observeth in all his dealings with his people. God is an absolute sovereign, and giveth no account of his matters; therefore we must acquiesce in his laws and providences, though we know not the reasons of them. Yet his sovereignty in the exercise of it is always mitigated, and made sweet to us by his wisdom, power, and goodness, as to the case in hand. For his laws, they are holy, just, and good; there is no modelling and bringing them down to our humours and fancies, but they must stand as they are, being built on eternal equity, and commending themselves by their own evidence to our consciences.

But for his providential dispensations—

[1.] There is much wisdom in them: for he doth not call us to any eminent act of self-denial till we are prepared for it, sufficiently enlightened and confirmed, before we are called to suffer for the truth, or upon the hopes of glory. As Jacob drove as the little ones were able to bear, so doth God lay upon his people no more than they are able to bear, 1 Cor. x. 13. His castles are well victualled before they are besieged; first enlightened, then afflicted: Heb. x. 32, 'After ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of affliction;' Gen. xxii. 1, 'After these things God did tempt Abraham.' After solemn assurances of his love, then he put him upon offering up Isaac. So he deals proportionably with all his children. Their afflictions are according to their strength, and the degree and measure of grace received.

[2.] From the power of God. We have no reason to be discouraged in his service. God can deliver you from hard trials by forbearing to call you to them, and restraining the rage of enemies by delivering out of their hands by his almighty power; only it is your duty to resolve to be obedient to him, whether he will deliver you or no, and make a way for your escape. This was the resolution of the three children: Dan. iii. 17, 18, 'We are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be

so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king: but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship thy golden image which thou hast set up.' So Paul: Acts xx. 22, 24, 'And now I go bound in the spirit to Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: but none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.' We must be positive in our duty, but refer it to God to determine of our lot. If the worst come to the worst, he is able to support us: 2 Tim. iv. 17, 18, 'I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion; and the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and preserve me to his heavenly kingdom.' It becometh not the servants of God to be tender of the interests of the flesh, if they will be kept blameless to his heavenly kingdom.

[3.] There is relief in his goodness too, who doth extraordinarily support, assist, and comfort his suffering servants in all their conflicts and trials: 1 Peter iv. 14, 'If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you.' Cordials are for a fainting time; and his people in sufferings have a more liberal allowance of his supporting presence, a sweeter taste of his love: Rom. v. 5, 'The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts.' Clearer hopes of glory than others have. All the saints of God are in a way to glory, but his suffering saints are in the nearest way; yea, they have a reward above the common reward, for those that come out of tribulation wash their garments white in the blood of the Lamb, and are admitted to stand before the throne, Rev. vii. 13, 14. Now since these things are so, we may be contented by any means to attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

3. The great difficulty lieth, not in a respect to the end, but the means; and so the trial of our sincerity must be rather looked for there. There is some difficulty about the end, to convince men of an unseen felicity, but the greatest difficulty is to convert them from worldly vanities, and to draw them to seek after it. We have a quick ear for offers of happiness, but we snuff at the troublesome conditions of duty, and obedience, and entire subjection to God. All would attain to the blessed resurrection, but they do not come to this, 'If by any means.' Balaam could say, 'Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my latter end be like his,' Num. xxiii. 10; but he loved the wages of unrighteousness. If the wicked are said to despise eternal happiness, it is not simply as happiness, nor eternal; they like happiness well enough, for they love themselves, and would be happy; nor as eternal, for man, that lost the right object of his desires, hath not lost the vastness of them; he would be happy for ever, but it is not in conjunction with the means. Thus the Israelites despised the pleasant land, and 'murmured in their tents,' Ps. cxvi. 24, 25. What ailed them? The land was a good land, a most fruitful possession; but when the spies brought back word, as of the great fertility of the land, so of the giantly strength and stature of the people and their fortifications, they thought God had deluded them, and resolved to give over the pursuit of Canaan. Canaan was not

thought worthy of the pains and difficulties to be sustained in going towards it. So it is in the case of heaven. Heaven is a good place, but out of indulgence to the ease of the flesh, and because of the strictness of holy walking, and the difficulties of obedience, we give over the pursuit after heaven. Therefore if we would be sincere, we must submit to any means prescribed or required.

