

DIRECTION NINTH.

THE SEVERAL PIECES OF THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD.

Fifth Piece—The Christian's Helmet.

‘And take the helmet of salvation’ (Eph. 6:17).

These words present us with another piece of the Christian's panoply—a helmet to cover his head in the day of battle—THE HELMET OF SALVATION. It makes the fifth in the apostle's order. And, which is observable, this, with most of the pieces in this magazine, are defensive arms, and all to defend the Christian from sin, none to secure him from suffering.

FIRST. They are most defensive arms. Indeed, there is but one of all the pieces in the whole panoply for offence, i.e. ‘the sword.’ It may be to give us this hint, that this spiritual war of the Christian lies chiefly on the defence, and therefore requires arms most of this kind to wage it. God hath deposited a rich treasure of grace in every saint's heart. At this is the devil's great spite; to plunder him of it, and with it of his happiness, he commenceth a bloody war against him. So that the Christian overcomes his enemy when himself is not overcome by him. He wins the day when he doth not lose his grace, his work being rather to keep what is his own than to get what is his enemy's. And truly this one thing well heeded, that the saint's war lies chiefly on the defence, would be of singular use to direct the Christian how to manage his combats both with Satan and also his instruments.

First. With Satan. Look, Christian, thou standest always in a defensive posture, with thy armour on, as a soldier, upon thy works, ready to defend the castle of thy soul which God hath set thee to keep, and valiantly to repel Satan's assaults whenever he makes his approach. But be not persuaded out of the line of thy place, and calling that God hath drawn about thee; no, not under the specious pretence of zeal and hope to get the greater victory by falling into the enemies' quarters. Let Satan be the assailant, and come if he will to tempt thee; but go not thou in a bravado to tempt him to do it. It is just he should be foiled that seeks his own danger. This got Peter his fall in the high-priest's hall, who was left therefore cowardly to deny his master, that he might learn humbly to deny himself ever after.

Second. With Satan's instruments. May be they revile and reproach thee. Remember thy part lies on the defence. Give not railing for railing, reproach for reproach. The gospel allows thee no liberty to use their weapons, and return them quid pro quo—stroke for stroke. ‘Be pitiful, be courteous: not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing,’ 1 Peter 3:8, 9. Thou hast here a girdle and breastplate to defend thee from their bullets—the comfort of thy own sincerity and holy walking, with which thou mayest wipe off the dirt thrown upon thy own face—but no weapon for self-revenge. A shield is put into thy hand, which thou mayest lift up to quench their fiery darts, but no darts of bitter words to retort upon them. Thou art ‘shod with peace,’ that thou mayest walk safely upon the injuries they do thee, without any prick or pain to thy spirit, but not with pride to trample upon the persons that wrong thee.

SECOND. As most of the pieces are defensive, so all of them to defend from sin, none to secure the Christian from suffering. They are to defend him in suffering, not privilege him from it. He must prepare the more for suffering, because he is so well furnished with armour to bear it. Armour is not given for men to wear by the fireside at home, but in the field. How shall the maker be praised, if the metal of his arms be not known? And where shall it be put to the proof, but amidst swords and bullets? He that desires to live

all his days in an isle of providence, where the whole year is summer, will never make a good Christian. Resolve for hardship, or lay down thine arms. Here is the true reason why so few come at the beat of Christ's drum to his standard; and so many of those few that have listed themselves by an external profession under him, do within a while drop away, and leave his colours; it is suffering work they are sick of. Most men are more tender of their skin than conscience; and had rather the gospel had provided armour to defend their bodies from death and danger, than their souls from sin and Satan.

But I come to the words—'and take the helmet of salvation;' in which—after we notice the copulative that clasps this to the former piece of armour, viz. 'and,' showing the connection between the various pieces, we pass to observe—FIRST. The piece of armour itself—THE HELMET OF SALVATION. SECOND. The use of this 'helmet,' or the offices of hope in the Christian's warfare. THIRD. Several applications of the doctrine of the helmet of salvation, alike to those who have and to those who have it not.

CONNECTION OF THE HELMET WITH THE SHIELD, AND THE PREVIOUS PIECES OF THE ARMOUR.

Let us notice the copulative 'and.' 'And take the helmet of salvation;' that is, with the shield of faith, and all the other pieces of armour here set down, take this also into the field with you. See here how every grace is lovingly coupled to its fellow; and all at last, though many pieces, make but one suit; though many links, yet make but one chain. The note which this points at is the concatenation of graces.

[THE CONCATENATION OF GRACES,
in their birth, growth, and decay.]

NOTE. The sanctifying saving graces of God's Spirit are linked inseparably together; there is a connection of them one to the other, and that in their birth, growth, and decay.

First Connection. In their birth. Where one sanctifying grace is, the rest are all to be found in its company. It is not so in common gifts and graces. These are parcelled out like the gifts Abraham bestowed on the children he had by his concubines, Gen. 25:6. One hath this gift, another hath that, none hath all. He that hath a gift of knowledge may want a gift of utterance, and so of the rest. But sanctifying graces are like the inheritance he gave to Isaac; every true believer hath them all given him. 'He that is in Christ is a new creature.' And, 'Behold all things are become new,' II Cor. 5:17. Now, the new creature contains all. As natural corruption is a universal principle of all sin, that sours the whole lump of man's nature; so is sanctifying grace an universal principle,

that sweetly seasons and renews the whole man at once, though not wholly. Grace comes, saith one, into the soul, as the soul into the body at once. Indeed, it grows by steps, but is born at once. The new creature hath all its parts formed together, though not its degrees. Some one grace may, we confess, be perceived to stir, and so come under the Christian's notice, before another. He may feel his fear of God putting forth itself in a holy trembling, and awe upon his spirit, at the thoughts of God, before he sees his faith in the fiduciary recumbency of his soul upon God; yet the one grace is not in its production before the other. One part of the world hath been discovered to us long after the other; yet all the world was made together. Now this connection of graces in their birth is of double use.

1. Use. To relieve the sincere Christian when in doubt of his gracious state, because some one grace which he inquires for, cannot at present be discerned in his soul by him. Possibly it is faith thou hast been looking for, and it is not at any hand to be heard of. Well, Christian, do not presently unsaint thyself till thou hast made further trial of thyself. Send out therefore thy spies to search for some other grace—as thy love to Christ; may be thou wilt hear some tidings of this grace, though the other is not in view. Hath not thy love to God and Christ been seen by thee in such a temptation, chasing it away with Joseph's answer to his wanton mistress, 'How...can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?' Yea, mayest

thou not see it all the day long, either in thy sincere care to please him, or hearty sorrow when thou hast done anything that grieves him? in which two veins run the life-blood of a soul's love to Christ. Now, know to thy comfort, that thy love can tell thee news of thy faith. As Christ said in another case, 'He that hath seen me hath seen my Father,' John 14:9; so say I to thee, 'Thou that hast seen thy love to Christ, hast seen thy faith in the face of thy love.'

But, may be, thy love to Christ is also lodged in a cloud. Well, then, see whether thou canst spy no evangelical repentance, loathing thee with the sight of thy sins, as also enflaming thee with revenge against them, as those enemies which drew thee into rebellion against God, yea, were the bloody weapon with which thou hast so oft wounded the name and murdered the Son of God. Behold, the grace thou lookest for stands before thee. What is love to God, if zeal against sin as God's enemy be not? Did not Abishai love David, when his heart boiled so over with rage against Shimei for cursing David, that he could not contain, but breaks out into a passion, saying, 'Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head?' II Sam. 16:9. And by thy own acknowledgment it troubles thee as much to hear thy lusts bark against God, and thy will is as good to be the death of them, if God would but say his fiat to it, as ever Abishai's was to strike that traitor's head off his shoulders; and yet art thou in doubt whether thou lovest God or no? Truly then thou canst not see fire for flame, love for zeal. Thus, as by taking hold of one link you may draw up the rest of the chain that lies under water, so by discovering one grace, thou mayest bring all to sight. Joseph and Mary were indeed deceived, when they supposed their son to be in the company of their kindred, Luke 2:44. But so canst thou not here. For this holy kindred of graces go ever together, they are knit, as members of the body, one to another. Though you see only the face of a man, yet you doubt not but the whole man is there.

2. Use. As it may relieve the sincere Christian, so it will help to uncase and put the hypocrite to shame, who makes great pretensions to some one grace when he hates another at the same time—a certain note of a false heart. He never had any grace that loves not all graces. Moses would not out of

Egypt with half his company, Ex. 10. Either all must go or none shall stir. Neither will the Spirit of God come into a soul with half of his sanctifying graces, but with all his train. If therefore thy heart be set against any one grace, it proves thou art a stranger to the rest; and though thou mayest seem a great admirer and lover of one grace, yet the defiance thou standest in to others washeth off the paint of this fair cover. Love and hatred are of the whole kind; he that loves or hates one saint as such, doth the same by every saint; so he that cordially closeth with one grace, will find every grace endeared to him upon the same account; for they are as like one to another, as one beam of the sun is to another beam.

Second Connection. Sanctifying graces are connected in their growth and decay. Increase one grace, and you strengthen all; impair one, and you will be a loser in all; and the reason is, because they are reciprocally helpful each to other. So that when one grace is wounded, the assistance it should and would, if in temper, contribute to the Christian's common stock, is either wholly detained or much lessened. When love cools, obedience slacks and drives heavily, because it wants the oil on its wheel that love used to drop. Obedience faltering, faith weakens apace. How can there be great faith when there is little faithfulness? Faith weakening, hope presently wavers; for it is the credit of faith's report, that hope goes on to expect good from God. And hope wavering, patience breaks, and can keep shop windows open no longer, because it trades with the stock hope lends it. In the body you observe there are many members, yet all make but one body; and every member so useful, that the others are beholden to it. So in the Christian there are many graces, but one new creature. And the eye of knowledge cannot say to the hand of faith, 'I have no need of thee,' nor the hand of faith to the foot of obedience, but all are preserved by the mutual care they have of one another. For, as ruin to the whole city may enter at a breach in one part of its wall, and the soul run out through a wound in a particular member of the body; so the ruin of all the graces may, yea must needs, follow on the ruin of any one. There is indeed a stronger bond of necessity between graces of our souls than there is between the members of our body. It is possible, yea ordinary, for some member to be cut off from the body without the

death of the whole, because all the members of the body are not vital parts. But every grace is a vital part in the new creature, and so essential to its very being that its absence cannot be supplied per vicarium—by substitution. In the body one eye can make a shift to do the office of it fellow which is put out; and one hand do the other's work that is cut off, though may not be so exactly; but faith cannot do the office of love, nor love the work of obedience. The lack of one wheel spoils the motion of the whole clock. And if one grace should be wanting, the end would not be attained for which this rare piece of workmanship is set up in the saint's heart.

[Two inferences to be drawn from the connection of graces.]

First Inference. Let it learn thee, Christian, this wisdom, whenever thou findest any grace weakened, either through thy negligence not tending it, or Satan's temptations wounding it, speedily to endeavour to recovery of it; because thou dost not only lose the comfort which the exercise of this one grace might bring, but thou weakenest all the others. Is he a bad husband who hazards the fall of his house by suffering a hole or two in the roof go unmended? What, then, art thou that putteth thy whole gracious state in danger, by neglecting a timely repair of the breach made in any one of thy graces? And so when thou art tempted to any sin, look not on it as a single sin, but as having all other sins in its belly. Consider what thou dost before thou gratifiest Satan in any one motion; for by one sin thou strengthenest the whole body of sin. Give to one sin, and that will send more beggars to your door; and they will come with a stronger plea than the former; another, why mayest thou not do this for them, as well as that? Thy best way is to keep the door shut to all; lest, while thou intendest to entertain only one, all crowd in with it. But if it were possible that thou couldst break this connection of sin, so as to take off one link that pleaseth thee best, and not draw the whole chain after thee by committing this, yet know there is a connection of guilt also. 'Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend

in one point, he is guilty of all,' James 2:10. As he that administereth to the estate of one deceased, though it be never so little that he takes into his hands, becomes liable to pay all his debts, and brings all his creditors upon him; so by tampering but with one sin, and that a little one, thou bringest the whole law upon thy back, which will arrest thee upon God's suit, as a trespasser and transgressor of all its commands. A man cannot stab any part of the face but he will disfigure the whole countenance, and wrong the whole man. Thus the law is copulative; an affront done to one redounds to the dishonour of all, and so is resented by God the lawgiver, whose authority is equally in all.

Second Inference. This may comfort those who trouble themselves with the thoughts of future changes which may befall them, and so alter the scene of their affairs, as to call them to act a part they never much thought upon; and what shall they do then, say they? Now, blessed be God, they make a shift to serve God in their place. But what if straits come? poverty, sickness, or other crosses, make a breach in their bank? How, alas! shall they then behave themselves? Where is their faith, patience, contentment, and other suffering graces, that should enable them to walk on these waves without sinking? They fear, alas! little of these suffering graces is in their hands for such a time. Well, Christian, for thy encouragement know, that if the graces of thy present condition—those I mean which God calls thee to exercise now in thy prosperous state—be lively, and quit themselves well, thou mayest comfortably hope the other suffering graces, which now stand unseen behind the curtain, will do the same, when God changeth the scene of thy affairs and calls them upon the stage to act their part. The more humble thou art now with thy abundance, the more patient thou wilt certainly show thyself in thy penury. So much as thy heart is now above the world's enjoyments, even so much thou wilt then be above the troubles and sorrows of it. Trees, they say, grow proportionably under ground to what they do above ground; and the Christian will find something like this in his graces.

DIRECTION IX.—FIRST GENERAL PART.

[THE HELMET OF SALVATION, WHAT IT IS.]

‘Take the helmet of salvation’ (Eph. 6:17).

We have done with the connective particle, whereby this piece is coupled to the former, and now come to address our discourse to the piece of armour itself—‘take the helmet of salvation.’ Though we have not here, as in all the other [pieces], the grace expressed, yet we need not be long at a loss for it, if we consult with another place, where our apostle lends us a key to decipher his meaning in this. And none so fit to be interpreter of the apostle’s words as himself. The place is, 1 Thes. 5:8, ‘And for an helmet, the hope of salvation:’ so that, without any further scruple, we shall fasten the grace of ‘hope,’ as intended by the Holy Ghost in this place. Now, in order to a treatise of this grace, it is requisite that something be said by explication that may serve as a light set up in the entry, to lead us the better into the several rooms of the point which is to be the subject of our discourse; and this I shall do by showing—FIRST. What ‘hope’ is. SECOND. Why called ‘the hope of salvation.’ THIRD. Why this ‘hope’ is compared to ‘a helmet.’

[The nature of the hope that forms the helmet.]

FIRST INQUIRY. What is the nature of the hope that forms the Christian’s helmet? A little to open the nature of this grace of hope, we shall do so as it will best be done, by laying down a plain description of it, and briefly explicating the parts. Hope is a supernatural grace of God, whereby the believer, through Christ, expects and waits for all those good things of the promise, which at present he hath not received, or not fully.

First. Here is the author or efficient of hope—God; who is called ‘the God of all grace,’ 1 Peter 5:10—that is, the giver and worker of all grace, both as to the first seed and the further growth of it. It is impossible for the creature to make the least pile of grass, or being made, to make it grow; and as impossible to produce the least seed of grace in the heart, or to add one cubit to the stature of it. No, as God is the father

of the rain, by which the herbs in the fields spring and grow, so also of those spiritual dews and influences that must make every grace thrive and flourish. The apostle, in the former place, teacheth us this when he prays that God would ‘perfect, establish, strengthen, settle them.’ And as of all grace in general, so of this in particular, Rom. 15:13, where he is styled ‘the God of hope;’ and ‘by whom we abound in hope’ also. It is a supernatural hope; and thereby we distinguish it from the heathens’ hope, which, with the rest of their moral virtues, so far as any excellency was found in them, came from God—to whom every man that cometh into the world is beholden for all the light he hath, John 1:9—and is but the remains of man’s first noble principles, as sometimes we shall see a broken turret or two stand in the midst of the ruins of some stately palace demolished, that serves for little more than to help the spectator to give a guess what godly buildings once stood there.

Second. Here is hope’s subject—the believer. True hope is a jewel that none wears but Christ’s bride; a grace with which none is graced but the believer’s soul. Christless and hopeless are joined together, Eph. 2:12. And here it is not amiss to observe the order in which hope stands to faith. In regard of time, they are not one before another; but in order of nature and operation, faith hath precedency of hope. First, faith closeth with the promise as a true and faithful word, then hope lifts up the soul to wait for the performance of it. Who goes out to meet him that he believes will not come? The promise is, as it were, God’s love-letter to his church and spouse, in which he opens his very heart, and tells all he means to do for her. Faith reads and embraceth it with joy, whereupon the believing soul by hope looks out at his window with a longing expectation to see her husband’s chariot come in the accomplishment thereof. So Paul gives a reason for his own hope from his faith, Acts 24:14, 15, and prays for the Romans’ faith in order to their hope, Rom. 15:13.

Third. Here is hope’s object.

1. In general, something that is good. If a thing be evil, we fear and flee from it; if good, we hope and wait for it. And here is one note of difference between it and faith. Faith believes evil as well as good; hope is conversant about good.

2. It is the good of the promise. And in this faith and hope agree; both their lines are drawn from the same centre of the promise. Hope without a promise is like an anchor without ground to hold by; it bears the promise on its name. 'I stand and am judged,' saith Paul, 'for the hope of the promise,' Acts 26:6. So David shows where he moors his ship and casts his anchor. 'I hope in thy word,' Ps. 119:81. True hope will trade only for true good. And we can all nothing so that the good God hath not promised; for the promise runs thus, 'No good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly,' Ps. 84:11.

3. All good things of the promise. As God hath encircled all good in the promise, so he hath promised nothing but good; and therefore hope's object is all that the promise holds forth. Only, as the matter of the promise hath more degrees of goodness, so hope intends its act, and longs more earnestly for it. God, he is the chief good, and the fruition of him is promised as the utmost happiness of the creature. Therefore true hope takes her chief aim at God, and makes after all other promises in a subserviency to heave and lift the soul nearer unto him. He is called 'the Hope of Israel,' Jer. 17:13. There is nothing beyond God the enjoying of which the believer projects; and nothing short of God that he can be so content with as, for the enjoying of it, to be willing to give God a general and full discharge of what by promise he stands engaged to him for. Now, because God is only enjoyed fully and securely in heaven's blissful state, therefore it is called 'the hope of glory,' Col. 1:27, 'the hope of eternal life,' Titus 3:7, and 'the hope of salvation,' I Thes. 5:8.

4. The object of hope is the good of the promise, not in hand, but yet to be performed. 'Hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?' Rom. 8:24. Futurity is intrinsic to hope's object, and distinguisheth it from faith, which gives a present being to the promise, and is ἐλπίξοZ μένων ὑπόστασις—the subsistence of things hoped for, Heb. 11:1. The good of the promise hath a kind of subsistence by faith in the soul. It is heaven as it were

in an interview. It brings the Christian and heaven together, as if he were there already. Hence they are said by faith to kiss and embrace the promise, Heb. 11:13, as two friends when they meet. Faith speaks in the present tense, 'We are conquerors, yea, we are more than conquerors.' Hope in futuro—in the future, 'I shall.' And lastly, I inserted or not fully performed. Partial performance of the promise intends hope; but, complete, ends hope, and swallows it up in love and joy. Indeed, either the full performance of the promise, or execution of the threatening, shuts out all hope. In heaven the promise is paid and hope dismissed, because we have what was looked for; and in hell the threatening is fully inflicted, and therefore no hope to be found among the damned, because no possibility of release.

Fourth. Hope's aid—by whose help and for whose sake it expects to obtain the promise—and that is Jesus Christ. It waits for all in and through him. He is therefore called 'our hope,' I Tim. 1:1, because through him we hope for what is promised, both as the purchaser, by whose death we have hanc veniam sperandi—leave and liberty to expect good from God; and by whose Spirit we have virtutem sperandi—ability to hope; so that both the ἐξουσία and δύναμις—the authority and strength to hope comes from Christ; the former by the effusion of his blood for us, the latter by the infusion of his Spirit into us.

[Why this hope is called the hope of salvation.]

SECOND INQUIRY. Why is the Christian's hope styled a 'hope of salvation?' A double reason is obvious.

First Reason. Because salvation comprehends and takes within its circle the whole object of his hope. 'Salvation' imports such a state of bliss, wherein meet eminently the mercies and enjoyments of the promises, scattered some in one and some in another; as at the creation, the light which was first diffused through the firmament was gathered into the sun. Cast up the particular sums of all good things promised in the covenant, and the total which they amount unto is, salvation. The ultima unitas—final whole, or unity, gives the denomination to the number, because it comprehends all; so salvation the ultimate object of the Christian's expectation, and that

which comprehends the rest, denominates his hope.

Second Reason. It is called 'a hope of salvation,' to distinguish it from the worldling's hope, whose portion, Ps. 16, is in this life, and so his hope also. It is confessed that many of these will pretend to a hope of salvation; but the truth is, they neither have right to it, nor are they very eager of it. They think themselves so well seated in this world, that if they might have their wish, it should be that God would not remove them hence. Even when they say they hope to be saved, their consciences tell them that they had rather stay here than part with this world in hope to mend themselves in the other. They blow up themselves into a hope and desire of salvation, more out of a dread of hell than liking of heaven. None I think so mad among them but had rather be saved than damned—live in heaven than lie in hell—yet the best of the whole pack likes this world better than them both.

[Why hope is compared to a helmet.]

THIRD INQUIRY. Why is hope compared to a helmet? For this conceive a double reason.

First Reason. The helmet defends the head, a principal part of the body, from dint of bullet and sword; so this 'hope of salvation' defends the soul, the principal part of man, and the principal faculties of that, whereby no dangerous, to be sure no deadly, impression by Satan or sin be made on it. Temptations may trouble but cannot hurt, except their darts enter the will and leave a wound there, by drawing it to some consent and liking of them; from which this helmet of hope, if it be of the right make, and fits sure on the Christian's head, will defend him. It is hard to draw him into any treasonable practice against his prince, who is both well satisfied of his favour at present, and stands also on the stairs of hope, expecting assuredly to be called up within a while to the highest preferment that the court can afford or his king give. No, the weapons of rebellion and treason are usually forged and fashioned in discontent's shop. When subject's take themselves to be neglected and slighted by their prince—think that their preferments are now at an end, and [that they] must look for no great favours more to come from him—this softens them to receive every impression of disloyalty that any enemy

to the king shall attempt to stamp them withal. As we see in the Israelites; thinking the men of Judah, of whose tribe the king was, had got a monopoly of his favour, and themselves to be shut out from sharing, at least equally, with them therein; how soon are they—even at a blast or two of Sheba's seditious trumpet—made rebels against their sovereign? 'We have no part in David,' saith Sheba, 'neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: every man to his tents, O Israel!' II Sam. 20:1. And see how this treason runs, even like a squib upon a rope. 'Every man of Israel went up from after David, and followed Sheba,' ver. 2. Thus, if once the soul fears it hath no part in God, and expects no inheritance from him, I know no sin so great but it may at the sound of the tempter's trumpet be drawn to commit.

