

degree of the exercises of faith and hope, *i. e.*, in believing the Divine truths, and in looking to the heavenly objects revealed in the gospel. True Christians are the heirs of promise, the adopted sons of God, and many are the privileges resulting to them even here from that relation.

What is intended by "the promises" may be gathered from other portions of Scripture. "This is the promise which God hath given us, even eternal life;" and herein are comprehended innumerable blessings, which are themselves the subject of distinct promises.

In the promised inheritance there is not only a cessation of all the evils of this life, its temptations and sins, as well as its trials and sorrows: there is the full fruition of blessedness, of which the believer has had but the foretaste. There is the promise of seeing, serving, and enjoying God for ever; a happiness this which is inexplicable to us while we remain in the body. Indeed, a full perception of the Divine glory would not consist with the design of our present state, with its exercises of faith and hope, nor with the weakness and imperfection of human nature. "Now we see through a glass darkly," says St. Paul, "but then face to face."

The most exemplary of God's servants here are not to expect an exemption from the common calamities of life. The pains and sicknesses, the sorrows and trials of this our state of probation,—these things cause grievous interruption to their happiness here. But these are the least of the Christian's sorrows. His severest trials, his sorest troubles are with sin and temptation, and under these he would inevitably sink, were it not for the supports of Divine grace, and the prospect of the happy change that awaits him, when perfect peace shall succeed the troubles and solitudes of his present condition, when he shall inherit that kingdom "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

But believers shall not only see him,—they shall serve him; and not only serve him,—they shall enjoy him. Nor will any secondary concerns call away their attention from the service and enjoyment of God. The business and blessedness of heaven are the same. Perfect knowledge, perfect holiness, and perfect love must necessarily open the avenues to perfect joy; so that to describe their happiness is not possible. In the Revelation we have some very exalted ideas of the future state, though it be only images accommodated to our feeble powers of conception. "The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them," says St. John, "and lead them unto living fountains of waters; and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." "In thy presence," says the Psalmist, "is fulness of joy; and at thy right hand are pleasures for evermore."

II. We have next to consider the instrumentality of faith and patience in preparing believers for that heavenly inheritance.

The original covenant was broken on the part of man; by consequence the way to the heavenly world was barred against the sinner by the justice of God, which, like the flaming sword, "turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." There was no other way left

whereby man could be restored to the Divine favour than that revealed in the gospel, wherein we learn that "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life." And when the sacrifice of atonement was made, the commission was given to the messengers of the gospel to preach "repentance towards God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Hence St. Peter cries, "Repent ye, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out." Hence the counsel of Paul and Silas to the trembling jailer, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." And every one truly convinced by the Holy Spirit of sin is invited to believe the faithful saying, "that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners." He rejoices in the announcement,—he sees the Saviour to be every way suitable to his fallen state. The merits of Christ's atoning blood, the perfection of his obedience, the efficacy of his intercession, constitute a plea which he is not afraid to urge. Upon this he lays hold, feeling that "other foundation can no man lay,"—that there is "salvation in none other,"—that "there is none other name given under heaven among men whereby we must be saved." He embraces Christ, and resting on his sufficiency as a surety for himself, he receives a title to the favour of God and to eternal life. Thus appears the instrumentality of faith in this our own day, as when in old times patriarchs and prophets by faith beheld the distant glory.

The necessity of patience as well as faith is obvious, by reason of the delay of the future blessedness. The trials to which true believers are ever exposed must call for the exercise of patience, that they may endure with submission the trials which God may call them to bear; and the more so, as we know they are a proof of our sonship, and that they help to loosen us from this world, to refine and purify our hearts, and so to prepare us for the heavenly inheritance. "Our light afflictions," says St. Paul, "which are but for a moment, do work out for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory."

Seeing then, that these things are so, how does it behove Christians to exhort one another daily, "that they be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises;" that they approve themselves as "good stewards of the manifold grace of God;" that they be not deceived by the thought of the slothful servant, "My lord delayeth his coming?" To each one of us it may be said, "Behold the Judge standeth before the door,"—"The Lord is at hand," "who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life: but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil." (Rom. ii. 6—9.)

Let us all, therefore, take heed to the exhortation: "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises."