

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.

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### 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.

[2.] 'Or were already perfect.' This also is an agonistical word, as Faber proveth at large. Though the runner was to catch at the crown, and seize upon it as his right, yet the *ἔλληνοδίκαι*, the judges, did first interpose their judgment before he could put it on his head, and when he received the crown from them, he was judged as a perfect wrestler and racer. The word 'perfect,' as applied to racing, was sometimes used of their strength, and sometimes of their reward. Of their strength and agility, having passed the agonistical exercises, 2 Cor. xiii. 9, 'For we are glad when we are weak, and ye are strong; and this also we wish, even your perfection;' that is, it would be matter of joy to him to see them strong and able to run the spiritual race. Sometimes of their reward, that when the crown was adjudged to them, or that they had done worthily, the more excellent of the racers had the more excellent rewards: *τὰ τέλεια τοῖς τελείοις διδόμενα*, saith Philo, which were called perfect rewards or crowns. Well, then, Paul had not yet gotten his crown, but was as the racer in the pursuit, in the way running as hard as he could, that at length he might possibly catch and receive that prize, the crown of eternal life. That he was not yet in heaven was evident, and needed not be so earnestly asserted; therefore the meaning is, that though he were in the way to glory, yet further difficulties remained; and though his estate were so far secured as to exclude diffidence and doubting, yet not so as to exclude caution and diligence; he had not ended his race so as to catch the crown, or receive it from the hand of the judges. Though he were now in prison at Rome, yet some time of living remained, and some further difficulties to be undergone. He speaketh at another rate, 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8, 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; 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.'

2. An earnest endeavour for the future: 'But I follow after it that I may apprehend,' *διώκω*. I run as hard as I can, pursuing and striving to overtake, with as great desire and diligence in that exercise, when he was behind another; so though he had not attained his crown, yet he would not slacken his diligence till he did attain: 'If I may apprehend,' *εἰ καὶ καταλάβω*, that at length he might take hold of it. 'If I may apprehend,' to exclude security, and to keep on his earnest pursuit by any means.

3. The reason of his diligence: 'That for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.' Christ's apprehending may be also interpreted in the agonistical sense. Instead of the crown, he apprehendeth us; for we are his joy, his rejoicing, his crown, if we hold out unto the end. Now we are apprehended by him—

[1.] In effectual calling, as he puts us upon this race, or inclineth us to this course of life. Paul was apprehended by Christ when persecuting the church, and running into destruction; then he converted him, possessed him by his Spirit, thinking of no such matter, posting quite another way. When an enemy, he took hold of him, converted him, inclined him, fitted him for this race, that he might obtain everlasting glory.

[2.] By constant support; for having apprehended us, he still

upholdeth us. We are on his hands, and he doth influence, animate, draw, and strengthen us in this race, as concerned in it, that he may not lose the fruit of his own agonies. By his constant influence we are strengthened and quickened till we come to the goal.

*Doct. 1.* That God's best children, however assured of their good estate, yet till their race be ended, cannot look upon themselves as quite out of danger.

*Doct. 2.* Whatever degrees are already attained, we must press towards perfection.

*Doct. 3.* That Christ's apprehending us for the obtaining the end of the spiritual race is a great encouragement to us to go on still.

For the first point, that none of God's children, however assured, can look upon themselves as past all danger till their race be ended.

I will prove to you two things—

1. That God's eminent servants may have assurance.

2. That they are not to look upon themselves as quite out of all danger till their race be ended.

I. That God's eminent servants may have assurance of their sincerity and good estate before God. So had Paul; he asserteth it all along, as we have seen. They may have assurance of their present grace, for Paul looketh upon himself as in the race; and of their final perseverance, for he was apprehended of Christ, that he might at length touch the goal and obtain the reward, to excite his desire and diligence: they may, I say, have assurance in these cases.