Second Reason. As the helmet defends the soldier's head from wounding, so his heart also from swooning. It makes him bold and fearless in battle though amidst swords and bullets. Goliath with his helmet of brass and other furniture, how confidently and daringly did the man come on! As if he had been so enclosed in his armour that it was impossible that any we upon could come near to deliver a message of death unto him! This made him carry his crest so high, and defy a whole host, till at last he paid his life for his pride and folly. But here is a helmet that whoever wears it need never be put to shame for his holy boasting. God himself allows him so to do, and will bear him out in this rejoicing of his hope. 'Thou shalt know that I am the Lord: for they shall not be ashamed that wait for me,' Isa. 49:23. This made holy David so undaunted in the midst of his enemies, 'Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear,' Ps. 27:3. His hope would not suffer his heart so much as beat within him for any fear of what they could do to him. He had this 'helmet of salvation' on, and therefore he saith, 'Mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me,' ver. 6. A man cannot drown so long as his head is above water. Now it is the proper office of hope to do this for the Christian in times of any danger. 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,' Luke 21:28. A strange time, one would think, for Christ then to bid his disciples lift up their heads in, when they see other 'men's hearts failing them for fear, and for look-

ing after those things which are coming on the earth,' ver. 26, yet, now is the time of the rising of their sun when others' is setting, and blackness of darkness overtaking them; because now the Christian's feast is coming, for which hope hath saved its stomach so long—'your redemption draweth nigh.' Two things make the head hang down—fear and shame. Hope

easeth the Christian's heart of both these; and so forbids him to give any sign of a desponding mind by a dejected countenance. And so much may suffice for explication of the words. I come now to lay down the one general point of doctrine, from which our whole discourse on this one piece of armour shall be drawn.

DIRECTION IX.—SECOND GENERAL PART.

[USE OF THE HELMET, OR THE OFFICES OF HOPE IN THE CHRISTIAN WARFARE.]

The doctrine now then is, that hope is a grace of singular use and service to us all along our spiritual warfare and Christian course. We are directed to take the helmet of salvation—and this, not for some particular occasion and then hang it by till another extraordinary strait calls us to take it down and use it again—but we must take it so as never to lay it aside till God shall take off this helmet to put on a crown of glory in the room of it. 'Be sober and hope to the end,' is the apostle Peter's counsel, 1 Peter 1:13. There are some engines of war that are of use but now and then, as ladders for scaling of a town or fort; which done, [they] are laid aside for a long time and not missed. But the helmet is of continual use. We shall need it as long as our war with sin and Satan lasts. The Christian is not beneath hope so long as above ground, nor above hope so long as beneath heaven. Indeed when once he enters the gates of that glorious city, then 'farewell hope and welcome love forever.' He may say, with the holy martyr, Armour becomes earth, but robes heaven. Hope goes into the field and waits on the Christian till the last battle be fought and the field cleared, and then faith and hope together carry him in the chariot of the promise to heaven door, where they deliver up his soul into the hands of love and joy, which stand ready to conduct him into the blissful presence of God. But that I may speak more particularly of hope's serviceableness to the Christian, and the several offices it performeth for him, I shall reduce all to these four heads. **FIRST.** Hope puts the Christian upon high and noble exploits. **SECOND.** Hope makes him diligent and faith-

ful in the meanest services. **THIRD.** Hope keeps him patient amidst the greatest sufferings. **FOURTH.** Hope composeth and quiets the spirit, when God stays longest before he comes to perform promises. First of the first.

FIRST OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian's helmet,
STIRS HIM TO NOBLE EXPLOITS.]

Hope of salvation puts the Christian upon high and noble exploits. It is a grace born for great actions. Faith and hope are the two poles on which all the Christian's noble enterprises turn. As carnal hope excites carnal men to their achievements which gain them any renown in the world, so is this heavenly hope influential unto the saints' undertakings. What makes the merchant sell house and land, and ship his whole estate away to the other end almost of the world—and this amidst a thousand hazards from pirates, waves and winds—but hope to get a greater by this bold adventure? What makes the daring soldier rush into the furious battle, upon the very mouth of death itself, but hope to snatch honour and spoil out of its jaws? Hope is his helmet, shield, and all, which makes him laugh on the face of all danger. In a word, what makes the scholar beat his brains so hard—sometimes with the hazard of breaking them, by overstraining his parts with too eager and hot a pursuit of learning—but hope but hope of commencing some degrees higher in the knowledge of those secrets

in nature that are locked up from vulgar understandings?—who, when he hath attained his desire, is paid but little better for all his pains and study, that have worn nature in him to the stumps, than he is that tears the flesh off his hands and knees with creeping up some craggy mountain, which proves but a barren bleak place to stand in, and wraps him up in the clouds from the sight of others, leaving him little more to please himself with but this, that he can look over other men's heads, and see a little farther than they. Now if these peddling hopes can prevail with men to such fixed resolutions for the obtaining of these poor sorry things, which borrow part of their goodness from men's fancy and imagination, how much more effectual must the Christian's hope of eternal life be to provoke him to the achievement of more noble exploits! Let a few instances suffice. **FIRST.** This hope raiseth in the Christian a heroic resolution against those lusts that held him before in bondage. **SECOND.** This hope ennobles and enables the Christian to contemn the present world with all its pomp, treasure, and pleasure, to which the rest of the sons of men are, every man of them, basely enslaved. **THIRD.** This hope, where it is steadfast, makes the Christian active and zealous for God. **FOURTH.** It begets in the Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength.

[INSTANCES wherein hope has raised
the Christian to noble exploits.]

FIRST INSTANCE. This hope raiseth in the Christian heroic resolution against those lusts that held him before in bondage. The Israelites who couched so tamely under the Egyptian burdens, without any attempt made by them to shake off the oppressor's yoke, when once Moses came from God to give them hope of an approaching salvation, and his report had gained some credit to be believed by them, it is strange to see what a mighty change the impression of their new-conceived hope made upon them. On a sudden their mettle returns, and their blood, that with anguish and despair had so long chilled, and been even frozen in their veins, grows warm again. They who had hardly durst let their groans be heard—so cowed were their spirits with hard labour—dare

now, fortified with hope, break open their prison doors, and march out of Egypt towards the place of rest promised, maugre [in spite of] all the power and wrath of enraged Pharaoh, who pursued them. Truly, thus it is with a soul in regard of sin's bondage.

O how impotent and poor-spirited is a soul void of this heavenly hope! what a tame slave hath Satan of him! He is the footstool for every base lust to trample upon. He suffers the devil to back and ride him whither he pleaseth, without wincing. No puddle so filthy, but Satan may draw him through it with a twine thread. The poor wretch is well enough contented with his ignoble servitude, because he knows no better master than him he serves, nor better wages than the swill of his sensual pleasures which his lusts allow him. But, let the news of salvation come to the ear of this sin-deluded soul, and a spiritual eye be given him to see the transcendent glory thereof, with a crevice of hope set open to him, that he is the person that shall inherit it, if willing to make an exchange of Satan for Christ, and of the slavery of his lusts for the liberty of his Redeemer's service—O what havoc then doth the soul begin to make among his lusts! He presently vows the death of them all, and sets his head at work how he may soonest and most effectually rid his hands of them. 'Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure,' 1 John 3:3. He now looks upon his lusts with no better eye than a captive prince would do on his cruel keepers, out of whose hands could he but make an escape, he would presently enjoy his crown and kingdom; and therefore meditates his utmost revenge upon them. There may be some hasty purposes taken up by carnal men against their lusts, upon some accidental discontent they meet with now and then in the prosecution of them; but, alas! the swords they draw against them are soon in their sheaths again, and all the seeming fray comes to nothing in the end. They, like Esau, go out full and angry in a sudden mood, but a present comes from their lusts that bribes them from hurting them; yea, so reconciles them to them, that, as he did by his brother, they can fall upon the necks of those lusts to kiss them, which a while before they threatened to kill; and all for want of a true hope of heaven to outbid the proffers their lusts make to appease their anger, which would never yield a peace should be patched

up with them on such infinite hard terms as it must needs be, the loss of eternal salvation. He that hath a mind to provide himself with arguments to arm him against sin's motions, need not go far to seek them; but he that handles this one well, and drives it home to the head, will not need many more.

What is the sin this would not prostrate? Art thou tempted to any sensual lust? Ask thy hope what thou lookest to be in heaven. And canst thou yield to play the beast on earth, who hopest to be made like the pure and holy angels in heaven?

Is it a sin of profit that bewitcheth thee? Is not a hope of heaven a spell strong enough to charm this devil? Can gold bear any sway with thee that hopest to be heir of that city where gold bears no price? Wherefore is that blissful place said to be paved with gold, but to let us know it shall be there trampled upon as of no account? And wilt thou let that now lie in thy heart, that will ere long be laid under thy feet?

Is it a sin of revenge? Dost thou not hope for a day when thy dear Saviour will plead thy cause, and what needest thou then take his work out of his hand? Let him be his own judge that hath no hope; the Judge, when he comes, will take his part.

SECOND INSTANCE. This hope ennobles and enables the Christian to contemn the present world, with all its pomp, treasure, and pleasure, to which the rest of the sons of men are, every man of them, basely enslaved and held by the leg as a prisoner by this chain. When once faith makes a discovery of land that the Christian hath lying in heaven, and, by hope, he begins to lot upon it as that which he shall shortly take up at his remove from earth; truly then the price of this world's felicity falls low in his account; he can sell all his hopes from it very cheap, yea, he can part with what he hath in hand of this world's growth, when God calls him to it, more freely than Alexander did the cities he took; because, when all this is gone, he shall leave himself a better hope than that great monarch had to live upon. The hopes of heaven leave a blot upon the world in the Christian's thoughts. It is no more now to him, than the asses were to anointed Saul.

Story tells us of some Turks who have, upon the sight of Mahomet's tomb, put their eyes out, that they might not defile them, forsooth! with any common object after they had been blessed with seeing one so

sacred. I am sure many a gracious soul there hath been, who by a prospect of heaven's glory—the palace of the great God—set before the eye of their faith, have been so ravished with the sight, that they have desired God even to seal up their eyes by death, with Simeon, who would not by his good-will have lived a day after that blessed hour in which his eyes had beheld the 'salvation' of God. Abraham was under the hope of this salvation, and therefore 'he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country;...for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,' Heb. 11:9, 10. Canaan would have liked [pleased] him well enough, if God had not told him of a heaven that he meant to give him, in comparison to which, Canaan is now but Cabul—a dirty land, in his judgment. So Paul tells us not only the low thoughts he hath himself of the world, but as they agree with the common sense of all believers, whose hope is come to any consistency and settlement, 'for our conversation is in heaven, from whence also we look for the Saviour,' Php. 3:20. Mark, he sets the saint with his back upon earth; and draws his reason from their hope—'from whence we look,' &c. Indeed, he that looks on heaven must needs look off earth. The soul's eye can as little as the body's eye be above and below at the same time. Every man converseth most where he hopes for to receive his greatest gains and advantage. The publican sits at the receipt of custom: there come in his gains. The courtier stands at his prince's elbow. The merchant, if you will find him, look for him in his warehouse or at the exchange. But the Christian's hope carries him by all these doors. Here is not my hope, saith the soul; and therefore not my haunt. My hope is in heaven, from whence I look for the Saviour to come, and my salvation to come with him; there I live, walk, and wait.

Nothing but a steadfast well-grounded hope of salvation can buy off the creature's worldly hopes. The heart of man cannot be in this world without a hope; and if it hath no hope for heaven, it must of necessity take in at earth, and borrow one there such as it can afford. What indeed can suit an earthly heart better than an earthly hope? And that which is a man's hope—though poor and peddling—is highly prized, and hardly parted with. As we see in a man like to drown, and [who] hath only some weed or

bought by the bank's side to hold by; he will die with it in his hand rather than let go; he will endure blows and wounds rather than lose his hold. Nothing can take him from it, but that which he hopes may serve better to save him from drowning. Thus it is with a man whose hope is set upon the world, and whose happiness [is] expected to be paid in from thence. O how such a one hugs and hangs about the world! You may as soon persuade a fox to come out of his hole, where he hath taken sanctuary from the dogs. Such a one to cast off his hopes! No, he is undone without this pelf and that honour; it is that he hath a lid up his hopes in, and hope and life are ever kept in the same hand. Scare and threaten him with what you will, still the man's heart will hold its own. Yea, throw hell-fire into his bosom, and tell him this love of the world, and making gold his hope, will damn him another day, still he will hold to his way.

Felix is a fit instance for this, Acts 24:26. Paul preached a thundering sermon before him; and though the preacher was at the bar, and Felix on the bench, yet God so armed the word, that he 'trembled' to hear the prisoner speak 'of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.' Yet this man, notwithstanding his conscience was struggling with the fears of judgement, and some sparks of divine vengeance had taken fire on him, could at the same time be sending out his heart on a covetous errand, to look for a bribe, for want of which he left that blessed servant of God in his bloody enemies' hands; for it is said, ver. 26, 'he hoped also that money should have been given him of Paul, that he might loose him.' But he missed his market; for, as a sordid hope of a little money made him basely refuse to deliver Paul, so the blessed hope which Paul had for another world made him more honourably disdain to purchase his deliverance at his hands with a bribe.

THIRD INSTANCE. This hope of salvation, where it is steadfast, makes the Christian active and zealous for God. It is called 'a lively hope,' 1 Peter 1:3. They are men of mettle that have it. You may expect more from him than many others, and not be deceived. Why are men dull and heavy in their service of God? Truly because their hopes are so. Hopeless and lifeless go together. No marvel the work goes hardly off a-hand, when men have no hope, or but little, to be well paid for their labour in doing of it. He that

thinks he works for a song, as we say, will not sing at his work—I mean, be forward and cheery in it. The best customer is sure to be served best and first, and him we count the best customer that we hope will be the best paymaster. If God be thought so, we will leave all to do his business. This made Paul engage so deep in the service of the gospel, [as] even to lose his worldly friends, and lay his own life to stake, it was 'for the hope of the promise,' Acts 26:6. This made the other Israelites that feared God follow the trade of godliness so close, 'unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come,' ver. 7. Mark, they are both instant, and constant, ἐν ἐκτενείᾳ. They run with full speed, stretching themselves forth as in a race; and this, at night and day—no stop or halt in their way, but ever putting on. And what is it that keeps them in breath? even the hope that they shall at last come to that salvation promised. Nothing better to expectorate and clear the soul of this dull phlegm of sloth and listlessness of spirit in the service of God, than hope well improved and strengthened. It is the very physic which the apostle prescribes for this disease: 'We desire that every one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end; that ye be not slothful,' Heb. 6:11, 12.

FOURTH INSTANCE. Hope begets in the Christian a holy impatience after further attainments, especially when it grows to some strength. The higher our hopes of salvation rise, the more will our hearts widen and distend themselves in holy desires. 'Not only they, but ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body,' Rom. 8:23. Methinks rejoicing would better become them for what they have already, than groaning for what they have not. Who may better stay long for their dinner, than they who have their stomachs stayed with a good breakfast? This would hold in bodily food, but not spiritual. No doubt, the sweetness which they tasted from their first-fruits in hand did cheer their spirits; but the thoughts of what was behind made them groan. Hope waits for all, and will not let the soul sit down contented till all the dishes be on the board—till the whole harvest that stands on the field of the promise be reaped and well inned; yea, the more the Christian hath received in partial

payments, the deeper groans hope makes the soul fetch for what is behind. And that,

First. Because these foretastes do acquaint the Christian more with the nature of those joys which are in heaven, and so enlarge his understanding to have more raised conceptions of the felicity those enjoy that are arrived there. And the increasing of his knowledge must needs enlarge his desires; and those desires break out into sad groans, to think what sweet wine is drunk in full bowls by glorified saints, and he living where only a sip is allowed, that doth not satisfy but kindle his thirst. It is harder now for him to live on this side heaven than before he knew so much. He is like one that stands at the door within which is a rich feast. He hears them how merry they are. Through the keyhole he sees what variety they have; and by a little which he licks from the trenchers that are brought out is sensible how delicious their fare is. O how such a one's teeth would water after their cheer; which another misse th not that hears not of it, or only hears, and tastes not of their dainties! The nearer the soul stands to heaven, and the more he knows of their joys, the more he blesseth them and pities himself. None long for heaven more than those who enjoy most of heaven. All delays now are exceedingly tedious to such. Their continual moan is, 'Why is his chariot so long in coming? why tarry the wheels of his chariot?' The last year is thought longer by the apprentice than all his time before, because it is nearer out. And if delays be so tedious, what then are desertions to such a soul, who hath his hopes of salvation raised high by the sweet illapses of the Spirit and foretastes of glory! No doubt Moses' death so nigh Canaan, after he had tasted of the fruit of the land at the spies' hand, was exceeding grievous. To lose a child grown up, when we seem ready to reap our hopes conceived of him, is more than to part with two in the cradle, that have not yet drawn our conceptions far. The Christian indeed, cannot quite lose his hopes. Yet he may have them nipped and set back, as a forward spring, by after-claps of winter weather, which pinches so much the more because the warm beams of the sun had made the herbs come forth and disclose themselves. And so desertions from God do make the saddest impression upon those, above all others, whose expectation had advanced far, and, by the present sense of divine goodness, been unfolded

into a kind of rejoicing through hope of glory. Now to meet with a damp from the frowns of the Almighty, and to be benighted by the withdrawing of that light which did so ravish it, O how dreadful must this sudden change be to the soul!

Second. These present attainments of grace or comfort, they do embolden the soul to expect yet more; and so provoke the Christian to press on for the full payment of all. See both these in David: 'Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice,' Ps. 63:7. The present boon he hath got makes him rejoice in hope of what is yet to come, and by this scent he is carried out with full cry to pursue the chase for more, as appears in the very next words, 'my soul followeth hard after thee,' ver. 8. And no wonder, if we consider that God gives his people their experiences with this very notion stamped on them, i.e. to raise their expectations for further mercies at his hand: 'I will give her her vineyards from thence, and the valley of Achor for a door of hope,' Hosea 2:15. God is there speaking to a soul converted and newly taken into covenant, what blessings he will bestow on it, as the happy effects of its reconciliation to God and marriage with Christ, and he alludes to his dealing with Israel, who came out of a desolate wilderness—where they had wandered, and endured unspeakable hardship, forty years—into a pleasant fruitful country, in the very entrance where whereof this Achor lay, which, when God gave them, he would not have them look on it as in itself it was a little spot of ground, and not so much worth, but as the opening of a door through which he would undertake to let them into the possession of the whole land in process of time; which circumstance, believed by them, made Joshua advance his banners with so much courage against the proudest of his enemies, well knowing that man could not shut that door upon them which God had opened to them.

Thus every particular assistance God gives the Christian against one corruption, is intended by God to be an Achor—'a door of hope,' from which he may expect the total overthrow of that cursed seed in his bosom. When he adds the least degree of strength to his grace or comfort he gives us an Achor, or door of hope, that he will consummate both in glory. O what courage this must needs bring to thee, poor heart, in thy fears and faintings! Paul had many enemies at

Ephesus to oppose him, but having ‘an effectual door opened unto him,’ for his encouragement, he went on undauntedly, 1 Cor. 16:9. As an army, when, after stubborn resistance by the enemy, who labour what they can to keep them out, the door or gate of the city flies open, then the soldiers press in again with a shout, ‘the city is our own.’ Thus when, after long tugging, and much wrestling with God for pardon of sin, or strength against sin, the door of the promise flies open, and God comes in with some assisting, comforting presence, now hope takes heart, and makes the soul fall on with double force and zeal.

SECOND OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian’s helmet, makes him
FAITHFUL IN THE MEANEST SERVICES.]

As hope raiseth the Christian’s spirit to attempt great exploits, so it makes him diligent and faithful in the meanest and lowest services that the providence of God calls him to;—for the same providence lays out every one his work and calling, which sets bounds for their habitations on the earth. Some he sets on the high places of the earth, and appoints them honourable employments, suitable to their place. Others he pitcheth down on lower ground, and orders them in some obscure corner, to employ themselves about work of an inferior nature all their life, and we need not be ashamed to do that work which the great God sets us about. The Italians say true, ‘No man fouls his hands in doing his own business.’ Now, to encourage every Christian to be faithful in his particular place, he hath made promises that are applicable to them all. Promises are like the beams of the sun: they shine in as freely at the window of the poor man’s cottage as of the prince’s palace. And these hope trades with, and from these animates the Christian at his work. Indeed, we are no more faithful in our callings than [we are] acted by faith and hope therein.

Now, you shall observe, God lays his promise, so as it may strengthen our hands and hearts against the chief discouragement that is most like to weaken them in their callings. The great discouragement of those high and public employments—magistracy and

ministry—is the difficulty of the province, and opposition they find from the angry world. These therefore are guarded and supported with such promises as may fortify their hearts against the force and fury with which the world comes forth to oppose them. ‘I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee: be strong and of a good courage,’ Joshua 1:5, [a promise] which was given to Israel’s chief magistrate. And the minister’s promise suits well with this, as having ordinarily the same difficulties, enemies, and discouragements: ‘Go ye therefore and teach all nations;...and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world,’ Matt. 28:19, 20. Again, the temptation which usually haunts persons in low and more ignoble callings, is the very meanness of them; which occasions discontent and envy in some, to see themselves on the floor, and their brother preferred to more honourable services; in others, dejection of spirit, as if they were, like the eunuch, but dry trees, unprofitable, and brought no glory to God, while others, by their more eminent places and callings, have the advantage of being highly serviceable to God in their generations. Now, to arm the Christian against this temptation, and remove this discouragement, God hath annexed as great a reward in the promise to his faithfulness in the meanest employment, as the most honourable is capable of. What more mean and despicable than the servant’s employment? yet no less than heaven itself is promised to them if faithful. He is speaking there to such. ‘Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ,’ Col. 3:23, 24. Where observe,

First. What honour he puts on the poor servants’ work. He serves the Lord Christ; yea, in the lowest piece of work that belongs to his office. His drudgery is divine service, as well as his praying and hearing; for he saith, ‘Whatsoever ye do.’ Again observe,

Second. The reward that is laid up for such; and that is as great as he shall receive that hath been faithful in ruling kingdoms, ‘the reward of the inheritance.’ As if God had said, ‘Be not, O my child, out of love with thy coarse homely work. Ere long thou shalt sit as high as he that sways sceptres. Though your employment now be not the same with his, yet your acceptation is the same, and so shall your reward

also be.' Thus we see, as we bestow more abundant honour on those members which we think less honourable; so doth Christ with those members of his body which, by reason of their low place in the world, may be thought to be most despised—he puts an abundant honour upon them in his promise. And where hope is raised, the Christian cannot but take sweet satisfaction from the expectation thereof. The poor ploughman that is a saint, and plows in hope of reaping salvation, would be as well contented with his place and work as the bravest courtier is with his. Think of this, when any of you have a servant to choose; if you would have your work faithfully and heartily done, employ such about it—if they be to be had—as have a hope of salvation. This will not suffer them to wrong you, though they could. Their helmet will defend them from such temptations. Jacob was a true drudge for his master Laban by day and by night, though he used him none of the best in chopping and changing his wages so oft. But Jacob served in hope, and expected his reward from a better master than Laban; and this made him faithful to an unfaithful man. Joseph would not wrong his master, though at the request of his mistress. He chose to suffer his unjust anger, rather than accept of her unchaste love. The evidence of this grace in a servant is better security for his faithfulness than a bond of a thousand pounds.

