

The Christian in Complete Armour - Part 13

by William Gurnall

William Gurnall emphasizes the importance of the Helmet of Salvation as a protective grace that enables Christians to withstand spiritual battles and suffering through hope in their salvation.

Topics: "Christian Hope", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

William Gurnall preaches about the powerful influence of hope in the Christian's life, highlighting how hope raises the believer to attempt great exploits, makes them diligent and faithful in their work, and supports them in the greatest afflictions. Hope acts as a helmet of salvation, defending the believer's mind and heart in spiritual battles, guiding them to trust in God's promises and remain steadfast in their faith despite challenges.

Transcript

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, I 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,' I 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 preceded 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's 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 intrinsical to hope's object, and distinguisheth it from faith, which gives a present being to the promise, and is $\text{\$8B>@\mu X@F}$ and $\text{*b<"\mu 4H}$ --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 apon 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 looking 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, I 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 faithful 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 condemn 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 condemn 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 fortune; 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 bough 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,' I 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, '< {6J,<.'. 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, I 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 amain 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 acceptance 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,' I 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 patience, 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 affliction, 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 sile

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