1. When grace is not small and indiscernible, but in some degree of eminency, it may be discerned. When grace is weak and small, and doth not discover itself in any eminent and self-denying acts, it is not noted and observed, but where it is in some degree of eminency, it may be discerned. As in Phineas, because he was zealous for God, Ps. cvi. 31, 'That was accounted to him for righteousness;' it was accepted by God as a testimony of his holiness. Surely great things are more liable to sense and feeling than little; a staff is sooner found than a needle. Some stars are so small that they are scarce seen. A strong faith, a fervent love, and a lively hope will soon discover themselves. It is hard to think that the soul should be a stranger to its own operations; though some lesser inconsiderable action may escape us for want of advertency, yet we know, and others about us know our 'work of faith and labour of love.'

2. It is eminent when this grace is not in their hearts, as a sleepy habit or buried seed, but in continual act: 1 Thes. i. 3, 'I remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope;' Gal. v. 6, 'For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision availeth anything, but faith that worketh by love.' They that keep grace in lively exercise seldom doubt of the truth of it. The sap is not seen, but apples will appear upon the tree.

3. When they blot not their evidences by frequent interruptions of the spiritual life, and so many sins as others do, which make their sincerity questionable. Though it be hard to state what sins are, and what are not consistent with grace, yet though conscience be not observant of our particular actions, or be confounded by them, yet the course, drift, and tenor of our lives cannot be hidden from it. A man in a

journey doth not count his steps, yet observeth his way. When a man mindeth the business of going to heaven in good earnest: Phil. iii. 20, 'But our conversation is in heaven;' and of approving himself to God in his whole course: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'But our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world;' 2 Cor. v. 9, 'Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him.' Surely a man may know his drift and scope.

4. They have assurance, because they have the spirit of adoption in a more eminent degree. All God's children have it: Gal. iv. 6, 'And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father;' Eph. i. 13, 14, 'In whom ye also trusted, after ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, after ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.' But much more they that do more eminently live in the Spirit, and walk in the Spirit. In some the Spirit discovereth himself only in childlike groans; they feel little of childlike joy and confidence. Surely they find the Spirit a comforter who least grieve him.

5. They have a more abundant sense of the love of God and his rich mercies in Christ.

[1.] By long acquaintance with him: Job xxii. 21, 'Acquaint thyself with God, and be at peace, and thereby good shall come unto thee.'

[2.] By frequent converse with him in the word and prayer: 1 Peter ii. 3, 'If so be ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious;' Eph. iii. 12, 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him.'

[3.] By the experiences of their afflictions: Rom. v. 3-5, 'And not only so, but we glory in tribulation, as knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given to us;' Heb. xii. 11, 'Now no chastening for the present seemeth joyous but grievous: Nevertheless afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby.'

[4.] By those rewards of obedience which belong to God's internal government, God's hiding or manifesting his favour to his people. Now a close walker hath many of these experiences: John xiv. 21, 23, 'He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him. If any man love me, he will keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.' They have more of sensible consolation. Now all these tastes of the love of God conduce to establish the soul in holy security and peace.

6. The change wrought in them by grace is most sensible, and plainly to be discovered. They may see a manifest difference between them and themselves. Their minds are changed: Eph. v. 8, 'Ye were sometimes darkness, but are now light in the Lord.' They have

another sight of things, of sin, God, Christ, and heaven. So Paul here: Phil. iii. 7, 'What things were gain to me, I counted loss for Christ.' Their hearts are changed; they love what they formerly hated, and, on the contrary, they esteem and choose what they formerly slighted: Phil. iii. 8, 'Yea, doubtless, I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord; for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.' Their lives are changed: 2 Cor. v. 17, 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold, all things are become new.' And there is a difference between them and others: 1 John v. 19, 'And we know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in wickedness.' There is somewhat of this in all, but in them the change is more notorious and sensible; whereas others cannot so easily interpret their sincerity.

[1.] This is not spoken to infringe the doctrine of the saints' perseverance. No; far be it from me or you to think so; for 'none can pluck them out of Christ's hands,' John x. 28. They are safe in the love and care of Christ, and have his power engaged for their preservation. None can unclasp those mutual embraces of love by which Christ holdeth them, and they hold Christ: Rom. viii. 39, 'Nor height nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' Yet we must not thence conclude that we have no more care to take, nor danger to be afraid of, or no more to do as necessary to salvation. We have still more work to do, and we have still to encounter new difficulties and dangers till we are in heaven, and much care and diligence is required at our hands in the use of all appointed means, much exercise of faith, and love, and hope; for by these means doth Christ preserve us in a state of holiness and obedience: 1 Peter i. 5, 'Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation;' 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if you do these things, you shall never fall.'