4. The hope propounded will bear this submission, and so the reason of the thing showeth it. Immortal happiness is most desirable, and endless misery is most terrible. This world is vanity, and hath nothing in it worthy to be compared with the hopes which Christ hath given us of a better life; therefore upon due deliberation we must resolve to let go all that is inconsistent with these hopes. I say, this hope will bear all the costs we lay out upon it.

Reason will teach us two things—(1.) To submit to lesser evils to avoid a greater; (2.) To undergo a lesser evil to obtain a greater good; and both are in the present case.

[1.] To submit to a lesser evil to avoid a greater. You escape at a dear rate when you must sin to escape any trouble in the world. You run into eternal sufferings that you may avoid temporal. No fire like the fire of hell. Christ says, 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; I say unto you, Fear him.' *Parce imperator, tu carcerem, ille Gehennam*—Excuse me, sir; you threaten me only with a prison, but he with hell. It is better for a man to suffer the most cruel punishments, and the worst of torments which man can inflict, than to lie under extreme everlasting pains and the loss of heaven. This is the case here.

[2.] To undergo a lesser evil to obtain a greater good than that evil depriveth us of. This is another head of reasoning the scripture uses in this case: Rom. viii. 18, 'For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us;' 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 pain and suffering will be short; within a little time you will feel it no more than if it had never been; and if pain be remembered, it will be only to increase our joy.

Use 1. Let us not sit down contented with a worldly portion and happiness. There is another state to be enjoyed after the resurrection. This you must seek after, and propound to yourselves as your great end and scope. This life was not intended to be the place of our perfection, but a preparation to it. God led his people out of Egypt, not to keep them in the wilderness, but to carry them through the wilderness into Canaan. The world was intended for our passage, but heaven for our home; carry yourselves then as strangers and pilgrims, Heb. xi. 13, seeking for the city of God, where you may dwell for ever. You come to renew this profession in the Lord's supper. The Israelites in their first passover stood in the posture of pilgrims, with their loins girt, and their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hands, Exod. xii. 11; so must we be, in the course and frame of our souls, pilgrims seeking a heavenly country. The ordinances are our songs in the house of our pilgrimage.

Use 2. Let us seek after this happiness without sticking at any difficulties either in active or passive obedience.

1. In active obedience. We must renounce all the pleasures of sense, how near and dear to us soever they be: Mat. v. 29, 30, 'If thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee; for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.' Certainly the damage of sin is more considerable than the delight; the honey will not countervail the sting. If you be men and women of pleasure, how do you keep down the body? 1 Cor. ix. 27. Oh, what kind of hearts have they who prefer every vain delight and wanton pleasure before the honour of Christ and the glory of the world to come! cannot leave a vain speech, a new-fangled fashion, deny themselves in anything! Is this submitting to any means? So also for any strict duty. Heaven is at the back of it, and that should sweeten it to us. If it cost you labour, it is for the meat that endureth for ever. Work out your salvation.

2. In our passive obedience. We are uncertain what changes we may see; it is past our skill to understand the methods of providence. We know not what God will do with us; but whatsoever he doth, you must say, 'If by any means I might attain the resurrection of the dead.' If we never suffer, we must be sure to have a heart to suffer if God call us to it. You may be saved without suffering, yet not without a heart that is willing to suffer, if God put you upon it: Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready, not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus.' We must be ready. Some cannot suffer a scoff, a frown, or a scorn. This part also doth much concern us in the Lord's supper; because—

[1.] Here we renew our belief of the promise of eternal life: John vi. 39, 40, 'And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me, I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day. And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day.' Christ hath engaged his fidelity to take charge of our very dust, and to gather it up again, and to give a good account of it at the last day, and raise it up in glory. Our death and rotting in the grave doth not make void his interest, nor cause his affection to cease. Though we die, Christ is still living, and under this obligation to God, and engaged to us by his promise to us, and inclined by his love to receive our dead bodies.

[2.] Here we come to make application of Christ: John vi. 54, 'Whosoever eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.' A sincere application of Christ begins that life which shall be perfected by the vision and fruition of God, and he will raise us up that we may enjoy the perfection of it.

[3.] Here we come to bind ourselves by any means to seek after this life, to make a full resignation to give up ourselves to be what God would have us to be, and to do what God would have us to do.