THIRD OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian's helmet,
SUPPORTS HIM IN THE GREATEST AFFLICTIONS.]

This hope of salvation supports the soul in the greatest afflictions. The Christian's patience is, as it were, his back, on which he bears his burdens; and some afflictions are so heavy, that he needs a broad one to carry them well. But if hope lay not the pillow of the promise between his back and his burden, the least cross will prove insupportable; therefore it is called 'the patience of hope,' 1 Thes. 1:3. There is a patience, I confess, and many know not a better, when men force themselves into a kind of quietness in their troubles because they cannot help it, and there is no hope. This I may call a desperate pa-

ience, and it may do them some service for a while, and but for a while. If despair were a good cure for troubles, the damned would have more ease; for they have despair enough, if that would help them. There is another patience also very common in the world, and that is a blockish stupid patience, which, like Nabal's mirth, lasts no longer than they are drunk with ignorance and senselessness; for they no sooner come to themselves to understand the true state they are in, but their hearts die within them.

But 'the patience of hope,' we are now treating of, is a sober grace, and abides as long as hope lasts; when hope is lively and active, then it floats, yea even danceth aloft the waters of affliction, as a tight sound ship doth in a tempestuous sea; but when hope springs a leak, then the billows break into the Christian's bosom, and he sinks apace, till hope, with much labour at the pump of the promise, clears the soul again. This was David's very case. 'Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul,' Ps. 69:1. What means he by 'coming unto his soul?' Surely no other than this, that they oppressed his spirit, and as it were sued into his very conscience, raising fears and perplexities there, by reason of his sins, which at present put his faith and hope to some disorder, that he could not for a while see to the comfortable end of his affliction, but was as one under water, and covered with his fears; as appears by what follows, 'I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing,' ver. 2. He compares himself to one in a quagmire, that can feel no firm ground to bear him up. And observe whence his trouble rose, and where the waters made their entrance: 'O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee,' ver. 5. This holy man lay under some fresh guilt, and this made him so uncomfortable under his affliction, because he saw his sin in the face of that and tasted some displeasure from God for it in his outward trouble, which made it so bitter in the going down; and therefore, when once he hath humbled himself in a mournful confession of his sin, and was able to see the coast clear betwixt heaven and him, so as to believe the pardon of his sin, and hope for good news from God again, he then returns to the sweet temper, and can sing in the same affliction where before he did sink. But more particularly I shall show what powerful influence hope hath on the Christian in af-

fliction, and how. **FIRST.** What influence it hath. **SECOND.** Whence and how hope hath this virtue.

[THE INFLUENCE of hope on
the Christian in affliction.]

FIRST. What influence hope hath on the Christian in affliction.

First Influence. Hope stills and silenceth the Christian under affliction. It keeps the king's peace in the heart, which else would soon be in an uproar. A hopeless soul is clamorous. One while it chargeth God, another while it reviles instruments. It cannot long rest, and no wonder, when hope is not there to rock it asleep. Hope hath a rare art in stilling a forward spirit when nothing else can; as the mother can make the crying child quiet by laying it to the breast, when the rod makes it cry worse. This way David took, and found it effectual. When his soul was out of quiet, by reason of his present affliction, he lays his soul to the breast of the promise. 'Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God,' Ps. 43:5. And here his soul sweetly sleeps, as the child with the teat in his mouth. And that this was his usual way, we may think by the frequent instances we find to this purpose. Thrice we find him taking this course in two psalms, Ps 42 and 43. When Aaron and Miriam were so uncivil with Moses, and used him so ill in their foul language, no doubt it was a heavy affliction to the spirit of that holy man, and aggravation of his sorrow, to consider out of whose bow these sharp arrows came; yet it is said, 'Moses held his peace'—waiting for God to clear his innocency. And his patience made God, no doubt, the more angry to see this meek man wronged, who durst trust him with the righting of his name; and therefore [it was that] with such speed he wiped off the dirt they had thrown on him, before it could soak in to the prejudice of his good name in the thoughts of others. Indeed this waiting on God for deliverance in an afflicted state, consists much in a holy silence. 'Truly my soul waiteth upon God: from him cometh my salvation,' Ps. 62:1—or, as the Hebrew, 'my soul is silent.' It is a great mercy, in an affliction that is sharp, to have our bodily senses, so as not to lie raving or roaring, but still and quiet; much more to have the heart silent and patient. And we find the heart is

as soon heat into a distemper, as the head. Now, what the sponge is to the cannon when hot with often shooting, that is hope to the soul in multiplied afflictions; it cools the spirit, and meekens it, that it doth not fly apieces, and break out into distempered thoughts or words against God.

Second Influence. This hope fills the afflicted soul with such inward joy and consolation, that it can laugh while tears are in the eye—sigh and sing all in a breath. It is called 'the rejoicing of hope,' Heb. 3:6. And hope never affords more joy than in affliction. It is on a watery cloud that the sun paints those curious colours in the rainbow. 'Rejoice in hope of the glory of God, and not only so, but we glory in tribulations,' Rom. 5:2, 3. Glorifying is rejoicing in a rapture—when it is so great that it cannot contain itself within the Christian's own breast, but comes forth in some outward expression, and lets others know what a feast it sits at within. The springs of comfort lie high indeed when his joy pours out at the mouth. And all this joy with which the suffering saint is entertained, is sent in by hope at the cost of Christ, who hath provided such unspeakable glory for them in heaven as will not suffer them to pity or bemoan themselves for those tribulations that befall them on the way to it. *Dum mala pungunt, bona promissa unguunt*—while calamities smite with oppression, the gracious promises anoint with their blessings. Hope breaks the alabaster box of the promise over the Christian's head, and so diffuseth the consolations thereof abroad the soul, which, like a precious ointment, have a virtue, as to exhilarate and refresh the spirit in its faintings, so to heal the wounds and remove the smart which the Christian's poor heart may feel from its affliction, according to the apostle in the aforementioned place: 'Hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts,' Rom. 5:5.

There are two graces which Christ useth above any other to fill the soul with joy; and they are faith and hope, because these two fetch all their wine of joy without doors. Faith tells the soul what Christ hath done for it, and so comforts it. Hope revives the soul with news of what Christ will do. Both draw at one tap—Christ and his promise. Whereas the other graces present the soul with its own inherent excellencies—what it doth and suffers for him, rather than what

he does for them; so that it were neither honourable for Christ, nor safe for the saint, to draw his joy from this vessel. Not honourable to Christ! This were the way to have the king's crown set on the subject's head, and cry Hosanna! to the grace of Christ in us, which is due only to the mercy of God in us. For thither we will carry our praise whence we have our joy; and therefore upon our allegiance we are only to 'rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,' Php. 3:3. And it would be no more safe for us than honourable for him, because of the instability of our hearts, and unconstant actings of our graces, which are as oft ebbing as flowing. And so our joy could not be constant, because our graces are not; but as these springs lie high or low, so would this rise and fall. Yea, we were sure to drink more water than wine—oftener want joy than have it. Whereas now, the Christian's cup need never be empty, because he draws his wine from an undrainable Fountain that never sends any poor soul away ashamed, as the brook of our inherent grace would certainly, at one time or other, do.

[WHENCE AND HOW hope hath its supporting influence in affliction.]

SECOND. Whence and how hope hath its virtue; or what are the ingredients in hope's cordial that thus exhilarates the saint's spirit in affliction.

First Answer. Hope brings certain news of a happy issue, that shall shortly close up all the wounds made by his present sufferings. When God comes to save his afflicted servants, though he may antedate their hopes, and surprise them before they looked for him, yet he doth not come unlooked for. Salvation is that they lot upon: 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,' Jer. 29:11—that is, an end suitable to the hopes and expectations taken up by you. Hope is a prying grace; it is able to look beyond the exterior transactions of providence. It can, by the help of the promise, peep into the very bosom of God, and read what thoughts and purposes are written there concerning the Christian's particular estate, and this it imparts to him, bidding him not to be at all troubled to hear God speaking roughly to him in the language of his providence.

'For,' saith hope, 'I can assure thee he means thee well, whatever he saith that sounds otherwise. For as the law, which came hundreds of years after the promise made to Abraham, could not disannul it, so neither can any intervening afflictions make void those thoughts and counsels of love which so long before have been set upon his heart for thy deliverance and salvation.' Now, such a one must needs have a great advantage above others for the pacifying and satisfying his spirit concerning the present proceedings of God towards him; because, though the actings of God on the outward stage of providence be now sad and grievous, yet he is acquainted with heaven's plot therein, and is admitted as it were into the attiring room of his secret counsel, where he sees garments of salvation preparing, in which he shall at last be clad, and come forth with joy. The traveller, when taken in a storm, can stand patiently under a tree while it rains, because he hopes it is but a shower, and sees it clear up in one part of the heavens, while it is dark in another. Providence, I am sure, is never so dark and cloudy but hope can see fair weather a-coming from the promise. 'When these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh,' Luke 21:28. And this is as black a day as can come.

When the Christian's affairs are most disconsolate, he may soon meet with a happy change. The joy of that blessed day, I Cor. 15:52, comes ἐν ὀπτομῷ ἐν ῥίπῃ ὀφθαλμοῦ—'in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye,' we shall be 'changed.' In one moment sick and sad, in the next well and glad, never to know more what groans and tears mean. Now clad with the rags of mortal flesh, made miserable with the thousand troubles that attend it; 'in the twinkling of an eye' arrayed with robes of immortality, embossed and enriched with a thousand times more glory than the sun itself wears in the garment of light which now dazzleth our eyes to look on. 'It is but winking,' said a holy martyr to his fellow-sufferer in the fire with him, 'and our pain and sorrow is all over with.' Who can wonder to see a saint cheerful in his afflictions that knows what good news he looks to hear from heaven, and how soon he knows not? You have heard of the weapon-salve, that cures wounds at a distance. Such a kind of salve is hope. The saints' hope is laid up in heaven, and yet it heals all their wounds they

receive on earth. But this is not all. For, as hope prophesies well concerning the happy end of the Christian's afflictions, so it assures him he will be well tended and looked to while he lies under them. If Christ sends his disciples to sea, he means to be with them when they most need his company. The well child may be left a while by the mother, but the sick one she will by no means stir from. 'When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee,' Isa. 43:2.

You know what God said to Moses when he was sick of his employment, and made so many mannerly or rather unmannerly excuses from his own inability—and all that he might have leave to lay down his commission: 'Go,' saith God, 'and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say,' Ex. 4:12. And again, 'Is not Aaron the Levite thy brother? I know that he can speak well. And also, behold, he cometh forth to meet thee,' ver. 14. Thus God did animate him, and toll [draw] him on to like that hard province he was called to. Methinks I hear hope, as God's messenger, speaking after the same sort to the drooping soul oppressed with the thoughts of some great affliction, and ready to conclude he shall be able to stem so rough a tide—bear up cheerfully and lift up his head above such surging waves. 'Go, O my soul,' saith hope, 'for thy God will be with thee, and thou shalt suffer at his charge. Is not Christ thy brother? yea, is he not thy husband? He, thou thinkest, can tell how to suffer, who was brought up to the trade from the cradle to the cross. Behold, even he comes forth to meet thee, glad to see thy face, and willing to impart some of his suffering skill unto thee.' That man indeed must needs carry a heavy heart to prison with him, who knows neither how he can be maintained there nor delivered thence. But hope easeth the heart of both these, which taken away, suffering is a harmless thing and not to be dreaded.

Second Answer. Hope assures the Christian not only of the certainty of salvation coming, but also of the transcendency of this salvation to be such, as the sorrow of his present sufferings bears no proportion to the joy of that. This kept the primitive Christians from swooning while their enemies let out their blood. They had the scent of this hope to exhilarate their spirits: 'For which cause we faint not; but

though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day,' II Cor. 4:16. Is not this strange, that their spirit and courage should increase with the losing of their blood? What rare unheard-of cordial was this? 'For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory,' ver. 17. Behold here the difference betwixt hopes of heaven and hopes of the world. These latter, they are fanciful and slighty, seem great in hope but prove nothing in hand; like Eve's apple, fair to look on as they hang on the tree, but sour in the juice, and of bad nourishment in the eating. They are, as one calls them wittily, 'nothing between two dishes.' It were well if men could in their worldly hopes come but to the unjust steward's reckoning, and for a hundred felicities they promise themselves from the enjoyments they pursue, find but fifty at last paid them. No, alas! they must not look to come to so good a market, or have such fair dealings, that have to do with the creature, which will certainly put them to greater disappointments than so. They may bless themselves if they please for a while in their hopes, as the husbandman sometimes doth in the goodly show he hath of corn standing upon his ground; but by that time they have reaped their crop and thrashed out their hopes, they will find little besides straw and chaff—emptiness and vanity—to be left them. A poor return, God knows, to pay them for the expense of their time and strength which they have laid out upon them! Much less suitable to recompense the loss he is put to in his conscience; for there are few who are greedy hunters after the world's enjoyments, that do drive this worldly trade without running in debt to their consciences. And I am sure he buys gold too dear, that pays the peace of his conscience for the purchase. But heaven is had cheap, though it be with the loss of all our carnal interests, even life itself. Who will grudge with a sorry lease of a low-rented farm, in which he also hath but a few days left before it expires (and such our temporal life is), for the perpetuity of such an inheritance as is to be had with the saints in light? This hath ever made the faithful servants of God carry their lives in their hands, willing to lay them down, 'while they look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not

seen are eternal,' II Cor. 4:18.

Third Answer. As hope assures the soul of the certainty and transcendency of heaven's salvation, so also of the necessary subserviency that his afflictions have towards his obtaining this salvation. 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?' Luke 24:26. As if Christ had said, 'What reason have you so to mourn, and take on for your Master's death, as if all your hopes were now split and split? Ought he not to suffer? Was there any other way he could get home, and take possession of his glory that waited for him in heaven? And if you do not grudge him his preferment, never be so inordinately troubled to see him onwards to it, though through the deep and miry land of suffering.' And truly the saint's way to salvation lies in the same road that Christ went in: 'If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together,' Rom. 8:17; only with this advantage, that his going before hath beaten it plain, so that now it may be forded, which but for him had been utterly impassable to us. Afflictions understood with this notion upon them—that they are as necessary for our waftage to glory as water is to carry the ship to her port, which may as soon sail without water, as a saint land in heaven without the subserviency of afflictions—this notion, I say, well understood, would reconcile the greatest afflictions to our thoughts, and make us delight to walk in their company. This knowledge Parisiensis calls *unus de septem radiis divini scientiæ*—one of the seven beams of divine knowledge; for the want of which we call good evil, and evil good—think God blesseth us when we are in the sunshine of prosperity, and curseth when our condition is overcast with a few clouds of adversity. But hope hath an eye that can see heaven in a cloudy day, and an anchor that can find firm land under a weight of waters to hold by; it can expect good out of evil. The Jews open their windows when it thunders and lightens, expecting, they say, their Messiah to come at such a time to them. I am sure hope opens her window widest in a day of storm and tempest: 'I will also leave in the midst of thee an afflicted and poor people, and they shall trust in the name of the Lord,' Zeph. 3:12, and, Micah 7:7, 'Therefore I will look unto the Lord; I will wait for the God of my salvation: my God will hear me.' See what strong hold hope's anchor takes. And it is a remark-

able 'therefore,' if you observe the place. Because all things were at so desperate a pass in the church's affairs—as there you will find them to be in man's thinking—'therefore,' saith the saint, 'I will look, I will wait.' Indeed, God doth not take the axe into his hand to make chips. His people, when he is hewing them, and the axe goes deepest, they may expect some beautiful piece at the end of the work.

It is a sweet meditation Parisiensis hath upon 'We know that all things work together for good to them that love God,' Rom. 8:28. *Ubi magis intrepida magis pensata esse debes, quàm inter cooperarios meos, et coadjutores meos?*—Where, O my soul, shouldst thou be more satisfied, free of care and fear, then when thou art among thy fellow-labourers, and those that come to help thee to attain thy so-much desired salvation, which thy afflictions do? They work together with ordinances and other providential dealings of God for good; yea, thy chief good, and thou couldst ill spare their help as any other means which God appoints thee. Should one find, as soon as he riseth in the morning, some on his house-top tearing off the tiles, and with axes and hammers taking down the roof thereof, he might at first be amazed and troubled at the sight, yea, think they are a company of thieves and enemies come to do him some mischief; but when he understands they are workmen sent by his father to mend his house, and make it better than it is—which cannot be done without taking some of it down he is satisfied and content to endure the present noise and trouble, yea thankful to his father for the care and cost he bestows on him. The very hope of what advantage will come of their work makes him very willing to dwell a while amidst the ruins and rubbish of his old house. I do not wonder to see hopeless souls so impatient in their sufferings—sometimes even to distraction of mind. Alas! they fear presently—and have reason so to do—that they come to pull all their worldly joys and comforts down about their ears; which gone, what, alas! have they left to comfort them, who can look for nothing but hell in another world? But the believer's heart is eased of all this, because assured from the promise that they are sent on a better errand to him from his heavenly Father, who intends him no hurt, but rather good—even to build the ruinous frame of a his soul into a glorious temple at last; and these af-

flictions come, among other means, to have a hand in the work; and this satisfies him, that can say, 'Lord, cut and hew me how thou wilt, that at last I may be polished and framed according to the platform [pattern] which love hath drawn in thy heart for me.' Though some ignorant man would think his clothes spoiled when besmeared with fuller's earth or soap, yet one that knows the cleansing nature of them will not be afraid to have them so used.

FOURTH OFFICE.

[Hope, as the Christian's helmet, QUIETS HIS SPIRIT WHEN GOD DELAYS TO PERFORM HIS PROMISE.]

The fourth and last office of hope propounded is, to quiet and compose the Christian's spirit when God stays long before he come to perform promises. Patience, I told you, is the back on which the Christian's burdens are carried, and hope the pillow between the back and the burden, to make it sit easy. Now patience hath two shoulders; one to bear the present evil, and another to forbear the future good promised, but not yet paid. And as hope makes the burden of the present evil of the cross light, so it makes the longest stay of the future good promised short. Whereas, without this, the creature could have neither the strength to bear the one, nor forbear and wait for the other. 'And I said, My strength and my hope is perished from the Lord,' Lam. 3:18; implying thus much, that where there is no hope there is no strength. The soul's comfort lies drawing on, and soon gives up the ghost, where all hope fails. God undertook for Israel's protection and provision in the wilderness, but when their dough was spent, and their store ended, which they brought out of Egypt, they fall foul with God and Moses. And why? but because their hope was spent as soon as their dough. Moses ascends the mount, and is but a few days out of their sight, and in all haste they must have a golden calf. And why? but because they gave him for lost, and never hoped to see him more. This is the reason why God hath so few servants that will stick fast to him, because God puts them to wait for what he means to give, and most are short-spirited, and cannot stay. You know what Naomi said to her daughters, 'If I

should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons; would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands?' Ruth 1:12, 13. The promise hath salvation in the womb of it; but will the unbeliever, a soul without heavenly hope, stay till the promise ripens, and this happiness be, as I may so say, grown up? No, sure, they will rather make some match with the beggarly creature, or any base lust that will pay them in some pleasure at present, than wait so long, though it be for heaven itself. Thus as Tamar played the strumpet because the husband promised was not given her so soon as she desired, Gen. 38, so it is the undoing of many souls because the comfort, joy, and bliss of the promise is withheld at present, and his people are made to wait for their reward; therefore they throw themselves into the embraces of this adulterous world that is present. 'Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world,' II Tim. 4:10. The soul only that hath this divine hope will be found patiently to stay for the good of the promise. Now, in handling this last office of hope, I shall do these three things—**FIRST.** I shall show you that God oft stays long before he pays in the good things of the promise. **SECOND.** That when God stays longest before he performs his promises, it is our duty to wait. **THIRD.** That hope will enable the soul to wait when he stays longest.

[GOD OFT STAYS LONG before he fulfills his promise.]

FIRST. God oft stays long before he pays in the good things of the promise. The promise contains the matter of all our hopes;—called therefore 'the hope of the promise.' To hope without a promise is to claim a debt that never was owing. Now the good things of the promise are not paid down presently; indeed, then there would be not such use of the promises. What need of a bond where the money is presently paid down? God promised Abraham a son, but he stayed many years for him after the bond of the promise was given him. He promised Canaan to him and his seed, yet hundreds of years interposed between the promise and performance. Esau was spread into a kingdom before the heirs of promise had their inheritance, or one foot of land [was] given them in it. Yea, all the patriarchs, who were the third

generation after Abraham, died, 'not having received the promises,' Heb. 11:13. Simeon had a promise 'he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ,' Luke 2:26. But this was not performed till he had one foot in the grave, and was even taking his leave of the world.

In a word, those promises which are the portion of all the saints, and may be claimed by one as well as by another, their date is set in the book of God's decree, when to be paid in to a day; some sooner, some later; but not expressed in the promise. He hath engaged to answer the prayers of his people, and 'fulfil the desires of those that fear him,' Ps. 145:19. But it proves a long voyage sometimes before the praying saint hath the return of his adventure. There comes oft a long and sharp winter between the sowing time of prayer and the reaping. He hears us indeed as soon as we pray, but we oft do not hear him so soon. Prayers are not long on their journey to heaven, but long a-coming thence in a full answer. Christ at this day in heaven hath not a full answer to some of those prayers which he put up on earth. Therefore he is said to 'expect till his enemies be made a footstool,' Heb 10:13. Promises we have for the subduing sin and Satan under our feet, yet we find these enemies still skulking within us; and many a sad scuffle we have with them before they are routed and outed our hearts. And so with others. We may find sometime the Christian—as great an heir as he is to joy and comfort—hardly able to show a penny of his heavenly treasure in his purse. And for want of well pondering this one clause, poor souls are oft led into temptation, even to question their saintship. 'Such promises are the saints' portion,' saith one; 'but I cannot find them performed to me, therefore I am none of them. Many a prayer I have sent to heaven, but I hear no news of them. The saints are conquerors over their lusts; but I am yet often foiled and worsted by mine. There is a heaven of comfort in the promise, but I am as it were in the belly of hell, swallowed up with fears and terrors.' Such as these are the reasonings of poor souls in the distress of their spirits; whereas all this trouble they put themselves to might be prevented, if they had faith to believe this one principle of undoubted truth—that God performs not his promises all at once, and that what they want in hand they may see on the way coming to them.

[OUR DUTY IS TO WAIT, when God stays his longest before fulfilling his promise.]

SECOND. When God stays long before he makes payment of the promise, then it is the believer's duty to wait for it. 'Though it tarry, wait for it,' Hab. 2:3. He is speaking there of the good of the promise, which God intended to perform in the appointed time; and because it might tarry longer than their hasty hearts would, he bids them wait for it. As one that promiseth to come to a friend's house sends him word to sit up for him, though he tarry later than ordinary, for he will come at last assuredly. This is hard work indeed! What! wait? When we have stayed so long, and no sight of God's coming after this prayer, and that sermon! So many long looks given at the window of his ordinances and providences, and no tidings to be heard of his approach in mercy and comfort to my soul; and after this, still am I bid wait? This is wearisome work. True, to flesh and blood it is; yea, weak faith is oft out of breath, and prone to sit down, or turn back, when it hath gone long to meet God in the returns of his mercy, and misseth of him; and therefore the apostle ushers in his duty with an affectionate prayer. 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,' II Thes. 3:5. He had laid down a strong ground of consolation for them in the preceding chapter, in that they were 'chosen to salvation,' and 'called by the gospel to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ,' II Thes. 2:13, 14, and assured them that God, who is 'faithful,' would 'stablish them, and keep them from evil,' II Thes. 3:3. He means [this] so as they should not miscarry, and at last fall short of the glory promised; but, being sensible how difficult a work it was for them amidst their own present weaknesses, the apostasies of others, and the assaults of Satan upon themselves, to hold fast the assurance of their hope unto the end, he turns himself from them to speak to God for them. 'The Lord direct your hearts.' And, as if he had said, it is a way you will never find, a work you will never be able to do of yourselves—thus to wait patiently till Christ come, and bring the full reward of the promise with him; the Lord therefore direct your hearts into it. And Moses, it seems, before he ascended the mount, had a fear and jealousy of what afterward proved too true, that

the Israelites' unbelieving hearts would not have the patience to wait for his return, when he should stay some while with God there out of their sight; to prevent which, he gave express command before he went up that they should tarry there for him, Ex 14:14. Indeed, a duty more contrary than this of waiting quietly and silently on God, bear our manners, and lackey after us, before we do what he commands: but if the promise comes not galloping full speed to us, we think it will never be at us.

Question. But why doth God, when he hath made a promise, make his people wait so long?

Answer. I shall answer this question by asking another. Why doth God make any promise at all to his creature? This may be well asked, considering how free God was from owing any such kindness to his creature; till, by the mere good pleasure of his will, he put himself into bonds, and made himself, by his promise, a debtor to his elect. And this proves the former question to be saucy and over-bold. As if some great rich man should make a poor beggar that is a stranger to him his heir, and when he tells him this, he should ask, 'But why must I stay so long for it?' Truly, any time is too soon for him to receive a mercy from God that thinks God's time in sending it too late. This hasty spirit is as grievous to God as his stay can be to us. And no wonder God takes it so heinously, if we consider the bitter root that bears it.

First. It proceeds from a selfishness of spirit, whereby we prefer our own content and satisfaction before the glory of God, and this becomes not a gracious soul. Our comfort flows in by the performance of the promise, but the revenue of God's honour is paid into him by our humble waiting on him in the interval between the promise and the performance, and is the main end why he forbears the paying it in hastily. Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and God sure may better make us wait, before the promise is given in to our embraces by the full accomplishment of it. 'For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise,' Heb. 10:36. It is very fit the master should dine before the man. And if he would not like a servant that would think much to stay so long from his meal as is required at his hands for waiting at his master's table, how much more must God dislike the rudeness of our impatient spirits, that would be set at our meal,

and have our turn served in the comfort of the promise, before he hath the honour of our waiting on him!

Second. It proceeds from deep ingratitude; and this is a sin odious to God and man. 'They soon forgot his works; they waited not for his counsel,' Ps. 106:13. God was not behindhand with his people. It was not so long since he had given them an experiment of his power and truth. He had but newly lent them his hand, and led them dry-shod through a sea, with which they seemed to be much confirmed in their faith, and enlarged in their acknowledgments, when they came safe to shore: 'then believed they his words; they sang his praise,' Ps. 106:12. One would have thought that God's credit now would have gone for a great sum with them ever after. But it proved nothing so. They dare not trust God with so much as their bill of fare—what they shall eat and drink; and therefore it is said, 'they waited not for his counsel, but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.' That is, they prevented the wisdom and providence of God, which would have provided well for them, if they could but have stayed to see how God would have spread their table for them. And why all this haste? 'They forgot his works.' They had lost the thankful sense of what was past, and therefore cannot wait for what was to come.

[HOPE WILL ENABLE THE SOUL TO WAIT
when the promise stays longest.]

THIRD. Hope will enable the soul to wait when the promise stays longest. It is the very nature of hope so to do. 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,' Lam. 3:26. Hope groans when the mercy promised comes not, but does not grumble. Hope's groans are from the spirit sighed out to God in prayer, Rom. 8:26, and these lighten the soul of its burden of fear and solicitous care; whereas the groans of a hopeless soul are vented in discontented passions against God, and these are like a loud wind to a fire, that makes it rage more. 'They shall drink, and be moved, and be mad, because of the sword that I will send among them,' Jer. 25:16. It is spoken of the enemies of God and his people. God had prepared them a draught which should have strange effects—'they should be moved;' as a man, whose brain is disturbed with strong drink,

is restless and unquiet: yea, 'be mad.' As some, when they are drunk, quarrel with every one they meet, so should their hearts be filled with rage even at God himself, who runs his sword into their sides, because they had no hope to look for any healing of their wounds at his hand. But now where there is hope, the heart is soon quieted and pacified. Hope is the handkerchief that God puts into his people's hands to wipe the tears from their eyes, which their present troubles, and long stay of expected mercies, draw from them. 'Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy, and there is hope in thine end,' Jer. 31:16, 17. This, with some other comfortable promises which God gave his prophet Jeremiah in a vision, did so overrun and fill his heart with joy, that, he was as much recruited and comforted as a sick or weary man is after a night of sweet sleep: 'Upon this I awaked,...and my sleep was sweet unto me,' ver. 26. When, however, the promise seems to stay long, hope pacifies the Christian with a threefold assurance. First. Hope assures the soul, that though God stays a while before he performs the promise, yet he doth not delay. Second. That when he comes he will abundantly recompense his longest stay. Third. That while he stays to perform one promise, he will leave the comfort of another promise, to bear the Christian company in the absence of that.

[A THREEFOLD ASSURANCE which hope gives the Christian when God delays to perform his promise.]

First Assurance. Hope assures the soul that though God stays a while before he performs the promise, yet he doth not delay. 'The vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry,' Hab. 2:3. How is this? 'Though it tarry it will not tarry!' How shall we reconcile this tarrying and not tarrying? Very well. Though the promise tarryes till the appointed time, yet it will not tarry beyond it. 'When the time of the promise drew nigh,' it is said, 'which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt,' Acts 7:17. As the herbs and flowers which sleep all winter in their roots underground without any

mention of them, when the time of spring approacheth, presently they start forth of their beds, where they had lain so long unperceived. Thus will the promise in its season do. He delays who passeth the time appointed, but he only stays that waits for the appointed time, and then comes. Every promise is dated, but with a mysterious character; and for want of skill in God's chronology, we are prone to think God forgets us, when, indeed, we forget ourselves, in being so bold to set God a time of our own, and in being angry that he comes not just then to us. As if a man should set his watch by his own hungry stomach rather than by the sun, and then say it is noon, and chide because his dinner is not ready. We are over greedy of comfort, and expect the promise should keep time with our hasty desires, which because it doth not we are discontented. A high piece of folly! The sun will not go the faster for setting our watch forward, nor the promise come the sooner for our antedating it. It is most true what one saith, 'Though God seldom comes at our day, because we seldom reckon right, yet he never fails his own day.' That of the apostle is observable. He exhorts the Thessalonian church there, 'that they would not be shaken in mind, or be troubled, as that the day of Christ were at hand,' II Thes. 2:2, 3. But what need of this exhortation to saints, that look for their greatest joy to come with the approach of that day? Can their hearts be troubled to hear the day of their redemption draws nigh, the day of refreshing is at hand? It was not therefore, I conceive, the coming of that day which was so displeasing and affrighting, but the time in which some seducers would have persuaded them to expect it, as if it had been at the very doors, and presently would have surprised them in their generation, which had been very sad indeed, because then it should have come before many prophecies and promises had received their accomplishment, and by that means the truth of God would have gone off the stage with a slur, which must not, shall not be, as he tells them, 'For that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition,' II Thes. 2:3. And as that promise stays but till those intermediate truths, which have a shorter period, be fulfilled, and then comes without any possible stay or stop; so do all the rest but wait till their reckoning be out, and what God hath ap-

pointed to intervene be despatched, and they punctually shall have their delivery in their set time.

Thou art, may be, bleeding under a wounded spirit, a poor broken-hearted creature that liest steeping in thy tears for sin. The promise tells thee that God is nigh thee to revive thee, thee I say by name, Isa. 57:15. Yet thou comest from this prayer, and that sermon, but hast no sight of him, nor canst hear more news of his coming than what the promise gives thee. Look now that God suffers no prejudice by his stay in thy thoughts, but conclude that his time is not come, or else he had been ere this with thee; and take heed of measuring God's miles by thy own scale, for his nigh may be thy far. God could have told his people the time when he meant to come with the performance of every promise as easily as set it down in his own purpose, but he hath concealed it in most, as a happy advantage to our faith, whereby we may more fully express our confidence in waiting for that which we know not when we shall receive. Abraham's faith was great and strong to follow God when he concealed the place he meant to lead him to. For he went, 'he knew not whither,' Heb. 11:8. So it requires great faith to rest satisfied with the promise when the time of payment is hid. But if we consider who we trade with we can have no reason to be the least jealous, no not when he stays longest, that he will fail or delay us a moment longer than the set time of the promise. There are three [why] men break their times of payment, and come not at their day. 1. Forgetfulness. 2. Unfaithfulness. 3. Impotency.

1. Cause. Forgetfulness. Many remember not what they promise. The day comes and it is quite out of their minds. Men seldom forget when they are to receive, but too oft when they are to pay, debts. An extraordinary occasion must be sent to rub up the butler's memory, or else he will never think of his prison promise. But God's promise is never out of his thoughts, 'he remembers his covenant,' Ps. 105:8; his people and their affairs are 'graven on the palms of his hands, and their walls are continually before him,' Isa. 49:16. Though the preferment of the Pharaoh's court made the butler forget his promise to Joseph, yet all the glory that Christ sees and enjoys in heaven hath not the power to blot the remembrance of his promise to his people who lie in chains of affliction here below. And God would have his saints

take notice of this to comfort themselves with, while [i.e. until] he comes. 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end,' Jer. 29:11.

2. Cause. Unfaithfulness. A promise with some is no more than a collar on an ape's neck. You have them not a whit the faster by it; for they can slip off the obligation at their pleasure. May be they never intended performance, when they passed it, but made use of a promise only as a key, to lock up their intention of deceiving from your present knowledge. Others haply mean at present as they say, but soon grow sick of their engagement, upon sight of some disadvantage which their after-thoughts discover likely to befall them upon the performance, and therefore their wits are set a-work to coin some handsome evasion to delude their engagement, or at least delay the payment. This made Lysander say of some men, that they played with oaths and promises sicut pueri cum astragalis—as children do at nine pins. They will keep them if they can get by the performance; but if it be like to prove a losing game, they will rather run debt to their conscience by breaking them, than to their purse, or any other worldly interest, by their performance. But no fear of God in this matter.

(1.) His name is truth and faithfulness. Now can truth itself lie, or faithfulness deceive? 'In my Father's house,' saith Christ, 'are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you, and if I go,...I will come again and receive you,' John 14:2, 3. See here the candour and nakedness of our Saviour's heart. As if he had said, 'This is no shift to be gone, that so I may by a fair tale leave you in hopes of that which shall never come to pass. No; did I know it otherwise than I speak, my heart is so full of love to you, that it would not have suffered me to put such a cheat upon you for a thousand worlds. You may trust me to go; for as surely as you see me go, shall your eyes see me come again to your everlasting joy.' The promises are none of them yea and nay, but 'yea and amen' in him.

(2.) He is wisdom as well as truth. As he is truth, he cannot wrong or deceive us in breaking his word; and being wisdom, it is impossible he should promise that which should prejudice himself. And therefore, he makes no blots in his purposes or promises, but what he doth in either is immutable. Repent-

ance is indeed an act of wisdom in the creature, but it presupposeth folly, which is incompatible to God. In a word, men too oft are rash in promising; and therefore what they in haste promise they perform at leisure. They consider not before they vow, and therefore inquire afterward whether they had best stand to it. But the all-wise God needs not this after-game. As in the creation he looked back upon the several pieces of that goodly frame, and saw them so exact that he took not up his pencil the second time to mend anything of the first draft; so in his promises, they are made with such infinite judgment and wisdom, that what he hath writ he will stand to for ever. 'I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment,' Hosea 2:19. Therefore for ever, because in righteousness and in mercy.

3. Cause. Impotency. Men's promises, alas! depend upon many contingencies. The man haply is rich when he seals the bond, and poor before the day of payment comes about. A wreck at sea, a fire by land, or some other sad accident, intervenes, either quite impoverisheth him, or necessitates him to beg further time, with him in the gospel, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all,' Matt. 18:26. But the great God cannot be put to such straits. 'The Strength of Israel will not lie,' 1 Sam. 15:29. As there is a lie of wickedness, when one promiseth what he will not perform; so there is a lie that proceeds from weakness, when a person or thing cannot perform what they promise. Thus indeed all men, yea, all creatures, will be found liars to all that lean on them, called therefore 'lying vanities.' 'Vanities,' as empty and insufficient; 'lying vanities,' because they promise what they have not to give. But God, he is propounded as a sure bottom for our faith to rest on in this respect. 'Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is strength, or everlasting strength,' Isa. 26:4. Such strength his is that needs not another's strength to uphold it. One man's ability to perform his promises leans on others' ability to pay theirs to him. If they him, he is forced to fail them. Thus we see, the breaking of one merchant proves the breaking of many others whose estates were in his hands. But God's power is independent. Let the whole creation break, yet God is the same as he was, as able to help as ever. 'Though the fig tree shall not blossom,

neither shall fruit be in the vines.' And, 'yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The Lord God is my strength,' Hab. 3:17-19. O how happy are the saints! a people that can never be undone, no, not when the whole world turns bankrupt, because they have his promise whose power fails not when that doth. The Christian cannot come to God when he hath not by him what he wants. 'How great is thy goodness, which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee,' Ps. 31:19. It is laid up, as a father hath his child's portion, in bags, ready to be paid him when the time comes. The saint shall not stay a moment beyond the date of the promise. 'There is forgiveness with thee,' saith the psalmist. It stands ready for thee against thou comest to claim the promise.

Second Assurance. Hope assures the Christian, that though God stays long, yet, when he does come, he will abundantly recompense his longest stay. As the wicked get nothing by God's forbearing to execute his threatening, but the treasuring up more wrath for the day of wrath; so the saints lose nothing by not having the promise presently paid into them, but rather do, by their forbearing God a while, treasure up more joy against the joyful day, when the promise shall be performed. 'To them who by patient continuance...seek for glory and honour,...eternal life,' Rom. 2:7. Mark, it is not enough to do well, but to 'continue' therein; nor that neither, except it be 'patient continuing in well-doing'—in the midst of God's seeming delays; and whoever he be that can do this, shall be rewarded at last for all his patience. Ploughing is hungry work, yet because it is in hope of reaping such an abundant increase, the husbandman faints not. O my soul, saith hope, though thou wantest thy dinner, hold but out a while, and thou shalt have dinner and supper served in together when night comes. The sick fits and qualms which the Christian hath in the absence of the promise are all forgot, and the trouble of them over, when once it comes and he is feasted with the joy it brings. 'Hope deferred maketh the heart sick: but when the desire cometh, it is a tree of life;' Prov. 13:12—that is, when it cometh in God's time after long waiting, then it causeth an overflowing joy. As there is a time which God hath set for the ripening the fruits of the earth, before which, if they be gathered, it is to our loss; so there is a time set by

God for the good things of the promise, which we are to wait for, and not unseasonably pluck, like green apples, off the tree—as too many do, who, having no faith or hope to quiet their spirits while [until] God’s time comes, do therefore snatch that by unwarrantable means, which would in time drop ripe into their bosoms.

And what get these short-spirited men by their haste? Alas! they find their enjoyments thin and lank, like corn reaped before it is fit for the sickle, wherewith he that bindeth the sheaves, filleth not his bosom. Therefore we find this duty of waiting pressed under this very metaphor. ‘Be patient, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord,’ James 5:7. Stay God’s time, till he comes according to his promise, and takes you off your suffering work, and be not hasty to shift yourselves out of trouble. And why so? ‘Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.’ The husbandman who, the proverb saith, is, dives in novum annum—rich in hope of the next year’s crop—though he gladly would have his corn in the barn, yet waits for its ripening in the ordinary course of God’s providence. When the former rain comes he is joyful, but yet desires the latter rain also, and stays for it, though long in coming. And do not we see, that a shower sometimes falls close to the time of harvest, that plumps the ear to the great increase of the crop, which some lose, that, through distrust of providence, put in their sickle too soon? I am sure mercies come fullest when most waited for. Christ did not so soon supply them with wine at the marriage of Cana, as his mother desired, but they had the more for staying a while. There is a double fullness, which the Christian may hope to find in those enjoyments that he hath with long patience waited for, above another that cannot stay God’s leisure.

1. A fulness of duration. Enjoyments snatched out of God’s hand, and not given by it, are but guests come, not to stay long; like David’s child born in adultery, they commonly die in the cradle. They are like some fruit gathered green, which soon rots.

Is it riches that is thus got? Some are said to ‘make haste to be rich,’ Prov. 28:20. They cannot, by a conscionable diligence in their particular calling, and

exercise of godliness in their general, wait upon God. No; the promise doth not gallop fast enough for them; on therefore they spur, and, by sordid practices, make haste to be rich. But God makes as much haste to melt their estate, as they do to gather. No salt will keep that meat long from corrupting which was overheated in the driving, nor any care and providence of man keep that estate from God’s curse which is got by so hot and sinful a pursuit. ‘Wealth gotten by vanity’—that is, vain, unwarrantable courses—‘shall be diminished,’ Prov. 13:11. Like the unsound fat which great drinkers and greedy eaters gain to themselves, it hath that in it that will hasten its ruin. ‘The getting of treasure by a lying tongue is a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death,’ Prov 21:6. The meaning is, such estates are tossed like a ball, from one to another, and are not to stay long in any hand, till it comes into the godly man’s, whom God oft, by his providence, makes heir to such men’s riches, as you may see, Job 27:11-23; Ecc. 2:26.

Again, is it comfort and inward joy? Some make too much haste for this. They are not like other Christians, who use to have a wet seed-time, and are content to wait for joy till harvest, or at least till it be in some forwardness, and the seed of grace, which was sown in tears of humiliation, appears above ground in such solid evidences as do in some degree satisfy them concerning the reality and truth of the same. Then indeed the sincere Christian’s spirit begins to cheer up, and his comfort holds, yea increaseth more and more, as the sun that, after a contest with some thick mist, breaks forth, and gets a full victory of those vapours which for a while darkened it. ‘The light of the righteous rejoiceth,’ Prov. 13:9—that is, over all his fears and doubts. But there are others so hasty that they are catching at comfort before they were ever led into acquaintance with godly sorrow. They are delivered without pain, and their faith flames forth into the joy of assurance, before any smoke of doubtings and fears were seen to arise in their hearts. But alas! it is as soon lost as got, like too forward a snibbing spring, that makes the husbandman weep at harvest; or a fair sunshine day in winter, that is the breeder of many foul ones after it. The stony ground is a clear instance of this, Mark 4, whose joy was a quickly down as up. A storm of persecution or temptation comes, and immediately he is

offended.

In a word, take but one instance more, and that is in point of deliverance. Such hasty spirits that cannot wait for the promise to open their prison door, and God to give them a release in his time, but break prison, and by some unwarrantable practice wind themselves out of trouble; do we not see how miserably they befool themselves? For while they think, by the midwifery of their sinful policy, to hasten their deliverance, they kill it in the birth, which, had it come in God's time, might have stayed many a fair day with them. The Jews are a sad instance of this; who, though God gave them such full security for their deliverance from the Babylonian hand, would yet take their own course, hoping, it seems, to compass it sooner by policy than they could expect it to be effected by providence, and therefore to Egypt they will post in all haste, not doubting but they shall thence bring their deliverance. But alas! it proved far otherwise; for all they got was to have more links added to their chain of bondage, and their lordly masters to use greater rigour upon them, which God, by his prophet, bids them thank their own hasty unbelieving spirits for. 'Thus saith the Lord God, the holy One of Israel, In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength, and ye would not,' Isa. 30:15. Indeed, if we look on such as have quietly waited by hope for God's coming to their help, we shall find they ever sped well. Joshua, who bore up against all discouragements from God and man, steadfastly believing, and patiently waiting, for the land God had promised, did he not live to walk over their graves in the wilderness that would have turned back to Egypt? and to be witness to their destruction also, who presumptuously went up the hill to fight the enemy and take the land—as they vainly hoped—before God's time was come? Deut. 1. Yea, did not he at last divide the land, and lay his bones in a bed of honour, after he had lived to see the promise of God happily performed to his people? So David, whose hope and patience was admirable in waiting for the kingdom after he had the promise of it; especially if we consider what fair opportunities he had to take cruel Saul out of the way, whose life alone did stand betwixt him and the throne. Neither did he want matter to fill up a declaration for the satisfaction and pacifying the minds of the people, if he had a

mind to have gone this way to the crown; but he knew those plausible arguments for such a fact, which would have pleased the multitude, would not have pacified his own conscience, and this stayed his hand from any such ripping open the womb of the promise, to come by the crown with which it was big, but left it to go its full time, and he lost nothing by it.

2. There flows in a fulness of benediction, with an enjoyment reaped in God's full time, which is lost for want of patience to wait thereunto. Now this benediction is paid into the waiting soul's bosom two ways. (1.) He hath that enjoyment sweetened to him with God's love and favour for his comfort. (2.) He hath it sanctified to him in the happy fruit it bears for his good.

(1.) He hath it sweetened to him with God's love and favour for his comfort; which he cannot so well expect that carves for himself, and cannot stay for God in his own time to lay it on his trencher. There is guilt ever to be found in the company of impatience and distrust. And where guilt is contracted in the getting of an enjoyment, there can be little sweetness tasted when it comes to be used. O guilt is an embittering thing! it keeps the soul in a continual fear of hearing ill news from heaven; and a soul in fear is not in case to relish the sweetness of a mercy. Such a one may happily have a little tumultuous joy, and warm himself awhile at this rash fire of his own kindling, till he comes to have some serious discourse with his own heart in cold blood, about the way and manner of getting the enjoyment and this is sure to send such a dampness to the heart of the poor creature as will not suffer that fire long to burn clear. O what a stab it is to the heart of an oppressor, to say of his great wealth, as that king of his crown, 'Here is a fair estate, but God knows how I came by it!' What a wound to the joy of a hypocrite! 'I have pretended to a great deal of comfort, but God knows how I came by it!' Whereas the Christian who receives any comfort, inward or outward, from God's hand, as a return for his patient waiting, hath none of these sad thoughts to scare him and break his drought when the cup is in his mouth. He knows where he had his outward estate and inward comfort. He can bring God to vouch them both, that they with his leave and liking. There is a great odds between the joy of the husbandman, at the happy inning of his corn in harvest, and the

thief's joy, who hath stolen some sheaves out of another's field, and is making merry with his booty as soon as he is got home. Possibly you may hear a greater noise and outis¹ of joy in the thief's house than the honest husbandman's, yet no compare between them. One knock at the thief's door by an officer that comes to search his house for stolen goods, spoils the mirth of the whole house—who run, one this way and another that. O what fear and shame must then take hold on his guilty heart, that hears God coming to search for his stolen mercies and comforts!

(2.) The waiting soul hath enjoyments sanctified to him for his good; and this another wants with all he hath. And what is the blessing of mercy, but to have it do us good? Hasty spirits grow worse by enjoyments gathered out of season. This is a sore evil indeed, to have wealth for our hurt, and comfort for our hurt. It was the sin of Israel that 'they waited not for his counsel,' Ps. 106:13. God had taken them as his charge, and undertook to provide for them if they would have stood to his allowance; but they could not stay his leisure, 'but lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert,' ver. 14. They must have what pleaseth their palate, and when their own impatient hearts call, or not at all. And so they had: 'He gave them their request,' ver. 15. But they had better been without their feast, for they did not thrive by it, 'he sent leanness into their soul,' ver. 15. A secret curse came with their enjoyments, which soon appeared in those great sins they thereupon were left to commit—they envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the Lord,' ver. 16—as also in the heavy judgments by which God did testify against them for the same, Num. 11:31. Whereas mercies that are received in God's way and time, prove meat of better juice and purer nourishment to the waiting soul. They do not break out into such botches and plague-sores as these. As the other are fuel for lust, so these food to the saints' graces, and make them more humble and holy. See this in Isa. 30:18, 19, compared with ver. 22, where they, as a fruit of their patient waiting on God for their outward deliverance, have with it that which is more worth than the

deliverance itself, i.e. grace to improve and use it holily. It was a great mercy that Hannah had, after her many prayers and long waiting, 'a son;' but a greater, that she had a heart to give up her son again to God, that gave him to her. To have estate, health, or any other enjoyment upon waiting on God for the same, is mercy, but not to be compared with that blessing which seasons and sanctifies the heart to use them for God's glory. And this is the ordinary portion of the waiting soul, and that not only in outward comforts, but inward also. The joy and inward peace which the sincere soul hath thus, makes it more humble, holy, heavenly; whereas the comfort which the hypocrite comes so quickly by, either degenerates into pride and self-conceit, or empties itself into some other filthy sink—sometimes even of open profaneness itself—before it hath run far.

Third Assurance. Hope assures the soul, that while God stays the performance of one promise, he shall have the absence thereof supplied with the presence of another. And this is enough to quiet the heart of any that understands himself. God hath laid things in such a sweet method, that there is not one point of time wherein the soul of a believer is left wholly destitute of comfort, but there is one promise or other that stands to minister unto his present wants. Sometimes, haply, he may want what he strongly desires, yet even then care is taken for his present subsistence; one promise bears the Christian company while another comes. And what cause hath the sick man to complain, though all his friends do not sit up with him together, if they take it by turns, and never leave him without a sufficient number to look to him?

We read of a 'tree of life,' Rev. 22:2, 'which bears twelve manner of fruits, and yieldeth her fruit every month,' so that it is never without some hanging on it which is fit for the eater. What can this tree be better conceived to be than Christ, who yields all manner of fruit in his promises, and comfort for all times, all conditions? The believer can never come but he shall find some promise ripe to be eaten, with which he may well stay his stomach till the other—whose time to be gathered is not yet come—hangs for further ripening. Here you see the Christian hath provision for all the year long. When Christ returned to heaven he gave his disciples this to comfort them, that he would come again, and carry them with him unto his father's

1. Outhees, i.e. outcry. — CHAUCER.

house, where no he lives himself in glory, John 14:2, 3. This is sweet indeed. But, alas! what shall they do in the meantime to weather out those many storms which were to intervene between this promise and the time when it shall be performed? This also our Saviour considered, and tells them he does not mean to leave them comfortless, but gives them another promise to keep house with, in the meantime, i.e. a promise of his Spirit—who should be with them on earth, while [until] he took them to be with him in heaven, John 14:16. The Christian is never at such a loss wherein hope cannot relieve it. ‘Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is, for he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green, and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit,’ Jer. 17:7, 8. These waters are the promises from which the believer draws continual matter of comfort, that as a tree planted by a river flourisheth, however the year goes, so doth he, whatever the temper of God’s exterior providence is. Possibly the Christian is in an afflicted state, and the promise for deliverance comes not, yet then hope can entertain him in the absence of that, at the cost of another promise—that though

God doth not at present deliver him out of the affliction, yet he will support him under it, I Cor. 10:13. If yet the Christian cannot find this promise paid into such a height as to discharge him of all impatience, distrust, and other sinful distempers—which to his grief he finds too busy in him for all the promise—then hope hath another window to let out the smoke at, and that is by presenting the soul with those promises which assure the weak Christian that pardoning mercy shall cover those defects which assisting grace did not fully conquer. ‘I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him,’ Mal. 3:1. So, Micah 7:18 ‘Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever.’ And certainly God would not have suffered so much impatience to have broken out in Job, but that he would have something left for pardoning mercy to do at the close of all, to which that holy man should see himself beholden, both for his deliverance, and that honourable testimony also which God himself gave of him before his uncharitable friends, who from his great afflictions, and some discomposure of spirit in them, did so unmercifully burden him with the heavy charge of being a hypocrite.

DIRECTION IX.—THIRD GENERAL PART.

[APPLICATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF THE CHRISTIAN HELMET, ALIKE TO THOSE WHO HAVE,
AND TO THOSE WHO HAVE IT NOT.]

Having shown now what the helmet of salvation is, and several of its offices to the Christian, we proceed to bring out how its doctrine applies alike to those who have, and to those who have it not, and the several points of improvement which naturally flow from it. These may be classed as four. **FIRST.** A trial of what metal our helmet of hope is made. **SECOND.** An exhortation to those who, upon trial, find it genuine, in which two duties are pressed on them. **THIRD.** Arguments why we should strengthen our hope, with directions how we may do so. **FOURTH.** An exhortation to those who want this helmet of hope.

FIRST POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Trial of WHAT METAL OUR HELMET OF HOPE
IS MADE.]

For trial, whether we have this helmet of hope on our heads or no—this helmet, I say, commended to us in the text. As for such paltry ware, that most are contended with for cheapness’ sake, it, alas! deserves not the name of a true hope, no more than a paper cap doth of a helmet. O, look to the metal and

temper of your helmet in an especial manner, for at this most blows are made. He that seeks chiefly to defend his own head—the serpent I mean—will aim most to wound yours. None but fools and children are so credulous as to be blown up with great hopes upon any light occasion and slight ground. They who are wise, and have their wits about them, will be as wary as how they place their hopes, especially for salvation, as a prudent pilot, that hath a rich lading, would be where he moors his ship and casts his anchor. There is reason for our utmost care herein, because nothing exposeth men to more shame than to meet with disappointment in their hopes. ‘They were confounded because they had hoped; they came thither and were ashamed,’ Job 6:20; that is, to miss of what they hoped to have found in those brooks. But there is no shame like to that which a false hope for eternal salvation will put sinners to at last; some shall rise ‘to shame everlasting,’ Dan. 10. They shall awake out of their graves, and out of that fool’s paradise also, wherein their vain hopes had entertained them all their lives, and see, instead of a heaven they expected, hell to be in expectation of them, and gaping with full mouth for them. If the servants of Eglon were so ashamed after their waiting awhile at their prince’s door, from whom they expected all their preferment, to find him, and their hopes with him, dead on the floor, Judges 3:25; O, whose heart then can think what a mixture of shame and horror shall meet in their faces and hearts at the great day, who shall see all their hopes for heaven hop headless, and leave them in the hands of tormenting devils to all eternity! Hannibal’s soldiers did not so confidently divide the goldsmiths’ shops in Rome among themselves—which yet they never took—as many presumptuous sinners do promise themselves heaven’s bliss and happiness, who must instead thereof sit down with shame in hell, except they can, before they die, show better ground for their hope than now they are able to do. O what will those fond dreamers do in the day of the Lord’s anger, when they shall see the whole world in a light flame round about them, and hear God—whose piercing eyes will look them through and through—calling them forth before men and angels to the scrutiny! Will they stand to their hope, and vouch it to the face of Christ, which now they bless themselves so in? Surely their hearts will fail them

for such an enterprise. None then will speak so ill of them as their own consciences shall do. God will in that day use their own tongues to accuse them, and set forth the folly of their ridiculous hope to the confusion of their faces before all the world. The prophet foretells a time when the false prophets ‘shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied; neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive, but he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman,’ &c., Zech. 13:4, 5.

Truly the most notorious false prophet that the world hath, and deceives most, is this vain hope which men take up for their salvation. This prophesies of peace, pardon, and heaven, to be the portion of such as [it] never once entered into God’s heart to make heirs thereof. But the day is coming, and it hastens, wherein this false prophet shall be confounded. Then the hypocrite shall confess he never had any hope for salvation but what was the idol of his own fancy’s making; and the formalist shall throw off the garment of his profession by which he deceived himself and others, and appear to himself and to all the world in his naked colours. It behooves therefore everyone to be strict and curious in the search of his own heart, to find what his hope is built upon.

Now, hope of the right make, is a rational well-grounded hope. ‘Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you,’ 1 Peter 3:15. Alas! how can they give an answer to others, that have not any to give to their own consciences to this question, ‘Why dost thou hope to be saved, O my soul?’ There is no Christian, be he never so weak in grace, but hath some reason bot-tomed on the Scripture—for other I mean not—for the hope he professeth. Do you think, yea, can you be so absurd as to think, your own bold presumption, without any word of promise to build upon, can entitle your souls to the inheritance in God’s kingdom? Should one come and say your house and land were his, and show you no writing under your hand by which you did ever grant him a right thereunto, but all he can say is, he dreamed the last night your house and land were his, and therefore now he demands it; would you not think the man mad, and had more to the bedlam than to your estate? And yet there are many hope to be saved, that can give no better reason

than this comes to for the same, and such are all grossly ignorant and profane sinners. As it is enough for a saint to end the trouble which his fears put him into, to ask his soul why it is disquieted within him, would he but observe how little reason his heart can give for the same; so [would it be enough] to dismount the bold sinner from his prancing hopes, if he might be prevailed with to call himself to an account, and thus to accost his soul sometimes, and resolve not to stir without a satisfactory answer. 'In sober sadness tell me, O my soul! what reason findest thou in the whole Bible, for thee to hope for salvation, what livest in ignorance of God, or a trade of sin against God?' Certainly he should find his soul as mute and speechless as the man without the wedding garment was at Christ's question. This is the reason why men are such strangers to themselves, and dare not enter into any discourse upon this subject with their own hearts, because they know they should soon make an uproar in their consciences that would not be stilled in haste. They cocker their false hearts as much as David did his Adonijah, who in all his life never displeased him so much as to ask him, 'Why dost thou so?' Nor they their souls to the day of their death by asking them, 'Soul, why hopest thou so?' Or if they have, it hath been as Pilate, who asked Christ what was truth, John 18:38, but had no mind to stay for an answer.

May be thou art an ignorant, soul, who knowest neither who Christ is, nor what in Christ hope is to fasten its hold upon; but only with a blind surmise thou hopest God will be better to thee than to damn thee at last. But why thou thus hopest, thou canst give no reason, nor I neither. If he will save thee as now thou art, he must make a new gospel for thy sake; for in this Bible it damns thee without hope or help. The gospel is 'hid to them that are lost,' II Cor. 4:3. But if knowledge will do it, thou haply canst show good store of that. This is the breast-work under which thou liest, and keepest off those shot which are made at thee from the word, for those lusts which thou livest and liest in as a beast in his dung, defiling thyself with them daily. And is this all thou hast to prove thy hopes for salvation for hopes true and solid? Indeed, many make no better use of their knowledge of the Scripture, than thieves do of the knowledge they have of the law of the land, who study

it not that they mean to keep it, but to make them more cunning to evade the charge of it when called in question by it. So many acquaint themselves with the word—especially those passages in it that display the mercy of God to sinners at the greatest breadth—that with these they may stuff a pillow to lay their wretched heads on, when the cry of the abominations in which they live begins to break their rest. God deliver you, my dear friends, from such a hope as this. Surely you mean to provide a better answer to give unto Christ at the great day than this, why ye hope to be saved by him; do you not? Will thy knowledge, thinkest thou, be as strong a plea for salvation, as thy sins which thou wallowest in, against that knowledge, will be for thy damnation? If there be hope for such as thee, then come Judas and Jezebel, yea devils, and all ye infernal spirits, and strike in for this good company for a part with them, for some of you can plead more of this than any of them all.

But may be thou hast more yet to say for thyself than this comes to. Thou art not only a knowing person but a reformed also; the pollutions in which once thou layest, now thou hast escaped; yea, thy reformation is embellished and set forth with a very gaudy profession of religion, both which have gained thee a very high opinion in the thoughts of all thy neighbours; so that if heaven might be carried by thy hands, thou couldst haply have a testimonial for thy unblamable and saint-like behaviour among them; yet, let me tell thee, if thou meanest to be faithful to thy own soul, thou must not rest in their charitable opinion of thee, nor judge of thy hopes for heaven by what comes under their cognizance, to wit, the behaviour of thy outward man—for further their eye and observation reacheth not—but art to look inward to thy own bosom, and inquire what spring thou canst find thereto have been the cause of this change and new motion that hath appeared in thy external conversation. This, and this alone, must decide the controversy, and bring thy thoughts to an issue, what to judge of thy hope, whether spurious or legitimate. It is not a new face that colours our outward behaviour, but a new principle that changeth the frame of the heart within, will evince thy hope to be good and genuine. 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,' I Peter 1:3. The

new birth entitles to a new hope. If the soul be dead, the hope cannot be alive. And the soul may be dead, and yet put into a very handsome dress of external reformation and profession, as well as a dead body may be clad with rich clothes. A beggar's son got into the clothes of a rich man's child, may as well hope to be heir to the rich man's land, as thou, by an external reformation and profession, to be God's heir in glory. The child's hopes are from his own father, not from a stranger. Now, while thou art in a natural estate—though never so finished—old Adam is thy father; and what canst thou hope from him who proved worse than nought, and left his poor posterity nothing, except we should put a crazy mortal body, a sinful nature, and a fearful expectation of death temporal and eternal from the wrathful hand of a provoked God—which indeed he left all his children—into his inventory? O sirs, how can you give way that any sleep should fall upon your eyes, till you get into this relation to God! Hannah was a woman of a bitter spirit till she got a child from God; and hast not thou more reason to be so, till thou canst get to be a child of God? Better a thousand times over that thou shouldst die childless than fatherless; my meaning is, that thou shouldst leave no child to inherit thy estate on earth, than to have no father to give thee an inheritance in heaven when thou art taken hence.

SECOND POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Exhortation to THOSE WHO HAVE
THIS HELMET OF HOPE.]

For exhortation of you, believers, who upon trial are found to have this helmet of hope. Several duties are to be pressed upon you as such. **FIRST.** Be thankful for this unspeakable gift. **SECOND.** Live up to your hopes.

[DUTIES which possession of the
helmet of hope involves.]

FIRST DUTY. Be thankful for this unspeakable gift. I will not believe thou hast it if thy heart be not abundantly let out in thankfulness for it. Blessed Peter cannot speak of this but in a doxology. 'Blessed

be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which hath begotten us again unto a lively hope,...to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away,' I Peter 1:3, 4². The usual proem to Paul's epistles is of this strain, Col. 1:5; Eph. 1:3. Hast thou hope in heaven? It is more than if thou hadst the whole world in hand. The greatest monarch the earth hath will be glad, in a dying hour, to change his crown for thy helmet. His crown will not procure him this helmet, but thy helmet will bring thee to a crown, when he shall have none to wear—a crown, not of gold, but of glory, which once on shall never be taken off, as his is sure to be. O remember, Christian, what but a while since thou wert—so far from having any hope of heaven, that thou wert under a fearful expectation of hell and damnation. And are those chains of guilt with which thy trembling conscience was weighed down unto despair, taken off, and thy head lift up to look for such high preferment in the celestial court of that God whose wrath thou hadst, by thy horrid treasons, most justly incensed against thee? Certainly, of all the men in the world, thou art deepest in debt to the mercy of God. If he will be thanked for a crust, he looks, sure, thou shouldst give him more for a crown. If food and raiment, though coarse and mean—suppose but roots and rags—be gratefully to be acknowledged; O with what ravishment of love and thankfulness are you to think and speak of those rarities and robes with which you hope to be fed and clad in this heavenly kingdom! especially if you cast your eye aside, and behold those that were once your fellow-prisoners—in what a sad and dismal condition they continue—while all this happiness has befallen you! It could not, sure, but affect his heart into admiration of his prince's mercy and undeserved favour

2. The text has the "Blessed Paul," and cites, I Peter 1:3, 4. However, correcting it to read Peter creates problems in the rest of the paragraph. For he then continues to cite the beginnings of Paul's epistles for his examples. All that I can do, for continuity's sake, is to change Paul to Peter here, and in the next sentence change the word 'his' to Paul. This should make it more uniform and clear up the misunderstanding that is bound to arise because of it. Also, this has the advantage of making the fewest changes to Gurnall's text.

— SDB

to him, who is saved from the gibbet only by his gracious pardon, if, as he is riding in a coach towards his prince's court—there to live in wealth and honour—he should meet some of his fellow-traitors on sleds, as they are dragging full of shame and horror to execution for the same treason in which they had as deep a hand as any of them all. And dost thou not see, Christian, many of thy poor neighbours, with whom haply thou hast had a partnership in sin, pinioned with impenitency and unbelief, driving apace to hell and destruction, while thou, by the freedistinguishing mercy of God, art on thy way for heaven and glory? O down on thy knees, and cry out, 'Lord, why wilt thou show thyself to me, and not to these?' How easy had it been, and righteous for God, to have directed the pardon to them, and the warrant for damnation unto thee! When thou hast spent thy own breath and spirits in praising God, thou hadst need beg a collection of praises of all thy friends that have a heart to contribute to such charitable work, that they would help thee in paying this debt; and get all this, with what in heaven thou shalt disburse thyself to all eternity, in better coin than can be expected from thee here—where thy soul is embased with sinful mixtures—it must be accounted rather an acknowledgment of what thou owest to thy God, than any payment of the least part of the debt.

SECOND DUTY. Live up to thy hopes, Christian. Let there be a decorum kept between thy principles and thy practices, thy hope of heaven and walk on earth. The eye should direct the foot. Thou lookest for salvation; walk the same way thy eye looks. This is so often pressed in the word, as shows both its necessity and difficulty. Some times we are stirred up to act 'as becometh saints,' Rom. 16:2; Eph. 5:3. Some times 'as becometh the gospel of Christ,' Php. 1:27. Sometimes 'as becometh those who profess godliness,' 1 Tim. 2:10. There is a τὸ πρέπον—a decorum, and comely behaviour, which, if a Christian doth not observe in his walking he betrays his high calling and hopes unto scorn and contempt. To look high, and to live low, O how ridiculous it appears to all men! When a man is dressed on purpose to be laughed at and made a jeering-stock, they put on him something of the king and something of the beggar, that, by this patchery of mock-majesty with sordid baseness together, he may appear the greater fool to all the com-

pany. And certainly, if the devil might have the dressing of a man, so as to cast the greatest shame and ignominy upon him, yea, upon Christ and the profession of his gospel, he could not think of a readier way than to persuade a wretch to pretend to high and glorious hopes of heaven, and then to have nothing suitable to the high-flown hopes in his conversation, but all base and unworthy of such royal claims. If ye should see one going into the field with a helmet of brass on his head, but a wooden sword in one hand, and a paper shield on the other, and the rest of his armour like to these, you would expect he was not likely to hurt his enemies, except they should break their sides with laughing at him. Such a goodly spectacle is the brag professor, who lifts up his head on high with a bold expectation of salvation, but can show never a grace beside to suit with the great hope he hath taken up; he may make the devil sport, but never do him any great hurt, or himself good.

Question. But may be you will ask, How is the Christian to live up to his hopes?

Answer. I answer, in general, he is to be careful to do nothing in which he may not freely act his hope, and from the promise expect that God will, for Christ's sake, both approve the action, and reward his person for it. Ask thy soul this question seriously before thou engagest in any work, 'May I hope that God will bid me good speed? Can I look for his countenance in it, and his blessing on it?' It is very unworthy of a Christian to do anything sneakingly, as if he were afraid God or his conscience should be privy to his work. 'Whatsoever is not of hope is sin, because it cannot be of faith.' O how would this hedge in the Christian's heart from all by-paths! Possibly thou hast a grudge against thy neighbour. The fire is kindled in thy heart, though it flames not presently out into bitter words and angry behaviour; and thou art going to pray. Ask now thy soul, whether God will accept that sacrifice which is kindled with such strange fire? Yea, bid thy soul bethink herself how thy hopes of pardoning and saving mercy from God can agree with thy wrathful unforgiving spirit towards thy brother? Certainly, as the sun cannot well be seen through a disturbed air, so neither can the eye of hope well see her object—heaven's salvation—when the soul is tumultuous and roiled with anger and unchristian passion.