[2.] Neither is this spoken to hinder the comfort and encouragement which ariseth from the application of this doctrine. The belief of perseverance in the general is one thing, and the belief of my perseverance is another. That is not so evident and certain every way as the doctrine itself; for my own sincerity is more questionable than the truth of God's promise: *conclusio sequitur debiliorem partem*—the conclusion follows the weaker part. It is certain that 'he that believeth in Christ hath eternal life and shall not come into condemnation,' John v. 24; because it is a truth revealed in the word of God. Amen, the faithful witness, hath assured us of it. But I am a true believer; this may be certain and evidenced to me by such real arguments and grounds of confidence as I have no reason to doubt of it; yet it depending upon spiritual sense and experience, it is not so unquestionably certain as the word of God is. Therefore this being the limiting proposition, the conclusion can bear no more weight than this proposition hath truth in it. Therefore while I am but making out my claim, as I am doing throughout the whole course of my life; though there be no uncertainty in the case, yet since there is no difficulty in the case, I may, and must say with the apostle, 'I press on if I may apprehend;' yet while I am

labouring, and striving, and persevering in my faith, love, and obedience, I may encourage myself in the love, faithfulness, and power of God to keep me as he hath kept me hitherto, and that he will preserve me in all difficulties and temptations: 1 Cor. i. 9, 'God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord;' 1 Thes. v. 23, 24, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit, and soul, and body may be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that hath called you, who also will do it.'

II. Yet they cannot look upon themselves as quite out of all danger, and past all care and holy solicitude. We are not yet out of gunshot till we come to the end of our race, and are conquerors over all opposition.

*Reasons.*

1. Because there is no period put to our duty but life; and it is not enough to begin with God, but we must go on in his way till we come home to him. We must not give over working till we obtain our reward: Heb. iii. 6, 14, 'But Christ as a son over his own house, whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of our hope firm unto the end. For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end;' 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.' These places show we have not done our work till we have done our lives. We must not give over running in the race till we obtain the prize. Though we are translated from death to life, we are not translated from earth to heaven; and therefore you must work, and 'work out your salvation with fear and trembling,' Phil. ii. 12.

2. During our lives upon earth there is somewhat yet more to do, and something yet more to suffer; some lust to conquer, some grace to strengthen. Paul was not perfect.

[1.] Sin is slowly weakened, and never perfectly subdued. There is a continual conflict between the flesh and the spirit: Gal. v. 17, 'For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.' The leading and commanding faculties of the soul do but imperfectly lead and command; and the faculties that should be commanded and led do but imperfectly obey, yea, often rebel, being put into a distemper by the senses. Now there is danger in a kingdom, where there is a feeble empire, and rebellious subjects.

[2.] There are continual oppositions from the devil and the world, whereby the weak measure of grace present is often interrupted. As sin within disturbeth it, so Satan and the world incessantly assault it. Therefore we must not give over watching till Satan give over tempting, nor striving till the world give over opposing. Well, many a storm and tempest you must expect, and possibly you may be put upon stranger trials than any yet you have undergone. Therefore, if hitherto you have forsaken all and followed Christ, you must follow him to the end. Temptations will haunt you to the last hour of your lives; therefore you must watch and pray that you fall not by these temptations, Mat. xxvi. 41. The danger is not over whilst you are in the way.