[4.] Here we come to get that peace which may enable us to en-

counter all troubles which may befall us in our way to heaven: Eph. vi. 15, 'Having our feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace.' No going to heaven without this shoe. When the quarrel is taken up between God and us, we can the better bear the frowns of the world. He calleth it the 'gospel of peace,' because it mainly dependeth on the terms of grace revealed to us in the gospel or new covenant. The law discovereth the enmity and breach, but the gospel discovereth that peace and friendship may be had. He calleth it the 'preparation,' because this peace breedeth a firmness and resolution to go through all difficulties, and hardships, and crosses: Acts xxi. 13, 'I am ready, not only to be bound, but to die at Jerusalem;' 1 Peter iii. 15, 'And be ready to give an answer to every man of the hope that is in thee.' The peace renewed between God and sinners breedeth a resolution to hold on our way to heaven, not broken with crosses and continual hardships.

Use 3. When we are actually tried we must do four things—

1. Be sure you do not ask counsel of the flesh; that will prompt us to present ease. The voice of it is, Favour thyself, love the present world. Ease is pleasing to flesh and blood. We are all by nature addicted to sensuality, or the gratifying of the senses; to say with Issachar, Gen. xlix. 15, 'That rest is good.'

2. Get a right esteem of this world: 1 Cor. vii. 29, 'The fashion of the world passeth away.' It is momentary and fading, and can never give us full content.

3. Look not to the state in which we are, but to that to which we are a-going. God is preparing us for this felicity. And set faith, hope and love a-work.

[1.] Faith, to see it as present. We have it in the promise, though not in possession: Heb. xi. 1, 'Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.' You see not the world to come that you are passing to, but faith believeth the reality of it.

[2.] Hope, which is an earnest expectation, a looking joined with waiting: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ;' Titus ii. 13, 'Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ.' Think often what you must be and do and possess for ever.

[3.] Love. All your looking to the reward must be mixed with a love to God, that there may be longing as well as looking. Our spiritual joys consist in a holy love and fruition of God. This is that we desire and value: Phil. i. 23, 'Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ, which is far better.' To be with Christ is best of all: 2 Cor. v. 6, 'Knowing that whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord.' It is love must incline us heavenward, to long after the fruition of him whom we love, that we may see him, and enjoy him, and be ever present with him.

4. By all means labour to get and maintain the assurance of your title: 2 Tim. iv. 8, 'Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord the righteous judge shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but unto them also that love his

appearing.' Now this is gotten by doing rather than searching. It is sin that woundeth conscience, and wasteth comfort, and grieveth the spirit of adoption, by which we 'are sealed to the day of redemption,' Eph. iv. 30. But it is holiness, and faithful obedience, and diligence in the heavenly life, that you may keep up your assurance in vigour: Heb. vi. 11, 'And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.' When we grow slothful and remiss, desertions follow to our great discomfort, but our certainty is maintained by watchfulness and diligence: Acts xx. 24, 'But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy.' He went bound in the spirit to Jerusalem. He had a call, but knew not fully what the issue would be, whether to die at Jerusalem or no; that bonds and afflictions abide me, but I make no reckoning of any such thing: 1 Thes. iii. 3, 'That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that we are appointed thereunto.' A christian should be of such a temper, that out of the hope of eternity he should not be greatly moved with any temporal things.

SERMON VIII.

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.—PHIL. iii. 12.

PAUL having spoken much of his self-denial for Christ, would not be misinterpreted, as if there remained no more to be done by him. No; his race was not yet finished, nor yet had he taken hold of the crown, which conquerors in those races were wont to do, from some high place where it was hung and fixed: 'Not as though I had already attained.'

In the words we have—

1. A disclaiming of present perfection.
2. An earnest endeavour to attain it for the future.
3. The reason of his diligence and earnestness; he was 'apprehended of Jesus Christ' for this end.

1. A disclaiming or denial of present perfection, in two expressions, proper to agonistical matters. They had their Olympian, Nemean, Isthmian, and Pythian games, which were the same for nature, only the place differed. Their usual exercises were wrestling, running and the like.

[1.] 'Not as though I had already attained.' It is an agonistical word put for receiving the reward due to the conqueror. In the races there was a crown of leaves generally set over the goal, that he that came thither foremost might catch it and carry it away with him: 1 Cor. ix. 24, 'One receiveth the prize.' So 1 Tim. vi. 12, 'Take hold of eternal life.' So here, οὐχ ὅτι ἤδη ἔλαβον, I have not yet caught the crown from the top of the goal.