But, to instance in some particulars wherein you must comport with your hopes of salvation.

[INSTANCES wherein the Christian should live up to his hopes.]

First Instance. In your company. Man is a sociable creature—made for fellowship. And what company is fit for thee to consort with, but those of the same breeding and hopes with thyself? The saints are a distinct society from the world. ‘Let ours also learn to maintain good works,’ Titus 3:14. ‘Ours,’ i.e. of our fellowship. And it becomes them to seek their company among themselves. That of Peter and John is observable, ‘being let go, they went to their own company,’ Acts 4:23. When among the ungodly world they made account they were not in their own company, and therefore stayed no longer than needs must among them. There were enough surely in the land of Canaan with whom Abraham might have associated; but he knew they were not company for him to be linked to in any intimacy of acquaintance, and therefore it is said of him, that ‘he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise,’ Heb. 11:9. We find him indeed confederate with Mamre, the Amorite, and Eshcol, and Aner, his brethren, Gen. 14:13, which presupposeth more than ordinary acquaintance. But these, in all probability, were proselytes, and had, by Abraham’s godly persuasions, renounced their idolatry, to worship with him the true God. And we may the rather be induced to think so, because we find them so deeply engaged with Abraham in battle with those idolatrous neighbour princes, which, had they themselves been idolaters, it is like they would not have done for a stranger, and him of a strange religion also. We find how dearly some of the saints have paid for their acquaintance with the wicked, as Jehoshaphat for his intimacy with Ahab, and many others. And if, knowing this, we shall yet associate ourselves with such, we cannot in reason look to pay less than they have done; yea, well, if we come off so cheap, because we have their follies recorded to make us wiser.

O consider, Christian, whither thou art going in thy hopes! Is it not to heaven? and do not men seek for such company as go their way? And are the

wicked of thy way? When heaven’s way and hell’s meet in one road, then, and not till then, can that be. And if thy companion will not walk in heaven-way, what wilt thou do that walkest with him? It is to be feared thou must comply too much in his way. In a word, Christian, thy hope points to heaven; and is it not one thing thou hopest for, when thou comest there, to be delivered from all company with the wicked? and what thou then hopest for, doth thou not now pray for? Sure enough thou dost, if a true saint. Whatever is the object of a saint’s hope is the subject of his prayer. As oft as thou sayest, ‘Thy kingdom come,’ thou prayest thus much. And will hoping and praying to be delivered from them, stand with throwing thyself upon them, and intimate familiarity with them?

Second Instance. Then thou comportest with thy hopes of salvation, when thou labourest to be as holy in thy conversation as thou art high in thy expectation. This the apostle urgeth from the condescency of the thing: ‘What manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness; looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God,’ II Peter 3:11, 12. Certainly it becomes such to be holy even to admiration, who look for such a blessed day! We hope then to be like the angels in glory, and therefore should, if possible, live now like angels in holiness. Every believing soul is Christ’s spouse. The day of conversion is the day of espousals, wherein she is contracted and betrothed by faith to Christ; and as such, lives in hope for the marriage-day, when he shall come and fetch her home unto his Father’s house—as Isaac did Rebecca into his mother’s tent—there to cohabit with him and live in his sweet embraces of love, world without end. Now, would the bride have her bridegroom find her, when he comes, in her fluttery and vile raiment? No, sure. ‘Can a bride forget her attire?’ Jer. 2:32. Was it ever known that a bride forgot to have her wedding-clothes made against the marriage-day? or to put them on when she looks for her bridegroom’s coming? Holiness is the ‘raiment of needle-work,’ in which, Christian, thou art to be ‘brought unto thy king and husband,’ Ps. 45:14. Wherefore is the wedding-day put off so long, but because this garment is so long a making? When this is once wrought, and thou ready dressed, then that joyful day comes: ‘The marriage of the Lamb is

come, and his wife hath made herself ready,' Rev. 19:7.

Thou hast not, Christian, a weightier argument to knock down all temptations to sin, nor a more honourable way to get the victory of them, than by setting thy hope to grapple with them. I confess it is well when this enemy is worsted, what hand soever he falls by; though it be the fear of hell that clubs it down in the lives of men, it is better than not at all. Yet I must tell you, that as the Israelites' state was poor and servile, when they were fain to borrow the Philistines' grindstone 'to sharpen every man his axe and mattock,' I Sam. 13:20, so it speaks the Christian to be in no very good state as to his spiritual affairs when he is fain to use the wicked man's argument to keep him from sinning, and nothing will set an edge upon his spirit to cut through temptation, but what the un-circumcised world themselves use. Thou, Christian, art of a nobler spirit, and more refined temper than these, I trow. And as we have a finer stone to sharpen a razor with that we use for a butcher's knife, so, certainly, a more spiritual and ingenuous argument would become thee better, to make thee keen and sharp against sin, than what prevails with the worst of men sometimes to forbear at least acting their wickedness. Go thou, Christian, to thy hope, and while the slavish sinner scares and terrifies himself from his lust with fire and brimstone, do thou shame thyself out of all acquaintance with it from the great and glorious things thou lookest for in heaven. Is it a sin of sensual pleasure that assaults thy castle? Say then to thy soul, 'Shall I play the beast on earth, that hope to be such a glorious creature in heaven?' Shall that head be found now in a Delilah's lap, that ere long I hope to be laid in Abraham's bosom? Can I now yield to defile that body with lust and vomit, which is the garment my soul hopes to wear in heaven? O no! Avaunt, Satan! I will have nothing to do with thee, or anything that will make me unmeet for that blessed place and holy state I wait for.

Third Instance. Let thy hope of heaven moderate thy affections to earth. 'Be sober, and hope,' saith the apostle, I Peter 1:13. You that look for so much in another world, may very well be content with a little in this. Nothing more unbecomes a heavenly hope than an earthly heart. You would think it an unseemly thing for some rich man, that hath a vast estate, among the poor gleaners at harvest-time, as busy

to pick up the ears of corn that are left in the field, as the most miserable beggar in the company. O how all the world would cry shame of such a sordid-spirited man! Well, Christian, be not angry if I tell thee that thou dost a more shameful thing to thyself by far; if thou, that pretendest to hope for heaven, beest as eager in the pursuit of this world's trash as the poor carnal wretch is who expects no portion but what God hath left him to pick up in the field of this world. Certainly thy hope is either false, or at best very little. The higher that the summer sun mounts above the horizon, the more force it bears both to clear and also heat the air with his beams. And if thy hope of salvation were advanced to any ordinary pitch and height in thy soul, it would scatter these inordinate desires after this world with which now thou art choked up, and put thee into a greater heat of affection after heaven, than now thou feelest to things below.

I remember Augustine, relating what sweet discourse passed once between his mother and himself concerning the joys of heaven, breaks forth into this apostrophe, 'Lord, thou knowest quàm viluit nobis in illo die hic mundus—how vile and contemptible this sorry world was in our eye in that day when our hearts were warmed with some sweet discourse of that blessed place.' And I doubt not but every gracious person finds the same by himself; the nearer to heaven he gets in his hopes, the further he goes from earth in his desires. When he stands upon these battlements of heaven, he can look down upon this dunghill world as a nigrum nihil, a little dust-heap next to nothing. It is Scultetus' observation, that though there are many blemishes by which the eminent saints and servants of God recorded in Scripture are set forth as instances of human frailty, yet not one godly man in all the Scripture is to be found, whose story is blotted with the charge of covetousness. If that hold true, which, as yet, I am not able to disprove, we may wonder how it comes about that it should, now-a-days, be called the professors' sin, and become a common charge laid by the profane upon those that pretend to heaven more than themselves. O woe to those wretched men who, by their scandalous practices in this kind, put the coal into wicked men's hands, with which they now black the names of all the godly, as if to be covetous were a necessary consequent of profession.

Fourth Instance. Let thy hope of heaven master

thy fear of death. Why shouldst thou be afraid to die, who hopest to live by dying? Is the apprentice afraid of the day when his time comes out?—he that runs a race, of coming too soon to his goal?—the pilot troubled when he sees his harbour?—or the betrothed virgin grieved when the wedding-day approacheth? Death is all this to thee. When that comes, thy indenture expires, and thy jubilee is come. Thy race is run, and the crown won—sure to drop on thy head when thy soul goes out of thy body. Thy voyage, how troublesome soever it was in the sailing, is now happily finished, and death doth but this friendly office for thee, to uncover and open the ark of thy body, that it may safely land thy soul on the shore of eternity at thy heavenly Father's door—yea, in his sweet embraces, never to be put to sea more. In a word, thy husband is come for thee, and knocks with death's hand at thy door, to come forth unto him, that he may perform his promise, which, in the day of thy betrothing, he made to thee; and thou lovest him but little, if thou beest not willing to be at the trouble of a remove hence, for to enjoy his blissful presence, in his Father's royal palace of heaven, where such preparation is made for thy entertainment, that thou canst not know here, though an angel were sent on purpose to inform thee.

O what tongue can express that felicity which infinite mercy bespeaks, infinite wisdom deviseth, infinite merit purchaseth, and infinite power makes ready! I have read that the Turks say, 'They do not think we Christians believe heaven to be such a glorious place as we profess and talk of; for if we did, we would not be so afraid to go thither, as we see many that profess themselves Christians to be.' It cannot be denied, but all inordinate fears of death betray great unbelief and little hope. We do not look upon death under a right notion, and so we start at it; which, were we by faith but able to see through, and assure ourselves it comes to do us a good turn, we should feel as comfortably on the thoughts of it, as now we are scared at the apparition of it. The horse eats that hay in the rack, which he is afraid of when a little lies at a distance on the road; because there he knows it, but on the way he doth not. Christian, understand aright what message death brings to thee, and the fear of it will be over. It snatcheth thee indeed from this world's enjoyments, but it leads thee

to the felicities of another incomparably better. And who, at a feast, will chide the servant that takes away the first course, of which enough is eaten, to make room for the second to be set on, that consists of far greater delicacies?

Fifth Instance. Then thou comportest with thy hope when thou livest in the joy of thy hope. A sad uncheerful heart does not become a lively hope. Let him follow his master with a heavy countenance, that looks to get nothing by his service. Thou art out of this fear, and therefore wrongest both thyself and thy God too by thy disconsolate spirit. 'Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,' Heb. 3:6. Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad uncheerful heart, than we in a dark melancholy house. Open thy shuts therefore, and let in the light which sheds its beams upon thee from the promise, or else thy sweet Saviour will be gone. We do not use to entertain our friends in a dark room, or sit by those that visit us, mopish and melancholic, lest they should think we are weary of their company. Christ brings such good news with him, as may bespeak better welcome with thee than a dejected countenance and a disconsolate spirit. I tell thee, Christian, could such a message be carried to the damned as might give them any hope—though never so little—of salvation, it would make hell itself a lightsome place, and tune those miserable souls into a rejoicing temper in the midst of their present torments. Blush then, and be ashamed, O ye drooping saints! that a few thin clouds of some short afflictions, coming over your heads, should so wrap you up in the darkness of your spirits, as that the hope of heaven, whither you look at last to come, should not be able, in a moment, to dispel and turn your sorrow into a ravishment of joy and comfort.

Sixth Instance. Thou livest up to thy hopes when, with thy rejoicing of hope, thou preservest an awful fear of God. 'The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy,' Ps. 147:11. We too often see that children forget to pay that respect and reverence which is due to their parents, when once the estate is made sure into them. And truly, though the doctrine of assurance cannot be charged with any such bitter fruit to grow naturally from it, as the Remonstrants and Papists would have us believe; yet we are too prone to abuse it; yea, the

best of saints may, after they have the love of God with eternal life passed over to them under the privy-seal of hope's assurance, be led so far into temptation, as to fall foully, and carry themselves very undutifully. Witness David and Solomon, whose saddest miscarriages were after God had obliged them by opening his very heart to them in such manifestations of his love to them, as few are to be found that had the like. Both father and son are checked by God for this, and a blot left upon their history, on purpose to show what a sad accent this gave to their sin—that they fell after such discoveries of divine love made to them—and also to leave us instances not barely of human frailty, but of grace's frailty in this life (and that in the most eminent saints, such as were penmen of holy writ), that when our hope grows into greatest assurance, and this assurance spreads itself into highest rejoicing from the certainty of our expected glory, we should yet nourish a holy fear of God in our hearts, lest we grow crank³ and forget God in the abundance of our peace. This holy fear will be to our joy as the continual dropping of water on the iron work in the fuller's wheel—which keeps it from firing; or, as the pericardium with which the God of nature hath moated about the heart in our bodies, that by the water of it, the heart, which is perpetually in motion, might be kept from being inflamed into a dis-tempered heat.

The devil is pleased if he can at any time get a saint to sin, but he glorieth most when he can lay them in the dirt in their holiday clothes, as I may so say, and make them defile themselves when they have their garments of salvation on, I mean those which God hath in some more than ordinary discovery of himself clothed them withal. If at such a time he can be too hard for them, then he hath, he thinks, a fair occasion given him to go, and insultingly show God what pickle his child is in, and hold up the Christian's assurance and comfort mockingly—as they their brother's coat to their father—besmeared with the blood and filth of some beastly sin he hath thrown him into, and ask God, 'Is this the assurance thou hast given him of heaven? and this the garment of salvation which thou didst put on him?' See where he

hath laid it, and what a case he hath made it in.' O what gracious soul trembles not at the thought of putting such blasphemy into the mouth of the devil to reproach the living God by! That, Christian, is the beloved child, and shall be most made of by his heavenly Father, who sits not down to loiter in the sunshine of divine love, but gathers up his feet the nimbler in the way of duty, because his God is so kind to make his walk more cheerful and comfortable than others find it, and who loseth not his reverential fear of God in God's familiarity with him. Moses is a rare instance for this. Did ever the great God treat a mortal man, a saint in flesh, with the like familiarity and condescension, as he did that holy man, with whom he spake mouth to mouth, and before whom he caused all his goodness to pass? Ex. 34:6. And how bears he this transcending act of grace? Doth he grow bold, and forget his distance between God and him, by this low stoop of the divine Majesty to converse with him in such a humble manner, if I may so say? No; his heart was never in all his life more filled with the reverence of God than now. He trembled, indeed, and quaked more, it is very likely, on Mount Sinai; but his filial fear was as conspicuous now as then. It is true, this extraordinary manifestation of those soul-ravishing attributes of God's love and goodness—especially his pardoning mercy to him that knew himself a sinner, and at that time made much more sensible thereof by the terror which the dreadful promulgation of the law had left on his spirit—could not but exceedingly heighten his joy, and overrun his soul with a sweet love to so gracious a God. Yet, was not Moses' awful fear of God drowned or lost in the high tide of these sweeter affections; for it follows, 'and Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped,' ver. 8. This favourite of heaven, mark how he shows his fear of God most, when God expresseth his love to him most.

THIRD POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[Arguments why we should
STRENGTHEN OUR HOPE, with directions how.]

Labour, O ye saints! to strengthen your hope. There is, as a weak faith, so a wavering unsteadfast

3. Crank, in this case, bold, self-confident. — Ed.

hope. This you are by the diligent use of all means to establish and consolidate. Now, then, hope is firm and solid when the Christian doth not fluctuate formidine oppositi—with the fear of being opposed, but, by this anchor-hold that hope hath on the promise, is kept from those dejections and tumultuous fears with which they that have no hope are swallowed up, and they whose hope is but weak are sadly discomposed and shaken. Solidum est quod sui solius est plenum—that is a solid body which is compact and free from heterogeneal mixtures. The more pure gold is from dross, and whatever is of a different nature to itself, the more solid it is. So hope, the more it is refined from groundless presumption on the one hand, or slavish fear and distrust on the other, the more solid and strong it is. This in Scripture is called ‘the assurance of hope.’ Now to provoke you to a holy zeal in your endeavour after this, consider, **FIRST**. It is thy duty so to do. **SECOND**. If thou do not thou wilt show thou little esteemest Christ and his salvation. **THIRD**. Thou knowest not what stress thy hope may be put to before thou diest.

[ARGUMENTS why we should strengthen our hope.]

FIRST ARGUMENT. Consider it is thy duty so to do. Indeed by the Papist’s doctrine, no man is bound to labour for such an assurance. But whether we should believe God or them, judge ye. What saith the Spirit of God, ‘We desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.’ Observe,

First. The thing he exhorts to endeavour for, πρὸς τὴν πληροφoρίαν τῆς ἠλπίδος ἄχρι τέλους—‘to the full assurance of hope.’ They whose hope is weak sail with but a scant side-wind. The apostle would have them go before the wind, and be carried with a full gale to heaven, which then is done when the soul, like a sail spread to the wind, is so filled with the truth and goodness of the promise, that it swells into an assured hope of what is promised, and rejoiceth in a certain expectation of what it shall have when it comes to the shore of eternity, though it be now tossed and weather-beaten with a thousand temptations and trials in its passage thither.

Second. Observe whom he presseth this duty upon; not some few choice Christians, as an enterprise laid out for them above the rest of their fellow-soldiers, but every person that will prove himself a Christian. ‘We desire that every one of you do show the same diligence,’ &c. In our civil trade, and particular worldly calling, it were sinful for every poor man to propound such a vast estate to himself in his own desires as he sees some few—the wealthiest merchants in a city—have got by their trade, so as no less shall content him. But in the spiritual trade of a Christian it is very warrantable for every Christian to covet to be as rich in grace as the best. Paul himself will not think himself wronged if thou desirest to be as holy man as himself was, and labourest after as strong a faith and steadfast a hope as he had; yea, thou oughtest not to content thyself with what thou hast, if there were but one degree of grace more to be had than what at present thou hast obtained. And,

Third. Observe what he imputes the weakness of the saints’ grace to; not an impossibility of attaining to more, but their sloth and laziness. And therefore he opposeth this to that blessed frame of heart he so much wisheth them, ‘That ye be not slothful,’ Heb. 6:12. Indeed it is the diligent hand makes rich; as in this world’s goods, so in this heavenly treasure also.

SECOND ARGUMENT. Labour to strengthen thy hope of salvation, or thou wilt show thou little esteemest Christ and his salvation. As we prize any good, so we labour more or less to assure ourselves of it. If a prince should lose a pin from his sleeve, or a penny out of his purse, and one should bring him news they are found; the things are so inconsiderable that he would not care whether it were true or not. But if his kingdom lay at stake in the field, and intelligence comes that his army hath got the day and beat the enemy, O how he would long to have his hope, that is now raised a little, confirmed more strongly by another post! Is heaven worth so little that you can be satisfied with a few probabilities and uncertain maybes you shall come thither? Thou basely despisest that blessed place if thou beest no more solicitous to know the truth of thy title to it. When Micaiah seemed to give Ahab—now advancing his army against Ramoth-gilead—some hope of a victory, by bidding him ‘go up and prosper,’ the thing being passionately desired by the king, he fears the worst—as

indeed he had reason, for the prophet's speech was ironical—and therefore cannot rest till he know more of this matter. 'And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the Lord?' 1 Kings 22:16.

Maybe thou hast some loose wavering hopes of heaven floating in thy soul. If now, thou didst think thy eternal woe lay in the truth or falsehood of that hope, certainly thou wouldst search thy heart by the word, and adjure thy conscience after an impartial review to tell thee the naked truth, what thy state is, and whether thou mayest in God's name, and with the leave of his word, hope it shall be thy portion or not; and this thou wouldst do, not hypocritically, as that wretched king did—who adjured Micaiah to tell him the truth, and then would not believe him though he did it faithfully—but with great plainness of heart; it being about a business of no less importance than what shall become of thee to eternity. Peter, when surprised with the tidings of Christ's resurrection, though the report did not find such credit with him as it might, yet, by his speedy running to, and looking into, the sepulchre, he showed both how dearly he loved his Lord, as also how joyful a man he should be, if the news held true that he was alive. Thus, Christian, though the promise of eternal life hath not hitherto produced such an assurance of hope that thou art the person that shalt undoubtedly enjoy it, yet show what appreciating thoughts thou hast of that blissful state, by endeavouring to strengthen thy hope and put thee out of doubt thereof.

THIRD ARGUMENT. Consider this also in the last place, that thou knowest not what stress thy hope may be put to before thou diest. The wise mariner doth victual his ship for the longest day. He reckons on foul weather and cross winds which may retard his voyage, and make it more troublesome, though some find it a shorter cut and fairer passage, and therefore he stores himself accordingly, knowing well it is easier carrying provision to sea than getting it there. Non facilè inveniuntur in adversitate præsidia, quænon fuerint in pace quæsita—protection is not readily found in adversity, which has not been sought out in time of peace—a good speech of Austin. God himself tells us we have 'need of patience;' he means great store of patience, 'that after we have done the will of

God, we may receive the promise,' Heb. 10:36. And if of patience, then of hope; because patience bears all on hope's back. Now, because we know not the certain degree of hope that will serve our turn—God having purposely concealed the weight of affliction and temptation he intends to lay on us—therefore we should never cease our endeavour to strengthen it. There are hard duties to be performed, and strong trials to be endured, and these require a hope proportionable. We are to 'hold fast...the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end,' Heb. 3:6. Now, will the Christian of weak hope do this? He, alas! is like a leaky ship with a rich lading; the fear of sinking before she gets the port takes away the owner's joy of the treasure she carries. Bid such a one rejoice in his inheritance that is laid up in heaven for him, and he will tell you he questions whether ever he shall come there. Patient waiting for mercy prorogued and deferred is another hard duty, 'It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord,' Lam. 3:26. Now weak hope is short-breathed, and cannot stay long with any quietness. Omne invalidum est querulum—weak persons are commonly hardest to please; soon peevish and forward if they have not what they would, and that when they desire it also.

When David's faith and hope were under a distemper, then he falls out with all. The prophet himself that brought him the news of a kingdom cannot escape his censure, and all because the promise stayed longer before it was delivered than he expected—'I said in my haste, All men are liars,' Ps. 116:11—whereas the promise went not a day beyond its due time, but he missed of its true reckoning through his inordinate desire. But take David in his healthful temper—when his faith and hope are strong—and he is not so hasty then to call for a mercy out of God's hands; but thinks his estate in God's hands as safe as if it were paid into his own. 'Praise waiteth for thee, O God,' or, 'praise is silent for thee,' so the Hebrew, *הלהללה דמיה* (*dumiyah thehillah*), will bear it, Ps. 65:1. As if the holy man had said, 'Lord, I do quietly wait for a time to praise thee. My soul is not in an uproar because thou stayest. I am not murmuring, but rather stringing my harp, and tuning my instrument with much patience and confidence, that I may be ready to strike up when the joyful news of my deliverance first

comes.' You have much ado to make the child quiet till dinner, though he sees preparations for a great feast; but one that is grown up will be soon pacified when he is kept a little longer than ordinary for his meal upon such an occasion. O Christian, it is our childishness and weakness of grace—especially of our hope—that makes us so soon out of patience to wait God's leisure. Strengthen hope, and patience will grow with it.