3. Some have 'left their first love,' Rev. ii. 4, have fainted in the race before they came to the goal: Gal. v. 7, 'Ye did run well; who hindered you?' Men that have made long profession of the name of Christ may find a great abatement of their integrity in their latter days: 2 Chron. xvii. 3, 'Jehoshaphat walked in the first ways of his father David.' In his latter time he fell into scandalous sins, partly through the suggestions of Satan. An importunate suitor may at length prevail by his perseverance in his suit. Long conversing with the world, and objects to which we are accustomed, taint the mind. Worldliness formerly hated may creep in. A deformed object is most odious at first sight, afterward it is more reconciled to our thoughts. Indwelling sin, long restrained, may break out again; as roses snipt in summer bud in winter. A man, upon the supposition that he hath grace, and is possessed of the love of God, may grow negligent, and thinketh there needeth not such diligence as when he was doubtful.

4. The nature of the assurance is to exclude fear, which hath torment; but not the fear of caution and diligence; for so, 'Blessed is he that feareth always,' Prov. xxviii. 14; and 'we must pass the whole time of our sojourning here in fear,' 1 Peter i. 17. We need not retain the same doubting perplexities and fears of God's displeasure, but we must retain a fear of sinning, and be much more in the love of God and his service than ever we were before. So that this assurance, if it be right, doth increase our diligence and watchfulness, and make us more obedient, holy, and fruitful towards God. We are never so thankful, humble, and heavenly as when we do most certainly look for salvation.

*Use 1.* To show us the difference between carnal security and solid assurance of our good estate before God. There are many differences, but it will not suit with my purpose to pursue all.

1. There is a difference in the grounds; the one is a slight presumption of the end without the means, the other goeth upon solid evidences: 1 John iii. 19, 'Hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him.' The one buildeth upon a sandy foundation, the other upon a rock.

2. They differ in the effects: the one benumbeth the conscience into a stupid, quiet, and lazy peace; the other reviveth the conscience, and filleth it with joy and peace in believing: Rom. xv. 13, 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost.' With joy and peace in obeying: 2 Cor. i. 12, 'For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not in fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.' With joy and peace in suffering: 1 Peter i. 8, 'Though now in tribulation, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.'

3. They differ in the way, how either is gotten, or how maintained. Foolish presumption costs a man nothing; like a mushroom, it groweth up in a night, or like Jonah's gourd. We did not labour for it; it came upon men they know not how nor why. The less such men exercise themselves unto godliness, the more confident. A serious exercising of grace would discover their unsoundness. A peace that groweth upon us we know not how, and is better kept by negligence

than diligence, is not right. We may say to them, How camest thou by it so soon, my son? Men leap into it upon slight grounds; but a true assurance is gotten with diligence, and kept with watchfulness.

[1.] It is gotten with diligence. The scripture everywhere calls for it, when it persuades us to look after so great a benefit. And surely the counsel of the Holy Ghost is not to be despised: 2 Peter i. 10, 'Give all diligence to make your calling and election sure;' Heb. vi. 11, 'That ye show forth the same diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end,' 2 Peter iii. 14, 'Be diligent, that you may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless.' Now see after all this warning if the comforts of the Spirit will drop into the mouth of the lazy soul. If you neglect your duty, your sense of your interest will abate. God withdraweth his comforts to awaken his children and quicken them to their duty.

[2.] It is kept with watchfulness. The scripture is plentiful in warnings of that nature. See some places: Heb. iv. 1, 'Let us therefore fear lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.' The more confident we are of the promise, the more should our caution increase: Heb. xii. 28, 29, 'Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire;' 1 Cor. x. 12, 'Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.' The fear of caution doth not weaken assurance, but guard it. And therefore if men be confident of salvation, and gather some ill consequence of it, that tendeth to security and remitting of their watchfulness and care, surely their assurance is not right; that is, if they be bolder with sin, if they stretch conscience, omit some of the more painful and costly duties, take more fleshly liberty and ease, and say, Now I am a child of God, out of danger, and therefore need not be so strict and diligent; these think themselves something when they are nothing.

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## SERMON IX.

*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.

USE 2. Is to teach us three duties which are to be observed to the very last—diligence, watchfulness, and self-denial.

1. Diligence. The race is not ended as soon as begun; it is a race from earth to heaven by the way of holiness. New converts are carried on with a great deal of affection and zeal, and make a swift progress at first, but flag and faint afterwards. Therefore you must renew your resolutions for God and heaven. There is many a corruption yet to resist and conquer, many a temptation to overcome, and much necessary work to do, and you received life from Christ to do it. How much is



all that you have done already beneath your duty, beneath the majesty of God whom you serve in the spirit, beneath the precious love of Christ, which should both incline and oblige you to live more to him; beneath the promises and advantages you have by grace for your growth and increase; beneath the weight and worth of endless glory into which you are entering! And therefore you should be best at last, from good grow better, and the nearer to enjoyment, be the more earnest in your motions, and the more confidence of obtaining, the more abounding in the work of the Lord.

2. Be not secure, but use all caution and watchfulness that you miscarry not. Man is a very changeable creature, therefore we should always stand upon our guard; considering—

[1.] The course of temptations may be altered; the devil doth not always play the same game; as it is said of Joab, 1 Kings ii. 28, he ‘turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom.’ A man may withstand one kind of brunt, yet fail in another. Every new condition brings new snares: Hosea vii. 8, ‘Ephraim is a cake not turned;’ that is, baked but of one side. The children of God prosperous differ from the children of God afflicted: Phil. iv. 12, ‘I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound; everywhere and in all things I am instructed, both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.’ Age hath its weaknesses and frailties as well as youth.

[2.] Corruptions are sometimes strangely disguised. A man may withstand open enemies, yet fail by the insinuations of those who have a show of godliness: 1 Kings xiii. 4, 19, the man of God withstood the king, but was overcome by the old prophet. We read in history of some that lost their limbs in defence of the truth under pagan persecutions, but after made shipwreck of the faith by errors. Many withstand violence, bear it out well in a storm, yet are soon deluded and turned out of the way.

[3.] There is danger after suffering. Many suffer many things for the truth who after make foul defection from God; they may suffer a while upon the example of others; their particular interest is wrapt up in the public applause which sufferers for the truth receive from the lovers of truth, and that will make even hypocrites suffer much. Yea, continued sufferings may make the soul faint for the present time; the best, being left to themselves in the hour of temptation, may shrink, and without continual aid from heaven will dishonour God and themselves. No experience from heaven, no experience of former joy and sweetness which they have found in the way of truth, nor their former sufferings, will make them adhere to it.

[4.] Where there seemeth to be least danger there is many times most cause of fear. Lot, that was chaste in Sodom, miscarried by incest in the mountains, where was none but his own family.

[5.] When conscience is cast asleep, a child of God may fall into grievous sins. David’s heart smote him when he cut off the lap of Saul’s garment, yet fell into uncleanness and blood, and lieth asleep in it for a long time, till Nathan the prophet roused him up. Who would have thought that such a tender conscience could ever have been so charmed? But the conscience of a child of God may be strangely

deadened and laid by for a time, even after he hath passed over the terrors of the law, and gotten some peace and confidence.

3. Continual self-denial; if you have suffered for Christ, you must suffer still, that you may not lose your cost: Gal. iii. 4, 'Have you suffered so many things in vain?' They are lost as to anything you can expect from God. If you have ministered to the saints, you must minister: Heb. vi. 10, 11, 'For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope to the end.' If you have mortified and subdued the flesh, you must mortify and subdue it more and more, that you may not be cast-aways: 1 Cor. ix. 27, 'But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway;' as those are who begin in the Spirit and end in the flesh: 2 Thes. iii. 6, 7, 'Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition received of us. For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us; for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you.' If you have endured afflictions, you must endure still: Col. i. 11, 'Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness.' The danger is not over whilst you are yet in the way. Take heed of miscarrying in the haven, and falling at last.

*Doct. 2.* That whatsoever degrees we have already attained, we must press forward to perfection.

As Paul laboured hard after it, so should we all in the sense of our defects, and endeavour a constant progress.