In a word, Christian, thou hast great trials and strong temptations to conquer before you enter heaven gates and be clothed with your garments of salvation there. Now defend thy hope, and that will defend thee in these; strengthen that, and that will carry thee through them. The head, every member is officious to preserve it. The hands are lift up to keep off the blow, the feet run to carry the head from danger, the mouth will receive any unsavoury pill to draw fumes and humours from the head. Salvation is to the soul what the head is to the body—the principal thing it should labour to secure; and hope is to our salvation what the helmet is to the head. Now if he be unwise that ventures his head under a weak helmet in the midst of bullets at the time of battle, then much more unwise he that hazards his salvation with a weak hope. Know, O Christian, the issue of the battle with thy enemy depends on thy hope; if that fail all is lost. Thy hope is in conflicts with temptations and sufferings, as a prince is amidst his army, who puts life into them all while he looks on and encourageth them to the battle, but if a report of the king's being slain comes to their ears, their courage fails and hearts faint. Therefore Ahab would be held up in his chariot to conceal his danger from the people, the knowledge of which would have cast a damp on their courage.

Thy hope is the mark Satan's arrows are leveled at. If possible keep that from wounding. Or if at any time his dart reacheth it, and thy spirit begins to bleed of the wound which he hath given thee by questioning 'Whether such great sins can be pardoned as thou hast committed? such old festered sores as thy lusts have been can be ever cured? or afflictions that are so heavy and have continued so long can possibly be either endured or removed?' Now labour, as for thy life, to hold up thy hope though wounded in the chariot of the promise, and bow not by despairing to

let the devil trample on thy soul. So soon as thy hope gives up the ghost will this cursed fiend stamp thee under his foul feet, and take his full revenge of thee, and that without any power of thy soul to strike a stroke for thy defence. This will so dispirit thee that thou wilt be ready to throw up all endeavour and attendance on the means of salvation; yea, desperately say, 'To what purpose is it to think of praying, hearing, and meditating, when there is no hope?' What! should we send for the physician when our friend is dead? What good will the chafing and rubbing the body do when the head is severed from it? The army broke up, and every one was sent to his city, as soon as it was known that Ahab was dead. And so wilt thou cast off all thought of making any head against sin and Satan when thy hope is gone, but fall either into Judas' horror of conscience, or with Cain, turn atheist, and bury the thoughts of thy desperate condition in a heap of worldly projects.

I come now to give a few words of counsel, how a Christian may best strengthen his hope. Take them in these six particulars following. 1. If thou meanest thy hope of salvation should rise to any strength and solidness, study the word of God diligently. 2. Keep thy conscience pure. 3. Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of him. 4. Labour to increase your love. 5. Be much in the exercise of your hope. 6. File up thy experiences of past mercies, and thy hope will grow stronger for the future.

[SIX DIRECTIONS how we may strengthen our hope.]

First Direction. If thou meanest thy hope of salvation should rise to any strength and solidness, study the word of God diligently. The Christian is bred by the word, and he must be fed by it also, or else his grace will die. That is the growing child that lies libbing oftenest at the breast. Now as God hath provided food in his word to nourish every grace, so in the composition of the Scriptures he had a particular respect to the welfare and growth of the saint's hope, as one principal end of their writing. 'That we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope,' Rom. 15:4. The devil knows this so well, that his great labour is spent to deprive the Christian of the help which the word is stored with; and indeed therein he is not mistaken, for so long as this river is

unblocked up which makes glad the City of God, with the succours which are brought in to them on the stream of its precious promises, he can never besiege them round or put them to any great straits. Some, therefore, he deprives of their relief by mere sloth and laziness. They make a few fruitless complaints of their doubts and fears, like sluggards crying out of their wants and poverty as they lie in bed, but are loath to rise and take any pains to be resolved of them by searching of the word for their satisfaction; and these sell their comfort of all others the cheapest. Who will pity him, though he should starve to death, that hath bread before him, but loath to put his hand out of his bosom to carry it to his mouth! Others he abuseth by false applications of the word to their souls, partly through their weak understandings, and troubled spirits also, which discolour the truths of God and misrepresent them to their judgments, whereby they come to be beaten with their own staff—even those promises which a skilful hand would knock down Satan's temptations withal. The devil is a great student in divinity, and makes no other use of his Scripture-knowledge than may serve his turn by sophistry to do the Christian a mischief, either by drawing him to sin, or into despair for sinning; like some wrangling barrister, who gets what skill he can in the law merely to make him the more able to put honest men to trouble by his vexatious suit. Well, if Satan be so conversant in the word to weaken thy hope, and deprive thee of thy inheritance, what reason hast thou then to furnish thyself with a holy skill to maintain thy right and defend thy hope? Now, in thy study of the word, propound these two ends, and closely pursue them till thou hast obtained them.

1. End. Labour to clear up thy understanding from the word, what are the conditions required by God of every soul that hath his grant and warrant to hope assuredly for life and salvation in the other world. Some conditions there are required to be found in all such is without all doubt, or else it were free for all, be they what they will, and live how they list, actually to lay claim to a right in heaven and salvation. If God had set no bounds at Sinai, and said nothing who should come up the mount, and who not, it had been no more presumption in any of the company to have gone up than in Moses; and if God requires no conditions in the person that is to hope,

then heaven is a common for one as well as other to crowd into; then the beastly sinner may touch God's holy mount as well as the saint, and fear no stoning for his bold adventure. But this sure is too fulsome doctrine for any judicious conscience to digest. Well, having satisfied thyself that if ever thou hast true hope thou must also have the conditions, inquire what they are. Now the word holds forth two sorts of conditions according to the two different covenants.

(1.) There is a covenant of nature, or law-covenant, which God made with innocent Adam; and the condition of this was perfect obedience of the person that claimed happiness by it. This is not the condition now required; and he that stands groping in at this door in hope to enter into life by it, shall not only find it nailed up and no entrance that way to be had, but he also deprives himself of any benefit of the true door which stands open, and by which all pass that get thither. 'Whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace,' Gal. 5:4. You must therefore inquire what the other covenant is; and that is,

(2.) A covenant of grace, as that other was of nature; of reconciliation to make God and man friends, as that was a covenant to preserve those friends who had never fallen out.

Now the condition of this covenant is, repentance and faith. See for this Luke 24:47; John 3:36; Acts 2:38; 5:31; 20:21; Gal. 5:5. Labour therefore to give a firm assent to the truth of these promises, and hold it as an indisputable and inviolable principle, that 'whoever sincerely repents of his sins, and with a 'faith unfeigned' receiveth Christ to be his Lord and Saviour, this is the person that hath the word and oath of a God that cannot possibly lie, for the pardon of his sins and the salvation of his soul.' What service a strong assent to this will do thee towards exerting thy hope thou wilt by and by see. It is the very basis thereof. The weight of the Christian's whole building bears so much on it that the Spirit of God, when he speaks in Scripture of evangelical truths and promises, on which poor sinners must build their hopes for salvation, doth it with the greatest averment of any other truths, and usually adds some circumstance or other that may put us out of all doubt concerning the certainty and unalterableness of them. 'Surely he hath borne our griefs,' Isa. 53:4. There is no question

to be made of it; but it was our potion he drank, our debt he paid. What end could he have besides this in so great sufferings? Was it to give us a pattern of patience how we should suffer? This is true, but not all; for some of our fellow-saints have been admirable instances of this. 'He carried our sorrows,' and 'was wounded for our transgressions.' This, this was the great business worthy of the Son of God's undertaking, which none of our fellow-saints could do for us. So, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' 1 Tim. 1:15. As if he had said, 'Fear no cheat or imposture here; it is as true as truth itself; for such is he that said it.' If you believe not this you are worse than a devil. He cannot shut this truth out of his conscience, though the unwelcomest that ever came to his knowledge. 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins,' 1 John 1:9. What can the poor penitent fear when that attribute is become his friend that first made God angry with him. Yea, so fast a friend as to stand bound for the performance of the promise, which even now was so deeply engaged to execute the threatening on him? 'Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath,' Heb. 6:17. What security could we have asked more of a deceitful man, than the faithful God of his own accord gives? The Romans did not give their magistrates oaths—supposing the dignity and honour of their persons and place were bond strong enough to make them true and righteous. Surely then God's word would have deserved credit, though it had not an oath to be its surety, yet God condescends to this, that he may sink the truth of what he saith deeper into our minds, and leave the print fairer and fuller in our assents to the same when set on with the weight of asseverations⁴ and oaths.

2. End. Having found what is the condition of the covenant, rest not satisfied till thou findest this condition to be wrought in thy own soul, and art able to say thou art this repenting and believing sinner. A strong hope results from the clear evidence it hath for both these. We read in Scripture of a threefold assurance. (1.) An assurance of understanding, Col. 2:2.

(2.) An assurance of faith, Heb. 10:22. (3.) An assurance of hope, Heb. 6:11. And it is a good note which an acute doctor of our own hath upon them, 'That these three make up one practical syllogism; wherein knowledge forms the proposition, faith makes the assumption, and hope draws the conclusion' (D. A. Tac. Sa. p. 126). 'I do,' saith the Christian, 'assuredly know from the word, that the repenting believing sinner shall be saved; my conscience also tells me that I do unfeignedly repent and believe; therefore I do hope firmly that I shall, however unworthy otherwise, be saved.' Now we know there can be no more in the conclusion than is in the premises; so that, as the force is, which the Christian puts forth in his assent to the truth of the promise, and the evidence which he hath, that the condition of the promise—viz. faith and repentance—is wrought in his soul, so will his hope be, weak or strong. Indeed it can be no otherwise. If his assent to the truth of the promise be weak, or his evidence for the truth of his faith and repentance be dark and uncertain, his hope that is born—as I may so say—of these, must needs partake of its parent's infirmities, and be itself weak and wavering, as they are from that which it results.

Second Direction. Wouldst thou have thy hope strong? then, keep thy conscience pure. Thou canst not defile this, but thou wilt weaken that, 'Living godly in this present world,' and 'looking for that blessed hope' laid up for us in the other, are both conjoined, Titus 2:12, 13. A soul wholly void of godliness needs be as destitute of all true hope, and the godly person that is loose and careless in his holy walking, will soon find his hope languishing. All sin is aguish meat; it disposeth the soul that tampers with it to trembling fears and shakings of heart. But such sins as are deliberately committed and plotted, they are to the Christian's hope as poison to the spirits of his body, which presently drinks them up. They, in a manner, exanimate the Christian. They make the thoughts of God terrible to the soul; which, when he is in a holy frame, are his greatest joy and solace. 'I remembered God, and was troubled,' Ps. 77:3. They make him afraid to look on God in a duty, much more to look for God in the day of judgment. Can the servant be willing his master should come home when he is in his riot and excess? Mr. Calvin, when some wished him to forbear some of his labours, es-

4. Asseverate: to state seriously or positively. — SDB

pecially his night studies, asked those his friends, 'whether they would have his Lord find him idle when He came?' O, God forbid! Christian, that death should find thee wanton and negligent in thy walking; that he should surprise thee lying in the puddle of some sin unrepented of! This would be a sad meeting! O how loath wouldst thou then be to die, and go to the great audit where thou must give up thy accounts for eternity! Will thy hope then be in case to carry thee up with joy to that solemn work? Can a bird fly when one of her wings is broke? Faith and a good conscience are hope's two wings. If, therefore, thou hast wounded thy conscience by any sin, renew thy repentance, that so thou mayest act faith for the pardon of it, and, acting faith, mayest redeem thy hope, when the mortgage that is now upon it shall be taken off. If a Jew had pawned his bed-clothes, God provided mercifully, it should be restored before night: 'For,' saith he, 'that is his covering, wherein shall he sleep?' Ex. 22:27. Truly, hope is the saint's covering, wherein he wraps himself when he lays his body down to sleep in the grave. 'My flesh,' saith David, 'shall rest in hope,' Ps. 16:9. O Christian! bestir thyself to redeem thy hope before this sun of thy temporal life go down upon thee, or else thou art sure to lie down in sorrow. A sad going to the bed of the grave he hath, that hath no hope of a resurrection to life.

Third Direction. Resort to God daily, and beg a stronger hope of him. That is the way the apostle took to help the saints at Rome to more of this precious grace. 'Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost,' Rom. 15:13. God, you see, is the God of hope; and not only of the first seed and habit, but of the whole increment and abounding of it in us also. He doth not give a saint the first grace of conversion, and then leave the improvement of it wholly to his skill and care; as sometimes a child hath a stock at first to set up, and never hath more help from his father, but, by his own good husbandry, advanceth his little beginnings into a great estate at last; but rather as the corn in the field, that needs the influences of heaven to flower and ripen for harvest, as much as to quicken in the clods when first thrown in. And therefore, be sure thou humbly acknowledgest God by a constant wait-

ing on him for growth. 'The young lions,' are said to, 'seek their meat from God,' Ps. 104:21. That is, God hath taught them, when hungry, to express their wants by crying and lifting up their voice, which, did they know God to be their Maker, they would direct to him for supply; as we see the little babe that at first only expresseth its wants by crying, doth, so soon as it knows the mother, directs his moan to her. Thou knowest, Christian, that thou art at thy heavenly Father's finding. He knows indeed what thou wantest, but he stays his supplies till thou criest, and this will make him draw forth his breast presently. Doth God take care for the beasts in the field? Surely then much more will he for thee his child in his house, and for thy soul above all. Thou mayest possibly pray for more riches, and be denied; but a prayer for more grace is sure to speed.

Fourth Direction. If you would strengthen your hope, labour to increase your love. There is a secret, yet powerful, influence that love hath on hope. Moses, we will easily grant, greatly befriended the Israelite, when he slew the Egyptian that fought with him. Love kills slavish fear—one of the worst enemies hope hath in the Christian's heart—and thereby strengthens hope's hand. He that plucks up the weeds helps the corn to grow, and he that purges out the disease makes way for nature's strengthening. It is slavish fear oppresseth the Christian's spirit that he cannot act hope strongly. Now, 'love casteth out fear,' I John 4:18. The free-woman will cast out the bond-woman. Slavish fear is one of Hagar's breed—an affection that keeps all in bondage that hath it. This love cannot brook. 'Shall I,' saith the loving soul, 'fear he will hurt me, or be hard to me, that loves me, and I him so dearly? Away, unworthy thoughts, here is no room for such company as you are in my bosom.' 'Love thinketh no evil,' I Cor. 13:5. That is, it neither wisheth evil to, nor suspects evil of, another. The more thou lovest Christ, the less thou wilt be jealous of him; and the less jealous thou art of him, the more strongly thou wilt hope in him, and comfortably wait for him. Hence, these two graces are so often mated in Scripture. 'The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ,' II Thes. 3:5. Love him, and you will wait for him. So, 'keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto

eternal life,' Jude 21.

Fifth Direction. Be much in the exercise of your hope. Repeated acts strengthen habits. Thus the little waddling child comes to go strongly by going often. You have no more money in your chest at the year's end than when you laid it there; nay, it is well if rust or thieves have not made it less. But you have more by trading with it than your first stock amounted unto. 'Thou oughtest to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury,' said Christ to the 'slothful servant,' Matt. 25:27. Now the promises are hope's object to act upon. A man can as well live without air, as faith and hope without a promise; yea, without frequent sucking in the refreshment of the promises. And, therefore, be much in meditation of them; set some time apart for the purpose. You that love your healths, do not content yourselves with the air that comes to you as you sit at work in your house or shop, but you will walk out into the fields sometimes, to take the air more fresh and full. And if thou beest a wise Christian, thou wilt not satisfy thyself with the short converse thou hast by the by with the promises, as now and then they come into thy mind in thy calling, and when thou art about other employments, but wilt walk aside on purpose to enjoy a more fixed and solitary meditation of them. This were of admirable use; especially if the Christian hath skill to sort the promises, and lay aside the provision made in them suitable to his case in particular.

Sometimes the Christian is at a stand when he remembers his past sins, and his hope is quite dashed out of countenance while they stare on his conscience with their grim looks. Now it were excellent for the Christian to pick out a promise where he may see this objection answered and hope triumphing over it. This was David's very case, Ps. 130. He grants himself to be in a most deplored condition, if God should reckon with him strictly, and give him quid pro quo—wages suitable to his work. 'If thou, Lord, should'st mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' ver. 3. But then, he puts his soul out of all fear of God's taking this course with poor penitent souls, by laying down this comfortable conclusion as an indubitable truth. 'But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared;' ver. 4, that is, 'there is forgiveness in thy nature; thou carriest a pardoning heart in thy

bosom; yea, there is forgiveness in thy promise, thy merciful heart doth not only incline thee to thoughts of forgiving, but thy faithful promise binds thee to draw forth the same unto all that humbly and seasonably lay claim thereunto. Now, this foundation laid, see what superstructure this holy man raiseth, 'I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope,' ver. 5. As if he had said, 'Lord, I take thee at thy word, and am resolved by thy grace to wait at this door of thy promise, never to stir thence till I have my promised dole—forgiveness of my sins—sent out unto me.' And this is so sweet a morsel, that he is loath to eat it alone, and therefore he sets down the dish, even to the lower end of the table, that every godly person may taste with him of it—'Let Israel hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities,' ver. 7, 8. As if he had said, 'That which is a ground of hope to me, notwithstanding the clamour of my sins, affords as solid and firm a bottom to any true Israelite or sincere soul in the world, did he but rightly understand himself, and the mind of God in his promise. Yea, I have as strong a faith for such as my own soul, and durst pawn the eternity of its happiness upon this principle—that God shall redeem every sincere Israelite from all his iniquities.' This, this is the way to knock down our sins indeed. And Satan, when he comes to reproach us with them, and, by their batteries, to dismount our hope, sometimes a qualm comes over the Christian's heart merely from the greatness of the things hoped for. 'What!' saith the poor soul, 'seems it a small thing for me to hope, that of an enemy I should become a son and heir to the great God! What! a rebel? and not only hope to be pardoned, but prove a favourite, yea such a one, as to have robes of glory making for me in heaven, where I shall stand among those that minister about the throne of God in his heavenly court, and that before I have done him any more service here on earth? O, it is too great good news to prove true.' Thus the poor soul stands amazed—as the disciples, when the first tidings of the Lord's resurrection surprised them—and is ready to think its hope but an idle tale with which Satan abuseth it, ut præsumendo speret et sperando pereat—that he may presume to hope, and perish with his presumption.

Now, Christian, that thou mayest be able to stride over this stumbling-block, be sure to observe those prints of God's greatness and infinitude that are stamped upon the promise. Sometimes you have them expressed, on purpose to free our thoughts, and ease our hearts of this scruple. When God promised what great things he would do for Abraham, to make them more credible, and easily believed, he adds, 'I am the Almighty God,' Gen. 17:1; and so, Isa. 55:7, 'Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.' But how can this possibly be done, that in the turn of a hand, as it were, such a great favour can be obtained, which among men could hardly be done in a lifetime spent suing for it? O that is easily answered. He tells you he is not a sorry man, but a God, and hath a way by himself in pardoning wrongs, which none can follow him in; for it is as far above our ways as the heavens are above the earth. This, Christian, observe, and it will be a key to unlock all promises, and let you in unto the untold treasures that are in them; yea, [will] make the greatest promise in the Bible easy to be believed. Whenever you read any promise, remember whose bond it is—the word of no other than God. And when you think of God, be sure you do not narrow him up in the little compass of you finite apprehensions, but conceive of him always as an infinite being, whose center is everywhere, and circumference is nowhere. When you have raised your thoughts to the highest, then know you are as far yea infinitely farther, from reaching his glory and immensity, than a man is from touching the body of the sun with his hand when got upon a hill or mountain. This is to ascribe greatness to God,' as we are commanded, Deut. 32:3. And it will admirably facilitate the work of believing.

Suppose a poor cripple should be sent for by a prince to court, with a promise to adopt him for his son and make him heir to his crown, this might well seem incredible to the poor man, when he considers what a leap it is from his beggar's cottage to the state of a prince. No doubt if the promise had been to prefer him to a place in a hospital, or some ordinary pension for his maintenance, it would be more easily credited by him, as more proportional to his low condition; yet, the greatness of the prince, and the de-

light such take to be like God himself, by showing a kind of creating power to raise some as it were from nothing unto the highest honours a subject is capable of—thereby to oblige them as their creatures to their service—this, I say, might help such a one think this strange accident not altogether impossible. Thus here. Should a poor soul spend all his thoughts on his own unmeetness and unworthiness to have heaven and eternal life conferred on him, it were not possible he should ever think so well of himself as that he should be one of those glorious creatures that were to enjoy it. But, when the greatness of God is believed, and the infinite pleasure he takes to demonstrate that greatness this way—by making miserable creatures happy, rather than by perpetuating their miseries in an eternal state of damnation—and what cost he hath been at to clear a way for his mercy to freely act in, and, in a word, what a glorious name this will gain him in the thoughts he thus exalts; these things—which are all to be found in the word of promise—well weighed, and acknowledged, cannot but open the heart, though shut with a thousand bolts, to entertain the promise and believe all is truth that God there saith, without any more questioning the same. A taste I have given in one or two particulars, you see, how the promises may be suited to answer the particular objections raised against our hope. It were easy here to multiply instances, and to pattern any other case with promises for the purpose; but this will most effectually be done by you who know your own scruples better than another can. And be such true friends to your own souls, as to take a little pains therein. The labour of gathering a few simples in the field, and making them up into a medicine by the direction of the physician, is very well paid for, if the poor man finds it doth him good and restores him to health.

Sixth Direction. File up thy experiences of past mercies, and thy hope will grow stronger for the future. Experience worketh hope, Rom. 5:4. He is the best Christian that keeps the history of God's gracious dealings with him most carefully, so that he may read in it his past experiences, when at any time his thoughts trouble him and his spiritual rest is broken with distracting fears for the future. This is he that will pass the night of affliction and temptation with comfort and hope; while others that have taken no

care to pen down—in their memories at least—the remarkable instances of God’s love and favour to them in the course of their lives, will find the want of this sweet companion in their sorrowful hours, and be put to sad plunges; yea, well, if they be not driven to think their case desperate, and past all hope. Sometimes a little writing is found in a man’s study that helps to save his estate; for want of which he had gone to prison and there ended his days. And some one experience remembered keeps the soul from despair—a prison which the devil longs to have the Christian in. ‘This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope,’ Lam. 3:21. David was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe preserve, the experiences he had of God’s goodness. He was able to recount the dealings of God to him. They were so often the subject of his meditation and matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but rub his memory up a little and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. ‘I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High,’ Ps. 77:10. The hound, when he hath lost the scent, hunts backward and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss for the life to come, and thou questionest thy salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee in this world.

Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith, that the other also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a penny in hand of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell. Go therefore, Christian, and look over thy receipts. God hath promised ‘sin shall not have dominion over you;’ no, not in this life, Rom. 6:14. It is the present state of a saint in this life that is intended there. Canst thou find this promise made good to thee? is the power of sin broken and the sceptre wrung out of this king’s hand, whom once thou didst willingly obey as ever subject his prince? yea, canst thou find he hath but begun to fall by thy unthroning him in thy heart and affections? Dost thou now look on sin not as thou

wert wont, for thy prince, but as a usurper, whose tyranny, by the grace of God, thou art resolved to shake off, both as intolerable to thee and dishonourable to God, whom thou now acknowledgest to be thy rightful Lord, and to whose holy laws thy heart most freely promiseth obedience? This, poor soul, may assure thee that thou shalt have a full dominion over sin in heaven ere long, which hath begun already to lose his power over thee on earth. It is observable how David rears up his hope to expect heaven’s perfect state of holiness from his begun sanctification on earth. First, he declares his holy resolution for God, and then his high expectation from God. ‘As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness,’ Ps. 17:15. Hast thou found God’s supporting hand in all thy temptations and troubles, whereby thou art kept from sinking under them? A David would feed his hope for eternal salvation with this, ‘thou hast holden me by my right hand,’ Ps. 73:23. Now observe hope’s inference, ‘Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory,’ ver. 24.

And as experiences carefully kept and wisely improved, would conduce much to strengthening the Christian’s hope on its chief object—salvation; so also would they lift up its head above all those distracting fears which arise in the Christian’s heart, and put him to much trouble from those cross and afflicting providences that befall him in this life. Certainly David would have been more scared with the big looks and brag deportment of that proud Goliath, had not the remembrance of the bear and the lion which he slew brought relief to him and kept them down. But he had slain this uncircumcised Philistine in a figure when he tore in pieces those unclean beasts. And therefore when he marches to him, this is the shield which he lifts up to cover himself with, ‘The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine,’ 1 Sam. 17:37. If experiences were no ground for hope in future straits—temporary now I mean—then they would not have the force of an argument in prayer. But saints use their experiences to do them service in this case, and make account they urge God very close and home when they humbly tell him what he hath already done for them, and expect he should therefore go on in his

fatherly care over them. 'Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns,' Ps. 22:21. And no doubt a gracious soul may pray in faith from his past experience, and expect a satisfactory answer to that prayer wherein former mercies are his plea for what he wants at present. God himself intends his people more comfort from every mercy he gives them, than the mercy itself singly and abstractly considered amounts to. Suppose, Christian, thou hast been sick, and God hath, at thy humble prayer, plucked thee out of the very jaws of death, when thou wert even going down his throat almost; the comfort of this particular mercy is the least God means thee therein; for he would have thee make it a help to thy faith, and a shore [support] to thy hope, when shaken by any future strait whatever. 'Thou brakest the heads of leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness,' Ps. 74:14. God in that mercy at the Red Sea, we see, is thinking what Israel should have to live on for forty years together, and looked that they should not only feast themselves at present with the joy of this stupendous mercy; but powder it up in their memories, that their faith might not want a meal in that hungry wilderness all the while they were to be in it. Experiences are like a cold dish reserved at a feast. Sometimes the saint sits down with nothing else on his table but the promise and his experience; and he that cannot make a soul-refreshing meal with these two dishes deserves to fast. Be sure, Christian, thou observest this in every mercy—what is the matter of present thankfulness, and what is ground of future hope. Achor is called 'a door of hope,' Hosea 2:15. God, when he gives one mercy, opens a door for him to give, and us to expect more mercy through it. God compares his promise to 'the rain,' which maketh the earth 'bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater,' Isa. 55:10. Why shouldst thou, O Christian, content thyself with half the benefit of a mercy? When God performs his promise, and delivers thee out of this trouble and that strait, thou art exceedingly comforted, may be, with the mercy, and thy heart possibly enlarged at present into thankfulness for the same. It is well. Here is 'bread for the eater'—something at present feasts thee. But where is the 'seed for the sower?' The husbandman doth not spend all his corn that he reaps, but saves some

for seed, which may bring him another crop. So, Christian, thou shouldst feast thyself with the joy of thy mercy, but save the remembrance of it as hope-seed, to strengthen thee to wait on God for another mercy and further help in a needful time.

[AN OBJECTION ANSWERED,
with some practical reflections.]

But, you will possibly say, how can a saint's past experience be so helpful to his hope for the future, when God, we see, often crosseth the saint's experiences? He delivers them out of one sickness, and takes them away, may be, with the next; he saves them in one battle without a scratch or hurt, and in another a while after they are killed or wounded; how then can a saint ground and bottom his hope from a past deliverance to expect deliverance in the like strait again?

Answer 1. There is the same power still in God that was then. What he did once for thee he can with as much ease do again; and this is one way thy experiences may help thee. Thou hast seen God make bare his arm, so that except thou thinkest that he since hath lost the strength or use of it, and is become at last a God with a lame hand, hope hath an object to act upon, and such one as will lift thy head above water. Indeed, the soul never drowns in despair till it hath lost its hold on the power of God. When it questions whether God will deliver, this is a sad leak, I confess, and will let in a thousand fears into thy soul; yet so long as the Christian can use this pump—I mean, act faith on the power of God, and believe that God can deliver when he pleases—though it will not clear the ship of his soul of all its fears, yet it will keep it from quite sinking, because it will preserve him in a seeking posture. 'Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean,' Mark 1:40. And for thee to say God cannot deliver, who hast been an eyewitness to what he hath done, were not only to betray thy great unbelief, but to forfeit thy reason as a man also. But,

Answer 2. To give a more close answer to the question, the saint, from his former experiences, even of temporal salvations, may, yea ought, not only believe that God can, but also that he will, save him in all future straits and dangers of this nature; only, he cannot conclude that he will do it in the same way as

in former deliverances. And none I hope will say, if he hath deliverance, that his experiences are crossed because God doth use another method in the conveyance of it to him. A debt may be fully satisfied, as with money, so with that which is money worth, except the bond restrains the payment otherwise. Now there is no clause to be found in any promise for temporal mercies, that binds God to give them in specie or in kind. Spiritual mercies—such I mean as are saving and essential to the saint's happiness—these indeed are promised to be given in kind, because there is nothing equivalent that can be paid in lieu of them; but temporal mercies are of such an inferior nature, that a compensation and recompense may be easily given in their stead; yea, God never denies these to a saint, but for his gain and abundant advantage. Who will say the poor saint is a loser whose purse God denieth to fill with gold and silver, but filleth his heart with contentation? or the sick saint, when God saves him not by restoring to former health, but by translating to heaven? And so much may suffice for answer to the objection propounded. I shall wind up this head with two or three reflections to be used by the Christian for his better improving past experiences when he is at a plunge.

(1.) Reflection. Look back, Christian, to thy past experiences, and inquire whether thou canst not find that thy God hath done greater matters for thee than this which thou now hast so many disquieting fears and despairing thoughts about. I suppose thy present strait great; but wert thou never in a greater, and yet God did at last set thy feet in a large place? Thou art now in a sad and mournful posture; but hath not he brightened a darker cloud than this thou art now under, and let thee out of it into a state of light and joy? Surely thy staggering hope may prevent a fall by catching hold of this experience. Art thou not ashamed to give thyself for lost, and think of nothing but drowning, in a less storm than that out of which God hath formerly brought thee safe to land? See David relieving his hope by recognizing such an experiment as this, 'Thou hast delivered my soul from death: wilt not thou deliver my feet from falling,' Ps. 56:13. Hast thou given me the greater, and wilt thou stand with me for the less? Haply thy present fear, Christian, is apostasy. Thou shalt one day fall by the hand of thy sins; this runs in thy

thoughts, and thou canst not be persuaded otherwise. Now it is a fit time to recall the day of God's converting grace. Darest thou deny such a work to have passed upon thee? If not, why then shouldst thou despair of perseverance? That was day wherein he saved thy soul. 'This day,' saith Christ to Zacchaeus, 'is salvation come to this house,' Luke 19:9. And did God save thy soul by converting grace, and will he not keep thy feet from falling by his sustaining grace? Was it not both more mercy and power to take thee out of the power of sin and Satan, than it will cost him to preserve thee from falling into their hands again? Surely the Israelites would not so often have feared provision in the wilderness, had they remembered with what a high hand God did bring them out of Egypt. But, may be it is some outward affliction that distresseth thee. Is it greater than the church's was in cruel bondage and captivity? yet she had something to recall that put a new life into her hope. 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him,' Lam. 3:24. See, she makes a spiritual mercy—because incomparably greater of the two—a ground of hope for temporal salvation, which is less. And hast not thou, Christian, chosen him for thy portion? Dost thou not look for a heaven to enjoy him in for ever? And can any dungeon of outward affliction be so dark that this hope will not enlighten? Recall thy experiences of his love to thy soul, and thou canst not be out of hope for thy body and outward condition. He that hath laid up a portion in heaven for thee, will lay out surely all the expenses thou needest in thy way thither.

(2.) Reflection. Remember how oft God hath confuted thy fears and proved thy unbelief a false prophet. Hath he not knocked at thy door with inward comfort and outward deliverances, when thou hadst put out the candle of hope, given over looking for him, and been ready to lay thyself down on the bed of despair? Thus he came to Hezekiah, after he had peremptorily concluded his case desperate, Isa. 38:10, 11. Thus to the disciples in their unbelieving dumps, 'We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel,' Luke 24:21. They speak as if now they were in doubt whether they should own their former faith or no. Hath it not been formerly thus with thee? wert thou never at so sad a pass—the storm of thy fears so great—that the anchor of hope

even came home, and left thee to feed with misgiving and despairing thoughts, as if now thy everlasting night were come, and no morning tale more expected by thee? yet even then thy God proved them all liars, by an unlooked for surprise of mercy with which he stole sweetly upon thee? If so, press and urge this experience home upon thyself, to encourage thy hope in all future temptations. What, O my soul! thou wouldst say, wilt thou again be seared with these false alarms?—again lend an ear to thy distrustful desponding thoughts, which so oft thou hast found liars, rather than believe the report of the promise, which never put thy hope to shame as these have done? The saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcass of their slain fears. The time which God chose, and the instrument he used, to give the captive Jews their jail-delivery and liberty to return home, were so incredible to them—who now looked rather to be ground in pieces by those two millstones, the Babylonians within, and the Persians without the city—that when it came to pass, like Peter whom the angel had carried out of prison, Acts 12:1-17, it was some time before they could come to themselves, and resolve whether it was a real truth or but a pleasing dream, Ps. 126:1.

Now, see what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope for afterward. It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what of what was so marvellously begun. ‘The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord,’ ver. 3, 4. They have got a hand-hold by this experiment of his power and mercy; and they will not now let him go till they have more. Yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves or others in any future distress. ‘They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him,’ ver. 5, 6.

(3.) Reflection. Remember what sinful distempers have broke out in thy afflictions and temptations, and how God hath, notwithstanding these, carried on a work of deliverance for thee. So that thou mayest say, in respect of these enemies in thy bosom, what David spake triumphantly in regard of his ene-

mies without, that ‘God hath prepared a table before me in the presence of thy enemies,’ yea, of his enemies. While thy corruptions have been stirring and acting against him, his mercy hath been active for thy deliverance. O what a cordial-draught this would be to thy fainting hope! That which often sinks the Christian’s heart in any distress, inward or outward, and even weighs down his head of hope that it cannot look up to God for help and succour at such a time, is the sense of those sinful infirmities which then discover themselves in him. ‘How,’ saith the poor soul, ‘can I look that God should raise me out of this sickness, wherein I have bewrayed so much impatience and frowardness? Or out of that temptation in which I have so little exercised faith, and discovered so much unbelief? Surely I must behave myself better before any good news be sent from heaven to me.’ It is well, poor Christian, thou art sensible of thy sins as to be thy own accuser, and prevent Satan’s doing it for thee; yet be not oppressed into discouragement by them. Remember how God hath answered the like objections formerly, and saved thee with a ‘notwithstanding.’ If these could have hardened his bowels against thee, hadst thou been alive, yea, out of hell this day? Didst thou ever receive a mercy of which God might not have made stoppage upon this very account that makes thee now fear he will not help thee? Or, if thou hast not an experience of thy own at hand—which were strange—then borrow one of other saints. David is an instance beyond exception. This very circumstance with which his deliverance was, as I may say, enamelled, did above all affect his heart: ‘I said in my haste, All men are liars. What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?’ Ps. 116:11, 12. He remembered his sinful and distempered carriage; and this he mentions, as to take shame for the shame, so to wind up his heart to the highest peg of thankfulness. He knows not how to praise God enough for that mercy which found him giving the lie to God’s messenger—even Samuel himself—that was sent to tell him it was a coming. And he doth not only make this circumstance an incentive to praise for what is past, but lays it down for a ground of hope for the future. ‘I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou heardest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee,’ Ps. 31:22. As if he had said, ‘When I

prayed with so little faith, that I as it were unprayed my own prayer, by concluding my case in a manner desperate; yet God pardoned my hasty spirit, and gave me that mercy which I had hardly any faith to expect.' And what use doth he make of this experience, but to raise every saint's hope in a time of need? 'Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the Lord,' ver. 24.

FOURTH POINT OF IMPROVEMENT.

[EXHORTATION to them that want
this helmet of hope.]

Be you exhorted that are yet without this helmet, to provide yourselves with it. Certainly if you be but in your right wits, it is the first thing you will go about, and that with sober sadness—especially may but three considerations take place in your thoughts. **FIRST.** How deplored a thing it is to be in a hopeless state. **SECOND.** It is possible that thou who art now without hope, mayest by a timely and vigorous use of the means obtain a hope of salvation. **THIRD.** Consider the horrid cruelty of this act—to pull down eternal destruction on thy own head.

[THREE CONSIDERATIONS to make all
provide themselves with this helmet.]

FIRST CONSIDERATION. How deplored a thing it is to be in a hopeless state. The apostle makes him to be 'without God' that is 'without hope'—'having no hope, and being without God in the world,' Eph. 2:12. God, to the soul, is what the soul is to the body. If that be so vile and noisome a thing, when it hath lost the soul that keeps it sweet; what is thy soul when nothing of God is in it? 'The heart of the wicked is little worth,' saith Solomon. And why? but because it hath not God to put a value on it. If God, who is light, be not in thy understanding, thou art blind; and what is an eye whose sight is out fit for but to help thee break thy neck? If God be not in thy conscience to pacify and comfort it, thou must needs be full of horror or void of sense; a raging devil or a stupid atheist. If God be not in thy heart and affections to purify them, thou art but a shoal of fish, a sink of sin.

If God be not in thee, the devil is in thee; for man's heart is a house that cannot stand empty. In a word, thou canst not well be without this hope neither in life nor death. Not in life—what comfort canst thou take in all the enjoyments thou hast in this life without the hope of a better? A sad legacy it is which shuts the rebellious child from all claim to the inheritance. Thou hast an estate, it may be, but it is all you must look for. And is it not a dagger at the heart of thy joy to think thy portion is paid thee here, which will be spent by that time the saint comes to receive his? Much less tolerable is it to be without this hope in a dying hour. Who can without horror think of leaving this world, though full of sorrows, that hopes for no ease in the other? The condemned malefactor, as ill as he likes his smokey hole in the prison, had rather be there, than accept of deliverance at the hangman's hand; he had rather live still in his stinking dungeon than exchange it for a gibbet. And greater reason hath the hopeless soul—if he understands himself—to wish he may spend his eternity on earth, though in the poorest hole or cave in it—and that under the most exquisite torment of stone or gout—than to be eased of that pain with hell's torment. Hence is the sad confusion in the thoughts of guilty wretches when their souls are summoned out of their bodies. This makes the very pangs of death stronger than they would be, if these dear friends had but a hopeful parting. If the shriek and mournful outcry of some friends in the room of a dying man may so disturb him as to make his passage more terrible, how much more then must the horror of the sinner's own conscience under the apprehensions of that hell whither it is going, amaze and affright him? There is a great difference between a wife's parting with her husband, when called from her to live at court under the shine of his prince's favour, whose return after a while she expects with an accumulation of wealth and honour; and another whose husband is taken out of her arms to be dragged to prison and torment.

Is this thy case, miserable man, and art thou cutting thy short life out into chips, and spending thy little time upon trifles, when the salvation of thy soul is yet to be wrought out? Art thou tricking and trimming thy slimy carcass, while thy soul is dropping into hell? What is this but to be painting the when the house is on fire? For a man to be curious about trim-

ming his face, when he is not sure his head shall stand a day on his shoulders! It was an unseasonable time for Belshazzar to be feasting and quaffing when his kingdom lay at stake and an enemy at the gates. It would have become a wise prince to have been fighting on the wall than feasting in his palace, and fattening himself for his own slaughter, which soon befell him, Dan. 5:30. And it would become thee better to call upon thy God, poor sinner, and lie in tears for thy sins at his foot, if yet haply thy pardon may be obtained, than by wallowing in thy sensual pleasures, to stupify thy conscience, and lay it asleep, by which thou canst only gain a little ease from the troublesome thoughts of thy approaching misery.

SECOND CONSIDERATION. Consider it is possible—I do not mean in the way thou art in, for so it is as impossible that thou shouldst get to heaven, as it is that God should be found a liar—but it is possible that thou who art now without hope, mayest by a timely and vigorous use of the means obtain a hope of salvation; and certainly a possible hope carries in it a force of strong argument to endeavour for an actual hope. There is never a devil in hell so bad but if he had a thousand worlds at his dispose—and every one better than this we dote on—would exchange them all for such a may be, yea count it a cheap pennyworth too. It was but a possibility that brought that heathen king of Nineveh from his throne to lie grovelling at God's foot in sackcloth and ashes, and that king will rise up in judgment against thee if thou dost not more. For that was a possibility more remote than thine is. It was spelled out, not from any express promise that dropped from the preacher to encourage them to humble themselves and turn to the Lord—for we read of nothing but desolation denounced—but from that natural theology which was imprinted on their minds. This taught them to hope that he who is the chief good would not be implacable. But you have many express promises from God's faithful lip, that if you in his tie and way seek unto him, as sure as God is now in heaven, you shall live there with him in glory. 'Your heart shall live that seek God,' Ps. 69:32. Yea there are millions of blessed ones now in heaven experimenting the truth of this word, who once had no more right to heaven than yourselves now have; and that blissful place is not yet crowded so full but he can and will make room for

you if indeed you have a mind to go thither. There is one prayer which Christ made on earth that will keep heaven-gate open for all that believe on him unto the end of the world. 'Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word,' John 17:20. This is good news indeed. Methinks it would make your souls leap within your breasts, while you sit under the invitations of the gospel, as the babe once did in Elizabeth's womb, upon the virgin Mary's salutation. Say not then, sinners, that ministers put you upon impossibilities, and bid you climb a hill inaccessible, or assault a city that is unconquerable. No; it is the devil, and thy own unbelieving heart—who together conspire thy ruin—that tell thee so. And as long as you listen to these counsellors you are like to do well, are you not? Well, whatever they say, know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven—which God forbid—the Lord can wash his hands over your head and clear himself of your blood; thy damnation will be laid at thine own door. It will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the offer of the gospel. What God did tender he was willing to give, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, and thy heart, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary, did not like the terms. 'But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me,' Ps. 81:11. So that when the jury shall go on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thine own damnation: *nemo amittit Deum nisi qui dimittit eum*—none loseth God but he that is willing to part with him.

THIRD CONSIDERATION. Consider the horrid cruelty of this act, for thee, by thy incorrigible and impenitent heart, to pull down eternal destruction on thy own head. O what a sad epitaph is this to be found on a man's grave-stone! Here lies one that cut his own throat, that unnaturally made away himself! this the man, that the woman, who would not be reclaimed! They saw hell before them, and yet would leap into it, notwithstanding the entreaties of Christ by his Spirit and ministers to the contrary! And the oftener thou hast attempted to do it, and God hath been staying thy hand by his gracious solicitations, the greater will be thy shame and confusion before God, men, and angels, at the last day. God hath set a

brand upon those acts of cruelty which a man commits upon himself above all other. It would speak a man of a harsh currish nature, that could see a horse in his stable or hog in his sty starve, when he hath meat to lay before him; more cruel to hear his servant roar and cry for bread and deny it; yet more horrid if this were done to a child or wife; but of all—because nature cries loudest for self-preservation—the greatest violence that can possibly be done to the law of nature is, to forget the duty we owe to our own life. O what is it then for a sinner to starve his soul by rejecting Christ ‘the bread of life,’ and to let out his soul’s blood at this wide sluice! This is matchless cruelty! Indeed, that which makes the self-murder of the body so great a crime is, because it doth so eminently—I will not say unavoidably—hazard the destruction of the soul. O how unworthy then art thou to have so noble a guest as thy soul dwell in thy bosom, who preparest no better lodgings than hell for it in another world!—that soul whose nature makes it being capable of being preferred to the blissful presence of God in heaven’s glory, if thou hadst not bolted the door against thyself by thy impenitency. But alas! this which is the worst murder is the most common. They are but a few molesters that we now and then hear of who lay violent hands upon their bodies, at the report of which the whole country trembles; but you can hardly go into any house one day of the week, in which you shall not find some attempting to make away their souls; yea, that carry the very knife and halter in their bosoms—their beloved sins I mean—with which they stab and strangle them; even those that are full of natural affections to

their bodies, so as to be willing to spend all that they are worth, with her in the gospel, on physicians when the life of it is in danger; yet are so cruel to their dying damning souls, that they turn Christ their physician out of doors, who comes to cure them on free cost.

In a word, those that discover abundance of wisdom and discretion in ordering their worldly affairs, you would wonder how rational they are, what an account they will give why they do this, and why that; when it comes to the business of heaven and the salvation of their souls, they are not like the same men. So that, were you to judge them only by their actings herein, you could not believe them to be men. And is it not sad, that the soul, which furnisheth you with reason for the despatch of your worldly business, should have no benefit itself from the very reason it lends you to do all your business with. This, as one well saith, is as if the master of the house, who provides food for all his servants, should be himself kept by them from eating and so remain the only starved creature in the house. And is not this the sad judgment and plague of God, that is visibly seen upon many, and those that go for wise men too, *stilo mundi*—after the manner of the world? Are not their souls, which give them understanding to provide for back and belly, house and family, themselves starving in the meantime? being kept by the power of some lust from making use of their understanding and reason so far as to put them upon any serious and vigorous endeavour for the salvation of them. How then can souls that are so treated prosper?