*Reasons.*

1. By this our title is assured. All that will be saved must either be perfect or labour after perfection. Perfect none can be, but all must labour after perfection, or else they are not sincere, and so far labour as to be ashamed of defects in holiness, and mourn over them, Rom. vii. Certainly we must not allow ourselves in them; still striving after more, and making further progress every day: Mat. v. 48, 'Be ye therefore perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Christians are called to perfection, though they cannot fully attain to it in this life. Many after they have gotten such a measure of grace whereby they think they may be assured they are in a state of grace, never look further, but set up their rest; think that hereafter God will make them perfect when they die. Oh, consider, here is the time of growth. Corn doth not grow in the barn, but in the field. Besides, they hazard their claim of sincerity who do not aim at perfection; for where there is true grace there will be a desire of the greatest perfection. As a small seed will seek to grow up into a tree, and there will be trouble about the relics of sin and grief, that they can serve God no more perfectly.

2. By this our hearts are more prepared in this life for our happiness. The more holy and heavenly we grow, the more meet: Col. i. 12, 'Who hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints .

in light.' We are remotely fitted by regeneration : 2 Cor. v. 5, ' Now he that hath wrought us to this self-same thing is God, who also hath given us the earnest of the Spirit.' But next and immediately by growth and increase of grace : 1 John iii. 3, ' He that hath this hope in him purifieth himself as Christ is pure.' He purifieth himself more and more : Rom. ix. 23, 24, ' And that he might make known the riches of his glory on the vessels of mercy, which he hath afore prepared unto glory, even us whom he called : not of the Jews only, but of the gentiles.'

3. By this our glory and blessedness are increased. The best graces have a more honourable crown ; for according to the degrees of grace, so will our glory be. Every vessel is filled according to its capacity ; they that are growing here have more in heaven. Glory and blessedness standeth in communion with God and conformity to him, or the vision and full fruition of God : Ps. xvii. 15, ' As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness : I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness ;' 1 John iii. 2, ' But we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him ; for we shall see him as he is.' Now the more holy we are, the more suited to this happiness, and therefore have larger measures of it ; if purity of heart be necessary to see God, to enjoy communion with God now, as unquestionably it is : Mat. v. 8, ' Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God ;' 1 John i. 7, ' If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another.' It is unreasonable to imagine that clarified souls have no more fruition of God than those who have only grace enough to make a hard shift to go to heaven. *Sicut se habet simpliciter ad simpliciter, ita magis ad magis.* If holiness fits to see God, and without it we cannot see him, so a little holiness fits to take in a little of God ; and the more of holiness the more of God ; and there is the same reason for aiming at the degree as at the thing, heaven being the perfection of holiness. If you do not desire more degrees, you do not desire heaven itself.

*Use.* Is to persuade us to get ground in our race, which we do as our title is more assured by self-denying obedience.

1. Our end will bear it, to see God and enjoy God : 1 Thes. ii. 12, ' That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you to his kingdom and glory.' How much is this better than all those worldly things upon which we lay out our labour and diligence ?

2. The glory of God requireth it. Less grace may serve for our safety than our comfort ; for our comfort than the glory of God : John xv. 8, ' Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit ; so shall ye be my disciples.' Your hearts will never serve you to do any excellent things for God in the world, but you will betray his honour upon all occasions by your weaknesses and infirmities. God hath most honour from the strong and fruitful christian, who produces the genuine fruits of godliness, and produces them in such plenty that God is mightily honoured by them : Mat. v. 16, ' Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' By your zeal, constancy, and fidelity in your relations. Meekness, patience, strictness, and heavenly-mindedness. But if our lives be filled with sensuality, pride, envy, malice, wherein do you differ from the ungodly world but only in the name, and some little grace buried under a heap of sin ?

3. The notion of grace implieth it. You must not only begin it, but continue it till you come to the goal. Besides your entrance into christianity, there must be a progress. There is a gate, and a way, Mat. vii. 14. Will you always keep at the door and entrance? It is not enough to begin, but we must finish in the way of mortification, heavenly-mindedness, self-denial: Prov. iv. 18, 'The path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day;' Ps. lxxxiv. 7, 'They go from strength to strength;' 2 Cor. iv. 16, 'But though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day.'

Now there is requisite to this—

[1.] A strong faith, or a deep sense of the world to come: Heb. x. 39, 'But we are not of them who draw back to perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.'

[2.] A fervent love, levelling and directing all our actions to God's glory: 2 Cor. v. 14, 15, 'For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.'

[3.] A lively hope, quickening and strengthening our resolutions for God and the world to come: 1 Peter i. 13, 'Wherefore 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.' In short, a faith that we may believe the gospel with an assent so strong as constantly to adhere to the duties prescribed, and to venture all upon the hopes offered therein; a hope so strong that the heart be so set upon glory to come, that present things do not greatly move us, whether the delights or terrors of sense; such a love arising out of the sense of our obligations to God, and a value and esteem of his grace, that we do with all readiness of mind and delight, with frequency and constancy, continue in the obedience of his will, seeking his glory.

*Doct.* 3. That it is a great encouragement in the spiritual race that Christ apprehended us for this end and scope, that we may apprehend the crown of eternal life.

Christ's apprehending of us implieth—

1. That any motion towards that which is spiritually good proceedeth first and wholly from Christ. He apprehendeth us before we can apprehend him; his person, ways, benefits, but especially our eternal rewards. We have from him beginning and progress; he is the author and finisher; he first layeth hold upon us, when we were dead in trespasses and sins, by his grace, and still upholdeth us by his grace. He puts us into the heavenly race; for till Christ changeth us we take up with things next at hand. A blinded unbelieving sinner cannot see afar off, till the spirit of wisdom and revelation open his eyes: Eph. i. 17, 18, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.' Nor will he regard heavenly things, nor set his heart on another world, nor lay up his hopes in heaven, and forsake all the things he seeth for that God and glory

which he never saw. He slighteth the offer; his heart is shut up against it till God open it: Acts xvi. 14, 'Whose heart the Lord opened, so that she attended to the things spoken by Paul.' Christ's apprehending us in effectual calling is by a work on the will and understanding; till Christ open our eyes and turn our hearts, and instead of sensual and worldly, make them spiritual and heavenly: Acts xxvi. 18, 'To open their eyes, and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.' We disregard these things till our understandings be cleared; have neither sight nor sense of the world to come, will not let go present advantages for heavenly hopes: 1 Cor. ii. 14, 'But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned;' Prov. xxiii. 4, 'Labour not to be rich; cease from thine own understanding.' Till the heart be turned our affections are prepossessed, till Christ puts us in the race.

2. Christ's apprehending us implieth a motion on our part, a subordinate operation; for he infuseth a new life, which we receive from Christ, to use it and live by it.' There is a vital power, whereby we are made to stir ourselves in a way of holiness, for thereby we are fitted for operations becoming the new creature enabled and inclined; and so the power of God and the liberty of man do sweetly consist together. Where God is said to create in us a new heart, he is also said to give us a free spirit, Ps. li. 10, 13. Where we are said to be 'God's workmanship in Christ Jesus;' we are said 'To walk in them,' Eph. ii. 10. Where he is said to 'take away the heart of stone, and to give us an heart of flesh,' there it is said, 'I will cause you to walk in my statutes,' Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27; 2 Cor. iii. 17, 18, 'Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty. 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.' God first worketh on us, and then by us. God's work is first, ours subordinate: Cant. i. 4, 'Draw me, we will run after thee;' Ps. cxix. 32, 'I will walk at liberty, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.' We are 'transformed by the renewing of our minds, but so as to prove what is that good, that acceptable and perfect will of the Lord,' Rom. xii. 2. Well, then, having such a spirit, and power, and principle of life, with which the rest of the world are not acquainted, let us press forward.

3. The tendency of this life infused is to be considered by us, which is to God and heaven. Converting grace draweth and bendeth the soul to its end and rest, that we may grow more divine and heavenly; for you are so far sanctified as you are divine and heavenly.

[1.] Divine: 2 Peter i. 4, 'Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature.' So that we are or should be still growing, breathing, and reaching forth after God, seeking after him, longing to be with him, to be rid of sin, to see his blessed face, and to live in his perfect love, praising him to all eternity. As the seed is working through the dry clods, so doth this principle of grace; it tendeth toward God, that it may have more enjoyment of God in conformity to him, and be more perfectly subject to him, and never grieve him nor dishonour him more. In the world there is not sufficient to answer the desires and expecta-

tions of the new creature. Two things the heart looketh for as soon as it is changed by grace—perfect enjoyment of God, and perfect conformity and subjection to him, that he may be with God, and free from sin. For this Paul groans: Rom. viii. 23, ‘Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our bodies.’

[2.] Heavenly; that we may live in heaven above the earth, and our hearts may be above with God as our happiness. The heart is suited to that exceeding glory promised us in the gospel, that we may affect it, care for it, fix it as our scope and home, travel toward it with all zeal and diligence. Well, then, if the first grace do in some measure incline us to seek this happiness with God above as our treasure, hope, and home, as the chief matter of our desires and joys, then we are apprehended by Christ; for none but illuminated souls can discern this glory, none but the sanctified soul is inclined to it: Col. iii. 1–3, ‘If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God. Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God;’ 2 Cor. i. 12, ‘For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world.’

4. Christ having apprehended us, still keepeth us in his own hands, and will not fail us, but stand by us in the race in which he hath set us; for that we have from him beginning and progress. He is the author and finisher of our faith; having laid hold upon us by converting grace, he still upholdeth us by his confirming grace; and having begun life, maintaineth it by a constant influence. His divine manutenance is often spoken of in scripture; so that besides our care, and watchfulness, and incessant labour, we receive a new life, vigour, and assistance from Christ.

*Use.* Is to press us to answer Christ’s apprehension of us by an exact, resolved, diligent pursuit of eternal life, that only will declare that we are apprehended by Christ, that we may be guided by him to the land of promise.

I shall give you two motives—

1. Think often of our great obligation to Christ for the great love he hath showed us in our calling and conversion; that he apprehended you in your sins, called you with a holy calling, gave you some taste of his graciousness in the pardoning of your sins, acquainted you with his great and distinguishing love. And is this to be answered with a cold obedience? Christ snatched you from the furnace of hell as brands plucked out of the burning; you have just cause to bless God to all eternity for making you new creatures, living members of Christ. But wherefore did he make you new creatures, but that at length he might perfect the work begun?

2. Consider how Christ is interested in your preservation. He had his race and his agonies: Heb. xii. 1, 2, ‘Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who, for the joy that was set before him, endured the cross, despised the shame, and is now at the right hand of the throne of God.’

The 'joy before him' was principally eternal glory, for which end he apprehended us. That is not all; we are his crown, his joy, a church of holy believers: Isa. liii. 10, 11, 'When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many, for he shall bear their iniquities.' A numerous seed, these are called his 'purchased possession,' Eph. i. 14. He had this in his eye as his crown and the reward of his sufferings: Ps. ii. 3, 'Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession;' given him as a recompense of his humiliation.

This consideration giveth you a double advantage—

[1.] It assureth you of his willingness and readiness to assist and help you to the end of the race; for Christ will not lose his own crown, if believers be his crown and rejoicing.

[2.] Our Saviour Christ hath given an example of enduring the highest afflictions in this world. Of faith; he hath led us as a captain. Let us lay aside our worldly love, and fear and obey him, for he will be sure to crown all those that follow him.

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## SERMON X.

*Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth toward those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Jesus Christ.—PHIL. iii. 13, 14.*

IN the words observe two things—

1. The imperfection acknowledged, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.'

2. His eager desire and endeavour after perfection asserted, 'But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth toward those things that are before.'

I begin with the first general branch, an humble acknowledgment of his imperfection renewed. He had said in the former verse 'Not as though I had already attained, or were already perfect;' now he repeateth it again, 'Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended.'

This he saith for his own sake, and for the sake of the Philippians.

[1.] For his own sake; to keep himself humble, and solicitous about so much of his duty as was yet behind. The meaning is not, I am not yet in heaven. Who knoweth not that, or doubted of that? Surely that needeth not to be disclaimed by this double denial. Nor doth he mean thereby as if he had not a present right to eternal life. We have a right at conversion, but yet this right to salvation is not full till all be ended. It is continued and confirmed by our perseverance in well-